Security and policing shadows

Pendular ethnography in urban Brazil

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Introduction

In the classic literature of police studies, policing has been described as ambivalent and the use of power and violence – even when legitimate – hard to scrutinise (Manning, 1978; Niederhoffer and Blumberg, [1965] 1973; Reiner, 1985). It is, therefore, no wonder that the focus of scholars' attention in the production of theories dealing with the issues of police violence and corruption has been on the issue of discretion and the uses and misuses of police powers (Beek et al., 2016; Durão, 2017; Martin, 2019). It is often in police officers' interactions with their communities, in the localisation of differences, categorisations, selectivity, and processes of otherness, that ethnographic endeavours in police institutions are situated (Fassin, 2013, 2015a; Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014). But there is much more known about in the moral, political, and material overlaps that authorise security officers to perform what we call here shadow work and lead them to take on otherwise opaque and often dangerous social statuses. The ethnographic approach is clearly a solution to the lack of such knowledge of the constructions of shadow security, but is not without dilemmas and difficulties. This chapter proposes an ethnographic reading on the forms of constructions of shadowy power and inequality from within the realm of security in Brazilian cities.

In this text, we argue that certain shadow configurations of security markets are potential sources of highly circumscribed powers and, at the same time, of massive inequalities. The notion of shadow security thus allows us to understand the structural forms of violence and the networks of interpersonal relations that make security blurred in its assemblages. From ethnographic approaches to the powers vested in key persons and in organisational domains of security work, we can more effectively advance the grey knowledge that makes 'security operate as a productive process' (Fassin, 2019; Glück and Low, 2017: 281).

Diving into the violent intimacies of the daily lives of security guards and producing academic thought about them are part of what we call pendular ethnography. This is a commitment to following shadow relationships and the threats and risks they raise (including for anthropologists) without being subject to such relationships, in ethical, political, and theoretical terms. Security shadows demand an ethnographic exegesis that denies a normative perspective but does not neglect ethical and humanitarian orientations. In pendular ethnography, the shadow

is an assertion, not a choice or perspective; it must be considered an integral part of the security assemblages. But for that very reason, an oscillating in-and-out approach is also a precondition of possibility to complexity theories about global security, when it undertakes to theorise security inconstancies. We therefore assert the need for a methodological courage capable of knowing more about ghostly spheres without succumbing to shadow.

Engaged in interdisciplinary dialogues, several anthropologists state that security 'is a critical object of study in its own right' (Glück and Low, 2017: 283). In a brief review of recent literature, we identify at least four axes of dominant analysis that directly or indirectly involve the areas of public and private security, from broad views to more specialised ones: i) studies based on the comprehensive notion of human security (Hylland-Eriksen, 2010) and on new security ontologies (Holbraad and Pedersen, 2013); ii) the praxis assembled and blurred securities (Diphoorn and Grassiani, 2019); iii) the critical (in)security and the advances of neoliberalism, with special focus on the socio-spatial dimension of security (Low and Maguire, 2019) and located in some regions of the Global South (Goldstein, 2010a); iv) the praxis of policing in various places around the world, with a more state-centric view than the previous ones (Fassin, 2013; Garriott, 2013; Jeauregui, 2010; Karpiac, 2016; Martin, 2019).

While progress has been made in terms of conceptual precision regarding how anthropology can address this broad theme of security and policing, some issues remain to be further explored and ethnographically detailed. The recent assemblage approach to security helps one to think about how the constructs of security, instead of vertical and programmed, are rather transversal, negotiated, plastic, and encompass multiple forms of governance (Anderson, 2010; Collier and Lakoff, 2008; Lentzos and Rose, 2009; White, 2010).[1] With this approach, Samimian-Darash and Stalcup help us 'focus on security forms of action and whether these are part of the nation-state formation or not, asking how they work' (2016: 11). In the same vein of understanding security practices in depth and detailing policing ambiguities, Diphoorn and Grassiani propose the notion of 'security blurs' (2019). Authors are specifically concerned with understanding security as performance, with forms of 'doing security' by providers across the globe (ibid: 06). Thus, they avoid notions that are too abstract, broad, or that conflate 'security' with fear, uncertainty, and multiple violations in contemporary settings (cf. Neocleous and Rigakos, 2011).

Approaches based on assemblages, actions, and security blurs are a great starting point for our reflections in that they allow us to problematise old dichotomies, such as formal versus informal, state versus non-state, and legal versus illegal, in order to understand security (Diphoorn and Grassiani, 2019: 03). Public and private security and regulated and unregulated economies are an integral part and an entanglement of what can be understood as a field of economic action and power.

These normative dichotomies prove unproductive when it comes to understanding security practices and the impact of grey areas on the everyday lives of citizens and security providers themselves. Diphoorn and Grassiani define security blurs thus:

> [A]s manifestations of security that are visible and identifiable, yet in their inception and performance, they are constructed and made up of myriad overlapping sets of actors, roles, motivations, values, materialities, and power dynamics.
>
> *(ibid: 06)*

But a definition of what is at stake in the grey areas of security is still lacking. Not only do they multiply and hide undifferentiated hybridisms that combine security and policing in their relations, processes, and performances (ibid: 02). It is not only the myriad of actors and material and symbolic constructions that should be addressed when it comes to security

practices. It is also necessary to grasp what certain powers, networks, and spaces of shadow security explain about what it means to provide security in different contexts of the world.

In the Brazilian case, as we shall see, assemblages are not just a messy historical accident. On the contrary, grey areas, deliberately erased in visible performances, are useful for profit-making powers and activities to take place, thus hiding productive dysfunctions and particular local governances. These grey areas also conceal the details of social, economic, and fundamental organisational inequalities between different security providers. Profitable security assemblages manifest themselves in specific relationships within the industry. It is thus necessary to go beyond the visible, confused, and hybrid dimensions of public/private security performances. It is important to put into perspective interpersonal networks, morphologies of security, and concrete shadow spaces and grey areas in contemporary markets.

This text is divided into four sections. In the first section, we briefly present how the treatment of shadows in policing in Brazilian scholarly literature has contributed to postponing interest in the morphologies of the grey areas of public and private security, and their entanglements. In the second section, the longest one, we discuss four ethnographic vignettes involving men we met during fieldwork in different security shadow domains and occasions, highlighting their powers and threats. In the third section we present a further counterpart of the shadows, a section of the security industry outsourced from the inside, describing the organisational shadow. In the last section of the chapter, before concluding, we propose a discussion of the theoretical challenges of what we call a pendular and intimate ethnography that heuristically considers instability and fragments, and is sustained by a methodological courage.

Grey zones of security in democracy

For 30 years, a large and solid literature has sought to highlight in Brazil the problem of public security in an effort to better understand the system that underlies the persistence of the grey areas and the 'dirty work' of the police (cf. Lima, Misse and Miranda, 2000; Muniz, Caruso and Freitas, 2017). The explanations for the persistence of violence, abuse, corruption, and police illegality have been primarily driven by the narrative of systemic failure. This failure was identified as part of Brazil's democratic transition which came about under the auspices of high rates of violence in the 1980s. From top to bottom, democracy and violence are intertwined in a conjunction that for some is paradoxical (Caldeira, 2002; Misse, 2019; Muniz, 2008); for others, these are democracies characterised by being violent (Arias and Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein, 2010b). The dirty police work and the incongruities of the criminal justice system are considered a consequence of a disjunctive, incomplete, and violent democracy (Adorno, 1995; Caldeira, 2013; Caldeira and Holston, 1999; Goldstein, 2010a; Sinhoretto, 2021), consolidating the 'illegitimate power of the state' (Zaluar, 1999: 9) and generating a 'complex choreography of police and paramilitary forces' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2014: 7). This is why police and security dysfunctionality is, in general, what best illustrates this mismatch (Lima and Bueno, 2015).

In the vastness of the 'black figures', as Paes Manso put it about the summary deaths perpetrated by police officers in death squads since 1960 from north to south of the country, the gaze easily shifts from security itself to its harmful effects (Huggins, 1997, 1991; Paes Manso, 2014: 1). The 'diffuse violence' gives rise to shadowy figures and traditional social types (Barreira, 2013). The 'pistoleiro', a poor man sponsored and paid by high-ranking state bosses, is a shadowy figure who resolves disputes within the public administration. This is how the 'pistolagem' is perpetuated, a crime still very much prevalent in the state of Ceará today (Barreira, 2004). These hands willing to dirty themselves with blood in the name of protecting a given elite are part of the history of rural Brazil. Today there are urban variants of private protection with

extensive state participation. The new 'jagunços', as called, are political figures, men who act on behalf of protecting bosses and enforce their rulings (Feltran, 2020). The most accomplished form of population and territorial control through economic exploitation by the police are the militias that occupy increasingly large areas in Rio de Janeiro (Cano, 2008; Paes Manso, 2020).

The death squads are also undergoing an update. During the military dictatorship (1964–1985), they were responsible for enforcing ideological repression, particularly with regard to the alleged emergence of a communist threat to the regime. In the transition to democracy, police killers acted according to a given moral control and with an eye on businesses in the urban peripheries (Cano and Duarte, 2012; Zaluar and Conceição, 2007). In general, these gangs of armed men are part of Brazilian history 'family struggles resulting from fights for local power, that is for control of land, wealth, and public institutions' (Zaluar, 2007: 37). Instead of disciplinary democracy, police violence and the violence of armed men become democratised (Douglas, [1966] 1984: 07). Democracy has thus been to an extent 'protected' not only by rule of law institutions but also by armed men, street power, and justice. This explains how President Bolsonaro successfully appealed to a male gun culture to get elected (Durão, 2021; Feltran, 2021).

Even with variations, most authors have identified security, the commodification of force, and the power to kill, as the great paradoxes of the Brazilian modernisation process in the last 40 years. The 'crime-business', in all its extent, involving from top to bottom public and private security agents, is the great scenario of the Brazilian drama. In an unfinished democracy, violence and abuse would be the means par excellence of conflict resolution and negotiation (Zaluar, 2007). But critical macro-sociological visions or twilight pattern figures often do not reflect the everyday practices that produce the shadowy forms of security. The authors identify the grey areas, but with few exceptions, do not explain them in detail. Instead of the topos of 'Western education' (Kleinman, Das and Lock, 1997) and the insistence on violence and corruption as loaded and descriptive stereotypes of the 'third world' – as Gupta says (2005) – it is necessary to understand what kinds of social relations the shadows of urban security in Brazil are producing (Jauregui, 2010). To this extent, it is important to understand the threads of historical continuity present today in the actions of security agents and the shadow politics of their everyday life.

Shadow security in practice

In this part of the chapter, we pay close attention to the forbidden dimensions of the security assemblages. We use the term shadow to convey not only hidden and opaque power but also the way police action is commonly characterised when it is anxious to negotiate its independence and leeway in the face of pressure for transparency (Palacios Cerezales, 2005; Lima, 2008). Nor do we use the term to describe the backstage of formal action, what some authors have called 'canteen cultures' (Waddington, 1999). Shadow in security can be seen as a reserve force, as much physical and material as moral, thereby turning the violence of some over others into an intrinsic part of a job that is largely based on internal agreements and collusion. Shadows are cultural, social, and organisational practices that are usually not seen for what they are, precisely because they are usually read as obscurities or corruption in security, as a fixed state of being (Jauregui, 2010). Shadows in security imply powers, negotiations, local collaborations, and also the involvement and interaction between concrete people. But these also contribute to structurally unequal arrangements that are located right inside the security industry itself, in its hierarchies, asymmetries, and in its economic and racial composition. Thus, we argue that the shadow in security can be empirically identifiable and can be described, even if only fragmentarily and unfinished – in its shadow assemblages – by anthropologists.

The shadow in security is not merely a dystopian observation, revealing subjective impotence in the face of the enormity of the world's injustices (cf. Derrida, 2002). In practice, as Beatrice Jauregui says, police forces – just like all security providers:

> Do not merely descend too low on a vertical ladder from right down to wrong violence, but rather cross back and forth across a vast span of bridges and boundaries, constantly transgressing a variety of culturally constructed margins configuring legality, truth, justice, adequacy, and necessity.
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> *(Jauregui, 2013: 129)*

Practical politics and shadow entanglements can be observed in the daily routines of private urban security in Brazil. In this chapter, we focus on long-term research among security providers situated at various hierarchical levels acting in cities of the state of São Paulo: São Paulo, Osasco, and Campinas. São Paulo is the state capital and the powerhouse of the Brazilian economy. It is a highly segregated city, a process in which private security has played a crucial and constitutive role since the 1980s (Caldeira, 2001). Osasco is a large city in the metropolitan outskirts of São Paulo. In the last decade, it has moved from being one of the major industrial centres of the State of São Paulo to becoming a city of services. It is a city with classic disputes over municipal power and where the levels of outsourcing and the uberisation of work are steadily increasing, as well as the construction of high-rise buildings and both residential and commercial gated communities. Campinas is the largest city upstate, with extensive urban sprawls containing sequential construction of medium- and high-standard residential gated communities typical of the global suburban model, as well as the incorporation of multiple private security systems (ibid; Cunha et al., 2006; Herzog, 2015). It is also known as a city where private security is controlled by groups of police officers, even if in violation of the private security law. The state of São Paulo as a whole accounts for more than 30% of the country's regulated private security industry (Durão and Paes, 2021). The expansion of the security industry in these cities has risen steadily since the 1990s, both at the corporate level and in the increase of a wide variety of clandestine local protection services. Business people and city managers estimate that the parallel security industry accounts for twice to three times the number of employees in the regulated sector (ibid).

This text is based on results from the research project 'Policing and Urban Imaginaries: New Security Formats in Southern Cities', coordinated by Durão and in which Argentin worked as a research assistant.[2] The project aimed to compare new formats of plural policing and security assemblages in cities of the Global South and in regions of Southern Europe. Special attention was given to forms of sociability, observation of practices, and political imaginaries associated with private security, namely in a hospitality-security modality combined with forms of militarism associated with private security (Durão et al., 2021).[3]

The project spanned 36 months and fieldwork was carried out between 2016 and 2019, with several subsequent visits, interviews, and meetings. Over 200 interviews were conducted with a whole range of security officers, each averaging 90 minutes. The descriptive material used in this chapter was drawn from the extensive field notes of both authors. Most of the fieldwork was carried out in contexts of security services provision in three large complexes of gated residential communities located in Campinas. We also did research in two shopping centres, in a hospital and in a university compound in São Paulo. We held in-depth interviews with a group of business owners and management personnel who are key players in the associative activity of private security in São Paulo.

As part of this ethnographic incursion, Durão took the mandatory basic training course of one month (200 hours) to become a private security guard along with a group of men at the end

of 2017. As a result of this field experience, Durão built a network of personal relationships with several security guards who she closely followed for years. Over the course of the research, the opportunity arose to follow up on connections, by way of their ongoing work, with politicians and municipal managers in the cities of São Paulo and Osasco. Those experiences made it possible to understand how private property security is today one of the few opportunities for poor young people to enter the formal labour market. Training is itself a business. In 2021, there were more than 3.28 million security agents with a certificate of course completion, but the market absorbs only about 600,000 (Durão and Paes, 2021: 33).

The methodological challenge of doing ethnography of shadows is predictable. Unlike other dimensions of social life, the ethnographic approach has to deal with fragments of situations and biographies that can never be fully seen or rationally told, and this empirical access is veiled to the outside. The information is valid precisely because it is observed by researchers on some surfaces of action, on empirical signs, and is spoken at specific moments in sporadic confessions and non-linear and fleeting biographical narratives to which attention must be paid. The theoretical challenge lies in making sense of the biographical fragments, the inductive flashes, and assuming that shadow knowledge is always necessarily unfinished, but that it can be progressive and constructive. More than the dirty counterpart of a straight clean life, or one that is imagined as linear even by anthropologists, the shadow is an expression of contemporary work and life that cannot be absent from anthropological knowledge projects.

We shall now present ethnographic vignettes containing stories told by security men about situations we have come across during our research. These are biographical and incidental windows through which we can catch a glimpse of security shadows. Each of the stories points to different aspects of the fragmentation of security shadows. But when read in sequence, common elements in the biographies stand out: the dark and powerful management of danger and the privilege that these guards have at their disposal, thus affording us a guess at all sorts of grey possibilities of this activity. All the names mentioned are, understandably, pseudonyms. If concern for identity protection is standard in ethnographic texts, it is even more important in the study of the grey areas of the politics and economics of life.

Vignette 1: Cesinha is a 50-year-old black guard. He works for 12 hours at a time followed by 36 hours rest in a luxury gated community in the city of São Paulo, as an outsourced service provider. His mandatory training is up to date and he has a gun permit. In a relaxed moment during a meeting in a coffee bar, Cesinha narrated to Durão his 'life on the run' (vida no corre), that is his permanent individual effort to get extra work and dispatches. He offers an example. In addition to the contract, like many others who cannot live on their meagre salary, he also works informally 'renting a station from a policeman', as he says, in a multinational chain of supermarkets. In other words, Cesinha is subcontracted by the policeman who is the 'station owner'. Our interviewee told us that it becomes impossible for the policemen to provide the service he himself provides, due to the scale of demand in asset surveillance and the wear and tear of long hours standing on their feet. That is why the policemen who succeed in securing jobs with businessmen eventually rent 'their stations', for a lower amount, to armed guards or, otherwise, to a whole group of relatives and friends. It is precisely in this condition that Cesinha has been working for many years.

In the same supermarket chain, there are several police officers who own stations. The network of leases and sub-leases eludes the company's oversight and is left, in trust, in the hands of these policemen. In this arrangement, anyone at any time can be a provider of 'security' services. A similar situation came to light recently in the case of the intentional murder of a client by a police officer irregularly working as a guard in a multinational network of supermarkets in Brazil. Because it was filmed and exposed in the media, the incident had an exemplary repercussion,

which led the supermarket network being ordered by law to pay a term of adjustment of conduct and constrained not to hire police officers or companies owned by them (Durão and Paes, 2021).

In shopping malls, policemen, working off-duty and in violation of the Federal Law of Private Security (dated 1983), are known as 'white hand'. On the streets, working for neighbourhood associations, in networks of police businessmen, or on their own, they are the 'little motorcycles' and ride patrol with concealed weapons held close to their bodies, as several guards describe them. The variations and the full range of labour delegation in the field of security are virtually impossible to outline. When Durão one day asks Cesinha why he thinks that police officers are so present in all forms of private security, even though they take risks because such activities are illegal, he immediately replies by saying, 'They don't take any risks. They consider themselves the owners of security, nobody is able to stop them in Brazil'.

Cesinha was introduced to Durão by Ricardo, aged 50 years, the oldest trainee she met on the training course. Between 2017 and 2021, Ricardo arranged for Durão to have a series of meetings, at work and in leisure settings, with janitors, security guards, military and civilian police officers, and professionals in the armed forces; a network of people showcasing precisely how fluid and continuous the relationship between these occupational types and people is. Conversations were also held through social networks, by phone, meetings and WhatsApp. Ricardo became more than just a privileged interlocutor in the research. Following his brief stint in private security, and his inability to resist the pressures of this labour market, as will be seen in the section describing how he brought us to watch the company's base from within, Ricardo allowed us to understand the reserve force of violence and inequality in these environments. In many ways, Ricardo opened the door to the grey universe of security.

Vignette 2: Faguno, 40 years old, has been responsible for more than 10 years for the patrols and the general coordination of the operational security of a high-end condominium complex in Campinas, comprising 40 gated communities and residential developments with more than 2,000 inhabitants. He took the same training course as Cesinha in one of the 292 private security schools, not to get a job, but to formally sign the contract with the outsourced company and thus ensure that the owner would be covered in case of an inspection by the Federal Police, which regulates the industry. Informal work often needs a facade of authority and formality. Faguno took the security guard course out of spite: 'I didn't learn anything new; what I know I learned on the streets', referring to the special relationship he has with Campinas police officers, particularly in the most ostensible unit, the Armed Group for Suppression of Robberies and Mugging of Campinas (Grupo Armado de Repressão a Roubos e Assaltos de Campinas – GARRA). In exchange for his 'services', the cops offer him ballistics classes, weapons licenses, and the chance to hang around with the uniformed officers. No wonder Faguno considers that the only people who make a 'career' in surveillance are those who do their own work and accept anything coming from above, meaning over the power over life and death. He once said vehemently, 'These security guards need to be men of vision, to know how things work, so that they don't just wallow in private security and end up at the base; getting humiliated'.[4]

When Faguno was young, he wanted to be a civil police officer, but, like many guards we met, he only became a security guard.[5] He worked his way up to become the indispensable right-hand man for the powerful military businessman who owns the local security company and for the businessmen who are residents and managers of the local splendidly wealthy gated communities, surrounded by poor favelas.

Argentin met Faguno through Dante, the administrator of the neighbourhood association of the aforementioned Campinas residential neighbourhood, hired by the residents to manage the security and the monthly funds to invest in security improvements, that is, the 'contract' with

the company that is in charge of the patrol service outside the gated community. Although the general Brazilian private security law does not allow the exercise of private patrols and armed response on public roads, all the neighbourhood patrols proudly display their weapons. For several months over a four-year period, Argentin was allowed to accompany Faguno and other guards on private surveillance rounds.

In addition to patrols, Faguno 'sells entrance gates', makes contractual arrangements, manages 'bicos' (odd jobs) for policemen in his network of acquaintances, and supervises dozens of outsourced security guards at gated communities' entrance gates.[6] Faguno accepts all kinds of services without asking questions: he escorts money whose origin is unknown, does stakeouts and special investigations, and executes death orders. He is an expert in the administration of dangerous information and manages in everyday life an 'epistemology of ordinary' shadow life – or, as Collier (2011, apud Foucault, 1984) would say, a knowledge power.

He once told Argentin that his level of intimacy with Leandro, his boss and a military policeman owner of the security company in which he works, is measured by the most violent pieces of information they know about each other. Even though he is granted this level of dangerous intimacy, Faguno never refuses doing household repairs and to solve problems of the rich in their mansions. Accompanying local security council meetings, Argentin came to realise residents suspect in Faguno the 'tainted' powers of the white but poor security guard, who not only knows all the routines of the residents but also is known to have access to the obscure political, police, and managerial intrigues. Despite this, Faguno is and will always remain a subaltern in the marketplace. But he distinguishes himself by wielding shadowy knowledge and, to that extent, becoming the foreman of the wealthiest. But the dangerous and compromising information is conveyed to Argentin in imprecise, indecisive, and suspicious fragments. As someone who is willing to spend time with poor security guards, Argentin is seen as a kind of outside partner with whom Faguno, his wife, and others can talk. Also being a social scientist trained at a public university, Argentin is seen as an ideological threat, guised as a left-wing and anti-Bolsonaro sympathiser, and contrary to the right-wing political preferences of officers and guards in Brazil, on the rise since at least 2017.

In short, the variation and range of Faguno's use of violence and lethal power is impossible to gauge, tailored between police and businessmen. Faguno never hides his pride in deeming security his rightful realm of action. Unlike Cesinha, Faguno's story is not that of a professional who falls into the precarious mesh of the 'system'. Faguno is one who charts his career on this grey margin. His own shadow, and his daily life as a shadow, looms over the outsourced private security and is in tune with it.

The shadow weighs heavily on the man's shoulders. One day Argentin met Faguno suffering from illness and stress. He confessed, 'I have done everything in this life; my heart disease and stress come from this job, not from what I eat and drink'. Later, his wife, a concierge at the same gated community, reiterated, 'You should never take too much responsibility from others to yourself. Faguno will die because of his work'.

Vignette 3: Lino, a white man around 45 years old, was for many years known as the top expert and the man in charge of the institutional security of the dean's office at a federal public university in Brazil. Due to Durão's work as an executive manager of the UNICAMP security campus, she met Lino through inter-institutional networks. All information was collected as stories and hearsay by co-employees who know Lino.

From being an outsourced security guard, he reached the highest level, with a position of institutional security at the university's administration, remaining there for 30 consecutive years. He always sustained personal connections with local police networks with the same group as Faguno, possibly operating with similar interpersonal networks and transactions

of services and favours. He knows the business people with mega-contracts for surveillance, gatekeeping and monitoring, and several university security agents who pitch in for formal public bids. He also hires the agents on overtime in his own clandestine private company. None of his work is officially registered, so as to deliberately hide his tracks. He has been known to not even open his e-mails. His role is to ensure that those facts that might 'cause trouble' for the dean's office are made to disappear. For example shutting down a drug hotspot at dawn; identifying and mapping who is who in the university; dispatching an agent to have a 'serious' conversation with an irreverent student, which back then meant grabbing them and beating them up in the backrooms. Lino even considered creating an intelligence team to manage the security services at the university.

At a certain point in his journey, Lino was inadvertently 'disconnected' from the university following an inspection by the Labour Prosecutor's Office. He was one of the last commissioned workers, retained in default of the rules of hiring by public competitive selection. At that point, Lino turned to his private business in security. He always anticipated that he might be removed from the public system, but he always felt confident being a security guard for the dean, self-portraying himself as a great expert in institutional campus security.

But he never did disappear from the local security circuits or from the university. He awaited, in the shadows, a possible comeback, counting on the right personal contacts. He shall stake a claim for return with someone who is indebted to him. Last thing Durão heard, Lino was able to negotiate a contract using his illegal private security firm on a new public-private hospital installed on the same university campus.

It is impossible to grasp how far Lino's networks of connections go and to assess the extent of his powers in the field of security. His biographical path shows that shadow is not only a broad field of economic transactions, but also of symbolic resources available to those who instrumentalise knowledge and power within the bureaucratic institutions of the state. This knowledge-power cannot be identified only as a parallel market or informal economy. Even if challenged or dismantled, it is a knowledge-power that returns to places through people and their biographical trajectories. Lino's story illustrates a cyclical dynamic of shadow security, always able to reconfigure itself through new opportunities sustained by dangerous liaisons.

Vignette 4: March 2018, during a busy night after work, in a warehouse in Osasco in a decommissioned industrial region, Durão attends a large meeting organised by a candidate for state deputy, along with his ally, a candidate for federal deputy, for the elections in October of that year. The venue is packed with more than 350 people due to the work of a team of five recruiters. Most of those present are security guards who work for one of the largest state-owned companies in the state of São Paulo, headed by politicians and managers from Osasco, which in turn has a mega-contract outsourced to a security multinational. In view of the sheer volume of attendance by security men with their families, many speak of the candidate as the 'candidate of the security guards', mirroring what happens with candidates of the policemen.

Durão knows three of the five security guards involved in attracting hundreds of colleagues to this event and to the dozens of political meetings that preceded it. After a month of classes in a training course where Durão met them, all the security guards got their employment contracts through networks of acquaintances in the city hall. From the municipal government, they were referred to Mr. Osvaldo, a man who for decades has been the security director of the public company that allied with and sponsors the candidates. Osvaldo, a sexagenarian, is also the head of the network distributing jobs for outsourced security guards, illicitly manipulating the multinational company that provides security services in the aforementioned public company.[7]

At every meeting, right up until the political speeches begin, we find Mr. Osvaldo standing in a corner, taking turns talking to each man and woman who humbly stands in a line of

dozens of people. Osvaldo has an assistant who writes down the names and contacts of those who come to him. Many are poor, unemployed, and come to the meeting hoping to get to talk to him. 'They imagine they can at least get the promise of a position with the outsourced company or some other form of work', says one guard sitting beside Durão on a white plastic chair. He also says, and later Durão confirms with others, how at this point many are fired from the outsourced company so that Osvaldo's 'friends' can be given their places in exchange for political 'volunteer' work in the campaign, a social type known in Brazil as 'cabo eleitoral' (electoral chain). 'Everything in outsourced work is politics, everything', they say. The large outsourced contracts for janitorial, security, and cleaning, especially in state enterprises, are largely based on mutual instrumentalisation and even parasitism between the contracting party (the State) and the contractor (the specialised firm), mixing and feeding political chains and private resources. The exchange of votes for work is only one of many methods.

In each of the 300 chairs, there is a registration form. No one is allowed to leave without handing it to the security guards at the white plastic tables outside the shed. In order to get likes on the candidate's Facebook and Instagram pages, each form must include up to ten names and e-mail addresses of relatives and acquaintances. But when October 2019 finally arrived, the candidate was not elected, and later on the company changed its contract with the private firm. Mr. Osvaldo is still in charge to this day.

Osvaldo also lives under threat. When Durão visited him in 2020 for the second time at the public company's headquarters, bars and several material protections were installed after he had received death threats from an armed security guard who had been fired days before, so he told Durão. The car is armoured, as are the vehicles of well-known businessmen and politicians in São Paulo. Not only Osvaldo is the target of revenge. His direct supervisor is one of the most affected. During fieldwork, we heard several stories of employees who, out of desperation and dissatisfaction with their fate at the company, threatened their bosses with death.

As identified here, there are some 'power holders' (Faoro, [1957] 2012) who engage in the broadest and longest lasting political and economic articulations, usually involving the precarious circumstances of a large number of people.[8] Mutual parasitism occurs at the macro-organisational level. Private security companies profit in the shadows and also comply with everything in order to maintain large contracts with the State, in exchange for operating without supervision. Allowing the illegal participation and guidance of the State company in hiring its own private security guards, which by law should be done entirely by the contractor, will just incur a labour liability in exchange for millions in uncontrolled earnings. Thus, in such cases, massive employee turnover and the desperation to wait for job openings at company bases, as we shall see, ultimately become the norm.

The base, a counterpart to the shadow

As Faguno rightly points out, the large, outsourced companies have so-called bases, considered by all surveillance employees to be the worst fate before unemployment. Always in a section adjacent to their headquarters and offices, the base is where security guards are, not infrequently, 'picked up' from their workstations. Durão visited the base accompanying a patrolling security guard, Ricardo, whom she met in the 2017 security guard training course. One day Ricardo was removed from the patrol watch by his supervisor due to conflicts he had with a co-worker and for making labour rights claims. He was thus pushed to the base without knowing what would happen to him from that point on. Ricardo's story contrasts, but dialogues, with that of the shadow men who dominate or transit between formal and informal networks of influence in the protection markets.

In 2017, Ricardo decided at the age of 47 to change his life. Tired of informal jobs in petty soccer refereeing, he decided to look for a job contract among neighbourhood friends employed at the Osasco City Hall. He was thus advised to look for Mr. Osvaldo, who got him a position as an outsourced janitor in a public company. Osvaldo encouraged Ricardo to take a training course as a security guard to earn a little more money as a patrolling guard. He made this suggestion, because he realised that Ricardo could garner votes among his colleagues and neighbours through the recognised charisma he also displayed on social media.

When Ricardo returned from the guards' training course to finally be promoted to the security guard position, the company had filled his concierge position and it took months to promote him, even though this was the precondition for taking the course. So he began covering for colleagues in various positions throughout São Paulo, but without receiving the allowance due by law. Ricardo quickly concluded that it was more beneficial not to have an outsourced contract and risk running out of money than to deal with what he called a 'political militia'.

Ricardo's decision to take medical leave was due to his outrage at being forced to work on the political campaign of those who appointed him to the company. It was not that he refused to work in politics. He ran several campaigns. But for those who 'live on the run', in and out jobs, it is unacceptable that such a task would not be paid. If the companies wronged him, he saw it as his right to withdraw, but with redress. After a year-long process, he was finally recognised by the State as disabled, but the company did not reinstate him. At that point, he decided to go to the labour court, and sued the outsourcing company for abuse, based on the 600 US dollars as the standard for workers' compensation. In this respect, Ricardo's story is not unique. Unlike shadow men, the work biographies of security guards are often short and they are, in essence, replaceable. On average, outsourced security guards remain in the occupation for only four years (ESSEG, 2019; Durão e Paes, 2021). As Ricardo and others told us, several times, 'outsourcing is garbage; it is a machine for grinding people. They beat us by exhaustion'.

The base may be seen as the vivid representation of the shadow cast by outsourcing on the lives of employees. One of the characteristics of the outsourcing economy is that the service is on contract, not the person. In this sense, employees never feel an integral part of the locations and sites where they work. But the base is the most invasive exponent of the work experience, because it alludes to bondage. Let's take a closer look at the place.

Entire groups of security guards are stationed at the base at times of dismissal or at the end of contracts to provide services to clients with many posts, which generally happens with state-owned companies. Sometimes, those in charge of human resources, before firing these employees without a posting, literally dump them at the base where they are left in an idle and anxious wait. The base is a shadow in the lives of these employees, one of the greatest humiliations of the outsourced labour system. At the base, occasionally, guards are called in by a supervisor – the one who runs the place – to work temporary postings, to cover vacations and lunch periods of other guards with a posting. Meanwhile, workers remain at the base indefinitely, for days, weeks, and months. Since they are in the service of the company, the security guards have no choice but to accept this situation. Every movement in and out of the base is registered in a logbook, by the supervisor.

On the day that Durão visited the base, she noticed the presence of pregnant security guards waiting to go on maternity leave, security guards who were put off duty so that someone else could take their place; others who had conflicts at their stations or were punished in some way. There are also those who, returning from sick leave, no longer have a posting, and the elderly security guard who is almost retired and is no longer productive. Some study the Bible, others chat. Many are visibly bored from lack of credit on their cell phones. Most are just waiting for

the hours of the shift to pass. In this sense, the base is not the alienation of the worker through labour, as advocated by Marxist theory, but through the lack of it. In a contiguous space of two by eight metres, up to 50 people can be huddled together on uncomfortable wooden benches; men on one side and women on the other – sitting, cramped, and squeezed. Combining the physical discomfort of the location, a decaying infrastructure, and total uncertainty about the future, the base invites depression and pushes one to exhaustion. Thus, it becomes a place to exercise the humiliation and punishment of the condition of an outsourced worker.

In this place, the steady posting is expected, where the security guard can at least re-enact references/memories from his daily life. The base is shadowy fundamentally because of what it foreshadows. It is the place where the security guards who are recalled know what the company, or, as many say, the 'system', expects from them. The company expects either that they will lose emotional control and offer a reason for a dismissal for 'just cause', or that they will reach waiting fatigue and 'call it a day'; they will quit on their own personal initiative, saving the company the severance rewards.[9]

As a recall of a past of bondage, the base is imposed upon impoverished, fatigued workers, who are asked to take leave of their bodies, as Franz Fanon would say ([1952] 2008). The base is thus one of the places where the shadow of the security market is cast. Even the figure of the supervisor creates this expectation. A very tall, young black man with a frown seems handpicked for the base, to create in the security guards' aversion and repulsion at his impersonation of the enforcer. This man is another piece of the shadow that is there to manage situations that may favour the company and the businessman. The workers at the base do not know how long they will be thrown into this shadow of the labour arena. But it is important to stress that, at the base, they are not outside the labour market; they are in a liminal physical and social space that defines the centre, that is, the entire security market arena (Pina Cabral, 2000). Thus, the base materialises the bondage of the outsourced contract, because it is a temporary, unstable, and unpredictable work solution and the most obvious display of the extreme inequality of the private security industry. In other words, even though a workplace that is both unproductive and immobilising, the base represents the 'productive' bureaucracy of outsourcing, as this is also accomplished through punishments and the frequent dismissal of employees. Therefore, the base itself becomes the bureaucratisation of waiting.

Durão later learned that, for Ricardo, the day spent at the base, having seen what it means to be stuck in a waiting room without knowing what will happen next, was exactly what made him decide never again to work in the outsourced security market. Even though he had cultivated for himself both the self-image of the professional and assiduous security guard and the long-standing desire to carry a weapon, everything about the work regime repulsed him. He would rather go back to the life 'on the run'; to the daily instability of informal work. He ended up reconciling multiple forms of earning and enrolled in 2020 in a virtual higher education program for a physical educator degree to try to enter the formal labour market. Again, his life story is not original among poor workers from families coming from regions of the Brazilian Northeast region, moving to São Paulo in search of job opportunities. Many security guards are driven to give up outsourcing and the CLT (Consolidation of Labor Laws), which in the framework of labour law stands as one of the few means to formalise the broad map of informal work that is typical of Brazil (cf. Jakobsen et al., 2000). This is exactly the hidden and shadowy function of the base in the lives of these employees; to pressure them to endure or give up precarious and strenuous working conditions. It is worth remembering that in 2019 in Brazil, there were five million workers with a National Security Guard Card, that is, ready to work formally in the sector, with only 700,000 of them being absorbed by the formal market (ESSEG, 2019; Durão and Paes, 2021). The surplus of labour ensures that outsourcing companies always have those who

are willing to abide by this labour regime. Thus, the base of the companies, this shadow of the outsourced labour market, is always full.

Inconstancy, trust, and pendular ethnographies

When we aim to expand explanations of what in the social fabric is constructed and historically solidified to be undefined, ethnography is deeply shaken (cf. Taussig, 1984, 1986). This is precisely the case with observing and writing about shadows in the realm of security, which everyone can see on the surface, or as a spectrally unruly and violent presence, but whose object cannot be assessed in its 'purity' – and perhaps can never be fully grasped in text (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2014).[10] The grey areas within the state, the economy, and politics exist to remain as spectres or to be the object of macro- and non-detailed analysis (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2014; Derrida, 1994). Ethnography challenges both at once, the baseline condition of observation and the analytical conventions of these informational forms. At the same time, it shifts the very course of ethnography itself, all the more so when the approach to people and environments is done directly and without mediations enabled by the creation of broad abstractions or meta-statements that are often self-evident.[11] How can ethnography and ethnographers cope with the cascade of details and the fine explanations proper to ethnography in environments, relationships, places, and concrete people for whom such an endeavour is not only undesirable but can also be perceived as threatening?

It is undeniable that the ethnographic project focuses on the intimacies of social life and the 'logic of progression of mutual trust' (Fassin, 2019: 381) that constitute the interactive and relational basis of access and participation in what Herzfeld has dubbed cultural intimacies (1997). These intimacies are the domains to which perhaps only professional anthropologists devote their lives to perceiving and theorising about. But as Marcus reminds us, in addition to ethnography being an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups, it is also potentially multi-sited (Marcus, 1998: 83). According to him, and many contemporary authors, the understanding of contemporary world systems of capitalist, political economy demands shifting ethnographic ways of observing, writing, and theorising; single-sited research can no longer be easily located in a world system perspective. Ethnography and ethnographers have to grope their ways (Idem: 81–82).

Ethnography in the shadow is an attempt to tread and probe the ground in the security assemblages that are barely known, and yet are imbricated in capitalist systems. This implies being attentive to the permanent shifting meanings of the world in an openness to the plasticity and sensoriality of an 'anthropology of becoming' proper to an unfinished world (Biehl and Locke, 2017), based on fragmented information, observations, stories, and non-linear biographies. But that is not enough. We have recalled before that in the scope of those who approach the political universes and economies of security in Brazil, contemporary intimacies are violent intimacies (Durão, 2018). The very experiences of security actors are permeated by these intimacies. And ethnographers, by sharing, penetrating, and being complicit in these universes, in the actions and shadowy knowledge generated by our interlocutors, become the target of the shrapnel from these instances of violence, in the form of relationship, action, or rumour.[12] Thus, we ask: How can ethnography respond to the need to describe, understand, and theorise about the social, cultural, and political dimensions of security and others that are intrinsically resistant to its text? How can ethnographers commit to not abandoning the knowing of power and the violence-generating consequences and brutal inequalities that the shadows of security daily generate in the world through the concrete actions of shadow men?

In this endeavour, we argue that, while fieldwork in the shadows generates uncertainty, it is necessary to move beyond the methodological anxieties provoked by new fluid and mobile objects of study (Marcus, 1998: 82). This text constitutes an attempt to do that. Even if ethnography is often described and affirmed as an intimate approach (Durão, 2018; Fassin, 2019), it should not be celebrated as a ground zero, or 'a magic moment', where the stability of the ethnographer-interlocutors' relations in the field are at least ideally conquered (Geertz, 2005: 57). Recently Fassin wrote about the ambiguous 'strange and familiar presence of the anthropologist' and how it is at the same time 'stealthy and uncomfortable, reassuring or dangerous' (Fassin, 2019: 380). When people and shadows of information about security and power are at stake, intimacy in the field takes on other contours. In this case, the ethnographers needed to be willing to experience intimate violence, because everything in the shadow is a management of the inconstancy that is proper to security. Anywhere, and even more so in Brazil, security is a field of force, coercion, power, and money, where power and privilege are displayed at the cost of some kind of social subjugation. What a shadow ethnography points out is its concreteness, the patterns of internal assemblages, and the form of the power relations that are incurred.

To this end, we deem it necessary to embrace a kind of methodological courage, as argued by Durão (2018) on another occasion; an endeavour to engage the shadows without dwelling in them, both heuristically and theoretically because, at the limit, the terrain is swampy and we may sink our feet. We must include in ethnographic reflection and theorising all the complexity and lack of control inherent in human relations, as a heuristic proposition. It is about exercising a militant non-resistance to the potential of a practical knowledge that inhabits the violent intimacies of social life, most certainly not only in discursive terms, and with no naivety. We also speak of methodological courage, because it is also necessary to be aware that the further we advance in the knowledge of the shadow, the greater the risk of being hit by the shrapnel of the shadow's power. Therefore, it is equally necessary to recognise that, for ethnographers, the value of shadow information lies precisely in the fragments, in the assemblages that intimate relationships allow us to capture, and in a pendular movement of being inside and outside the shadows of security.

It is of no small importance to remember other factors at play in these issues, brought about by the proximity of method and text to those who come in and out of our research. We must remember that ethnographic projects of this nature generate the kinds of panic and paranoia experienced by ethnographers in a personal way, that can not only render access to the field impossible but also even derail their own ontological security during and after the fieldwork. The place of the ethnographers in the shadows of security, especially when they share the same living and working environment where those shadows are materially concretised, is manifestly difficult and ambiguous. Beatrice Jauregui (2013) has drawn attention to epistemological and ethical aspects of a 'dirty anthropology' about police officers in India who engage in violence on a routine basis. She highlights the dilemmas of the ethnographical encounter with ordinary violence by highlighting parallels between the practices and motivations of police themselves, and those of the anthropologists who study them. Both are complicit with some forms of state violence, engage in fragmentary and indeterminate knowledge, and in perpetual transgressions and transformations of social boundaries as they perform their work. Instead of denying radical ambiguities and dangers, Jauregui argues for a 'strategic complicity' for navigating the murky work of dirty anthropology (Jauregui, 2013: 143).

However, variations need to be pointed out. The place of 'dirty anthropologists' is more demanding than that of anthropologists who practice a 'floating ethnography', generally amenable to some neutralisation of the dangers of the shadow by way of theory.[13] We also need to understand that the dirty ethnographies of the shadow cannot be merely positioned as activist

and separated from lived realities via a text that is delocalised from the full range of its inter-locutors, who are transitioning between the most variable positions of power and subalternity. We thus argue that ethnographers who risk trying to grasp the shadows of security need to contribute to a broader movement of an ethnography ethically aware of its oscillating and pen-dular movement. As Bruno Latour said, if what Foucault calls 'governmentality' has become the norm, the reason, the knowledge, and the straight line, we need to carefully investigate who exercises power illegitimately and who struggles to make opposition to it (2020). Researchers are 'political people who are delegated the task of exploring, groping, in a certain obscurity, with the tools of research, the consequences of our actions' (Latour, 2020). But they grope the obscurity, and subject themselves to the risky pendulum movement, to make it clearer.

The ethics of resisting the fear of shadow men and the consequent attention to the ambigui-ties that run through the undefined manifestations of the powers and economies of security need to be reflected in theoretical-ethnographic approaches. Oscillations in the path of ethnographic knowledge include very different things. At one moment, the same ethnographers can almost get mixed up in the everyday action of security schemes; at others, they are receptive to a listen-ing without moral filters but ethically oriented, and at others, they take a public stand in national and transnational polemics that involve discussion about the perpetuation of violence and racism in public and private security (Durão and Paes, 2021). To live ethically with the awareness of a perverse and nebulous world system, full of details to be ethnographically unveiled, can never mean to align with it. Opting for a movement of oscillating and pendular ethnographies means creating epistemological and material conditions to advance in explaining the shadows of the world (Fassin, 2019). But for this, it is fundamental not to forget that in anthropology such an understanding cannot fall into the temptation of generating only abstract essayistic exercises. A text that steers clear of intimacies, ambiguities, and contradictions, which are situated and multi-situated in concrete relations – to the extent that for ethnographers, human beings are not trans-parent (ibid: 380) – will not help us to understand the shadows of security or the contemporary world system. If, as Fassin reinforces, ethnography is not only a method but also an experience of writing and reducing otherness (ibid: 384), understanding the phantasmagorias of the world implies the same exercise of ethnographic and intellectual modesty as ever.

Conclusion

Acknowledging the constant presence of modes of organisation that escape the ordering prin-ciples of security implies not being deluded by normative perspectives – Jean and John Comaroff have already called for going beyond the yearning for 'the rule of law' (2014: 6). It is necessary to recognise that in many, if not all, contexts, security in practice is constantly immersed in extra-official modalities and hidden powers that, in some places, can be potential generators of massive inequalities not only among those upon whom they act but also within their own labour markets.

This implies creating lenses of analysis that reach beyond the vertical and hierarchical vision, the notion of border and grey zone, between what might be regulated or unregulated, right or wrong. In other words, it implies taking seriously the ghostly presence of police and powerful security entrepreneurs in the shadows, building from deep within the lucrative and unequal security assemblages present in Brazilian cities. Similarly, it involves realising that security moves away from the ideal of the modern state to move closer to the idea of late liberalism, engaged in the control of populations in a global context, and activated locally and within the internal dynamics of assemblages (Povinelli, 2013). Our ethnographic observations and descriptions offer this reflexive suspension of the immediate judgement of state-centric views. Only in this way

can we take seriously the ethnographic inductive data that will allow us to advance contemporary critical theories of security as a global phenomenon.

'Security apparatuses are not only repressive. They are also productive', Fassin wrote recently (2020: 273–274). But Fassin and so many other authors have not provided enough data to go beyond the productions observed and performed upon the stages of security. Although distinctions between the private and the public only ever exist neatly in theory, they remain firmly etched and are shared in political imaginaries (Owen, 2016: 54). Notions of the state as a distinct (and primary) locus of politics, separate from the economy, hardly reflect the complex webs, networks, and assemblages of security agents – the logics, practices, and technologies that make up security production today. As many authors have shown, these lines of distinctions are, at best, 'diffuse' (cf. Johnston, 1992: 205; Abrahamsen and Leander, 2016).

The shadow of social life is the 'bound and inseparable likeness of its original' (Ferguson, 2006: 17). It can be located in the global world in the advance of the third sector, with the commercialisation of mass security. As we have tried to show through our ethnographic work, security assemblages in Brazilian cities are not just abstract and diffuse formations. They are structured in the historical presence of key people and determinant organisational dimensions. Security assemblages are populated by men with armed businesses that intrinsically massify inequality. Therefore, it is important to study social relations and locate the ethnographies of the shadow. Private security in Brazilian cities operates in the protection of wealth and control of poverty, but it also fixes social and patrimonial orders in urban spaces by creating powerful internal hierarchies in the security work itself.

Even if the movement of social sciences and institutional actors goes in the direction of recognising the presence of the shadow in security, we are far from understanding the logics that make it a ubiquitous power and an absolutely common sense in everyday reality. The shadows in security are the forecourts of male power and materialised forms of humiliation of poor workers, the organisational base of the companies being the quintessence of the inequalities imprinted in this industry's modes of action. The base is a form of alienation wedged into the heart of these assemblages; a place that materialises the formal labyrinth of precariousness in outsourced security markets. In this sense, these shadows – its powerful men, the persistent articulators, and the obfuscated precarious materiality of poor workers – co-exist and co-constitute themselves in the global forms of the market.

We conclude that there is no glimpse at any time of an end to the shadow. Cesinha, Faguno, Lino, Osvaldo, and Ricardo will always exist in their social relations in the realm of Brazilian security. The shadow is constituted as a form-action of security; it is part of the assemblage, never external to it. It is a ghostly place that is secured in its practices. Even if the Rule of Law is in a position to exercise the possibility of control and regulation, the whole theatre of actions is accompanied by shadows, and most notably by shadow men. The persistence of their biographies and relationships revived in their daily work goes beyond the situational indeterminacies to which they may be subjected – precisely because they enact security as a market-form, and not only as a law-form. The specific cases convey the endurance and imagination of these men and their networks of influence in the great marketplace of security. Forms of security action are manufactured in shadow policing – producing a constellation of possibilities, inseparable from its original – that make private security, in Brazil and globally, much more a marketplace of shared and obfuscated possibilities than a mere field of actions.

This chapter did not intend only to identify the field of security in Brazil in order to describe its complex social compositions. We also drew attention to the need for an ethnography of shadows as a condition of possibility to complexify non-normative theories of global security. In his

ethnography on prisons, *L'Ombre du Monde*, Didier Fassin alludes to the neologism hantologie proposed by Derrida to characterise the force with which the past resurfaces in the present of human experiences (2015b). In a note, Fassin refers to the possibility of authors being persecuted and intimately invaded by the weight of the field in prisons (2015b: 458). In our case, the spectrum goes beyond empirical and intellectual experience in the field of security and its eminent injustices. A hantologie lingers and extends into the landscape of ordinary life, as the experience of citizenship is fully interspersed with these and other forms of security. Urbanity is shared with shadow men; they are everywhere. The spectre is made doubly gloomy, by the unlimited and unspoken power we can glimpse in the field, and by the entanglement of inequalities that the ubiquitous shadows of security generate. But we cannot afford to cave in. We need to keep searching in our ethnographies for sources of knowledge about these worlds that, unfortunately, promise to become more and more trivialised with each passing day.

Notes

1 Although most of the literature on these topics uses the notion of plural policing (White, 2010; Crawford et al., 2016), security assemblages are a better representation of our object of interest. Not surprisingly, anthropologists are the ones who prefer to think in terms of security assemblages (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009; Diphoorn and Grassiani, 2019; Diphoorn, 2016; Schouten, 2014). As we shall see, assemblages are about how security works in practice, and how these practices can produce unpredictable plasticity in security governance. While closely related as concepts, the assemblage perspective goes behind the pluralisation of institutional policing structures, such as public versus private security, precisely because all valid ethnographic security research advocates a non-normative approach and a non-state-centric point of view.

2 This project was funded by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo and the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia in Portugal. Process FAPESP 2014/19989–5.

3 From that project resulted the study of the expansion of private security in Brazil and its deadlocks in dealing with the issue of violence, including racial violence (Durão and Paes, 2021).

4 As we shall see later, the base is a shadow, namely a humiliation, which mirrors the power and independence of the shadowy men.

5 The Civil Police exercise functions of judicial police in the federal units of Brazil, and are subordinate to the Governors of the States, as the Military Police are, the other major police corporation exercising functions of uniformed patrol and prevention. In practice, both split the policing cycle in two: the operational, on the one hand, and the judiciary and notarial, on the other.

6 'Bico' is the term used to indicate the work done by police officers in their off-hours and also the sporadic work done between formal work hours.

7 Durão was present at most of the meetings for more than eight months, and observed the growing tension to gain support and declare votes for the candidate, closely coupled with the presence of more and more people trying to get jobs.

8 The delegation of private protection power is an old practice that predates the liberal market turn of the 1980s. In terms of scholars' discussion, it goes back to patrimonialism as the essence of the Brazilian State (Faoro, [1957] 2012) and to *coronelismo* as a specific form of political power dating back to the Empire and flourishing in the First Republic. (Nunes Leal, 2012; Woodard, 2005). The coronel is the most senior rank in a policing structure and becomes in rural and urban Brazil a kind of polarising socio-economic element.

9 Especially when security guards are recalled due to the loss of a large contract, the company is unwilling to fire them and thus be obliged to refund the 40% severance pay that the Consolidation of Labor Laws requires (cf. Decreto-Lei n. 5.452, May 1st, 1943).

10 Or, of what Derrida would call 'phantom criminal states'; plural (and brutal) violence and ubiquitous impunity that prowl (1994). Here we can also refer to the visible shadow states described in the section 'Gray Zones and Security in Literature'.

11 To speak about the unnameable without mediations and its consequent outlets for and through ethnography is a problem masterfully discussed in the work on terror and torture in Taussig's book, 'Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild man. A study in terror and healing' (1986).

12 A borderline situation can be found in Katherine Verdery's work throughout her fieldwork in Ceasusescu's socialist Romania (Verdery, 2018).

13 According to Colette Pétonnet, floating observation in cities consists of remaining vague and available in all circumstances, in not mobilising the attention on a precise object, but letting it 'float', so that information penetrates it without a filter, without a priori, until the moment in which points of reference, of convergences, appear and we come, then, to discover the underlying rules (2008: 4).

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