Conviviality in Inequality
Security in the City (São Paulo)

Susana Durão

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Abstract

This paper explores the interplay between security, conviviality, and inequality in São Paulo, Brazil, with a specific focus on hospitality security within gated communities. Through seven years of extensive fieldwork and research, this study sheds light on the pivotal role played by hospitality security in shaping social life within São Paulo's urban areas. Rather than viewing private security as a response to the failings of the rule of law or gaps in the public security system, this paper positions it within a broader moral economy. The analysis incorporates the concept of conviviality and its reciprocal connection with inequality, encompassing material, power, environmental, and epistemic dimensions. The paper emphasizes the significance of gatekeepers, explores the cultural importance of cordiality, and highlights the experiences of low-level security guards operating within this framework.

About the Author:

Susana Durão, an Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp) and a Senior Fellow at Mecila in 2020, was a Visiting Scholar at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais of Universidade de Lisboa and participated in the Summer Program in Social Sciences at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton University. Durão's research focuses on public and private security, urban violence, policing, inequality, and police training from an urban ethnographic perspective. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in Portugal, Brazil, and African Lusophone contexts. She is co-author of "In the Shadows of Protection: Brazilian Police in Private Security" (*Policing and Society*, 2023), with Erika Robb Larkins and Paola Argentin.

Contents

1. Introduction

In 1977 in the inaugural issue of the journal *Anuário Antropológico*, Gilberto Velho and Luiz Antonio Machado da Silva asked themselves what would best define urban anthropology: an anthropology of the city or in the city (Velho and Machado 1977).[1] Since then, several authors have debated which empirical units to select in order to convey the city and the flow of urban social life, both of which are dimensions that can never be fully grasped.

Relying on influential traditions within the discipline – the Chicago School, the Manchester School, and the Africanists from the Livingstone Institute – Michel Agier stressed the pertinence of exploring moral regions, situation analyses, networks of relations, individuals, and the city itself as important realms of insight for the anthropological assessment of the urban space (Agier 2011). In Brazil, remarkable contributions have pushed forth this field of studies.[2] There is a broad consensus that neither the city nor social relations should be essentialized. Hence, it became inevitable for the discipline to include the study of the construction of states and democracies, as well as the economic and market dynamics that have sustained inequalities in and among cities. In this way, critical contemporary issues remain open to urban anthropology (Ortner, 2016).

My claim in this paper is that security is a phenomenon that is both intrinsic and constitutive of contemporary cities, and particularly so in the Brazilian context. I intend to expose how a certain type of patrimonial security is present in urban areas of the State of São Paulo. This development, while certainly in congruence with the global historical trend of privatization since the 1970s (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011; Abrahamsen and Leander 2016), nevertheless demonstrates regional peculiarities which I identify through the lens of what has become known as hospitality security (Robb Larkins 2017;

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2   Some examples are the research on rural-urban migrations and on social movements carried out by Eunice Durham (Durham and Thomaz 2004) and Ruth Cardoso (Cardoso and Caldeira 2011); the writings on generations and middle classes in Rio de Janeiro by Gilberto Velho (Velho 1989, 1994); the elaboration of spatial categories, such as turfs [*pedaços*] and patches [*manchas*] in São Paulo, as proposed by José Guilherme Magnani (Magnani 1992; Magnani and Torres 1996), among countless others.

Durão et al. 2021; Robb Larkins and Durão 2022, 2023).[3] This article allows the reader to become immersed in the society of gated condominiums (*sociedade de portarias*), although it is also the result of extensive research.

A few words about the non-canonical aspect of the fieldwork. I stepped into this world by asking the union of private security entrepreneurs of São Paulo (Sindicato das Empresas de Segurança Privada, Segurança Eletrônica e Cursos de Formação do Estado de São Paulo, SESVESP) for an opportunity to attend short training courses for security guards and supervisors in 2016. I also met some dynamic entrepreneurs in the industry, people I would meet at trade fairs, lectures, webinars, and so on. In 2017, I completed the full thirty-day private security course (200 hours) at a trade school. I also gathered detailed information about approximately fifty gated communities in Campinas. For a month and a half, I made frequent visits to gated communities in the northern region of Campinas that finally made it possible to get permission to spend more than six months in the field, along with my students, at gatehouses (*portarias*) of three of those communities. It was a strategy to gain access to extremely private spaces. I also did fieldwork in a large shopping mall in the state capital and followed the daily life of security guards of a multinational company based in Brazil, their political connections and operational management in the cities of São Paulo and Osasco. I have conducted dozens of interviews and tracked a number of career trajectories of janitors, security guards, supervisors and private managers, people who have become friends over seven years of research.

I have interviewed several entrepreneurs and security managers, as well as residents, building superintendents and caretakers of gated communities. I also had the opportunity to attend business meetings and assemblies of condominium owners. To this extent, the results I present here reflect a cross-sectional, top-down survey of private security. Whenever I could, I gave preference to the guards' perspective.

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3   The initial interest in these topics came first with a project I coordinated (with Daniel Seabra Lopes, from ISEG/UL): "Policiamentos e Imaginários Urbanos: Novos Formatos de Segurança nas Cidades do Sul" [Policing and Urban Imaginaries: New Formats of Security in Southern Cities] (FAPESP/FCT agreement: 2014/19989-5). Several complementary projects would follow: "Mapeando a Segurança Privada no Brasil" [Mapping Private Security in Brazil] and "Cidades de Portarias: Segurança Privada em São Paulo" [Cities of Gatehouses: Private Security in São Paulo] (Unicamp, social aid grants between 2017-2023); "Violência e Segurança Privada no Brasil: Eixos Comparativos" [Violence and Private Security in Brazil: Comparative Axes] (DRERI-UNICAMP/San Diego State University – College of Arts and Letters); "Police Unions in the Global South and Democratic Security", coordinated by Prof. Beatrice Jauregui, submitted to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Insight Grant by the Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies, University of Toronto; project submitted (Insight Grants), from 2021 to 2026; Research Productivity project "Segurança como trabalho: reflexões etnográficas e teoria antropológica" [Security as Work: Ethnographic Reflections and Anthropological Theory], CNPq [National Council for Scientific and Technological Development] (301668/2022-1, 2023-2026). It is also important to highlight my role as executive coordinator of the Secretariat of Campus Living (SVC) in which I had the opportunity to create a new governance model for university security and the management of gatekeeping, surveillance and electronic monitoring contracts with more than 600 workers, has helped me further explore these issues.

Despite some exceptions (Manzo 2004; Berg 2010; Diphoorn 2016) it has always amazed me how this is one of the least scrutinised groups in the literature, in contrast to the attention given to state security agents in Brazil and Latin America (see Muniz et al. 2018 for an overview).

I argue that hospitality security is crucial to living in urban areas in the state of São Paulo. This is a protection model created for elite and middle-class spaces, blurring the lines between control and care. In this paper, I do not understand private security as simply a product of the failure of the rule of law or the incomplete Brazilian public security system in response to crime; I see it as part of a moral economy, with a socio-technical structure that is generically labelled "care". In this sense, urbanity and the socio-technical apparatuses shape the way social life works and classify who is the object and who is the subject of protection, surveillance, and suspicion. Secured environments represent, therefore, spaces for the protection of class and Whiteness. This kind of security is valued based on the assumption that certain protected places are distinct from "public", open space, which is perceived as violent and unruly. For it to work, the everyday interactions and symbolic aspects of working in hospitality security are paramount, and they stabilise this material asset, as elusive and intangible as it may be. Hospitality security is a mode of protection that draws both on long-standing cultural notions of cordiality and on the racialized, gendered, and classed labour of low-level security guards themselves (Durão et al. 2021: 140–141). For this essay, I would like to single out security in gated communities and highlight the gatehouses (*portaria*) as the key feature of these compounds. From a theoretical point of view, I argue that hospitality security is a fundamental part of conviviality in the inequality of daily life in São Paulo's cities. Hospitality security is a distinctive feature of guards' work in gated communities, as a form of protection created in and for elite and middle-class spaces, fundamental for understanding social life, and the reproduction of inequalities and infrastructure in urban areas.

Sérgio Costa and other scholars (Costa 2019; Heil 2020; Nobre and Costa 2019) have argued for the importance of understanding the reciprocal constitution between inequality and conviviality, especially with a view to studying Latin American societies. The theoretical framework of "convivial life" as an emancipatory and non-utilitarian approach in industrial capitalist societies, was initiated by Ivan Illich in the 1970s and revisited in various forms (Illich 1973). On the one hand, conviviality is the friendly and affective dimension of sociability, in terms of cooperative relations, both in human relationships and with non-humans (Overing and Passes 2020; Rosengren 2006). On the other hand, non-normative views stress the frailties and power asymmetries that are intrinsic to convivial relationships (Gilroy 2000; Mbembe 2001; Gutierrez Rodriguez 2011). Sérgio Costa contends that the nexus between conviviality and inequality must

be addressed on at least four levels: at the material level, in power asymmetries, in environmental inequalities, and in epistemic apparatuses (Costa 2019: 28).

This approach shares with the tradition of urban anthropology the common need to understand social realities as historically constituted, placing conviviality and inequality in interactive and communicational units of observation. Pursuing this line of study, I intend to show that security hospitality is part of the history of the unequal urban infrastructure of Brazil and São Paulo. It is also part of private policing in the form of care, upheld by the cultural figure of the gatekeeper, which is socially performed by a mass of precarious security workers, the vast majority of whom are outsourced, who daily endure and reproduce the inequalities and asymmetries they are part of. In this paper, I shall cover each of these dimensions, but first, we must review how the notion of security appears in anthropological theory.

2.   Security in Anthropological Theory

My work is not an isolated endeavour in academic scholarship, nor is security a residual issue in anthropology today. The topic has become extremely relevant to several groups of researchers for at least a decade and a half. How has security been conceptualised across the discipline? In a maximalist view, security is a future-oriented human aspiration (Rothschild 1995; Hylland-Eriksen 2010; Pedersen and Holbraad 2013; Povinelli 2013; Burke 2002). Security is "the reproduction of certain social collectives over time" (Pedersen and Holbraad 2013: 2). These authors argue that security has always been around as a hidden issue in the history of social anthropology. They point the finger at the minimalist vision of security that narrows its possible meanings to the criminal dimension (Cunha and Durão 2011). They criticize the triumphant perspective of "risk as danger", which increasingly overshadows "risk as social deprivation" (Carlen 2007 *apud* Cunha and Durão 2011: 55). Theories of securitisation in liberal cosmology are problematic precisely because they detach political structures from populations and their life processes as if they were realms autonomous from each other (Pedersen and Holbraad 2013: 13).

This reductionism finds expression in the institutionalist views that dominate the literature on these topics in Brazil and many other places, where the state is seen as an entity detached from social and economic life (Mitchell 2006). Thus, studies on public security systems and their nebulous extensions tend to underline the "spectacles of decline" and the "functionalities of disorder" (Beek et al. 2017: 2). The systemic ungovernamentality of states, their functional illegibility (Zanetic 2009, 2010; Lopes 2011), and the "jerry-rigging of institutions" (Muniz and Dias 2022) is often highlighted. However, both views of security in their "temporal ontologies" (Pedersen and Holbraad

2013: 18) and critical objections by anthropologists to the neoliberal securitarian state in Latin America (Goldstein 2010) tend to define security in terms of its direct connection to issues of insecurity, violence, and crime (Sammimian-Darash and Stalcup 2016). This has been a dominant approach in the relatively recent field of police studies in Brazil, where most authors have been charting police problems more than police and policing as problems (Muniz et al. 2018: 169). Security inevitably comes to be seen either as part of the general vulnerability of being alive in certain places and contexts on the planet, confused with human security, or as a power device, both insufficient and violent, in the hands of police forces.

Both perspectives of security, maximalist and minimalist, have their limits. Accordingly, an alternative proposal has emerged for critical ethnographic inquiry into the worlds of security and police (for an overview, see Fassin 2017; Karpiak and Garriott 2018; Martin 2018; Steinberg 2020). Police officers and security guards perform peculiar acts of social control and order maintenance, but they also negotiate the day-to-day paradoxes that pervade institutions that have all too often been discredited (Beek et al. 2017). They are workers who are embedded in the practical governance of everyday life, with its sociabilities, ethos, and rationalities (Garriott 2013; Karpiak 2010; Muniz and Albernaz 2017; Sclofsky 2016). In many cities of Latin America and the Global South, police officers and guards are as violent as they are susceptible to violence and to provisional authorities that ethnography helps to document (Jauregui 2014). Furthermore, material structures have an effect on the production of plural security modalities as a defining element of cities (Ghertner et al. 2020). Anthropology can thus contribute to the study of security assemblages, understood as fluid and discrete plural combinations of control, generating normative orders beyond the nation-state, showing that a growing power of private actors interacting with the state shape security assemblages (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009; Haggerty and Ericson 2000; Sammimian-Darash and Stalcup 2016). In this sense, security as hospitality is a private socio-technical arrangement in the built environment, in technology, and in the performance of security workers reshaping cities.

In the Foucauldian tradition, security apparatuses only make sense in their relation to the population; they are historical and specific modalities of governance (Povinelli 2013: 28). However, we must make sense of the processes, how they organise, aggregate and compete, as well as what practical meanings are thereby generated. It is not a matter of trying to "humanise" the actors of control or of yielding to the enticements of the study of power by giving voice to those who would not otherwise warrant being part of an ethically committed anthropological undertaking (Alves 2021; Duran and Simon 2019; Vitale 2018). Abolitionist theorists believe that anthropology should be constructed as an insurgent discipline, set up against the police and policemen,

who are in that approach strictly defined as "violence workers" (Seigel 2018). In line with ethnographic studies of police and policing, I rather tend to agree with authors who favour adopting the epistemological perspective that regards them as "security labourers" who may have a genuine interest in social transformation at large (Jauregui 2023: 354, 2021). I propose moving beyond a liberal, institutionalist, presentist and merely socio-centred vision of security. We need to critically confront the effects of a notion of security that promotes confusion between control and urban care in realities from which the classical commitment to an empirically sustained urban anthropology cannot escape.

This is meticulous work, namely safeguarding inequality within urban conviviality. As Didier Fassin noted, we must pay attention to the aspirational role of the elite and middle classes (Fassin 2009). It seems imperative to grasp how the legacy of the two-class system in Brazil, with its elaborate inter-class hierarchies, as Anthony Leeds argued (Leeds 1994: 157), comes to fruition in urban planning (Caldeira 2001). But it is also crucial to look beyond and understand how the whole material and social framework, built to suit its clients, is ultimately sustained by the poor security workers who have been largely absent from the maps of sociological research, even for those who engage in thought-provoking ethnographies of securityscapes, surveillance, and control (Low and Maguire 2019). Therefore, I shall turn to explore five points that help to define the material and operational foundation that endows hospitality security with its social body and infrastructure.

3.   History of Private Security in Brazil

The expansion of private security in Brazil has been ascribed to two main causes. The first is the state's failure to provide security in a country where it has never been able to maintain its monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Adorno 1993, 1999; Adorno and Cardia 1999). The privatisation of protection works from within the state's dysfunction and the commodification of violence (Misse and Adorno 2018). One of the most radical developments is the spread of militia organisations. State actors and networks have often appropriated their power for personal gain, subjugating communities and encroaching on territorial arrangements (Cano and Duarte 2012; Miranda and Muniz 2018). In less extreme cases, Brazilian cities are overrun by a range of services, organised along a public/private security *continuum* (Huggins 2010; Shearing and Stenning 1981; Zanetic 2013) that is effectively impossible to be regulated by the Federal Police, or even adequately supervised by contractors (Abrahamsen and Leander 2016; Durão and Paes 2021; Lopes 2014, 2017; Zanetic 2009, 2013). Private security legislation ensures that the services of state and non-state security actors are not conflated. Despite being considered insufficient, state security forces in Brazil

nevertheless have retained a better reputation than non-state security actors, which has resulted in the security industry becoming an appendage of the State's armed institutions. In Argentina, an identical process is occurring (Lorenc Valcarce 2014). In Mexico, however, something different is happening, with the direct incorporation of private guards into state police forces. There, the security firms distance themselves from police forces in general which have a worse reputation than the private security industry (Puck 2017). One of the main similarities between the privatization of security in Brazil and other Latin American countries is how the private security industry coexists with massive informality in the provision of protection services.

The second factor highlights the association between paid protection and the privatization of public spaces that has shaped the geography of spatial segregation in the country, with the walls increasingly high in cities where the middle classes turn to protection apparatuses and services (Caldeira 2001; Melgaço and Botelho 2015). This process undermines democratic citizenship and alienates these populations from shared responsibilities and the *polis* (Dunker 2015a; Rolnik 2022), favours securitarian dystopias (Davis 2018), spawning cities under siege and a new form of militarised urbanism (Graham 2011), according to the authors.

To the previous two, I also add a third factor: the commodification of informal security and the massive outsourcing of patrimonial security services in urban Brazil. Let us briefly summarise the historical background. In the late 1960s, private security aligned with national defence, aimed at curbing attacks on banks and financial institutions that were staged as part of a strategy to oppose the military regime. By the late 1970s, the security industry was one of the first in the country to outsource its services. Sociologist Ricardo Antunes showed that the outsourcing process in Brazil had its origin in legislation introduced in the 1970s and started precisely with the services of asset security and transportation of valuables in financial establishments, thus helping to validate a trend that was already in place in the provision of services.[4]

In the 1980s (with the introduction of Law 7.102 of 1983), the business of security was granted its own specific legislation. Under this law, private security is as an activity complementary to the state, and thus should neither be conflated with public security nor replicate the police (in their uniforms and gun calibres, for example). Henceforth, according to the law, security operators without accreditation or regulation, including off-duty military and police officers, are clandestine operators. However, formal

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4   Even after the Superior Labour Court [Tribunal Superior do Trabalho, or TST] declared in 1986 that it was illegal for a company to outsource any permanent activities, it still allowed the outsourcing of temporary work and surveillance services. However, in the early 1990s, in response to lobbying from the private sector, the TST acknowledged the legality of contracting any services linked to so-called intermediate activities, which would further weaken any limitations on outsourcing in Brazil (Antunes 2018: 221-222).

regulation has never been able to curb the informal commodification of these markets. For every security guard hired formally there is another, informal security guard at work (Lopes 2010: 352). Police officers are unlawfully involved in all kinds of paid security services (private and electronic). In the 1990s, as crime was escalating, the demand for personal security guards intensified. In the 2000s, new stakeholders came to the fore, with private security firms co-managing public, financial, commercial, and residential developments. Over the past twenty years, the growth of security companies in Brazil was indeed impressive. In 1990, there were only 82 such firms in Brazil, a number that grew to 284 in 2000, to 2,282 in 2012 and to 3,625 in 2021 (Durão and Paes 2021: 29–30). The tradition of delegating private protection to poor workers is an indelible part of Brazilian history – or maybe a "sediment", because the present contains countless fragments of different pasts (Beek et al. 2023). Today the workforce of private security guards outnumbers that of public security agents. The headcount of security guards is 1,096,398, i.e., 1.4 times larger than the number of people deployed as state security agents, estimated at 772,202 (Lopes 2010: 352).

While the government and banking institutions adopt the outsourcing of private security activities largely as a way to reduce labour costs, in commercial and residential areas, the elites have come to embrace it on broader grounds. Executives and managers cultivate a professional approach to the discourses and images associating security with urban modernity and its new developments, where the middle classes can live and do business. In absolute terms, Brazil ranks third in the world in number of private security companies, trailing only India and China, but far ahead of the United States (McCarthy 2017). Brazil is following the trend of global capitalism, with private security growing at an average rate of 6% per year. Even in recent years of economic crisis and job cuts for security guards, the revenues for the industry have steadily increased, in a formal market that generates nearly 37 billion reais, while the informal market profits even more (Lima 2022).

Thus, we should look at private security as an industrial complex – just as Angela Davis describes the prison-industrial complex, or the medical-industrial complex, as part of global capitalism (Davis 2003). Its expansion is a result of economic and historical factors and not of rising crime rates, as the private security business owners themselves acknowledge (Nazário 2022: 343). This complex is much more than a market segment or a range of unregulated services. A certain transversal social morphology is an important aspect of it, combining a variety of services, such as gatekeeping, front desk reception, surveillance, and others. It is worth noting that although patrimonial security has its own distinct status and legislation, many of the same large outsourcing companies offer a wide scope of services, which consist simultaneously of urban control, preservation, and care (Durão and Paes 2021; Wakefield 2003). Evidence

of this is the recent sales campaign of G4S, an Allied Universal Company, with over 800,000 employees worldwide, including 12,000 in Brazil: "More than protecting, *we care*" (emphasis in the original) (G4S 2023). Nevertheless, the private security industrial complex could not exist without a strong urban infrastructural investment where protection services are performed.

4.   Security in the Urban Infrastructure

Survival condominiums are a reality these days, with luxury features designed for survival living (Survival Condo 2023). Fear of a nuclear war in Europe has fuelled demand for sophisticated bunkers. These structures combine "ultra-modernity", technology, and comfort. However, for several decades horizontal and vertical condominiums have been defining elements of the urban landscape of inland cities in São Paulo state. They are often bedroom communities for the large capital or nearby cities, where "quiet" is associated with physical distance from the urban crowds. The middle classes self-segregate into what demographers have called "wealth ridges (*cordilheiras da riqueza*)" (Cunha and Falcão 2017). The plurality and distinctive aesthetic, sometimes thematic, identity of these clusters, though relatively isomorphic, are typical of the expansion of this Brazilian style "suburban sprawl" (Herzog 2015). They are suburban enclaves and global suburbs. The "suburb" is an "urban planning idea that came to represent certain cultural values – privacy, exclusivity, and security" (Herzog 2015: 2; see also Blakely and Snyder 1999; Duany et al. 2000).

Anthropologists tend to emphasize the role walls play in social relations, and thus they have been examining gated communities as projects and lifestyles associated with upward class aspirations (Patriota de Moura 2012; Zhang 2010). Gated communities and exclusive private environments are one of the best illustrations of how White privilege and the very material consequences of uneven accumulation take place in Latin America (Ceron-Anaya et al. 2023). The authors note but generally do not explain the ethnographic dimension underlying the structures of care and protection services that permeate the very notion of condominium, possibly due to methodological challenges resulting from the social class and gender of the researchers themselves.

One of the core features of hospitality security is the element of predictability. Safeguarding the spaces of residence is a long-term investment and is synonymous with caring for oneself and for the family. Paying to have your surroundings well cared for means being a good citizen, a "proper citizen", as residents and guards have often stressed to me. Control systems, along with property management companies and a whole raft of maintenance services, provide local governance and infrastructure. They create a pre-emptive urban convivial pedagogy that even children are taught from an

early age as part of the good life, in contrast to the "houses facing the street", as their parents would phrase it. Children living in condominiums often emphasised the role played by these mechanisms and in some cases described preventive behaviours, seeking to stave off the element of surprise at the prospect of crime.

In 2016, I conducted a workshop at an elite high school in Campinas (São Paulo) asking 25 8-year-old children to draw a "safe house". Artur's drawing (Figure 1) is sufficient to show the children's representational pattern of houses physically walled-off with electric wires. A caption reads "Camera releasing poison ball".

Figure 1: The drawing of a "safe house" (Artur, 8)
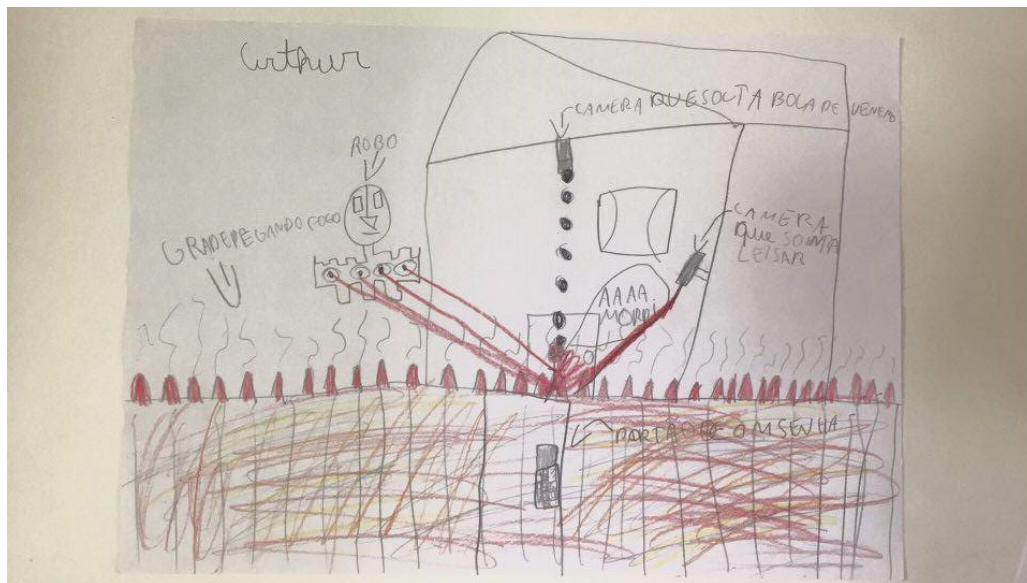
Source: Photograph by author (used with permission).

In the wake of frequent waves of burglaries in gated communities – carefully hidden from the media's attention so as not to tarnish the properties and erode their value – reinforcements to security take place. Residents, managers and caretakers all claim to be "improving the common spaces". A wide range of operators are involved in promoting the economy of fear, with a variety of advisory services and costly contracts for cutting-edge monitoring systems, electrified fences, biometric access control systems, optical sensors to trigger alarms, facial recognition cameras and phone apps, and, of course, more security guards.

It is typical for one of the residents to come across some senior officer specialized in the matter, or a security manager who, thanks to their network of business connections, lobbies the emptied tenants' assemblies for investment projects and reinforcements at the gates. Not surprisingly, the market for condominium security is one of the most debated trends on YouTube channels run by private security and electronic surveillance groups, which became increasingly popular during the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2021 and is still going strong to this day.

Ornamental entrances to gated communities are far from being simple house entrance lobbies. In most cases, they are an architectural monument with variable aesthetic investments. Figure 2 is one example of a large condominium located in the northern part of Campinas. As Roger Bastide would argue in his analysis of the variations of the baroque doors in Brazil, the ornament at the doorways of buildings serves a sociological purpose: it is a display of power (Bastide 2006: 134). Architectural postures in gated communities also have the effect of flaunting class power, however sternly at times. The investment in hospitality security ensures a predictable environment, one that is welcoming, clean, urbanised, and free of the flaws of Latin American cities.

Figure 2: An entrance to a gated condominium in Campinas, São Paulo

Source: Photograph by author.

Those are the gatehouse cities (*cidades de portarias*), complementary to the walls. As Simmel said, "The wall is mute, but the door speaks", and offers a sense of direction (Simmel 1996 [1909]: 12). The gatehouse embodies the very idea of mobility, the controlled flow of people and goods. Not only does the door open or close, but it also obstructs and safeguards the crossing. As Bastide notes, "It is the lid that keeps a secret" (Bastide 2006: 132), the secret of Whiteness in Brazil (Robb Larkins 2023; Roth-Gordon 2018; Paterniani 2022). As pointed out by Patrícia Pinho, Whiteness has come out of the closet under the Bolsonaro administration (Pinho 2021).

Gatehouses – which might be rooms, receptions, lobbies, or even a building at the entrance to condominium residential areas – are active agents and guarantees of conviviality in inequality. I even heard a resident say that the gatehouse "is like a bunker" (*casamata*), which in military language amounts to a low-lying fortification. To this extent, channelling and portability are crucial elements in architecture, that is, the predictable conveyance of goods and people through the socio-technical apparatus of the gatehouse, which thus materialises social relations. Figure 3 shows the patterned

spatial distribution of gateways that classify people into separate groups of residents, visitors, and service providers.

Figure 3: Gateway distinguishing residents, visitors, and service providers

Source: Photograph by author.

Access to the gated areas, passage (or portability), from outside to within the guarded space, implies the management of symbolic dangers. To avoid misidentifying members of any given group, rites of passage are put in place. This is "as dangerous a passage as that from one era to another", as Bastide claims when commenting on Van Gennep's classic analysis of rites of passage (Bastide 2006: 130). The channelling of differences engraved in the geographies of gated communities relies on the subjective collaboration of those who make the crossing; the same that temporary erode criticism against the apparatus. Not coincidentally, Achille Mbembe equates the urbanism of gated communities with the fragmented colonial occupation and its vertical sovereignties (Mbembe 2019: 45).

At the gatehouses, I could observe the hospitality rites for residents and some guests already familiar with the door attendants and guards. Security workers develop a series of micro-gestures and exchange cordialities in the interaction, with smiles, nods, and bodily greetings. Safeguarding wealth means keeping it in its place, grounded on cultural elements that are highly valued in Brazilian cities, such as friendliness when serving and neatness of uniformed workers' personal appearance (Durão et al. 2021; Robb Larkins 2017).

Guests inhabit an ambiguous place and may give rise to misunderstandings in control systems, but the rule for door attendants and guards tends to be to replicate a certain level of care towards family and friends of residents. For Pitt-Rivers, who has been engaged in studying the topic of hospitality in anthropology, the status of guests lies

somewhere midway between that of hostile strangers and of community members (Col and Shryock 2017: 166). In essence, the stranger is an unknown and potentially a threat.

Thus, it is towards outsiders – service providers and others – that the rites of control are aimed, rites of scrutiny, identification, observation, and annotation, which are intended to classify and retain personal data, whereby all interactions take place by intercom and do not involve the ceremonial practices of hospitality at all. There are nuanced variations between providers and suspects, but suspicion is a dance, it is guessing in the dark or, as I was told, "a thug has no particular face, but has a particular behaviour". A female gatekeeper told me that just by looking closely at a man she could tell if he was a plumber, a bricklayer, a pool cleaner, or just a malicious person itching to gain entry to the gated community. She claims to be able to sort out who's who by observing their behaviour. If the man is jumpy, for example, she will pay more attention and may even call the supervisor for instructions. These are rare moments, but they do tend to happen.

Another aspect to stress in the work of those who control access is the duty of keeping records of identities, number plates and other details of the guests, either digitalised for those who have a computer to work on, or in a handwritten record book for those who do not work with such systems. Across thousands of gated communities, there are correspondingly thousands of stored externally uncontrolled databases, in many cases of great commercial value. The Brazilian General Data Protection Law is largely unknown or ignored in these professional settings. Any security worker knows that criminality happens regardless of access control. If a burglar holds up the doorman or the guard, there is no gatehouse that could possibly save him. In some gatehouses, these rites may extend to housemaids and servants passing through the so-called social gate (*portão social*), subjecting them to a check of their bags on their way out.

The gatehouse in gated communities is one of the elements accommodating, under the new impositions of architecture, the old mentality expressed by the "horizontal sensibilities" of Gilberto Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves* [*Casa Grande e Senzala*], as Gilda de Mello e Souza wrote (Mello e Souza, Gilda de 1978: 17). These urban units show those social hierarchies, cultural divisions and the portability that ritually distinguishes who is who designed on the floor even before entering the architecture of the houses and flats. The entrance hall is an extension of the households and, as such, it also embodies ways of thinking, feeling, and being in the world (Pontes and Gui Rosatti 2022: 16). Much like domestic space, the gatehouse is the result of various affective and material investments, prolonging in space the segmentations that are part of the inequalities in conviviality.

Sometimes glitches do occur, and access controllers get confused and switch principles of action in the rites of control and hospitality. I have watched a door attendant get shafted by the family member of a condominium owner who could not stand the access control rules designed for guests. I saw a security guard become outraged with a young resident of a gated community who had cheated the system by creating a fake card for a friend so that he could bypass control by getting access through the residents' area. This same security guard, after a complaint from the young man's father to the manager, was warned by his supervisor not to raise the question again and to never again correct residents. However, one of the most outrageous incidents I witnessed was the accusation of a lack of sympathy levelled at a female access controller by a resident. This man would not let up until she was fired. The outsourced company acted on behalf of the client; his arbitrary complaint was heard. She was fired for "just cause", a legal clause that ought to be used as a last resort, but which has become widely trivialised (Durão 2022).

5. Private Policing

The rites of hospitality and control imply sociality and negotiations between people. This partly explains why the automated remote gatehouse, sold as a modern innovation, or even simple remote-control gatehouses are not the most common element in security as hospitality in Brazilian cities (Kishi 2022). As anthropologists Michalis Lianos and Mary Douglas rightly point out, automated control systems impose limits on cultural interaction and negotiation; they have the practical aim of eradicating any form of deviation (Lianos 2001, 2003; Lianos and Douglas 2000). However, they do something else that does not serve hospitality security: they introduce the egalitarian status of users, i.e., they do not take into account the categories of social and racial division inscribed into the very infrastructure of places.

Although the costs of remote-control gatehouses may be 70% lower than the services provided by traditional door attendants (and even less if they involve outsourced security guards), these social actors are still present everywhere to guard inequality with their negotiated forms of urban policing. Of course, the huge contingent of cheap labour in the market of protection and care contributes to this. Having poor and impoverished guardians protecting property and serving homeowners is part of a certain status convenience for the elites. The technologies of fear, and their pretence of modernity, emerge in combination with, rather than as an alternative to, private social safeguards. It is therefore no wonder that modern electronic gatehouses and simpler systems of control tend to be adopted in "low-end" (*baixo padrão*) apartment blocks, and not so much in "mid-to high-end" (*médio e alto padrão*) gated communities or apartment buildings, as real-estate salesmen call them.

In long conversations with condominium managers, caretakers, and residents, I noticed a moral concern to justify life in a closed environment to me, who in 2017 was more of a foreigner than I am today. Mr. Arthur, a manager in his seventies, told me: "You, as a European may find it odd, but we are forced to live in prisons to protect ourselves in a society where nothing works".

Casual conversations grew harsher as the years progressed among supporters of Bolsonaro's authoritarian and bellicose government (2018-2022). I began to hear more frequently, "Here we don't tolerate bums (*vagabundos*) who want our stuff, we protect ourselves", in an attitude that has been defined as "wounded Whiteness" (Pinho 2021). As I have come to understand, *vagabundo* has become a reactionary category, used as an imaginary enemy, into which all sorts of undesired people and social and political suspects belong (Robb Larkins and Durão 2022). Nevertheless, what underlies hospitality practices is the notion of policing as exclusionary local governance. There is a need to care for, maintain and protect intramural spaces and people on a daily basis. This is a dilated notion of policing, pertaining to the nineteenth-century period, which Michel Foucault highlighted. Subsequently, with the institutionalisation of police forces at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century the notion of policing became synonymous with reacting to the risks of crime. As the author put it, "Life is the object of the police. [...] Society and men as social beings, individuals with all their social relations, are now the true object of the police" (Foucault, 2001: 412-414).

Hospitality security reclaims those dilated notions of policing but as a virtuous reaction to the lack of governance of Brazilian and Latin American public spaces. The remaining urban spaces become demonised, dangerous places, dirty, noisy, and permeable to bums (where police action is predictably harsh). In the cities studied, private policing is an element of social distinction, similar to the sense that Bourdieu attributes to the appreciation of artistic taste (Bourdieu 1979). The consumption of security services, and their symbolic and aesthetic valorisation, reflect an unequal relational ordinary displayed in infrastructure. In Latin America, distinguished private places frequently express White geographies (elegance, cleanliness, nature, morality) as opposed to "dark" surrounding metropolises (ugly, disorderly, dangerous, violent) (Ceron-Anaya 2019; Pinho 2021).

In this form of security, the common good is neither society nor the collective. The common good is the moral interest shared by the private management structures, which include the general maintenance services, combining control with landscaping, pruning the trees, upgrading the automated devices, cleaning the pool and lounge, improving the amenities, and so on. Property security and the whole apparatus of service management for the middle classes in "violent democracies" (Goldstein and

Arias 2010) is currently just as undisputed as the fees associated with life and health insurance or private schooling.

In each gated community, we can catch a glimpse of the *gatehouse society*, to reference Foot-Whyte's notion of Street Corner Society (Foote Whyte 1993 [1943]). Norbert Elias and his descriptions of court society also inspire me, in particular when describing those who are to serve and those who are to be served in the interplay of physical proximities and distances of everyday sociality (Elias 2001 [1933]). We turn now to our gatehouses and the social relations daily displayed. Figure 4 sketches the dynamic map of a gatehouse I observed and its daily interactional features.

Figure 4: Dynamic map and interactional features of an observed gatehouse[5]
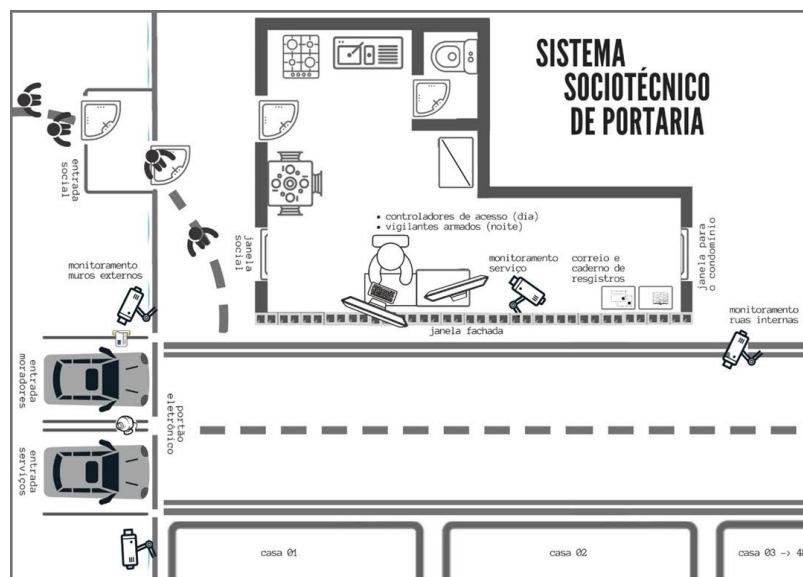
Source: Author's elaboration.

Female access controllers work during the day; they are a cheaper and friendlier workforce. At night and on patrols, armed guards are preferred and are deemed to be more virile and in line with the traditional image of the security man. In the private security industry, the recruitment of women has been growing slightly (today they account for almost 10% of the total) and they are more frequently deployed in residential, commercial areas, and banks (Durão and Paes 2021: 33).

Despite the frequent adoption of general guidelines, each gatekeeper at the gatehouse gradually implements their own personal interaction policies in their day-to-day work. I heard several people say that in condominium environments it is more important to study the residents and their habits of life, in order to please them than to know how to use a gun. They also say that there are as many bosses as there are residents, including

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5 From the top, clockwise: sociotechnical gatekeeping system; access controlers (daytime); armed secutiry guards (night); monitoring; mail and record logbook; window facing the condominium; internal streets monitoring system; facade window; social window; electronic gate; service entrance; resident entrance; external wall monitoring system; social entrance. Bottom: houses 01-48.

children. The gatehouse is a "world of gossip" that operates as an "information centre" and even keeps a book of internal complaints. Whenever thefts happen, the gatekeeper is invariably the main suspect. Psychoanalyst Christian Dunker's assertions in his blog speak to my ethnographic findings. The hypertrophy of rules in the condominium environment – which he examines to understand Brazilian society and politics – is enforced upon those outside and softened for those within (Dunker 2015b).

The social entrance gate, through which female domestic workers coming from the peripheries enter and leave towards the bus stop, compels them to pass by the window of the gatehouse. Here a series of informal conversations and exchanges take place with those at the desk. The house cleaners sometimes bring from their employers' homes the *quentinhas* (packed meals) that keep the guards warm during the long nights. They also help the female access controllers to get overtime odd jobs in the houses they serve, perhaps styling hair or polishing fingernails. Some nicer residents do not wait for the house cleaners to indulge the gatekeepers.

Unlike their house cleaners, the residents access the gatehouse through the opposite window, the one facing the internal streets. This is further proof that the segregation enforced by the entrance channels yields a continuum of divisions and inequalities in interpersonal relationships. These imaginary borders restrict social spontaneity in space and time and thus perpetuate conviviality in inequality. As such, guards are always pulled in two directions, between tension and the need to appear calm and nice. In Figure 5 we may see F. with whom I spent months performing her daily work at the post of a gatehouse access controller (between 2016 and 2017).

Figure 5: F. at work as a gatehouse access controller (2016-2017)

Source: Photograph by author.

6.   Cordial / Polite Guards

While security is widely acknowledged in the literature to be a moral good rather than a mere (and tainted) commercial transaction (Loader et al. 2014), guards are in practice those who perpetuate a system of security services (Vieira et al. 2010). They are prominent in cultural representations, as in the song "*Alô Porteiro*" (Hello, Doorman) by the late Marília Mendonça, celebrated as the queen of *feminejo* (country music sung by female voices). In the song, she informs the doorman that her ex-boyfriend is barred from entering the building and going up to her flat.

The door attendant is also featured in the series *Embrulha para Viagem* (Wrap it To Go), a YouTube channel of comedy sketches. In the episode "*Bom Dia*" (Good Morning), the indifference of a resident who refuses to cordially greet the benign condo doorman escalates to an absurd and burdensome lawsuit brought against the resident. The whole episode seems to tap into a daydream universe of the door attendant, a fantasy of interactive social justice. The irony lies in the fact that such an inversion of power is a fictional situation in Brazilian cities (Embrulha pra viagem 2017).

This episode clearly touches on the cultural question of cordiality and obedience required of workers such as security guards. As we recalled in a previous text, being cordial, as part of the analytical legacy of Brazilian cultural traits, means acting amicably and humbly and hiding forms of interpersonal animosity when dealing with strangers (Durão et al. 2021: 153). It also means politely glossing over the inevitable class and racial tensions that inform everyday interactions between people occupying different social classes. Hence, hospitality is fundamental to Brazil's functioning as a "status society", that is, a society where social groups have developed "rights" to certain privileges in relation to the state and other social groups (Candido 2016; Guimarães 2004).

The pervasive presence of security guards in social life has reached the world of art. A duo of contemporary artists has created a fictitious private security guard company and launched provocative performances and installations in public venues. In the performance *Por gentileza* (Kindly), the security guard approaches and asks the visitors to kindly photograph them next to the artworks, ironically inverting the everyday situation of being the visitors' occasional photographers. It is worth noting how cordiality, friendliness, consideration, and hierarchy are the elements explored in these parables of hospitality security.

Most seriously, Rodrigo Leão's painting, *Privilégios Ameaçados* (Threatened Privileges) (2015), featured on the front page of Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil's 7 August 2015 edition, addresses the sedimentations of the past in the present. Leão establishes a historical parallel with Jean Baptiste Debret's famous painting, *Um jantar brasileiro* (A Brazilian Dinner) (1827) (see Figure 6), depicting in the same social places the servile

figures within the domestic universe of the elites. Leão equates the house cleaner and the guard, both Black, so present in the lives of the White middle classes, with the enslaved women and men who were the keepers of the court in Debret's painting. Combinations of the past and visions of the future meet in the everyday practices that sustain inequality in the gatehouse cities. The figures who are daily guarding and maintaining the power and property of the elites and middle classes are nowadays performing their duties in this social kitchen of private security. In Leão's painting, we observe the figure of a private personal security guard (*vigilante de segurança pessoal privada*, or VSPP) who attained considerable prestige in the 1990s, with the boom in kidnappings across the cities of the Brazilian Southeast. At the time, security guards earned up to four times the minimum wage (Durão and Paes 2021: 31). With the outsourcing of services to facilities (i.e., buildings and urban amenities) in the 2000s, door attendants and security guards spread out all over the city and started earning less than two times the minimum. In parallel, the outsourcing of condominium management was also taking place. Thus, the path to São Paulo's urban patrimonialism finally became easy.

Figure 6: *Privilégios ameaçados* (Threatened Privileges)

Source: Left: Jean-Baptiste Debret, *A Brazilian Dinner* (c. 1830), watercolor, 16 x 13 cm.
Right: Rodrigo Leão, *Privilégios ameaçados, Le Monde Diplomatique*, 7 August 2015.

With low formal education requirements (only fourth grade), the security industrial complex attracts a huge contingent of poor urban workers, who are predominantly just

as Black as the housemaid and Blacker than the cook, the housekeeper or the butler, as portrayed by Leão. This working population alternates between informal activities and periods of formal unemployment, following the trend of occupational mobility adapted to the general economic dynamics (Guimarães and Hirata 2006). It is important to note that the social profile of the security guards is changing and does not align with the school background required by law, which serves as a brake for an increase in the grounds for wage negotiation. Today, almost 75% of hired security guards have completed high school (Lima 2022). For many, working in gatehouses means an exit and not an entry into the labour market. Perhaps this explains why the most constant age ranges for hiring security guards are between 30 and 49 years old (Lima 2022).

In the occupation system of overlapping positions, the door attendant became the access controller and receptionist; the night watchman became a paid informal guard; the street and house watchmen became property guards (*vigilantes*). In the commercial sector, storekeepers and shopkeepers have become loss prevention agents (Ostronoff 2023); the inspector in the metro station has become an overseer (*orientador*). As the president of the union of security companies states, "If everything is security, then we get this mixture, this confusion, and it is not clear to whom we can assign which responsibilities" (Durão and Paes 2021: 75-76). In fact, the official definition of the occupation of security guard includes a whole series of variants (Ministério do Trabalho 2017).

This confusion is a productive shadow, as we have been arguing in recent articles (Durão et al 2023), that combines a series of practices impossible to oversee (Durão 2022). It is indeed rather typical to have a rotation of people at the gatehouses, as well as to pay someone to do the job instead, informally. This practice is quite common among police officers who rent their own *bico* (gig security work). *Bico* is the term used to indicate the work done by police officers, and guards as well, in their off-hours, and the sporadic work done between formal work hours (Durão and Argentin 2023: 509).

As it becomes a moral good and requires round-the-clock attention to residents – which, some interview subjects told me, accounts for 90% of the security guards' work – hospitality security turns into a demanding and exhausting world of social relations. Access controllers must be available to residents at all times. If asked for a favour, a conversation or confidence, they must immediately attend to the "boss", as they say. Asymmetrically, guards cannot leave their posts and experience extreme difficulty in going to the bathroom, the only place where they escape being monitored. When labour is outsourced, there is an even stricter margin of tolerance for momentary absence from the post, which can result in quick dismissal.

City dwellers, businesspersons and managers, all expect from security workers the accomplishment of a gigantic mission, namely turning security into a kind of care and into an indisputably pleasant dimension of life for the urban middle classes. While ordinarily being considered a cordial and civil element within the facilities, the guard may quite easily fall into disgrace. In the private security services, we observe daily what Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro calls the "everyday micro-despotisms" of "socially implanted authoritarianism", expressed in the form of racism, sexism, elitism, and other "socially entrenched" hierarchies (Pinheiro 1997: 47).

7. Security Guards: A Mass of Poor and Impoverished Workers

When I took the security guard course in late 2017 at a school in the Tiradentes neighbourhood, São Paulo, Pedro, a shooting instructor and bodybuilder, was constantly telling prospective security guards that their new profession would require them to sacrifice themselves every day for clients who aren't worthy of them. "Are they worth your life?", he would rhetorically ask the class, shaking his head. "Always be vigilant and protect your lives first and foremost in any situation." Much of Pedro's teaching focused on survival, showing YouTube videos of security guards violently murdered. As I would eventually come to realise, everyone faces greater problems in dealing with companies and bosses than with armed offenders.

The care involved in security as hospitality, designed to please customers, does not incorporate the workers into the inner layers of this industry. On the contrary, these are work environments permeated by intimate, often unsustainable violence (Durão 2018), where on average security guards spend less than four years of their working lives. In one of the first systematic studies on the field, results show that São Paulo's security guards remained employed in security companies for an average of 34 months, a shorter time than other states in Brazil. São Paulo also had the highest rates of dismissal for "just cause" (10%) and of dismissal at the initiative of the employee (27%). The findings suggest high rates of labour force turnover, in part due to jobs relying on service provision agreements, which, when terminated, trigger massive dismissals of security guards (Lopes 2010). In addition to turnover, security guards have no career plan or real aspirations, they subsist on low wages, are forced to work double shifts so that the company may cut down on the number of security guards hired, and must endure pay gaps and delays (Durão 2022). For every three security guards who have been certified with an up-to-date training course, the market only absorbs one (Durão and Paes 2021: 33).

Security as hospitality disguises the underlying violence and conceals the real dimension of the exercise of control. After all, it is easier to maintain a job market

based on low wages and poor workers, from whom all authority is withdrawn, than by ostensible police officers, who are nevertheless invariably present and active in the backstage of private protection services. Thus, the private security industry flourishes and expands at the expense of a large workforce from extremely poor social origins, made up of migrant peolpe from the Northeastern states or Black adults from the urban slums. One of the defining aspects of hospitality security is precisely to keep this working population in poverty. In addition to being part of the "neo-proletariat of security" (Cunha and Durão 2011: 58; Robert 1999), these guardians of the wealth, property, and well-being of the urban middle classes are plagued by the abhorrent racial division of labour in Brazil, replicating the pattern of domestic workers (Teixeira 2021).

8.   Concluding Remarks

Hospitality security derives from a Brazilian economic, social and urbanistic history where middle classes and elites are considerably Whiter than the rest of the population and where Whiteness becomes not only a capitalist ethos (Ceron-Anaya et al. 2023), but also a capital per se to protect. In this sense, private (White) security is not merely a consequence of the failure to uphold the rule of law and of the incompetent Brazilian public security democratic system. It is a plural form of security built into urban geographies and architectures, as Caldeira points out, weaving daily interactions permeated by social and racial inequalities, both material and symbolic (Caldeira 2001). Recently, authors have asserted that São Paulo is an anti-Black city, made up by the spectacle of violence and marginalization (Alves 2021). In that perspective, space is analysed as a landscape of racial meaning with its own moral topography, material, symbolic, and affective contours where everyday experience naturalizes social and physical segregation, producing hierarchical conventions (Pinho 2021: 13, 16), namely using security for that purpose. *Portarias*, small houses of access control and hospitality, are also one of the key players asserting the historical, futuristic, and empowered structures of Whiteness, certainly because of their infrastructural, social and political potential to escape from resistance.

Nevertheless, what is lived in secured spaces shows intricate dynamics. Most residential socio-technical control apparatuses channel convivial relations and try to "soften" the hierarchies present in extreme inequality and racial disparities. Those spaces are not only part of *cordilheiras* with walls, fences, electric agonistic wires, and all sorts of barriers. Structural inequality is communicated and lived *through* and *in* control apparatuses (not only reproduced by them), namely in the kind of gatehouses we visit in this text. I hope to have convinced the reader how *portarias* encapsulate conviviality in difference. We may say that the condominiums' gatehouse is a fundamental

contribute to stabilizing the dynamics of what Roth-Gordon calls the "comfortable racial contradiction" (Roth-Gordon 2018: 25). This contradiction has the effect of segregating and distinguishing workers while bringing them closer to those (White elites) whom they have to care for and safeguard when executing their jobs.

In that sense, racial conviviality and racial disparity become urban and social productions of everyday life in São Paulo cities. In Brazil, structural racism – where the Black population is disproportionally concentrated at the bottom of society and Whites disproportionally enjoy the privileges and resources offered to those at the top (Roth-Gordon 2018: 8) – is part of the urban landscape. In *portarias*, where most guards are *nordestinos*, not considered (racially) White by the *paulistanos*, structural racism is part of the everyday life, making those workers embody micro-gestures of hospitality and control. Between the private realm and the public sphere, guards, often reluctantly and tired, help maintaining White worlds protected, the very same urban, social and economic structures and daily practices that imprisons them in inequality.

In its materially and socially adaptable rites of hospitality and control, the condominium gatehouse is fitted to welcome while repelling, to protect while shunning, to include while excluding people, networks, services, environments. It encloses the "garden city" while excludes the city beyond, the "public space" where misgovernment, incivility and violence are believed to lurk. Hospitality security thus has the advantage of being two in one – conviviality in inequality – with history serving to validate it and hence having its future ensured.

In this security industrial complex, private policing goes far beyond preventing or responding to crime; it also encompasses managing spaces and setting segregated but amicable patterns of social interaction. The working poor and the impoverished are the gatekeepers of everyday inequality and Whiteness. Upon guards lies not only the expectation to distinguish outsiders from residents, but also the constant suspicion of being displaced elements themselves, strangers to the very places of affluence they guard. According to Simmel, the outsider/stranger never really moves in terms of status, only in terms of place (Simmel 1971 [1908]: 143).

I reach the conclusion that private security in the world, and in particular in Brazilian urban areas such as São Paulo, is a complex that does not necessarily cater to deviance control, despite making use of critical moments to gain a foothold in the market. It is a moral economy of the protection of assets and White property that promotes structures and socio-technologies of class and racial care – White individuals also being part of racial grammars (Pereira 2020; Sovik 2009). Hence the silent and plural proliferation of hospitality security and its massive available workforce.

Finally, the research expands this concept to argue that the cities of São Paulo are gatehouse cities – *cidades de portarias* – permeable to socio-technical combinations of control and hospitality. For the ones playing the role of guard and access control, material and symbolically violent differentiation must be lived through conviviality, and amicable interactions. Occasionally, comfortable contradictions may be less comfortable than they seem to be, as illustrated by the YouTube sketch parody I discussed earlier. For all these reasons, any urban anthropology aimed at analysing security through the theoretical lens of conviviality in inequality will inevitably also become a political and economic anthropology, aware of the developments and critical trends of the ways different and differentiated people experience and inhabit contemporary cities.

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Contact

Coordination Office
Maria Sybilla Merian Centre
Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America

Rua Morgado de Mateus, 615
São Paulo – SP
CEP 04015-051
Brazil

mecila@cebrap.org.br

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