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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
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Security Assemblages, the Urban Public and Cash-in-Transit;
Private Security in Nairobi, Kenya

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Anthropology

by

Nathan Dobson

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Bill Maurer, Chair
Associate Professor Kris Peterson
Professor Victoria Bernal

DEDICATION

To

my interlocutors in Kenya.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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MSc (Distinction), University of Sussex, Brighton, UK, 2010 - 2011

Comparative and Cross Cultural Research Methods (Social Anthropology),

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BA (2nd Class Honors: Upper Division), London School of Economics, London, UK, 2002 - 2005

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PUBLICATIONS

- “Private security in Nairobi, Kenya: securitized landscapes, crosscurrents and new forms of sociality” accepted for publication in *African Studies Review*.

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ACKNOWLEDGED CONTRIBUTIONS TO PUBLICATIONS

Dalinghaus, Ursula 2017 *Keeping Cash: Assessing the Arguments about Cash and Crime. IMTFI White Paper for Cash Matters*, ICA, IMTFI.

Maurer, Bill 2015 *How Would You Like to Pay?: How Technology Is Changing the Future of Money*, Duke Univ. Press.

IMTFI 2013 *Warning Signs and Ways Forward*, IMTFI

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RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

<i>Private Security and public form in Nairobi, Kenya</i>	Research for PhD, University of California, Irvine, including a total of 15 months fieldwork.
<i>The Unwritten Rules of Salsa Classes</i>	Participatory ethnographic study carried out over the course of ten weeks (Spring 2011) as part of MSc in Cross-Cultural Research Methods, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.
<i>The Gascon Rolls Project (1317-1468)</i>	Research assistant on <i>Arts and Humanities Research Council</i> -funded project with the University of Liverpool and University of Oxford, making the English government's parliament rolls for the duchy of Aquitaine available as a searchable online resource.
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ACADEMIC GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS

2014 - Center for Global Peace and Conflict Studies, dissertation research grant, UCI
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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2018 - "Securitized landscapes, crosscurrents and new forms of sociality: private security in Nairobi, Kenya" – *African Studies Beyond the Binary: Critical Encounters at the Intersection*, St Anthony's College, Oxford, UK.

2017 - "For school fees, for Friday, for the public; private security and claims in Nairobi, Kenya" – Anthropology in Transit, Graduate Student Conference, University of California, Irvine

2015 - "Private security and public form in Nairobi, Kenya." Catholic University of E. Africa

2012 - "Money transfer, socio-technical constructions of economic behaviour in Kenya" - CAS@50: Cutting Edges and Retrospectives, University of Edinburgh

2011 - Community and Complementary Currencies, International Conference, Lyon, France

WORKSHOP LEADERSHIP

2015 - Anthro in Transit Graduate Student Annual Conference — Steering Committee Member,
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Security Assemblages, the Urban Public and Cash-in-Transit;

Private Security in Nairobi, Kenya

By

Nathan Dobson

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Irvine, 2018

Professor Bill Maurer, Chair

This dissertation contributes to public and scholarly discourse around urban sociality in Africa. Unlike the literature on private security and the public sphere that replicates stereotypes about violence and the closing down of sociality, I show that the massive and growing presence of private security around Nairobi brings new forms of sociality. Private guards maintain close ties with people “back home” and associate with hawkers and other urban migrants as well as the people who live and work in the area of the property they guard creating new sets of obligations that sit alongside and at crosscurrents to the securitized landscape.

Informed by Africanist literature on law, space and conceptions of order, refracted through postcolonial critique, my project situates the contemporary security moment in Kenya in the context of debates over postcolonial public spheres and the relationship among economic value and moral values. The dissertation sheds light on the social and political consequences of global concerns around human rights, public space, and public interaction including the marginalization of urban migrants and the silencing of that

history. It contributes to the fields of political and economic anthropology, urban and African studies, and interdisciplinary research on security regimes, their technologies, rituals and relations.

The dissertation also contributes to the anthropology of the state through a critique of Actor Network Theory. Rather than just look at state subjects, this dissertation looks at state agents such as the police and people who carry out tasks of the state like private guards. Security is delivered to customers in Kenya through a web of relations between guards and police, the managers of private security companies, bureaucrats and NGO workers. I move between both sides of the interface; the point-counterpoints of state and non-state groups, the switchbacks between formal representations of security and the messy incoherence of the delivery of security services and cash, between the idealizations of free and open public spheres and the practices of the people that promote them that contradict those ideals, to get to matters of concern rather than matters of fact. I argue the state refounds its own logic in the daily experiences of the police and in fact also the practices of private security involved in the cash-in-transit sector, riding roughshod over the messiness to produce a rationality effect that sustains ideas of a public sphere and a rational government.

Introduction

I spent a summer in Kenya a year before the horrific attacks on the Westgate mall that took 67 lives and security was on people's lips and all over the press, just as much then as it was after the attacks. Some scholars, such as the historian Jeremy Prestholdt (2011) trace the ubiquity of discussions on the topic of security in Kenya to the relationship with the US since the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998, but for me there is something more everyday about the ways that people think about security in Nairobi. People talk about a "bandit economy," "Nairobbery," "thugs," "thieves," "hawkers," and "hustlers," and so I was interested to talk to private guards who see what happens on the streets of Nairobi 24 hours a day.

Askari is a Swahili word that is used today in many different contexts for any type of watchman, private security guard, soldier, police officer, or county-officer. I have heard it being used by Kenyans for soldiers in the Kenya Defense Forces as well as private security guards and watchmen employed on an informal basis to protect homes or markets.

For some Kenyans, particularly Kikuyu, the term *askari* is a reminder that certain groups turned against them when they challenged the British government before and during the Mau Mau insurgency. *Askaris* are the police that worked with the British to brutally crush the various uprisings. The British used armies of indigenous Kenyans brought from other parts of the colony, particularly "Kamba and Kalenjin as soldiers, Samburu as trackers, and Luo, Nandi, and Kipsigis, as prison warders" (Hornsby 2012:46). For many it also carries negative connotations when it is associated with the city county *askaris*, administration police and national police. These people extract money from

members of the public for tax and real and imagined offenses. The term was also used to describe the guards or porters that accompanied early caravan expeditions into the African interior that some scholars attribute to the establishment of a price for waged labor (see Guyer 1987; Rockel 2006). And it was also used for the retainers or “semi-official politico-administrative apparatus” of the chiefs in the native reserves who “supplied the often brutal and abusive force involved in tax collection, or the provision of labor for public works or the settler areas” (see Berman 1990:212).

Some private security guards told me that they did not tell their friends and family that they were working as guards or *askaris* because they felt ashamed. Usually this was to do with the low salary attached to the job but sometimes it was also to do with the nature of the job and association with the police and colonial regime.

But because there are just so many private security *askaris*, the term has become widespread, and is at times very neutral. Most Kenyans in urban and rural areas know an *askari* or two and interact with them in their lives on a daily basis. Calling the *askari* to help, or asking the *askari* to run an errand, are very normal practices that do not carry any association with the colony. Most private security *askari* who are positioned for 12 hours at a time, day after day or night after night are generally treated as passive, uneducated, migrants, who took a job that requires no education and that typically no one wants.

Kenya’s growing economy has created a large and expanding elite with steady incomes, but due to a history of corruption and violent political acts carried out in the name of authoritarian regimes, there is broad distrust in the ability of government institutions including the police force to safeguard their new wealth or to ensure their safety. Coupled with the liberalization policies of structural adjustment in the 1990s and the growth in

crime and lawlessness in Nairobi that went with them, this mistrust has resulted in a massive demand for private security, which has grown to be the biggest sector of formal employment. Private guards line the streets of the capital, standing outside all of the banks, businesses and hotels as well as the homes of wealthy residents. They create fortified enclaves in areas of the city that exclude members of the general public.

This dissertation looks at a form of privatization in a place where ethnic political clashes over resources and political power can be directly linked to claims over, and appropriations of, public services and resources. The long-standing dominance of Kikuyus in positions of government in Kenya is something that rival political groups are willing to fight over. This was made clear in the post-election violence of 2007/8. Many of the private security companies in Kenya are owned or funded by members of parliament who are able to influence the political agenda on security whilst enriching themselves from the profits of private companies. In this way, private security taps directly into these networks of patronage. Such processes are the historical results of kin and client networks that were promoted and strengthened under colonial rule.

Below I look at the reasons behind the massive and growing presence of private security around Nairobi as well as some of the consequences. I use ethnographic work with private guards and other urban migrants and interviews with the managers of private security companies and public officials. I document the different perspectives people have on security, public space and the public sphere.

The perspectives of my interlocutors were of course, in constant dialogue with my own, which was shaped and molded by the research process. During my early research trips to Kenya, I assumed that private guards would generally help out with public safety

on the streets of Nairobi but that they blocked access to places. These two ideas are central to this ethnography and something that I reflected upon during the whole of the 15 months that I spent there conducting fieldwork. My attitude was also being influenced by my experiences in California and Irvine where I was pursuing my PhD. Originally from the UK, I was not used to there being so few people on the streets. In Orange County, in particular, it feels like people are usually in their cars, homes, or places that you pay to be in, such as bars or restaurants, rather than on the streets or in public spaces. The residential estates in Orange County are also designed in such a way that public access to them is curtailed through the use of what in the UK we call “dead ends,” or “cul-de-sac,” roads that go nowhere. Using “dead ends” and terraforming the landscape in a particular way, means that some residential estates are very difficult for the public to pass through even though the roads are still public. The price of these areas is much higher than those areas where members of the public are regularly able to use as a through road. In the periods in between my first two fieldwork trips of 3 months each, I thought a lot about public space in the US and so this multi-sited perspective is also important for the ethnography. Ahead of what comes below, I want to make my positionality clear. From the first time I met and spoke with guards I wanted to see things from their perspective. At the same time I really value public space and empathize with activists and scholars who look at public space and the contestation over it as an important battle against oppressive enclosures and the regimented securitization and privatization of space.

Methods

I conducted IRB-approved preliminary research in Nairobi during the summers of 2013 and 2014. While conducting research on the first trip, I began to have informal

discussions with guards in the street. During the summer of 2014, I conducted a much more focused study, compiling over 10 hours of observation and 35 interviews with managers and security guards employed by 22 different private security companies. The security guards were forthcoming with information and happy to answer questions concerning security. Some security guards protect houses as part of their kin obligations; others work for private companies with no shared investment in the thing they are protecting besides their paycheck at the end of the week. I developed a broad range of contacts across the 30 member companies of the Protective Security Industry Association (PSIA), the 30 member companies of the Kenya Security Industry Association (KSIA) and the countless other companies that I found out are often tied to particular members of parliament or prominent business men. I visited the offices and training grounds of a number of big private security companies and learnt about the ways that companies deal with cash handling and storing money.

In October 2015 I went back to Nairobi and established myself in the city. I continued to interview guards on the street and carried out participant observation with the guards. I spent nine weeks with different cash-in-transit teams as they delivered cash around the city. I gathered information on how people in the street and the public police thought about private security. Many current private guards are ex-policemen because there is an age-limit to being employed by the public security sector.

The perspective I got from going around with the cash-in-transit guards was broad. We visited places across a huge geographical area. I saw how private security guards operate in malls, banks, businesses, and residential areas in a 20-mile radius around the

center of Nairobi. I saw private security in very rich areas and in very poor areas and I spoke with guards from very different backgrounds.

Spending time with the cash-in-transit teams was a more anonymous perspective than the closer interviews I did with guards at their stations because we would arrive, do the job in the ATM, or bank, or business, and leave. At the same time because of the fact that it was clear the job would be over very quickly and we would be leaving, this method actually produced some meaningful conversations very quickly.

I was very privileged to get this perspective, and it was because of the link I had with the private security company with which I was working. The fact I was a foreign, white, researcher helped me attain this perspective. It was a very mobile perspective, and this is rare amongst guards who are usually stationed at their position the whole day.

The companies I am describing are all primarily guarding companies. Other duties may include electronic surveillance installation, dog patrols, fencing etc. All the companies I spoke to are domestic and do not aid in military operations or humanitarian crises elsewhere in the world (G4S international may but not G4S Kenya).

Literature review - Escaping the binary

This dissertation is situated in three main bodies of literature. The first is around private security and security more generally in African contexts. This can be further divided into two approaches: the state-centered approach and the more recent assemblage approach. By talking about assemblages we enter the realm of work in Actor-Network-Theory. The second main body of relevant literature is anthropological work on civil

society, public space and the public sphere. The last area that this dissertation contributes to is work on the anthropology of the state. In this section, I provide the general argument of the thesis and an introduction to how it fits in these bodies of literature. I provide further citations of work within the chapters when a more specific argument is being made.

The state-centered approach to security

The work on private military/security is very often framed in terms of their relation to the state, understood as laid out by Max Weber as being distinguishable from other forms of institutional control of territorial areas through the fact that state “administrative staff successfully [uphold] the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order” (1978:54). Two of the main books on private security cite Max Weber’s definition of a state (Avant 2005:1; Singer 2003:170) as a platform from which to understand private security. They look at how private security challenges the state’s legitimation through threatening the stability of the government’s monopoly on violence (Avant 2005) and how it interacts with and affects state military functions such as “combat operations, strategic planning, military training, intelligence, military logistics, and information warfare” (Singer 2003:73). Many studies provide a history of private security based on the joint processes of globalization and privatization, the encroachment on sovereignty by private security is thus thought of as part of the more general trend toward a transnational market for military and security services (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010; Avant 2005; Singer 2003).

Some studies of private security take a directly economic approach. Jäger and Kümmel (2007) explain that the use of private military is a trade off between liberal norms

and cost-benefit analyses and that the latter usually wins. Many argue that trying to eradicate private security companies would result in a surge in uncontrollable freelance mercenaries (Aboagye 2007) and that the key to controlling them is some kind of regulation of already existing companies. Anna Leander (2005) has written on the externalities of using private security and outlines how the market can contest established security orders and create patchy security coverage in areas. Drawing on the work of Krahnmann (2008), Branović (2011) explains that private companies offer a good opportunity to displace the costs of financing security but that the market thus drives itself: “by applying this strategy of displacement, governments themselves contribute to the commodification of security and its transformation into a private good” (14). Branović provides a quantitative study of the different kinds of services offered by security companies from 1990 to 2007. The results show that from 2001 to 2007 the use of private companies for logistics support, intelligence, quasi police tasks and border patrols, and security/protection (individuals and property) grew at an exceptional rate in comparison with the heavier military duties of combat and military operations, military assistance and operational support which remained more or less constant. The general move is from private military to private security.

Private security companies in the global North are usually thought of as a supplement to the state provision of security and thus subordinate to the state’s sovereignty (Avant 2005). The particular form of integration into the circuits of the formal and international economy, experienced by Kenya as a result of British colonial rule and structural adjustment programs, has meant that governing, and the provision of services has always been influenced and encroached upon by outside actors (Bayart 1989; 2009;

Mbembe 2001). This dissertation looks at the influence of those actors in terms of security. By contrasting the work of private security personnel with that of state officials and police, documenting times when they work together, and recording how they talk about each other and how they are talked about in the press, this project looks at the relationship between private security companies and state services. Through observation and interviews and through analysis of newspapers and social media, this dissertation shows how differently positioned subjects evaluate private security companies in relation to state agencies and the kinds of discourses they use.

The fact that much of the work on private security in Africa is written from an international relations or political science perspective means that the analysis of private security is conducted in relation to whether a country is deemed to be a strong or weak state. This idea of the strong or weak state is a corollary to the Weberian ideal-type of the monopoly of the use of violence. The titles of this work clearly reflect the idea that countries (often African) are forced to use private security because of a failure or lack in government. For example: *Weak governments in search for strength. Africa's experience of mercenaries and private military companies*, MacIntyre and Weiss (2007); *Privatization of security, arms proliferation and the process of state collapse in Africa*, Musah (2002); *The privatization of security: Modern conflict, globalization and weak states*, Taulbee (2002). Avant (2005) attempts to raise all of the possible issues of the use of private security for what she describes as strong and weak states. Her conclusions are guided by what she sees as the control problems of weak states. She explains that most of the benefits that strong states like the US gain from using private security are outweighed by other costs in weak states. Mills *et al's* (1999) edited collection of essays on private security in Africa similarly

situates private security as a response to weaknesses in the state. They look more closely at the possibilities of regulation and insist on collaborative efforts between the companies and the state. The rhetoric of the failed state continues into the one major study of private security by Kenyans. Mkutu and Sbala (2007) provide a host of statistics showing rising crime levels as a justification for the rise in private security.

The assemblage approach

There has been a range of different critiques of the state-centered approach to private security since the 1980s. A general turning away from state-focused analysis and an acceptance of more plural and multifaceted types of legitimation in terms of security grew in the 1980s among international relations scholars reading Foucault, particularly his work on governmentality. *Security Beyond the State* by Abrahamsen and Williams (2010) is a continuation of this work into private security studies. They point to localized and internalized understandings of non-state security assemblages that they advocate analyzing alongside their pluralization or hybridization with other modes of security practices such as policing.

Early work by Bigo (1997) in what is known as the Paris school shows their interest in contesting political constructions of security by looking at technology and policing practices within the security industry in France (see Bigo and Tsoukala 2008). As with work in what has come to be known as the Copenhagen school (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998), the focus is often on the definition and uses of the words security and insecurity in different contexts as a form of governmentality. The Aberystwyth School is centered around the work of Ken Booth (Booth 1991). Scholars in all three schools share a

commitment to broadening the field of security studies from the narrow confines of statist and military-oriented research (CASE Collective 2006:448).

Tessa Diphorn is part of a research team based at the University of Amsterdam called “security assemblages” that has been granted a research fund from the European Research Council to investigate the relationship between private security and public police in four cities: Jerusalem, Kingston, Nairobi, Recife, and Miami. Diphorn takes a similar approach to Abrahamsen and Williams explaining that “rather than thinking in terms of public and private, policing is best analyzed within a pluralized security landscape” (Diphorn 2016:12). As Abrahamsen and Williams (2010), she advocates a closer ethnographic approach to security in order to see how and when it can be said that the state is, or is not in the picture, defining plural policing as a “social process that is executed by a range of actors to maintain a particular social order” (Diphorn 20016:13). They sometimes appear as the state, sometimes as something else for Diphorn.

As with Abrahamsen and Williams, I agree with Diphorn’s framing of a plurality of policing practices within the same area and I agree that some of the practices and symbols of private security can be thought of as performing sovereign power. But different security agencies, as well as individuals, perform things that look like sovereign duties all the time, claiming to maintain civil obedience and upholding property rights in ways that are so overlapping and cross-cutting it is difficult to pick out who or what should be thought of as more or less state like.

In her discussion of criminality and vigilantism, Diphorn explains how “defining sovereign bodies as illegal or informal as opposed to legal or formal ignores the variability between them” (17-18), for example “the use of violence by a vigilante group may be

defined as illegal but citizens may view it as legitimate and legal and the same holds for the use of violence by private security officers” (17). Her ethnography shows that neither public nor private police are always legitimate or always legal, the legal or illegal actions of different companies and groups of public police are more or less legitimate and legal depending on different contexts. She does not go so far as to suggest that vigilante groups might in fact provide better security and government than the state as many authors have (see Meagher 2012) but she is prepared to “question the extent to which vigilantism and private security are in fact distinct phenomena” (Diphoorn 2016:18) throughout the book.

The reason that Diphoorn can talk so freely of vigilante groups is because of the widespread belief that groups of organized criminals operate inside and outside of African states. Anthropological work has shown how historically layered networks of kin and relations, strengthened through colonially constructed notions of ethnicity and tribalism, are involved in unregulated movements of capital and resources that might be thought of as types of often violent governmentality but are nonetheless heavily imbricated in the construction of what is recognized as the state in Africa, public goods, or public spheres (Bayart 2009; Ekeh 1975; Chalfin 2010; Roitman 2004). In Kenya, Katumunga’s (2005) article on how such groups were formed and continue to operate because of their associations with politicians is still broadly accepted (see Rasmussen 2017). For Katamunga, Moi’s city commission was the start of a vicious circle of decline in urban governance and the growth of what he calls Nairobi’s bandit economy, “a criminalization of urban existence” in a bid to ensure the regime’s survival (Katamunga 2005:219). The ruling circle around Moi are accused of spreading violence, crime and disorder, which could then be suppressed by the army and police as a justification for the ban on multiparty politics

(see Hornsby 2012 and Mutongi 2017). The names of such groups: The Talibans, Baghdad Boys, Jeshi la Embakasi, and Mungiki (a name derived from Muingi meaning masses in Kikuyu), have since the 1990s been associated with organized crime in Nairobi.

Sometimes these groups are celebrated for their social capital and ability to bring services to poor and marginalized groups. In more recent elections, the ability of youth or slum groups to mobilize large numbers of voters very quickly has been noted. Rasmussen (2017) for example describes the Mungiki as “one of the most influential non-state actors in the political changes in Kenya for the last two decades... [with] a central role in Kenyan popular politics as a Kikuyu cultural and religious revivalist movement claiming to fight poverty and inequality, while also being one of the main protagonists in the 2007/08 post-election violence” (131). Rasmussen claims expert knowledge of the Mungiki, explaining that they see themselves as revolutionaries of the present that rely on Kikuyu uprisings in the past such as Mau Mau for their legitimacy. He also believes that much of their legitimacy comes from filling in for the state by providing “more mundane activities such as security and transport provision, garbage collection and criminal extortion [which] has placed the movement and its members at the centre of poor Kenyans’ everyday concerns regarding security” (131).

Because of their focus on providing security to their members, these groups are often described in similar terms to private security. Private security is sometimes mentioned in this literature as a legitimate (in the eyes of the state and outside observers) part of this bandit economy, facilitating shadow movements through protected enclaves of capitalist extraction (Ferguson 2006) as well as protected residential areas and thus certain public spheres (Caldeira 2000; Low 2003). The key question here at the heart of

this ethnography is how should the value of non-state groups be thought of without measuring them against an ideal? As I argue, the work mentioned above that has turned to assemblages in an effort to represent non-state groups, often ends-up focussing on similar idealizations of the state-centered approach.

An assemblage, always in some way implies modernity as a rational form or ideal-type of the kind that Weber describes. When we move between conceptualizations of state and non-state we are at the interface at the heart of the ethnographic project - us and them. The West supposedly standing for rational behavior, and the rest, irrational. The interfaces between conceptualizations of rational state operations and those at the margins of the state that are seemingly incoherent are switch-backs between the two sides of the binary (Guyer 2016:168-169). To return to the anthropological literature in Africa, you might trace as a trajectory through early French Marxist scholars such as Rey (1973), Terray (1969), and Meillasoux (1981) through scholars like Hibou (2004), Roitman (2004), Mbembe (2001), Bayart (1989) in the present, the problem of looking at the layers of kinship and networks of relations as an alternative and perhaps more morally sound African system, usually an alternative to capitalism. As Meagher (2005) shows, a celebration of the social capital of these groups can be premature and also go too far in that evidence of their violent and destructive acts can be ignored. For example Meagher suggests African social networks are often reduced “to a single economic logic, based either on popular entrepreneurship, parochial solidarities, or mafia-like collusion” (224). Meagher explains that looking at African social networks from this perspective suggests they are only to be either “celebrated as social capital to the extent that they appear to

promote stability and economic growth, or denounced as social liabilities if they fail to do so” (224).

This promotion of social capital is heavily linked with the assemblage approach. Both are seen as a new and improved view compared to the older state-centered approach meaning both contain within them some kind of notion of progress akin to the new social order taking over from the old. Anthropologists have long been skeptical of such a teleological perspective and it has proven easy enough for anthropologists to debunk the myth that all clientalistic relations in Africa are either to be celebrated and morally superior to conceptualizations of capitalism elsewhere. But how can we escape the binary of bad, traditional, backward, not modern, Africa versus an overly enthusiastic celebration of the social capital of violent and destructive groups?

This remains a difficult question that this ethnography attempts to address through a study of private security in Nairobi. What I make clear throughout is that the continued use of ideals like the monopoly of the use of violence in the assemblage approach does not escape the binary. Nor, as I introduce in the next section, do ideals of civil society, public space or public spheres. In fact, I argue, such a use of ideals are a major part of a minoritizing logic, one that started in the colonizing of East Africa and that continues today. I have attempted, as Guyer describes to continue the critique of the Weberian or state-centered approach concerned with rationalization, secularization and disenchantment “right into its own quintessential instruments” (2016:174). The public sphere and the promotion of public space can work as just such an instrument.

Public space and spheres

The first time that I went to Nairobi I was very surprised at the number of private security guards that line the streets. I saw these uniformed men and women as an affront to my freedom and, as any self-respecting liberal would, I looked at them suspiciously as I might a member of the police force of any nation. I thought they might try to arrest me, or impede my progress somewhere, or deny me access to something that I had the right to access. At the same time I thought that they were there for the safety of the public and that I could turn to them if I had a problem.

I had interactions with private security long before I had interactions with the Kenyan police. They searched me as I entered shops and malls and they watched me as I walked around the city. I soon realized that they were largely passive in their interactions with members of the public. The scanners they passed over me didn't seem to work and the pat-downs they gave me were too quick to check if I had a concealed weapon.

When I looked further into the issue and began to interview guards they usually told me that if there was an incident with a member of the public near where they were working they would not intervene. This was confirmed to me by friends and informants who told me that private security guards would assess the situation and if they thought they were in danger they would probably wait until the danger had passed before checking you were okay. The guards told me their responsibility was the building or property that they were assigned to protect. Some told me they were responsible for the people inside the building. When I asked them to draw a line as to where their responsibility ended, it was always very close to the building or property.

At the same time, I was closely following the different ways that private security is represented in newspapers, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media sources. What stood out from these sources is that I was not alone in thinking that private security blocks free and open discussion and movement in public space in Nairobi and elsewhere in the world. The overriding argument in these media is that private security is either directly responsible or part of a broader process of cutting, curtailing and blocking public things, such as public safety, space and free association and open debate in the public sphere. It is a popular discourse that has allowed some people such as Charles Veitch to become relatively famous on Youtube by filming their encounters with private security guards to an enraged public. Outraged opinion pieces abound in the UK and US press about how private security outnumber the police in most countries and are responsible for creating gated communities. For example Bradley L Garrett writing in the Guardian newspaper has a series of posts from 2014 to 2017 on the privatization of public space. In one article he compares an open-air stadium in Phnom Penh in Cambodia and POPS (privately owned public spaces) in London. In the stadium Garrett experiences what he describes, quoting Ash Amin as “the unfettered circulation of bodies [producing] new rhythms from the many relational possibilities” (Garrett 2015), in London, by contrast, in controlled areas he says sociality is curtailed and people begin to monitor themselves.

In studies of private security, international relations scholars, political scientists and anthropologists use an ideal of a public sphere that never existed in Europe, let alone the places that it gets transported. In its very framing this ideal of an open and free society blocks and separates groups and minoritizes others through the binary of openness and

closedness. Those that use public reason are open; those that do not are closed. It thus creates a contradiction in that it blocks and separates people even as it is said to open.

Anthropologists such as Teresa Caldeira and Setha Low have made careers on the back of this rhetoric of private security destroying free association. In *City of Walls* (2000), after describing the massive and growing inequality experienced by many Brazilians and a long history of police brutality and abuse, Caldeira explains that private security services make matters worse. Increasingly loose legislation has allowed private security to further impose on the lives of Brazilian citizens as well as a growing illegal market in private security to flourish.

Caldeira shows how private security sometimes infringes on the lives of the citizens of São Paulo it is supposed to be protecting, violating their rights but echoing a general trend towards vigilantism and even private justice in the absence of trust in the police forces. Caldeira believes that the “expansion of the private security sector presents challenges for the organization of policing anywhere... to the point that it has profound implications for public life... the vitality of civil rights and the character of democratic government” (2000:202). Caldeira raises a number of issues over the work of private guards as a new kind of instrumental shaping of the city in a similar way that boulevards shaped cities in Europe. Caldeira writes about private security as being an essential part of a new kind of public sphere that is only accessible to the rich: “The new pattern of urban segregation based on the creation of fortified enclaves represents the complementary side of the privatization of security and transformation of notions of the public in contemporary cities” (2000:3).

One of the central idealizations that is present in this work, even if not directly mentioned, is the bourgeois public sphere that is often depicted as something similar to that described by Habermas in *Structural transformation of the public sphere* (1989 orig. 1962). Caldeira writes about private security and the public sphere as though the modernist vision of open avenues where people can freely discuss politics in a rational and disinterested way actually happened in Brazil. She ignores Nancy Fraser's (for example 1990) work on the fact that the Habermasian public sphere could never have existed as it was described for Europe, let alone Brazil, and that it must have, by its construction, involved exclusions and counter-publics. Setha Low's (2003) argument in her eight-year study of gated communities in New York City, suburban Long Island, New York, and San Antonio, Texas, rests on a similar understanding of the public sphere. For all of the exclamations at the shock of how cities are being closed down, Low's study focuses on the white and affluent communities behind the walls.

Habermas' thesis was that the ideal public sphere remained an ideal. As soon as it came into being it was already being negated by publicity (its immanent critique) that sways people's desires and makes perfect, equal, and just, public discourse an impossibility. Habermas shows the intimate link between the growth of bourgeois capital and in particular print capital and public discourse. That is that a division of labor and a diversity of needs came with the public as it was conceived, "with its own opinions and interests - to which government might be accountable; also of a public sphere in which those opinions and interests might express themselves" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 9 quoting Charles Taylor 1990:108). The critique I am providing of this literature on public spheres echoes work on civil society in Africa. As the Comaroffs point out: "the autonomy of civil society

from the state, the very autonomy on which the Idea is predicated, is entirely chimerical. It, too, rests on a series of idealized separations, starting with that of political authority from private property” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:24). The true person of the public who maintained the subject position as both man and citizen between the home and their interactions in public was truly someone who could talk of the things of the public, the res, the republican.

As Warner explains, publicness always had written into it, the minoritizing logic of domination. The self-abstracted person who could talk authoritatively in a disinterested and public way described by Habermas as the ideal of the bourgeois public sphere carried with it its own negation. When nineteenth century literary circles bought and read pamphlets and contributed opinion pieces in them, they could imagine a subjectless humanity, a perfectly formless mass of people, a reading public. In effect those people busy talking in the coffee houses that Habermas describes were making claims “for the public,” that this or that should be done in the rational interests of the public. The genre of this kind of claim constituted the public that Habermas describes. The white, males, able to talk in a public way had to carry with them the bad faith that denied these attributes even as they allowed them to get to this position in the first place (Warner 2002:176). The work on public spaces and public spheres mentioned above, misses the fact that having an open, public society required the subordination of people in the colonies but also women and children and the working classes at home. In African states such as Kenya, these problems are amplified because of the popular perception that African states are weak, corrupt, lack civil society institutions and are full of traditional kinds of clientalistic relations/transactions.

This minoritizing logic around the public sphere continues as a quintessential instrument of modernity, one that separates. The different ways these idealizations are involved in this minoritizing and separating logic are shown through the course of the chapters. This means unpacking some of the ways that these ideals are used to subvert, including an analysis of: the popular press, historical representations of Nairobi's past, and the sociological and anthropological assemblage approaches that rely too much on violence. The ways this logic silences and subverts the social interactions of urban migrants in Nairobi is central and thus in the course of outlining some of the elements of this minoritizing logic I describe and depict the social relations of urban migrants in Nairobi. This means recounting the ways that urban migrants like private guards come to the city and get a foothold, create relations with the owners of the property they are looking after as well as other urban migrants like hawkers, and interact with members of the public (see chapter three). It also means showing how the guards act on the streets with a relative degree of impunity because they carry police officers with guns, as well as what might be called the messy parts of state practices, the bribes and the nepotism and the power games involved in the cash-in-transit industry: how the different people from different organizations helped their friends and families get a job or move to a new company and how they "bodge" parts of their job to make sure the cash machine is full or works. My hope is that in the course of describing these processes, a different story comes through, one in which separation and abstraction are only one among many other things going on in the lives of private guards.

CHAPTER ONE: Privatization, Terrorism, and Urbanization; A History of Private Security in Nairobi

Introduction

In this chapter I provide data gathered in the course of my research alongside some of the reasons given in the literature for the global rise of private security. The goal is to show how the two main reasons given for the growth of the industry, the cold war/terrorism and privatization, overshadow a third reason that is particularly important for Kenya, urbanization. The importance of urbanization in the growth of private security in Kenya is largely hidden because of the sensationalist appeal of the other two reasons and because they are more closely tied to a history that is centered on Europe and the US. Spending time with guards and interviewing managers of companies gave me a different perspective from the literature that focuses on privatization and terrorism. And in a similar way to how Mutongi (2017) describes the matatu industry in Kenya, there is a more local and Kenyan history to private security, one that might be called a “history from below” in that it is closely linked to the many urban migrants that came to Nairobi looking for work and were forced into jobs like hawking and private security. But this is also to do with a growing middle class in Nairobi and its desire for security. Urbanization as I explain further in later chapters is also associated with hawking and crime.

Privatization of the military

The discourse around privatization of what are known as public, or national military creates a lot of hype. The full extent to which the US government was using private military

companies to carry out operations and services in the different war zones in which it was engaged was thrown into the limelight when members of the American private military company, Blackwater, fired on and killed 14 Iraqi civilians and injured 20 others in Nisour Square in Bagdad in 2007. The Iraqi government accused Blackwater of an unprovoked attack and this caused outrage among Iraqis. A protracted trial of the perpetrators and continual investigations by the Iraqi and US authorities meant that private military contractors were never far from people's minds throughout the war. The media interest in the story and the use of private military has continued into the present. The sentencing of four of the perpetrators on April 14, 2015, received wide media attention. Four former Blackwater security officers were sentenced to long prison sentences for the Nisour Square killings but the founder of the group, Erik Prince, remains free. Mr. Prince was able to rename and sell Blackwater. It is now known as Academi, a member of the Constellis Group, a major player in security contracting (Risen and Rosenberg 2015). Prince is now involved in a new venture called "Frontier Services Group" that provides what it describes as "expeditionary logistics" for mining, oil and natural gas operations in Africa and has the backing of Citic Group a large state owned Chinese investment company" (Risen and Rosenberg 2015). The incidents in Iraq and the notion of modern mercenaries gallivanting around the world picking up trophies and booty has inspired a number of sensational and condemnatory books on the subject (Hagedorn 2014; Isenberg 2009; McFate 2014; Scahill 2007; Simons 2009).

Soon after the Blackwater incident, the UN released the findings of a two-year study of private military contractors. The report found that use of private military contractors was a "new form of mercenary activity" and illegal under international law. A spokesman

for the US mission to the UN offices in Geneva responded by saying that the report was demeaning and that guards working for US government contractors protect clearly defined United States government areas, and their work is defensive in nature. The United States is not one of the 30 countries that ratified the 1989 UN Mercenary Convention banning the use of mercenaries (Milliard 2003). The Geneva center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) pursues “good governance and reform of the security sector” (Bryden and Hänggi, 2005). One of the definitions of a mercenary in the 1977 additional protocol to the 1949 Geneva Conventions was those “who are motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain” (Milliard 2003). Aside from engaging in research into private security, it is currently working on raising awareness and acquiring signatures for the “Montreux Document” an intergovernmental initiative launched by Switzerland, the International Committee of the Red Cross, that encourages the adoption of national regulations on private military and security companies to respect for international law. DCAF has travelled around the world and held conferences to gain support for the document and currently has the endorsement of 51 states. South Africa has become a particularly well-known center for private security because of Executive Outcomes, a major player in a number of wars in Africa including fighting in Sierra Leone during the 1990s. Executive Outcomes was directly responsible for arresting the Revolutionary United Front rebels and bringing the Strasser government back to power. It was dissolved in 1998 under the orders of Nelson Mandela.

The question as to whether guards are said to be sacrificing themselves for the sovereign has been looked at by Taussig-Rubbo for the US private mercenaries in Iraq. As Taussig-Rubbo (2013) explores: The incidents in Iraq with Blackwater show the difficulties

of holding private companies to account over their actions in the same way as public armies. Questions will always be raised over their loyalty to the regime they are defending and whether they truly represent the best interests of the public when they have pecuniary interests at heart. Taussig-Rubbo argues that one of the reasons for using private military in war is that US officials avoid the political liability entailed in calling a loss a sacrifice. However when four Blackwater officers were mutilated in the Iraq war, legal discourse around the contractors proved inadequate for understanding the meaning of their deaths. The status of “American” and “citizen” took over and their deaths became understood as a sacrifice through the concept of popular sovereignty (ordinary citizens as latent vehicles for or of the sovereign). He points to the incident as an example, contra-Agamben, of the failure of the attempt to construct the actor who is unsacrificeable, and yet it is exactly to avoid the fact of their deaths as sacrifices that he believes private contractors have emerged.

Stories of private military taking over the public military draw condemnation from both side of the political divide in places like the UK and US and so it is easy to see how they gain traction in the media. They evoke strong feelings in terms of patriotism and sacrifice for the country. But to use this to describe private security in Kenya would detract from the context. This more macro view of private security moves the discourse away from Kenya and places it more firmly in the UK or US or South Africa.

Cold war and terrorism

The cold war and its extension into terrorism in the twentieth century also predominates discussions of security in Kenya. In turn this seeps into discussions of private security and what they can and should be doing to help.

Scholars working on private security in Africa, Europe and North and South America, agree on the importance of the cold war in contemporary formations of private security (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010; Avant 2005; Mandel 2002; Mills and Stremmler 1999; Singer 2003). The fall of the Berlin wall and demobilization of Russian and American forces all across the world, left thousands of trained soldiers without work. It also released thousands of firearms into the open market. As Lock (1998) explains, during the cold war, states in places like Africa were guaranteed intervention by at least one of the bloc parties but the end of the cold war left them with a military resource gap and an increased demand for military goods and services

During much of the cold war, Kenya was considered part of Britain's sphere of influence. This was particularly important as Kenyatta's main rival in the independent country's early years, Odinga, sought funding and military training from Eastern Bloc countries, and Ethiopia and Tanzania, on Kenya's borders were already communist. But with Kenyatta propped up by the British, it was unlikely to fall to Chinese and Russian offers of assistance. However British power in Kenya waned in the 1970s, the US's increasingly grew. In 1976, Kenya started taking on loans from the IMF, run from Washington. Between 1973 and 1976, Kenya received at least US\$738 million in aid of various types, with the World Bank the largest donor and the UK second (Hornsby 2012:293).

The bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998 that claimed 228 people, strengthened relations between the countries as the US began to put pressure on the Kenyan government to target terrorists. Prestholdt (2011) lists a number of different ways that the US has helped Kenyan security forces including training and the creation of the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), the creation of a joint counterterrorism task force, a national counterterrorism center, and a national security advisory committee. The US also gave Kenya \$88 million in 2005, almost 90 percent of the development funds earmarked for East Africa. In 2006, the US gave six boats as part of a project totaling \$3 million. The U.S. government approved an additional \$14 million in direct assistance to Kenyan counterterrorism authorities in 2007. And the list of training and assistance goes on. Prestholdt explains that the most troubling development in the post-9/11 Kenya-U.S. counterterrorism partnership is the fact that Kenya's leaders may now stand to gain from the prospect of terrorist attacks (2011).

Prestholdt shows direct links between acts of violence by the Kenyan government on terrorist suspects and praise from the US. The first international terrorist trial in Kenya began around the same time that Kibaki was invited for a state visit to the White House by George W. Bush. Further acts of force during the 2000s followed American claims that Kenya was not doing enough. In 2007 counterterrorism police surrounded the home of Sheikh Ibrahim Mohammed Obeidilla, teargasing the neighborhood and ransacking three homes. The sheikh was claimed to have come from the same place as Fazul Abdullah Muhammad suspected of the truck bombing of the Paradise hotel. On the tenth anniversary of the U.S. embassy bombing, Kenyan authorities once again drew international attention to their counterterrorism efforts. In early August 2008, just four days before the tenth

anniversary of the U.S. embassy bombing, the ATPU claimed that Fazul Abdullah Muhammad was in Malindi and in a high profile media frenzy they chased him around the coast (Prestholdt 2011:76).

In October 2011, the Kenyan military, aided by US forces, invaded Somalia. The effects of Kenya's debts to the US in terms of military ties can most clearly be seen in the recent spate of violence carried out by the Islamic terrorist group, Al-Shabaab in retaliation for the invasion of Somalia.

The attack on the Westgate mall in 2013 by a group of armed gunmen took 67 lives. The shopping mall was all but destroyed by the grenades of the militants and the response of the Kenyan police and armed forces. This was followed in June 2014 by an attack by waves of gunmen on the Kikuyu town of Mpeketoni in Lamu County. The town is the last urban area on the mainland before the Somalian border and the site of the Lamu County administration office. The gunmen used a minibus to storm the town and raid the police station. They then went through the town and killed anyone who could not repeat the *shahada*. They killed at least sixty people and destroyed property. Following the attacks, many of the Kikuyu residents moved into the bush areas around the town and lived there for a number of days before returning to their homes. These attacks and another incident of a person firing a gun in Mombasa that did not injure anyone, were seized upon by the government who declared that they were motivated by opposition politicians trying to destabilize the country rather than terrorists.

The most recent attack on the University College of Garissa on Easter Sunday April 5, 2015, was the most brutal attack in Kenya since the bombing of the US Embassy. Masked gunmen ran into the dorms of the University in an early morning raid, spraying bullets and

executing those people that could not speak sections of the Quran. They threw grenades and had suicide bombs strapped to their chests to detonate when the armed police finally arrived 8 hours after the siege began. 147 people were killed, mostly students. Less rhetoric around politics followed in media reports of the incident because it was clearly the work of Al-Shabaab. Much more was made about the poor response of the security services, the overall lack of security in a town that is close to the border (and considered a Garrison town) with Somalia and that the same mistakes of not listening to early warnings of an attack were made as they were for Westgate.

Many people within the security industry that I spoke to marked the 1998 embassy bombing as a significant step in the growth of private security. A high-ranking employer of one of the top companies who was working at the US Embassy at the time of the bombing, emphasized that it changed peoples' perceptions of threat and crime and made people realize that it was no longer just the Americans that were being targeted. Kenyans too were part of this war and were going to suffer. The result was a growth in fear and a growth in private security. When I spoke with members of the police force and the managers of different companies, they suggested that private security should be involved in the fight against terror. Reports from security think tanks also often state that private security, given their locations around the city, should be more involved in counter-terrorism. But this does not tell the full story for Kenya and as I mentioned in the introduction, there is something more everyday about security in Kenya that needs explaining.

The postcolony

The particular form of integration into the circuits of the formal and international economy, experienced by Kenya as a result of British colonial rule and structural adjustment programs, has meant that governing, and the provision of services has always been influenced and encroached upon by outside actors. Therefore, the privatization argument needs to be modified to the particular context of Kenya.

The British maintained a vice-like grip on the security services of independent Kenya. As independence grew closer, they worked to turn the King's African Rifles (KAR), mainly made up of African and Indian troops led by British officers, into separate armies for the three new countries emerging from the region that the KAR controlled. This meant training Kenyan officers in the years leading up to independence and after the defense agreement in 1964. Britain would also train a new Kenya Air Force and create a small Navy; in return, Britain could use Kenya as an outpost for ground troops who would train there twice a year, Mombasa for its Navy, and Eastleigh and other airstrips for its air force. British troops would help Kenyans free of charge because they were still worried about communist influence. "Britain effectively ran the Kenyan army until 1966, and the navy and air force until 1972, and Britain remained the principal donor of officers and equipment and training until the mid-70s" (Hornsby 2012:99). Africanisation of the police force also remained slow. The British and Asian officers stayed on after independence. The Tribal Police (renamed the Administration Police in 1958,) who remained in place, were a reserve force for "less-serious and less-structured conflict resolution and in Central Province had been a key institution in the fight against Mau Mau" (*ibid*: 100). At independence they were used to bolster central authority by being moved from the Ministry of Native Affairs to the

Office of the President where they remained until the 2010 constitution placed them into the same control structure as the Kenya National Police. The paramilitary trained General Service Unit also remained under British command until 1967.

As British influence in the country's main security apparatus *slowly* waned after independence, private security companies were established by ex-police and army officials, securing the property of mainly white settlers who did not trust the police. As a Kenyan-born, white manager of a leading private security company who has been in the business for 35 years explained to me:

We decided that there was a niche in the marketplace for rapid response because the police can't do it, because they have limited resources (Interview, Nairobi, July 10, 2014).

This was corroborated by a Kenyan manager of a mid-level company:

Passed say the 35-year mark, going back, there was very limited employment of private security in this country. You could have counted about a dozen or so firms undertaking private security. You could say one reason is the fact that the economy here and the people are not as sophisticated as you see them today. Being very basic then, on the economic and social front, the state was able to control security, so the police were the main players, almost the sole players in policing. At that time people trusted the police. The police managed, they worked, they had systems that worked, they had 991 or whatever call, a service you would call upon and they would show up within a minute, because I say again they were not overwhelmed The social and economic situation was very basic and manageable for them. (Interview Nairobi, Kenya, June 2014).

Four of the earliest companies established in Kenya all remain among the highest earning and well-known companies in the field today and all were either started by settlers

who were ex-police and army officials or were formed from the amalgamation of other companies started by ex-police or army officials. *Security Guard Services* was established in 1970. *Securicor*, later to become *G4S*, began in Kenya in 1969 through the acquisition of three companies: K9 Guarding Company, Night security organization, Thika, and a Mombasa based Guarding Services Company. *Security Group Africa* was started in 1970 by an ex-patriot police officer, and *Securex* was set up by an ex-policeman of Asian origin in 1970.

Two other companies that are among the leaders today were formed in the late 70s: *Wells Fargo*, which bears no relation to the bank in America except the name and a star logo, started in 1977 when an employee of *Securicor* (G4S) broke away from the company and took some of his clients with him, and *Ultimate Security*, a sister company to *Security Guard Services* (SGS), formed in 1979.

Bob Morgan, an ex-patriot from Britain and former deputy commissioner of the Kenyan police, “benefitted from the good will afforded him in the 1982 attempted coup” (Interview with BM employee, Nairobi, July, 2014) through acquiring clients and formed his own company *Bob Morgan* (BM), in 1984. The last company to fill the top bracket of companies today is *Kenya Kazi*, also known as the *KK group of companies* or just *KK*. The company was originally a small, family-owned, private security company run by an Irish man who had been in the Kenyan police force with about 500 guards in Mombasa. It was bought by a Kenyan who had been working in insurance and incorporated in 1993.

It is hard to say that structural adjustment had a direct impact on the private security industry but liberalization policies in general helped pave the way for the creation of a flood of companies in the 80s and 90s. When Kenya gained independence in 1963

commodity prices were high. The country enjoyed positive economic growth and expanding industry. However things turned sour in the late 1960s as a result of reforms by US President Nixon including the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. This slump was compounded by the oil crisis of 1973 that had devastating effects in Africa. Kenya's balance of payments situation deteriorated massively as prices for its exports fluctuated and the cost of necessary imports such as oil soared. The balance of payments current account deficit tripled between 1973 and 1977. The growth of industry came to a halt, local production costs were lowered and Kenya was forced to devalue its currency and take out loans (Ochieng and Maxon 1992). The signing of the first World Bank Structural Adjustment Loan came as the Kenyan government laid out its plans for a system of structural adjustments of the economy in Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1980. This was bolstered by further loans from the IMF and World Bank and the Economic Support Funds of the United States. The loans came with agreements to liberalize prices and marketing systems, reform the financial sector, trade reforms, government budget rationalization, and the divestiture and privatization of parastatals and civil service reforms. Many of the larger private security companies in operation in Nairobi today were set up in the wake of this process of liberalization.

Urbanization

As described above, all security agencies in the colony were run by settlers with the backing of the King's African Rifles. Private security guards were a continuation of this into a period when the settlers could no longer justify their control of what was called public security but was in fact always semi-public organizations serving the interest of certain

groups above others. But Private Security, particularly in terms of labor and the growth of smaller companies in the 80s and 90s, must be understood in relation to the massive urbanization process that has taken place in Kenya. This process started long before independence and only increased when restrictions on the movement of indigenous Kenyans was lifted.

The compulsory registration of births and deaths only began in the 1960s but Obudho and Aduwo (1992) have figures from censuses taken in 1948 and 1962. The Mau Mau rebellion did not stop a massive influx of Europeans during the 1950s and it was a time for massive growth in Kenya Colony. Subsidized by a thankful British government that was prepared to reward war veterans and those who had helped in the war effort with land in the colonies, migrants flocked to Kenya and urban areas became bustling centers of trade. Loans and other financial incentives also became more readily available for settlers. Between 1948 and 1962, people living in urban areas grew from 285,445 to 671,024; this represents a 6.6 percent increase per annum over the 14-year period, a growth of 135 percent. Urban population growth continued to grow up to independence and accelerated after 1962 as colonial boundaries and restrictions on the movement of Africans eased and people went in search of waged employment.

The number of urban centers with 2,000 or more people had also been growing and reached 47 by the time of the next census in 1969. By this time 1,079,908 people were in urban centers, 9.87% of the population with an annual growth rate of 7.1% per annum (Obudho and Aduwo 1992). The new urban centers were largely old townships, rural centers, and market or trading centers. By 1979, there were 91 urban centers with a total population of 2,315,696. Obudho and Aduwo (1992) attribute the increases to the push

factors from rural areas including the fact land was concentrated in fewer hands, farming was increasingly mechanized, there was a lack of investment in rural areas, and the fact that droughts, floods, and disasters, sent refugees to camps usually located on the outskirts of major urban areas (*ibid*: 426). Hornsby (2012:200) explains that urban problems increased towards the end of the 1960s as “loafers” in the town were said to be robbing people. A Vagrancy Act in 1967 attempted to remove them, but whilst housing was being built for the middle wage earning class, new poor migrants had little help. Rent tribunals were introduced in 1967 to keep house rents affordable and the National Housing Corporation also tried to build low cost housing.

But the general trend was for male migrants to come to the city on a short-term basis for waged employment and then to circulate back to their rural homesteads with their earnings. Obudho and Aduwo note a circulatory migration process. The 1969 census showed there were 50 percent more males in Nairobi than females and a study by Johnson and Whitelaw (1974) showed that 88.9% of the male migrants regularly sent some money out of Nairobi. Their study showed that the more money these migrants earned the less they sent home. This was explained by the fact that rural ties weaken as the urban migrant becomes more successful.

The growth in the number of private security companies was particularly strong in the 80s and 90s as Nairobi grew and as the demands of the middle classes grew. Many different owners of private security companies described these companies as being “more Kenyan” and “more local”.

Hornsby associates this urbanization of unemployed males with the rise in crime in the 1970s. He outlines how Kenyatta took a zero-tolerance approach by pushing for the

death penalty for robbers. In 1975, “the death penalty for armed robbery was introduced and remains on the statute book today” (2012:266). By 1979, Nairobi’s population had risen to 830,000 and Mombasa’s to 340,000. By 1984, nearly 60 percent of all formal sector jobs were in Nairobi (2912:387). By the census in 1989, 1.3 million people were living in Nairobi, a five-fold increase since independence, and a large part of that lived in slums.

Private security grew in the 80s and 90s as Nairobi and the demands of the middle classes grew. It is worth hearing at length from a Kenyan manager of a private security company as he explains about urbanization:

What happened is that people wanted to get some kind of watch around their property. Someone to keep watch around their property because us, the economic dimension in this society evolved, there was a large rural – urban migration into the cities, there was the kind of perception that there were more fortunes to be gained in the cities as opposed to the rural areas so every child who graduated from high school or college was directed to us the urban centers took advantage of the opportunities there. This caused that influx of very many young people into the cities and the job market wasn’t ready, it wasn’t able to keep pace with the migration so you ended up with a lot of unemployed idlers in the cities which translated into some economic negatives by way of insecurity, initially of purely economic nature, the pilfering and so on, but later on it grew into the violent character that would normally evolve because they faced resistance from the owners of the properties. And once it evolved in that direction then the need to have somebody keep watch grew larger and larger and you know the state found themselves more and more overwhelmed and this led to exponential growth of private security because the economy I would like to say was growing faster than maybe the state had anticipated or planned for and this is what has brought it to the situation we see

ourselves in today. In fact you say right on the onset as the situation evolved, people simply went and hired somebody who was looking for a job or who didn't have a job and got him to just stand outside his gate, they put gates and fences there, he didn't have to be trained and you paid him to just stay there and you instructed him to keep watch so we called them watchmen. His job was just to keep off any intruder, any unwanted guest and watch out for those ill intentions who are likely to sneak through the fence, blow up, and so he carried a whistle and erm that was adequate at the beginning, you opened the gate for the house owner to come in, you unlocked the gate and that's how it started. (Interview Nairobi, Kenya, June 2014).

After the initial establishments of some of the top private security companies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the 80s and 90s saw a massive rise in the number of private security companies as expatriates from Britain in the Kenyan police or army continued to establish them on retirement that they would then sell to what people call “local Kenyans.” Riley’s and Inter Security, two mid-level companies in Kenya today, are spin-offs from a company originally run by a British expatriates policeman. *Mac Security*, which was later broken into different companies including *Marco security* in 1999, was also formed in this way. And as indigenous Kenyans started to occupy the top positions in the police and army and retire with honorable discharges, they took up the trend of establishing private security companies. Often known as more “local” companies these companies form the majority of the mid-level companies in Kenya. *Cobra* and *911* were incorporated in 1995, *Lavington* in 1996, *Radar* in 1998, and *Brinks* in 2001. Some companies, such as *Perimeter*, started as private investigation units run by ex-police or army officials, serving “private

clients and the government itself” before becoming private security companies with guards.

This trend of urban migration has been coupled with a growing affluent middle class who demands similar protection to the white population. As demand for private security amongst middle-class Kenyans has risen, so have a number of gated communities in the East and South of the city in areas that are traditionally thought of as more Kenyan as opposed to white or Indian.

On the outskirts of Nairobi, usually located along its main arterial routes leading into the center, there are whole residential estates of large houses that only the richer residents of Nairobi can afford. They are often built by one company with a similar style of house throughout, they are enclosed by walls, barbed wire fencing, and private security. Security gates, manned by private security guards whose job is to lift and close the gate all day for the passing cars, protect entrances to and from these areas. The private security company here will likely be one company guarding and patrolling the whole estate.

Perhaps the oldest estate of this style and with perhaps the richest residents is the Runda Estate, located near the United Nations. The name Runda immediately invokes in people the impression of wealth and politicians. But look at Google maps and follow the arteries of Nairobi such as the Limuru road, the Mombasa road where it meets the Athi river, the Thika highway and the Ngong road and you can see the uniform houses of gated communities distinctly cut out of the landscape. The self-contained, enclosed estates, described above can also be found within much poorer areas of the city on the Eastside, in what is known as Eastlands. For example on the outer ring road between the Taj mall and Donholm in an area more generally known as Pipeline because of the large pipe factory

that is located in the area, there is the Fedha estate. The estate is entirely enclosed by walls and guard gates can be found at each entrance to a new area. To get to some areas, you may have to pass two guard gates. Another good example of a self-enclosed residential estate within a more generally poor area is the newly built Greenspan mall and Greenspan housing estate of three and four bedroom houses which are separated from the surrounding high-rise and poorly managed residential apartment blocks of Donholm by a high wall and guarded gates.

These self-contained estates are not so frequently found in the more immediate suburbs of Nairobi. Instead, richer houses that are located closer to the city center largely rely on their own walls and security. Guards may stand at the entrance to a house or the entrances to an apartment block. This is mainly the case in Westlands, some parts of Ngara and Highridge, in the North; Hurlingham, Kilimani, Kileleshwa and Lavington in the West and South B and C in the South. The Eastside of the city is generally poorer although you will find some guards guarding residential apartment blocks in Kamukunji, Kariokor, Pumwani, Pangani, Shauri Moyo, and Kaloleni.

The last thing to note here is that, accompanying this rise in private security was the aesthetic of having security in your area, your street or your home. It became a requirement for middle class Kenyans that adds to prestige. The image of a security or bodyguard with sunglasses surveying the landscape is popular in music videos. Whilst former US president Barack Obama's visit to Kenya in 2015 gripped the nation, it was his limousine that stole the show. The details of what was dubbed "the beast," were splashed

across every newspaper in Kenya. The fact that it had armor-plated sides, bulletproof windows, and all kinds of other security equipment filled Kenyans with awe.

Conclusion

What is the rationality for private security and its growth in Kenya? If we stick with traditional narratives in the literature and media about the ways private security is destroying the public police and army we miss the nuance of the Kenyan context. It takes the rationality of the process away from Kenya. Similarly the rhetoric of the importance of the cold war and the demobilizing of Soviet armies, places Kenya on the periphery of world forces, the satellite of the UK and US. There is a much more important and local influence on Nairobi, the massive and continually growing impact of urbanization. This narrative is subsumed by the other two, it is written out of the history of Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO: Effects of the Insecurity Discourse

Introduction

As Goldstein explains “who or what is the proper object of security in a neoliberal context is a matter of some debate” (2012:16). Drawing from Ferguson (2000), he points to the disruptive powers of neoliberalism in relation to security: “nation-states have increasingly been required (by the burden of debt...) to adopt the role of security providers for global capital which often forces these states to act in ways that undermines the security of their own citizens” (Goldstein 2012:16-17). In this chapter I look at some of the contemporary effects of the discourse that swirls around insecurity in Kenya and the growth of the private security industry.

The picture I got from my interviews and ethnographic encounters was of a disconnect between commentators overseas and policy makers in Kenya on one side who described Kenya as insecure, and the reality on the ground. The disconnect can be seen at a number of levels. First, the international press runs news articles about the security of Kenya that can have a direct effect on the business of the country but do not necessarily match the feeling of Kenyans in Nairobi. Second there is a disconnect around the idealizations people make of the public sphere within the Kenyan government and the way people treat public space. The stereotype of an ever-present threat of urban violence also comes through and the result of this discourse is that poorer people suffer, hawkers who are similar to private guards in that they are usually poor urban migrants, are chased and stigmatized, whilst guards take up positions of vulnerability.

“Shaken but resilient”

In traditional portrayals in the domestic and international financial press security in Kenya is depicted as a necessary precondition for productive and profitable economic processes. For instance, following a series of killings in the coastal region in August 2014, Bloomberg News ran a story describing how investors in infrastructure projects and buyers of a July-issued Kenyan five-year bond were “shaken by the violence” but that Kenyan markets “remained resilient” (Bloomberg 2015). This is perhaps not surprising given that much of Kenya’s economy is based on exports of tea, coffee and petroleum, as well as tourism. Security is essentially linked to the successful exportation of goods as it has been since colonial agricultural production whilst the links between tourism and security are obvious in that people will not visit the country if there are security problems.

Ferguson (2006) who has witnessed the work of private security in the copper mining industries of Zambia points to the localized spatial arrangements that private security engenders. Rather than having to secure an entire nation, capitalist investors in mining projects only need to use private contractors to secure their investments. “If this model of mineral extraction appears to many observers as a disturbing sign of our times,” Ferguson notes “it is worth remembering that many of the key features are not very new at all... in many respects colonial era extraction was similar” (206). Ferguson also explains that those countries with successful extractive enclaves of industry such as the Angolan oil fields, often do a lot better economically than their African neighbors despite raging war and insecurity (196).

Security from this perspective is closely linked to the massive insurance business underwriting assets. Insurance companies, like the one I visited in Nairobi’s Upper Hill,

carry out assessments of property and the number of private guards and type of security infrastructure plays a major part in assessing the value of banks, businesses, and extractive industry. These companies are then linked to broader global insurance companies and risk assessment companies that monitor political uprisings and local militia attacks and provide information and updates to business people through platforms like “Control Risks” and “iJet.” Foreign governments also offer security updates to potential tourists.

Another system that provides information to local communities around Nairobi is the network of residents’ associations. Given the colonial history of Kenya, residents’ associations have banded together in certain parts of Nairobi to swap crime stories and notices through newsletters and a central administration office that coordinates with the UN as well as government officials. Searching through twitter, there are a number of accounts dedicated to streaming news of muggings and robberies around Nairobi. Accounts such as “Crime Watch Nairobi, @ suemc_phee” deliver daily tweets about robberies, mainly of cars. Private security companies also publish statistics of crime on their twitter and social media accounts, further fueling the feeling that crime is around every corner.

Whether portraying Kenya as a volatile place sometimes benefits the economy is a moot point but in the conversations I had with people in Kenya it was clear there was a disconnect between portrayals of security in Kenya through these media and the situation on the ground. I experienced this disconnect myself when I signed up for alerts from the UK government’s foreign office whilst I was in Kenya and received constant email updates that made me think I was living in a war zone. When I spoke to managers of different private security companies, they often wondered aloud about why Kenya was considered a dangerous place. As one white owner of a private security company explained to me:

“Crime here is not actually as bad as people make out, it’s no worse than anywhere else and better than other places I mean it’s far better than Johannesburg. The terrorism thing... there are more bombs in New York and yet we get a travel ban” (Interview Nairobi, June 2014).

A Kenyan manager of one of the top companies also explained how many people compare Kenya to other countries in terms of security and conclude that Kenya is not much worse and yet is described by others as much worse: “No one is saying don’t go to America after 9/11 [and yet in Kenya] it is blown out of proportion. I’m watching CNN or Al-Jazeera and I’m asking myself, am I in Kenya (2519). It’s hyped let me put it that way. It’s not so bad compared to other areas. It’s just a perception.” (Interview Nairobi, July 2014).

Open plazas of rollerbladers

The disconnect I felt between the discourse on social and other media was also present when I explained to a person high up in the hierarchy of the city county government that I was interested in private security. They were shocked, and exclaimed, “Why are you interested in talking to them?! You should be talking to....” I was directed to talk to a group of people who worked with NGOs, KARA (the association of residents’ associations), and UN-Habitat. The city county government had a special team dedicated to working with NGOs and UN-Habitat to promote public space, take it back from corrupt politicians who were said to have grabbed the land, and enable free and open spaces for the public. Three particular spaces were cited as success stories in this regard - “true public spaces.” They explained that the area around Mama Ngina road for example had changed from a no-go zone into somewhere that the public could walk freely without worrying

about crime or even simply car traffic. The other success story was the Jevanje Gardens project that maintained the park in the North East of the city, ridding it of drunks and drug dealers and allowing people to feel safe moving around in the park. The last success story was a square in the CBD where an initiative by the Nairobi city county had turned the park into an area that could be used by rollerbladers on Sundays. Such depictions echo work in anthropology on the ways that privatization blocks free and fair interactions in public space and the public sphere as I discussed in the introduction and develop more in chapter three.

I had in fact already attended a meeting set up by KARA and UN-Habitat. In the meeting, different uses of public space were measured, quantified, and analyzed by the members of the NGOs and the UN in their various presentations. When it came time to hear the members of the audience, which was mainly made up of people from different residents' associations around the country, the issue of public space was largely forgotten and the meeting descended into an opportunity for everyone to give their opinion about how badly the government was doing in general, and the levels of corruption in the Nairobi city county government.

The meeting showed me the disconnect between the attempts of these groups to promote public space and the political situation experienced by many Kenyans. It showed that the target of their policies were idealized visions of freely associating people in public space. For example the number of religious groups that were able to use the space was considered alongside the number of people who felt safe in the area and the improvement of the trees.

This disconnect was also something I witnessed first hand when I spent a day with an NGO promoting public space in a suburb of Nairobi. The bright colors of the marker pens with which the NGO wrote out their manifesto for collaborative, participatory development (inspired by Robert Chambers see for e.g. 1994), were discordant with the drab grey buildings and muddy streets of the project space. The NGO was busy getting the local community to plant trees whilst local DJs blasted out music from a hired music station. Women hung colorful designs across the houses. Increasingly throughout the day people were less and less interested in the project and more and more interested in the music station. By the time we drove off in our cars past a huge mass of people gathered around the music station, people waved to say thanks and goodbye, not for what had happened in the day or for the intentions of the NGO workers who did or did not know best about how to manage things, not for the policies of the NGOs desperate to promote the building of communal space, but more for the chance to have music and dancing. As they waved, it seemed to me that they knew that the NGO workers were going back to places that they envied, places where there was coffee and sandwiches (as they had taken from Java Coffee in the Sarit centre mall at the start of the day) in well-lit malls with music playing all the time. These groups decry the loss of public space in Nairobi and attempt to promote it for the habitat of the public even as they go back to their gated communities and privately guarded homes.

The number of NGOs in Kenya boomed from 125 in 1974 to over 400 in 1987 (Hornsby 2012:449). “Believing that civil society was more democratic than the state, foreign agencies actively bypassed the state in resource distribution. By 1996-7, USAID routed 85 per cent and Britain 40 per cent of its aid through non-government channels”

(Hornsby 2012:587). As a manager of a leading private security company who had set up branches of the company around Africa told me, “when the UN goes into a country it is safe for others to go in” (Interview Nairobi, July 2014). NGOs and development workers are coming to Kenya in the name of different projects and backed by alternative security providers, effectively outsourcing the money that the Kenyan government could get from this. This has taken on its own moniker when scholars describe it as the security-development nexus (Buur and Stepputat 2007; Duffield and Donini 2014)

Private security unions in Kenya

There is also a disconnect between institutions that are supposed to look after the interests of private security guards and the guards themselves. In this section more elements of the insecurity of guards is revealed through the institutional structure that is supposed to protect them. Security matters get discussed far away from the people who are on the ground in the boardrooms of the two private security unions or in the government committees on private security. I found out surprisingly late in my research that there was a workers’ union for private guards. Not one of the guards I had interviewed had mentioned it and I only found out by chance through their Facebook page. I carried out a long interview with an administration officer of the private security workers’ union in their headquarters in Hurlingham and he assured me they were doing everything they could to recruit and get their guards on board to reap the benefits of being part of a union but they explained that it was difficult because it was such cheap labor the companies can even sack people who join the union. The officer explained that some companies undermine their attempts to recruit guards and so they sometimes target the managers and company as a

whole and try to get them to sign a service agreement with them whereby everyone of their employees will be signed up and pay a small amount each month from their pay check unless they opt out of the scheme. The officers showed me a list of the companies that had signed up but told me it was an ongoing struggle. It was difficult to gauge how much the union really did for the workers. When I spoke to different guards about the union there was very little enthusiasm. Some did not know whether they were paying money to the union or a part of it or not. The union backs calls to arm their guards. The officer I interviewed became particularly animated over this issue and explained that it was the only way to protect their lives (see below for more on arming guards).

Because of the negative connotations about being a guard sometimes their families do not know they are guarding and so they lack the protection of their family. As one guard explained to me: "Friends are not relatives. Most of their families don't know they are doing security; worried about telling their family because they would be discouraged." (Interview Nairobi, July 2014).

In 2002 the top private security companies established the Kenya Security Industry Association along the lines of the British Security Industry Association. The KSIA meet every two months (except if an emergency meeting needs to be called) to discuss issues surrounding private security. I attended one meeting and talked to a number of the managers from the different companies on different occasions. Many of the managers said that it was formed in order to regulate the industry particularly in order to keep members and the industry in general in line when it came to paying their workers a fair wage. The big companies feel that their business is undermined because of what they call "suitcase companies," small outfits that might be run by one person out of their suitcase, which are

able to offer clients much reduced rates because they do not pay their workers minimum wage.

The KSIA now has 30 members and they are all signed up to an agreement to pay minimum wages and the government fees for running a company (i.e. to be properly registered). There are three categories of subscribers, determined by the number of employees and turnover. The big companies pay a subscription fee of 160,000 shillings a year. The medium pay 80,000 and the small 40,000. The administrative duties of the association are run by the PR firm, Churchill, that was established in 1975 with offices in Karen located away from Nairobi on the Ngong Road. Despite the rules on minimum wages and regulations, the companies of the KSIA argued amongst themselves about whether all of them were paying. At the meeting I attended they discussed a possible audit of all of the members to ensure they were adhering to the standards. A number of the managers I spoke to explained that probably only three of the companies in Kenya actually pay the minimum wage. This is not as surprising as it sounds as my understanding was that this is common practice in Kenyan business generally. The association also has a black list of employers and employees. Some companies have been known not to pay the private security company for their services when it was time and moved onto another. These companies are put on a black list so that other companies know not to offer them their services. Employees who are known to have stolen whilst on the job or acted inappropriately are also placed on a list.

The Protective Security Industry Association (PSIA) was formed around the same time as the KSIA in opposition to some of the stricter rules of the KSIA. They are considered a “rebel group” by the KSIA, formed by private security companies who were unable to

afford the fees or were prepared to adhere to the rules on salaries of the KSIA. On the website they have 67 member companies. They resent the big contracts that the top private security companies in the KSIA win through having links to international businesses and particularly the embassies and diplomatic missions. One informant explained to me that the ones that have the diplomatic missions are the only ones who can afford to pay the minimum wages. I know for a fact, having seen pay slips and spoken to guards that very few companies adhere to the rules on minimum wages.

Since 2004, the KSIA and others have pushed the government for more formal regulation of the private security industry. A bill was drafted back in 2004 but was shelved and revived a number of times. A version of the bill was then passed in 2016. Most of the managers that I spoke to did not believe that the bill would change anything in regards to the minimum wage.

One of the earliest issues that I picked up in my research with private guards is whether or not private security guards should be armed. I heard this issue talking with guards on the street and used a snowball interview technique to then take this question to other people in the industry. This issue in fact was pushed to the top in most discussions I had with guards on the street and even more so with the managers back in their offices. The PSIA members were usually for arming guards whilst the KSIA were strongly against. It seems the issue of whether to have guns has been used as a political bargaining chip in negotiations between the PSIA, KSIA, and Kenyan government. When I spoke with a senior member of the private security workers union, he strongly advocated arming guards. In arguments to do with guards and guns, Uganda is often given as a good example of a place where arming guards has been a success.

The vulnerability of private guards

I referred at the start of this chapter to the fact that “who or what” is secured under neoliberalism is a matter for debate. Mike Davis points to the ways that private security in Los Angeles is made up of “an army of non-union, low-wage employees” (Davis 1990:251) for the labor-intensive roles that public workers do not want to do. But more than that, private guards are more exposed than their police counterparts who as Davis explains have “retrenched behind the supervision of security macro-systems, maintenance of major crime databases, aerial surveillance, jail systems, paramilitary responses to terrorism and street insurgency and so on” (*ibid*: 251). One of the results of the discourse of insecurity swilling around Nairobi is that private guards are employed for minimal wages in insecure and vulnerable locations.

One thing that became very apparent to me as I talked to guards all around the city is their fear of an attack by robbers with guns. They are the first line of defense and so, as can be seen from attacks like Westgate where the guards at the front of the mall were the first to be shot, they are more exposed to the violence of attackers than other guards inside a mall or police stationed elsewhere.

When I asked guards what they would like to be changed about the industry they usually said either that they would like to have more protection by being given guns or they said they would like more pay because of the risks of the job. As one guard explained when asked whether he felt secure in his job:

“errr at a time yes, at a time no, because as a security guard, our life is just not secured because we are not armed we just have some rubber batons these are rungus, and if somebody is coming maybe to do some activity here and me I am just holding a rungu

then you will see he may also go and take away my life before he enters here, that's why our lives are not so much secure" (Interview Nairobi July 2014).

I often asked guards about what they understood by the word risk and the idea of their job being a risk came up frequently:

"Let's say when criminals come the first people they meet are the soldiers, now that is the first risk, the first people they meet is you, our lives are in danger we endanger our lives" (Interview Nairobi, June 2014).

Words such as "forefront," and "first victims," were used in interviews to describe the fact that guards are the first people to face a threat. Another guard explained: "When you are trained in security you have to understand that you are the first person in any case, if you are here, anyone can strike, but errr like for example a terrorist you are the first thing he make sure he clears" (Interview Nairobi, June 2014)).

The low value around being a guard is outlined by them and their powerlessness in the face of their needing to be employed. It is worth quoting at length how this guard feels worthless in his company:

"... there was a time when the owner of the company was saying if they kills, if they come here and they kill you, they will employ another person so that they can work and life continues. You see that kind of argument, or that kind of way of talking. You see it discourages somebody from being that guard, because they kill me today here and the following day, even if I follow, they come and shoot me and they rush me to the hospital and I get treated and I get well. If I try to follow their insurance, whatever, to get paid, there is nothing like that. Instead what they will do is to terminate me and another thing they'll do, I'll hire a lawyer to help me with that case and in the process they will call my lawyer.

They pay him well to stop chasing that (laughter) my employee and it ends like that since because I'm not financially well, they give up on the person and it goes like that..."

(Interview Nairobi, June 2014)

Another way through which guards lives are rendered expendable is that some are recruited to go and fight in Iraq with American forces. As I was told by the secretary to the KSIA:

"We have a member now who has applied to be a member called ..., what he does is he's contracted by some American companies to recruit guards from Kenya and they guard the American embassies in Afghanistan, Iraq and it's a very tedious method of getting them because they have to train them in Miami, they have to be of good conduct, they have to be physically strong but he told me he has about 300 of them out there in Iraq, he recruits them here" (Interview Nairobi, June 2015).

The fact that guards were being taken to work in places like Afghanistan was corroborated by a CNSNEWS article from 2008:

"Sentry Security of East Africa, a company registered in Pennsylvania but with a branch in Kenya, expects to employ at least 1,200 'guards' from Kenya in Iraq and Afghanistan starting this month. Jack Kimuri, head of the East African branch, said the contractors will work under U.S. Department of Labor regulations, providing for a 10-hour working day, minimum pay and disability and death insurance. The positions draw interest because salaries are about 30 percent higher than those earned by members of the armed forces here and five times more than salaries earned by policemen. They are almost 10 times more than those earned by private security guards in Kenya and Uganda" (Mbogo 2008).

Sometimes guards emphasized that they thought the government should do more to protect them:

“When will the government realize private security are important in the community? And when will they support them so they can boost the security? They should not just concentrate on police that are armed with weapon because if you are being engaged in security you can just give information that will lead to arrest of those who are planning to do something because as a security guard if you raise an issue they just take you as a mere security guard...” (Interview Nairobi June 2014).

In the section that follows I describe more about the city inspectorate and hawkers as they provide an interesting parallel with private guards. Both are poor urban migrants who suffer from the demand for security and the discourse around insecurity in Kenya.

The city county inspectorate and hawkers

Since the reestablishment of the city council in 1992, the city inspectorate have continued to occupy a controversial position as law-enforcement officers with the power to arrest for what was for a long time the city council, but since 2013 is now the county government. In reference to this group I often heard the phrase “hired thugs.” On their side, the inspectorate told me they wished they had more powers to arrest and that they had better equipment to do their job effectively.

One of their main jobs in the central business district is to clear hawkers who have encroached on public land. Linehan (2007) explains how hawkers continue to be the main group targeted in terms of policy when successive governments and city councils want to combat crime but also shows how they have been embroiled in political corruption and

sometimes given more leniency by the government to secure votes. For example, “when the NARC Government took office in 2002, a campaign to rid Nairobi of hawkers was commenced with great determination by both civic authorities, local business organization and the Kenyan Police” (Linehan 2007:30). Battles against hawkers from different combinations of groups stigmatizes hawking and makes it the number one thing to attack when in office.

As a high-ranking member of the city inspectorate told me:

The public are very much essential to our work because we are wanting them to walk freely (clap), enjoy life, (clap), and we (inaudible) them with security, that's why we get hawkers away because when you, when hawkers are in town you find there's a lot of mugging and lawlessness, people are doing things without a plan, they are just doing things, littering is all over, but now when you now contain them you find that things are being contained in a way you have planned. (Interview, Nairobi, March 10, 2015).

I spent a day with city inspectorate officials when they planned a major operation to crack down on hawkers in the public bus depot. The bus depot is geographically on the East of Moi Avenue but very close to it. As with other areas of the city, hawkers' stalls had begun to creep further and further from the edges into the middle of this vast open square space.

All across Kenya, Churches and mosques are usually in prominent positions and well maintained. People often refer to the area around St Peter's church in the city centre east of Moi Avenue, simply as St Peter's. I had arranged to meet the member of the city inspectorate outside the church. I was on the correct side of the church, as when I called he was soon crossing the street from the opposite direction, and leading me to the compound directly across from the church that was used by city inspectorate officials (transport and

security.) A group of mainly men were already gathered and listening to a leader explain the operation they were going to perform that day. As we stood there some of the city busses were driven into the compound. The city inspectorate official told me that this is where they would impound busses and other public transport vehicles that had not paid their taxes.

We set off for the main operation of the day which was to smash a number of makeshift hawkers stalls that had been set up in the main bus depot area and confiscate any merchandise that was left. The bus depot is geographically on the East of Moi Avenue but very close to it. As with other areas of the city, hawkers' stalls had begun to creep further and further from the edges into the middle of this vast open square space. This is a tactic that you can see all over Nairobi with informal market stalls. I saw this process first hand at my friend's kiosk (see chapter three for more). The process is that somebody has managed to ascertain a space in the city to sell goods and establish a stall. Their friends, who walk around the city selling goods, may ask if they can use the permanent structure to then sell from that space. Slowly the stall begins to grow, perhaps because the stall owner has told another seller they can use it as a base for their merchandise, perhaps because they have told the other seller they can add to the stall with an extra table.

As we approached the square, my guide and two other inspectorate officials began talking to a disabled man who was selling sweets and other small items on the walkway, they hesitated and discussed the situation with the man before deciding that he did not have the right authority to be there and they started to pack up his goods and move him along.

The operation to destroy the stalls did not surprise me because I had seen the way that hawkers are treated near the kiosk mentioned above. By the time I arrived in the square, the hawkers had all vanished as they had obviously been given a sign to run otherwise they would have been arrested. I watched as the inspectorate officials bundled up the clothes and other goods previously on sale into huge bags or tied bundles. I was told the goods are taken to an auction place on Ngong road where the public can buy them back. I asked my guide whether anybody did and he said that if the goods are more expensive such as trousers and electrical items they may try to buy them back. They then used crow bars or bars of metal to smash all the wooden structures of the stalls, reducing them to rubble, which they then loaded onto the top of their vans. My guide told me that the hawkers had been given notice: two weeks, and then three days and then a final warning.

After the stalls had been smashed and the goods confiscated, we regrouped outside the compound. Later on that morning he showed me what the rest of a typical day was for him. We walked from the city inspectorate compound and as we walked he talked about the city, completely dividing it along the line of Moi Avenue. To the West of Moi Avenue, he called this the Upper CBD. He told me that there were no hawkers in the Upper CBD, because the workers and businesses there saw the hawkers as a threat and so “they cannot sell there, there is no business, they know it is associated with crime” (Interview, Nairobi, February 3, 2015). We got to the Nation Media Center and a man my guide said was a colleague was there sitting reading the paper next to a newspaper stand. My guide said he patrolled that street and that “they have people out looking after certain streets so the hawkers know they can’t go there” (Interview, Nairobi, February 3, 2015). I realized that some kind of selling was sanctioned in the Upper CBD; there are newspaper and bookstalls

that gradually accommodate other types of selling such as the sweets and small items such as single cigarettes that the disabled man near the bus depot had sold. These stalls pay their dues to the city inspectorate and are allowed in the Upper CBD. Among the other sanctioned types of hawking in the Upper CBD are things associated with businesses such as ink stamps. My guide suggested that we go back down toward the lower CBD, the River Road area, as “there are no hawkers here” (Interview, Nairobi, February 3, 2015).

We walked along a road that he had classified as part of the lower CBD, Tom Mboya, which runs parallel to Moi Avenue; he explained, “that at night this road is full of hawkers. They come from the market and sell. They used to have a thing where they could come at a certain time and day but it didn’t work. And they don’t have enough people to stop it” (Interview, Nairobi, February 3, 2015). I verified this information with a friend who worked for a private security company. He also told me about an initiative to keep hawkers in a certain market for certain times of the day but that it did not work. He agreed with my guide, dividing the city by the hawkers’ ability to sell and explaining that the hawkers don’t visit the West side of the CBD because they cannot sell there. He explained that they know there are lots of people moving around in the River Road area and that they can sell their goods cheaply there. He said the quality of the goods is high and I assumed that people preferred to come and sell their goods there and move on as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

The demand for security from foreign investors that we saw through international media manifests itself in two ways. First there are continual crackdowns on hawkers and the operations of gangs in the Nairobi CBD. The second is the massive rise in the demand

for security from Nairobi residents and people who work there. Private guards, like hawkers, are usually poor urban migrants trying to make it in the city and sending money back home. Winning a private security job gives workers money but it also means they are vulnerable.

CHAPTER THREE: Securitized landscapes, crosscurrents, and new forms of sociality

Introduction

During the 15 months I spent working with private security guards in Nairobi, Kenya, much of my leisure time was spent with friends in a kiosk in a suburb about 20 minutes' walk from *Town*, the central business district. Here, "Mungiki," the name of a banned, non-state political group, was whispered between friends in the shadows of the market alleyways, whilst some of its members jumped onto nearby *matatus* (public busses) and jumped off with a small cash sum from the driver as payment for safe passage. At the same time, the city inspectorate officials chased away hawkers in the name of public security, and an informally-employed private security guard looked after the market stalls at night for a gift of cash, in what people in the area called the *kadogo* (small) economy.

The recognition of the range of different actors involved in providing security in settings like the one just described was one of the factors involved in the development of critical security studies in the 1990s. For critical security studies scholars the practices of non-state groups like private security often intersect with the contracts and business of the state, showing the pluralization and hybridization of the security practices of both police and vigilantes. Paul Higate and Mats Utas' (2017) recent edited collection entitled *Private Security in Africa*, for example, contains chapters on private security and on groups such as the Mungiki. Critical security studies scholars point to localized understandings of non-state security assemblages of the range of different groups involved in providing security

and advocate analyzing them ethnographically (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011; Diphorn 2016; Kirsch and Grätz 2010).

Critical security studies scholars point to the essentializations and idealizations of the older state-centered approach such as a monopoly on the use of violence, and the notion of security as a purely public good, separate and untainted by private interests. When applied to African contexts, the encroachment of private security on these ideals is seen by the state-centered approach as a reflection of weak states. For critical security studies scholars by contrast, private security represents the perfect example of how services like security have always involved a range of actors even when they are delivered by the state. The work of Charles Tilly is often cited to claim that state-making itself often resembles “organized crime” (quoted in Abrahamsen and Williams 2011:113). In this chapter I take issue with the fact that within this approach, the terms on which the state is placed on an equal level with other groups usually revolves around violence, in that both state and non-state groups are able to claim sovereignty through the threat or use of violence. For example Tessa Diphorn, in her ethnography with rapid response private security guards in South Africa, looks at how violence is used for “claims to sovereignty” which are described as being about “creating communities and constructing social borders” (2016:14). My contention is that the focus on violence obfuscates some of the actually existing forms of sociality that the massive and growing presence of private security all around the city of Nairobi engenders. “Violence,” for Diphorn, “is the means by which these borders, and thus communities, are enforced and created: Violence constructs order out of (perceived) disorder” (2016:14). Yet, the neighborhoods and communities described by way of the threat of violence are usually affluent, and usually white, echoing similar

work on private security and residential enclaves in anthropology (Caldeira 2000; Low 2003). Like Meagher (2012), I suggest that an assemblage approach that focuses on violence does not escape the binary of the state-centered approach in that it is often left describing the kinds of networks that only work on the logic of an ideal of the monopoly of the use of violence. The idealization of violence in the literature has resonance with other similar idealizations of free, open and fair association in public squares or the public sphere that private security are said to break down or block and so in this way the chapter also approaches the broader topic of civil society in Africa as will be explained below.

Focusing on the social experience of moving through the securitized spaces of the city, and the lives and social networks of security guards, paints a different picture from the stereotype in the literature that private security is based on, and perpetuates, an ever-present threat of urban violence. Like Göpfert describes for “security in Niamey” (2012), the networks that I document disrupt the idealized sections of the city protected through the threat of violence by different groups. I extend work in this field that focuses on the forms of sociality created by networks of security providers (such as Pratten 2010; Hornberger 2017), by offering ethnographic insights from the context of Nairobi.

The presence of guards in different locations around the city are constructive of new obligations that stitch the city together in a non-ethnicized manner. As I showed in the last chapter, the position of the guards is more vulnerable because of the threat of violence that they evoke, but the forms of sociality that are thus created are not however galvanized by this violence (Meagher 2012). The guards maintain links to home, associations with people like hawkers, and build on the benefits of having a foothold in the city. The networks I describe are engendered alongside and at cross-currents to the securitized landscape.

“Money doesn’t circulate in *Town*, it’s expensive”

Most of what I considered leisure time during my fieldwork was spent with friends in a small kiosk in a shipping container that was located in Ngara, a suburb of Nairobi that is close to what is known as *Town* or the Central Business District (from now on, *Town*) but separated from it by the Nairobi river and *Globe* (a large circular intersection.) A large market selling fruit and vegetables, and clothes and shoes, and a large matatu *stage* (bus station,) dominates the Western side of Ngara. The market is located in the alleyways and roads that ascend up West from the Thika highway after it passes over *Globe* and along Ngara. The shipping container is at the bottom of one of the lanes of the market leading up the hill.

The container is on one of the edges of a triangular section made by an exit road from the highway nearby. This section of stones and dirt was always intended to be part of the main bus station which it is directly joined to along its North side but has never been tarmacked. Nonetheless, it is used by the matatu drivers and is a main part of the station for the bigger busses. When it rains, you can see how this area was a major tributary for the Nairobi river as these alleyways and roads stream with water.

As I reflected on my time here, it became central to the way that I understood my work with private guards because the people that I spent time with in the area were, like most private security guards, relatively poor urban migrants looking to make money from people in *Town* through hawking or hustling.

One Tuesday afternoon I was sitting at my friend John’s clothes stall at the end of the shipping container. I was perched on the plastic outer layer of an old computer monitor that, by being turned screen side down, makes a seat. We had a steaming cup of tea from a

lady who makes it in huge pots and keeps it in large camping flasks further up the alleyway heading up the hill. Things are slow, the food stalls have not yet been set up, the hawkers are nowhere to be seen, and matatu traffic is very light in comparison to the key commuter times.

John and I start to talk about the differences between Town and Ngara. John explains to me that Ngara is a place for hawkers and hustlers but that money circulates here, unlike Town where, he says it is expensive. Money is associated with rich areas in Nairobi. You hear people say: “there is money there,” or “that person has money” because he comes from here or there, all the time. Town is always associated with money and hustlers and hawkers recognize it as a place where money can be made.

People in Nairobi often explain the issue of hawking (street trading) in terms of unemployment, but many hawkers come to Nairobi knowing full well that they will not get a job. There is enough distribution of money and other goods around Nairobi to make even small hawking jobs more attractive than staying in the village, and slums have grown up around Nairobi full of people without formal jobs who are happier to be in the slum than the village. Given the fact that most people know that there are no formal jobs, urbanization is better thought of in those terms, but also as a chance to make claims on people in the city who have access to more material and wealth.

John’s explanation that Town is expensive makes this reference to it being a place of money but he is also talking about the kinds of transactions that take place there. Town is a place where small gifts of money or goods to friends and family, what John is referring to as circulating money, do not happen. Transactions in Town are seen as large for goods that

must be bought in a shop or mall using a bank account as opposed to what people refer to as the *kadogo* (small) economy of places like Ngara.

People call it the “kadogo economy,” the millions of micro-transactions that people in Nairobi engage in with one another everyday. Goods such as cigarettes, oil, soap, razors, chewing gum, alcohol, milk, and even toothpaste can be bought wholesale and then broken up into much smaller units of sale that people can afford. Unilever cottoned on to this and make tiny packages of washing powder for example. Cigarettes are bought in packs but sold individually. Painkillers and antacids are sold individually from a larger pack. Oil is bought in large gallon sized containers and a measure is sold in plastic bags. Long bars of soap are cut and sold at varying lengths. Alcohol in the form of spirits (liquor) can be bought as a quarter of a bottle or a half of a bottle. Milk is sold in measurements of plastic bags or even spoons for very poor people in slums and toothpaste can be sold by the squirt. Small measures of goods in plastic bags like oil are similar to the way that coal is measured in paint cans and beans in cans that used to be used by the supermarket. All these processes are in effect avoiding any payments of tax on their sale that is covered by the original producer. Sugar has long been made in sachets that are barely worth anything except when you need them; hot chocolate, razors, and coffee are the same.

At the level of the kadogo economy, handing over a 1, 5, 10, or 20 shilling coin, or even 50 shillings to someone, happens on a regular basis. As a result there is a very high circulation of 10 and 20 (*mbao*) shilling coins. You are considered slightly foolish to try to keep hold of these denominations when they are so small and so they pass easily between people. Many of these coins remain in the kadogo economy, passed between kiosks and matatu conductors and never re-enter the bank of Kenya system. There are huge numbers

of 5 shilling coins in circulation still bearing Moi's face and other even older 5 bob coins. 50 shilling notes are often in extremely bad shape, discolored, torn, and very dirty, because they are not used in places that would take their cash to a bank.

Kenyans see these networks as different from the formal transactions of Town and the many malls that have sprung up around Nairobi. They divide places like Ngara from Town in a way that effects people's actions whether people look for jobs in Town or whether they go to a market in a suburb, whether they look for credit from family that work in Town or those who work in rural areas.

Securitized spaces

As stated in the introduction, I interviewed over 50 security guards around Nairobi. I also carried out participant observation, sitting with them during their 12 hour-shifts and accompanying cash-in-transit (CIT) teams as they delivered cash around the city. What I saw was a securitized landscape backed by the threat of violence. The threat of violence was sometimes very visible in that armed police were stationed next to the bank or mall and paid for by them. Cash-in-transit teams always have three armed police officers with them. But I learned that a lot of the time, the threat of violence is hidden behind an alarm, either at their station or that the guards wear around their necks that would summon a rapid response team who would be accompanied by armed police.

For private security, the malls are some of the best clients as contracts can be won for the whole of the mall or for shops, banks, and businesses, inside the mall. Malls often house the important cash holding branches for the different Kenyan banks. You can find the guards of at least five different private security companies in a mall the size of the Sarit

Centre in Westlands (that has around 50 different shops and businesses) and more in Garden City mall off the Thika road where there is generally more space to cover.

Many gas stations in and around Nairobi are mini-versions of malls in that they are highly securitized spaces with chains of shops or restaurants. There is always a high presence of private security, mainly because gas stations house ATMs for most of the major banks but also Pizza Inn, Galitos (a chicken fast food restaurant), and an ice cream parlor. Each ATM can have a separate guard from a different company posted to it.

There are lots of malls located all around the West and North of the city in areas that are considered white or Indian, and new malls are being built all the time. “Two Rivers” mall is a huge new construction project involving Chinese firms and financed by Centum, an investor listed on the Nairobi securities exchange. It is being built on the Limuru road where there is already a number of malls including the long-standing “Village Market.” Another new mall that was in the process of being completed whilst I was there in 2016 is “The Hub” which has Kenya’s first Carrefour supermarket as well as many other international chain stores serving the needs of the richer residents of Karen, named after the Danish author Karen Blixen’s family. A number of informants corroborated the fact that the member of parliament who built Garden City Mall along Thika Road had promised that he was going to build something for the poor, and instead he built a huge mall with the slogan “Shop differently, live comfortably.”

These securitized spaces serve a certain group of people. In this sense there is a link between the threat of violence of the guards and police, the amount of money that circulates in the malls and shops and banks, and the community they create just as other scholars have described for residential areas and gated communities (Caldeira 2000; Low

2003). The extent to which the malls are important to expatriate Europeans and Indians can be seen by their noticeboards which are full of adverts offering services or items for sale that only this section of society could afford or would be interested in buying. They resemble the magazine “www.xpatlink.info” that is freely on offer in most of the malls with classified ads for trampolines, French lessons, mobile phones, cars, and of course real estate. These noticeboards allow the more affluent Nairobi residents to communicate and sell to one another informally, away from the hustle of the street, and private security is a major part of making that the case. This is evident in the ways that malls are promoted. On one of the entrances to the Sarit Centre, a sign reads “The Sarit Centre, a city within a city.” The sign seems particularly appropriate, as the people I knew that shopped there did not count Town (the central business district) as the city. In the Sarit Centre there is a small post office, there are banks and ATMs, there is a big Uchumi supermarket, flower stalls, gift shops, a gym, and a cinema. In most of the malls there are also doctors and dentists. The people that visit these places do not need to go anywhere else; for them the mall can be their city. One expatriate friend told me that he no longer likes to go into Town and that the places he moves are between the West side of Nairobi and sometimes Westlands.

The binary of security and insecurity

Binary idealizations of the security of areas divide the city along similar depictions of secure formal transactional spaces and insecure places where gifts in the kadogo economy predominate. The first descriptions I read of the River Road area of Nairobi, (the East side of Moi avenue) were in keeping with the impression I was given from a number of other sources at other times in my research. On my first visit to Nairobi, I read in a

guidebook about the cheaper hotels located near River Road. It was described as being part of Town but it was given special attention as a part that was to be treated with caution because of crime, particularly pick-pocketing, and activities around bars and nightclubs. A Euro-American friend later said to me that he would “never go down there” and Kenyan friends and acquaintances also echoed this sentiment. On my first two visits to Nairobi I rarely went to the area, but when I went it was for cheap goods or transport. I arrived to Nairobi in 2013 needing a certain item of clothing having left all of mine at a friend’s house and a friendly Kenyan lady I met at the hotel showed me around River Road and where to buy cheap clothes. I went to the offices of a bus company there on a few occasions to check prices but my friend and I went directly to the offices and did not stay long. The only other time I went there in my first visits to Kenya was to take the overnight bus from Nairobi to Lamu. It was dark as I boarded the bus, my friend William saw someone he knew and he asked him to look out for me on the journey. We were waiting around for the bus to pack up but at a certain point William said he wanted to leave as he thought it might get “hot” in the area, meaning that somebody might try to cause him problems walking back from there to his home at that time.

Early on in my third trip to Nairobi, a trip of nine months, I visited the area at least a couple of times, one time for a whole afternoon to try to buy a cheaper mattress than could be found in the supermarkets and malls we had already checked. This was the first time that I really got an idea of what the area was like. I noticed that it was much busier than the rest of Town in terms of people. People and cars and busses all shared the road and there is barely enough space to go around. You learn quickly that motorcycles driving in any direction and on any part of the pavement/sidewalk or road are not to be challenged and

you are immediately to move out of the way. People moving carts or hauling things aim directly for the pedestrians because they know they will move otherwise they will get hit by the metal or the sack of pineapples. It was very clear that this was much more of a transport hub than other areas of the city. And I linked this to the fact I knew about the long distance busses arriving and departing from the area. I also linked this to the fact that there were cheaper goods on sale, that this was the area for cheaper goods in the city and that you could buy them in bulk. This was backed up by my friend who said he knows people who send other people down to the River Road area to get cheaper clothes and bring them to the other side of the Nairobi central business district to sell or to their houses on the West side of Nairobi. At various other times in my research I had conversations with people who separated the area from the rest of the city and explained that they would go there or would not dare go there and why.

Non-coercive association

The ways that the fragmented and plural systems of private security and non-state groups are described in the literature leaves very little room for non-coercive forms of association. One of the reasons for this is Katumanga's influential article on the history of Nairobi's "bandit economy" (2005) that is still widely followed and cited (see Rasmussen 2017). I take issue with this work on two levels. First, as Guyer (1996) explained for what are similar disputes that circle around the concept of civil society in Africa (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Kasfir 1998; Rothchild and Chazan 1998; Harbeson et al. 1996), it is particularly difficult to access non-state groups that perform functions of the state because "organizations that have political agendas tend not to welcome the objective outsider, even

if, as in a democratic political order, they may have a right” (216), and so the ethnographic depth that these scholars are looking for will always be left lacking. I spoke with people that were called Mungiki by people in the area that I lived and carried out an interview with someone who was at the cutting edge of the matatu industry, but it soon became clear to me that working with this group on a long term basis through engaged participant observation would be impossible because gathering data with them would always either incriminate me or my interlocutors.

Second, I believe this work, like the critical security studies’ assemblage approaches that focus on violence, can be accused of carrying preconceived ideas of how civil society or non-state groups should look into African contexts and that this tends to obscure existing forms of sociality (Cody 2011:45). In this paper I focus on violence but other similar idealizations of free, open and fair association in public squares or the public sphere act similarly (Fraser 1990).

A good example of this is the relations that form between private guards and hawkers (street traders) in the city. I think there is an important connection between private security guards and hawkers that is missed in the focus on violence. In the area that I spent much of my leisure time, people who worked as private guards would come back to relax amongst people who were hawking.

Hawkers mingle and chat with guards next to the buildings and outside the malls. And if they are lucky the hawkers may be able to store their goods in the security guards’ hut. This is a tactic that you can see all over Nairobi with informal market stalls. A very good example is in the central business district around the Nairobi library. These stalls are forever edging out further and further into the main pavement area, the public

thoroughfare, before being told to withdraw by a city official. I saw this process first hand at the shipping container that housed my friend's kiosk. Next to the container, about three meters away, was a small building that may previously have been a guard post although I cannot say for certain what it was (it had the size of a guard post - a single standing two square meter space.) Sharon and Selma used this as a base from which to store and sell clothes by putting a table outside and sometimes standing inside when it was rainy. My friend Simon, who was a hawker, with a regular spot on the stones in front of the container, sometimes used their tables to rest his goods. As I regularly visited the container, Simon became more and more established in the area. He was well liked by people and always had a smile and a joke. Eventually Simon convinced my friend who worked in his kiosk in the container and other interested parties, to set up his own tables in-between Sharon and Selma's stall and the container.

Guards at the gates

Unlike hawkers who are chased and stigmatized, the positions of private guards around the city are sanctioned. In this section I show how, like the hawkers, the presence of guards around the city of Nairobi is disruptive to the binaries and divisions made by people such as the city inspectorate officials and how their presence engenders new obligations that stitch the city together. This section echoes the work of Göpfert (2012) who shows how the ideal-type spaces of the city are traversed in practice. The networks created by the guards are at cross-currents to the securitized spaces and communities they protect. It also points to the ambivalence of security and its close association to insecurity in that the

position of guards allows them to steal from those they are supposed to be protecting (see Kirsch 2016).

Because many private security guards receive such low wages, they try to supplement their income by asking other people, people they consider to be wealthier than them, to give them gifts or tips like hawkers. A major distinction between private guards and other urban migrants that I spoke to in the city is that they work at the homes and businesses of people considered to “have money.” This provides them with opportunities to interact with people who are likely to give them money or gifts. But more than that, being close to these people can engender stronger bonds. I spoke to some guards who had built personal relationships with the people whose property they were looking after. Some guards were having their school fees paid for by the property owners or were given donations towards their children’s school fees. Others received regular extra tips. I spoke to the guards at the gates of the cluster of houses of the Chandarias, a wealthy business-owning family in Nairobi. On the same street, one that stands out in terms of private security and barriers because it has a checkpoint on both ends of the street with guards who lift and lower the gate all day and night for passing vehicles, I was told by a guard that the owner of the property gives him small cash gifts occasionally.

Guards can make claims on the owners of properties they guard. The owners know that the guards are not paid well and so if you start a relationship with the guards they will expect you to start to give them small gifts or payments. In this case the claim is being made because the gap between the wealth of the guards and the wealth of the owner is very clear. Because it is clear, making a claim is a normal enterprise. One way guards threaten owners is with the question, “how is the apartment?” This is a veiled request for small

monetary gifts and a suggestion that they might rob the apartment. The implication is clear: those who guard are also those who can steal.

Perhaps the strongest example of the closeness of insecurity to security is when guards are said to rob directly from the home or business they are meant to be protecting. This is a very common story in Nairobi and it is mentioned in other literature on private security. When I walked around Nairobi interviewing private security guards I was told on a number of occasions that this or that company had taken over the contract for securing a business or home because the previous guards had stolen from it. This was the case at the Nairobi club for example. Having said that sometimes this was used as an excuse for a private security company to win a new contract. The private security company that has the contract for a certain building or business changes often. In the course of my fieldwork I saw a number of changes and I was told by some business owners that they preferred to regularly change the private security company so that the guards could not collude with criminals to rob from the premises. I heard of particular incidents whereby the guards had been caught stealing or had colluded with thieves to steal and that this provoked a change of company having the contract.

Sometimes guards told me that they had to watch their colleagues to make sure that they were not stealing from the business or home and there is a general suspicion throughout Nairobi that guards will use their position to benefit from the thing they are protecting. One visiting researcher that I met in Nairobi explained to me that she did not trust private guards. She explained that in her apartment block the guards made a note of who had left for Christmas vacations and worked with thieves to rob those apartments. During my time working with private security cash-in-transit teams, the most infamous

stories were of times when guards had colluded with their administration police colleagues to steal the money and escape.

Guards are often portrayed as criminals by two groups of people, those who employ them either directly outside their homes or businesses and police and public officials. On a number of different occasions in conversation with police officers and public officials, private security guards were portrayed to me in a negative light. When I went to speak to public officials working in the city annex building, I was met with surprise when I explained I thought they had a role in determining the ways people think about and see publics. "Why talk to them?" I was asked. "They are uneducated", I was told (Interview, Nairobi, May 5, 2015). I asked a number of police officers about the relationship between private security and the police, and I was met with different answers. I was told that the police used private security guards sometimes to acquire information about a certain area because the guards are there 12 hours a day everyday they see a lot and know a lot about what is happening. But any suggestion that the police might be able to work with private security was also met with the proviso that you cannot always trust them because sometimes they work with thieves and let them know if and when the police are around or the residents of a property they are hoping to steal from.

These descriptions of the nature of crimes were also often coupled with conversations about how crime had changed in Kenya--that before people would attack you from behind with a wooden stick along their arm that they used to choke you before running away with the stuff you were carrying. People said that nowadays there was a lot more crime done on motorbikes as they provided a quick and easy escape.

Guards of residential blocks see when the residents of the block come and go and can trade in this information. Passing guards every day as friends and I entered and left my apartment block or my friend's apartment (inside a house that was divided into apartments,) I would feel that I had to engage with the guards and that I should give them something, even if it was only a conversation or a quick joke. I watched other people as they entered and left buildings and compounds they entered and left regularly and it seemed that they too felt beholden in some way to the guards at the front. The guards in front of my own building would regularly receive small gifts from the residents. I noticed that if the guards were ignored by one of the residents they pretended that it did not matter to them but that they would adapt their approaches to try and get gifts or tips.

I spent time carrying out interviews and participant observations with private guards in a mall in Westlands. The small claims they made on people coming and going was usually dependent on the position of the person. A local politician walked past and they made a claim and received a small gift "for chai," a regular customer of the mall walked past and they made a different type of claim. The manager from the mall, a very regular visitor, received special attention.

Private guards are part of the same history of law enforcers for the colonial regime. Just as the colonial government deliberately employed *askari* (guards, police, or watchmen) from different parts of Kenya against Kikuyu uprisings and employed people for their different police and army units from certain colonially determined ethnic groups and moved them to Nairobi or elsewhere, private guards usually work far from their home or *shamba*. *Shamba* is a Swahili word that infuses Nairobi's cultural and political life because so many people in the city are urban migrants who maintain close ties to home. It usually

refers to a small plot of agricultural land that is owned or run by a family but it also includes other rural practices such as the keeping of goats or cattle. Wealthier families can have very large shambas that produce goods for wholesale. This plot is usually “back home” where the urban migrant originally comes from and so the word is also heavily associated with home in a more general sense.

They are usually not of the same ethnic group as the people living and working in their area and yet they spend 12 hours a day or night, six days or nights a week in that area. Such a situation can lead to Luo guards working and regularly interacting with people in predominantly Kikuyu areas or Kalenjin guards working with Masaiis. This is particularly the case in some of the above-mentioned residential streets where the guards are attached to the property and its owners rather than a separate company. Guards share a drink and a chat and the importance of ethnicity in terms of the association between the guards is greatly reduced.

The level of integration of a guard in the local community is an important factor for security but also exemplifies the crosscutting and new forms of sociality engendered by the securitization of space. Brian is a Masaii guard informally employed in a local market on the outskirts of Nairobi. He receives a subsistence wage that allows him to live day-to-day from some of the people that work along a lane in between two buildings who are predominantly Kikuyu. They give him around 300 shillings (around 3 dollars) to look after their stalls during the night where they leave some of their cooking utensils. He is given a place to sleep in a corrugated iron shack located down the lane. The lane is between two buildings but has been filled in on both sides with wooden structures that act as individual commercial plots. In one of the plots there is a pool table and games are sold for a small

amount, in another there is a lady who makes steaming cups of tea. Two of the plots are restaurants where you can sit, and two are taken by women who make big pots of food (one *githeri* and the other *mukimo*) which they then sell out in the open of the market area around the time people are going home from work between 4pm and 7pm. The guard is able to earn small tips and gifts from doing odd jobs around the market.

Some guards are fully integrated into the community of their post and enjoy familial relations with the people that live and work in the area. Susan is a guard that works the 12 hour day shift guarding an ATM machine in a busy suburb of Nairobi. The ATM is located in a single-story row of shops that line a perpetually busy, and dusty (outside of the rainy seasons) street. This street is off from a major ring road into the center of Nairobi. The ring road is being reconstructed and is currently full of construction traffic along with the everyday three or four lanes of traffic. When travelling around with the cash-in-transit company we would visit this location to top up the ATM. Our jurisdiction here was the cash but we had to work with the private security guard of the other company in order to access the ATMs cash-loading area. Susan sits with the women staff of the hairdressing school next door on one side of the ATM or the staff or clients of the multisex hairdressers on the other side, or the guards from the other ATMs in the block. When I asked her what she would do in an emergency she made it clear that she would look to her friends in the area to help. Susan is the one tasked with protecting the ATM and yet the women who work in the hairdressers take some responsibility too in that they will be called upon in an emergency. During my second stint of fieldwork in Nairobi, I conducted an interview with Emily at the National Treasury. Emily worked for a mid-to-high level company with a regular wage and a new uniform. I asked Emily what she would do in an emergency. She had made friends

with the police down the road and she had the direct line of a police officer who would come over if she called. She also knew the private guards in the next building down the street. Whether there is a threat of violence or not, the guards are integrated into the community, spending their 12-hour shifts in the presence of people with whom they would not usually associate.

Conclusion

In her article, “The Belly of the Police,” Hornberger (2017) reflects on how it has taken her fifteen years to write on material on policing and food rather than focus on the “questions of violence and justice” on which she says she “proved herself” (203); fifteen years before she “could delve into the cultural nitty-gritty and anthropological particularity and ‘otherness’ of the police” (203). The ethnographic data presented in this article on the presence of private security around Nairobi brings into question assemblage approaches of critical security studies scholars that focus on violence. Where this approach emphasizes violence to show how communities are formed, my analysis points towards other galvanizing processes that do not fit the typical models of non-state groups in Africa. Guards are the first point of contact for robbers or attackers but the threat of this violence is not what brings them together with other urban migrants. I show how private guards maintain close links to their Shamba and how rural life continues to infuse Nairobi. The restaurants that source their food from the Shambas of urban migrants like private guards serve food for lower prices but are in the middle of more expensive, securitized areas. This brings low-paid urban migrants such as private security guards together in a way that creates networks alongside the securitized spaces.

I suggest that a focus on violence and the logic of an ideal of the use of violence obfuscates these networks in a similar way to idealizations of public space and the public sphere in other literature on private security and residential enclaves (such as Caldeira 2000; Low 2003). Private security is often looked at as a static process, one whereby physical walls divide and deny access through a threat of violence, but a private guard's presence on the street in the central business district in Nairobi engenders conversations with others and gifts of money "for chai" in the kadogo economy. Comparing guards, who are sanctioned, to hawkers, who are chased and beaten, undoubtedly shows how processes of sociality in the city are mixed up with moral constructions around violence (see Pratten 2008). The association hawkers make with one-another is galvanized by a threat of violence from the city inspectorate. But talk of bandits and violent groups that are inaccessible to ethnographers only perpetuates the stereotype in the literature of an ever-present threat of urban violence. The similarities between private guards and hawkers as they search for tips and gifts in the city and as they share money in the kadogo economy shows that new sets of valuations and obligations are coming up all the time, engendered by the presence of private guards around the city. Such networks cross-cut the securitized landscapes when, for example, guards make strong bonds with the owners of the property they are protecting. By looking at the associations private guards make with hawkers and the close ties they maintain to home, the data presented here allow more space for emic understandings of personhood (see also Pratten 2010). Once these guards are in their positions in the city, galvanizing processes such as ethnicity begin to matter less in a person's set of obligations.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Rationality Effect

Introduction

In the last chapter I pointed towards anthropological literature in which the way that private security is said to block and curtail public interaction is based on an idealized vision of a public sphere that could never exist in reality. I also showed how violence, does not necessarily apply in the same way as in typical depictions in security studies and anthropology. But it is not just that private security is actually productive of other kinds of social life, and given the particular history of Kenya's integration into the international state system, it is not enough to continue on the line that there are private elements involved in public security. What is more important is that despite the inconsistencies, incoherencies and messy bits to the functioning of the state, somehow, ideals of rational government and the public sphere persist. How does the state come through those processes, continue to operate, continue to produce what Veena Das calls the "rationality effect" (Das 2004:251), despite the messiness? Whilst the last chapter was about the productivity and creativity of people like guards and hawkers who are pushed to marginalized positions by, among other things, a discourse of insecurity, this chapter is about the messy creativity that is needed within the processes of the state; informal practices are always necessarily involved in the formal practices of the state in this case in the movement of cash in the cash-in-transit sector.

The cash center

The cash center for the private security company with which I worked is in an underground area below a parking area for a small shopping and business center or mall. The solid five-storied mall of concrete sits on top of the parking area that is slightly below ground level. The mall is not particularly busy, as it has only a few small businesses such as an insurance broker, a travel agents, and a phone and computer repair shop. There is an American sandwich shop, Subway, at the front of the mall but customers can access it without having to park in the parking lot under the mall because they can park in the front area. There is a Thai restaurant inside the mall directly above the cash centre that has a steady supply of customers during lunchtimes and evenings. Despite the fact that there are relatively few customers to the mall, it is open for the public to come and park in the parking lot as long as they can tell the private guards at the gate, the name of the business they are going. As a result, aside from the private security and administration police involved in the cash-in-transit sector (from now on CIT), there are a fairly consistent, low number of members of the public coming and going from the parking lot.

The guards from a different private security company to those who manage the cash are stationed around the small shopping mall. As I mentioned in the last chapter, this is a common practice all the way through the industry that different private security companies overlap in their different services protecting different parts of what might be considered the same space. Employing different private security companies in the same area is a common tactic to ensure that the guards cannot collude to steal any cash but it is also because the private security company that deals in the cash only rents the space from the property owner and so the decisions for the rest of the mall building, including which

private security company looks after it, is made by them. In the following section I offer descriptions of a typical day spent with guards in the CIT business.

I arrive early at the black outer gate with thick bars. The gate is slightly open and so I nod to the two guards there as I slip through. I look further over to see if the guards with whom I have become friends are working today. I see one of them over by the entrance to the shopping mall and walk up the steps and greet him with a handshake and small talk. I know that I will be able to talk to them more when I am waiting for the CIT guards to get ready.

I go down into the parking garage for the mall located slightly below ground level. To get there I can walk down the steps inside the arcade near to the guards stationed at the entrance, cars have to pass through another gate that the guards swing open and closed all day long as they note in their log book the license plates of the passing cars of the mall customers usually heading to the Thai restaurant or to the offices in the mall.

It is much darker in the parking garage, the gate at the other side of the mall into and out of which the private security company's CIT vehicles come and go all day long is the main source of light but because it looks out into an alleyway between two large buildings it does not offer much. The private security guards responsible for the mall, open and close this gate very regularly in the mornings and then not as much in the afternoon/evenings. In the mornings the guards drive the CIT vehicles from their underground area to collect administration police officers who will accompany them later as they do their rounds. It is illegal for a private security company to carry cash without at least two administration police officers, one in what is known as the lead car (the pickup

that has been converted into a CIT vehicle) and one or two in the chase car that must follow the lead car.

I greet another of the private guards stationed at the top of the driveway that leads down into the cash center's parking lot, motioning to him that I will come back to speak to them. I pass by the small "tuk tuk" stationed at the front of the parking lot that one guard uses to make extra cash in the evenings after his shift. The CIT cars are very tightly squeezed along each wall, each with a large number emblazoned on the front and other numbers down the side. They are uniform colors and almost everyone in Nairobi would be able to tell you the brand name from just seeing the colors. One car is being expertly parked into a very narrow gap; another is being banged by the open palm of a guard because its driver has got too close to the wall.

Over to the right as you come into the parking lot, an administrator from the company and an administration police officer are seated looking over "trip sheets", which will be assigned to each CIT team. On the sheets, the team has to note each of the locations that the car went to in the day and the "speedo", the reading from the milometer, when they arrived. During my time with the CIT guards I took countless photos of all the different ways that the cash is tracked as it moves between different places. For example, the bags that are used always have a barcode and a plastic zip tie that can only be broken once. The barcodes are noted by the sending and receiving banks or businesses. But of course in amongst all this certification and documentation there were very informal ways of making sure the cash got from A to B in the correct manner. For example the "trip sheets" that documented the mileage of the car and the times they arrived usually ended up being very

dirty, scruffy, documents by the end of a long day zooming around Nairobi and were not properly filled in.

The administrator from the company is assigning guards to different routes. As a security measure, the guards do not know which route they will take that day and so cannot plan in advance to steal any cash. A few administration police and private security guards are milling around the desk, talking and greeting one another. I don't see anyone I know and I don't see the car that I usually ride with in the parking lot so I walk to the back, where a huge black gate (this one is not just bars but one solid piece of metal so you cannot see through to the other side) blocks access to another enclosed area within the cash center parking lot. The gate is slightly open, usually I would have to go around through the door on the other side, but I sneak in and wave to the guard sat on the other side. My team is in the loading bay here. The pickup truck's front faces the gate through which I've just come and the rear is facing the main cash vault. I walk to the rear and the doors are open and members of my team are checking the numbers of the seals on the cash bags with the numbers they have on their sheets. The cash vault has more guards stationed in this area to help with the movement into and out of the cash vault. People can pass into the vault through a door on the right that has a sign saying they must leave all their valuables outside before entering. There is a very thick pane of glass between the loading bay and the cash vault but it is dark and almost impossible to see inside without putting your face right up to the glass. At the bottom of the glass is a small counter, a space through which documents and keys can be past. Under that, from waist height to the floor, is a turnstile through which the dark green ATM bags of both the types of cash team pass.

The ATM bags are loaded by the team or the people in the cash center the afternoon or night before. When they are full of cash they are zipped up and a plastic seal that cannot be tampered with except broken is put through the two zips. Each cassette for the ATM also has its own seal. The seals have their own barcodes and numbers. The team has noted all the numbers to the ATM cassettes. As they take them from the cash center, they check the seals of the bags against the ones they have already noted. The cash center holds a certain amount of cash for some of their bank clients to save on extra trips to the bank's vault.

I greet the two guards from my team and put my face to the glass to look inside the cash center. It is too dark to see clearly but there are bundles of cash on tables and various seals and cash bags and boxes around. I help the team load the bags into the truck and they are soon telling me they want to leave as quickly as possible. They lock the inside vault of the truck with a padlock key (although in the course of the day this will be left unlocked to save time) and then swing the outside door around and push the metal lever in to lock it in place between two metal bars. I walk around and Brian is already driving out of the black gate. He parks the car in the lot and asks me if I want to stay in it whilst he gathers up the administration police. I refuse in order to go and talk a bit more with the guards from the other private security company and also because I know that, despite the fact that they want to leave quickly, sometimes it takes some time to get the administration police assigned to them. I walk back up and find my friends from the other company (the guards I greeted when I first arrived).

Private security cars and vans are coming and going into the mall full of administration police and cars are coming and going into and out of the cash center and the black gate that faces out into the alleyway. Just beyond the gate, there are at least 15

administration police hanging around drinking cups of tea and eating *mandazi* or *ngumu* (sweet bread) that have been sold to them by a young lady who brings a flask of tea and cups and buckets to wash them and a huge bag of *mandazis*. The *ngumu* come from a man dressed in a white lab coat who brings them in a see-through bucket. Hawking of this kind is actually illegal but the administration police are happy for the warm, sweet, milky tea and bite. It is a crucial part of the day as they will not get the chance to eat again until their CIT team determines it is time to eat lunch. This was often a point of contestation between the CIT guards and the administration police. We talk about football and sometimes Roslyn comes over and we talk about private security or land or the price of things Boniface explained to me that many of the guards for this company were from the same place in Western province (often just shortened to Western), that there was one prominent owner of the company who recruited people from his home town back in Western and that they all helped each other out when they got to Nairobi.

Eventually Brian comes zooming up the ramp in the truck, his window lowering to shout over to me that they are ready. He drives out of the gate and parks up on the alleyway. He gets out and whistles and motions but he can't find the administration police and so he must go back down into the cash center. Jim, the other guard from the team comes walking slowly with a joking smile on his face up the ramp carrying the trip sheet and a bag of keys. He skillfully deflects and jokes with people as they ask him whether he is with the *mzungu* (white man) today. He stands with me and the other guards for a while chatting and then walks to another group and is chatting with them. He goes and buys a tea and talks with more guards. Eventually Brian comes back and we are all ready. I say goodbye to the guards and I jump in the back seat of the lead car with Jim. In front of me is

Brian the driver and in the front passenger seat is an administration police officer in army uniform, with an automatic machine gun that he places upright on the floor of the car. I greet him and shake his hand and he acts stern and settles into his seat. We bump along the alleyway outside the cash center that has a very uneven surface, Brian has to weave in and out of huge potholes full of water but soon we are out onto the roads of Nairobi.

Bribes

The fact that the illegal food vendor is an important part of the day of police officers has no bearing on their seeming rational control of cash, the property of the state, and yet it is a messy part of it. The policemen and women here represent what Das and Poole describe as “the fading of the state’s jurisdiction and its continual refounding through its (not so mythic) appropriation of private justice” (2004:14). The police cannot realistically chase every single illegal hawker in Nairobi and so the state’s jurisdiction fades when hawkers come to sell at the cash center, but the authority of the police is refounded through acts of private justice in their condoning and endorsing the vendors.

Similarly, the fact that the police take bribes is a fact of life in Nairobi. Moving around with the CIT private security teams I spent a lot of time with police officers. Many of the officers were slightly hesitant about telling me directly that corruption and bribery are endemic in the police force but they would find ways of telling me that it was going on without saying the words exactly. Some disgruntled officers were more clear, particularly those who had done a degree or gained another qualification, thinking that it would help them move up the ranks only to find that the only way to promotion was paying your superiors. In one conversation with an officer about what he would do should he win the

sportpesa lottery (a popular football betting game in the newspapers), he explained he would “buy a higher position in the administration police” by paying his superiors and “then relax,” suggesting that those higher up did not have to do any hard work. Another officer told me very clearly that bribing is going on all the time, and if others were doing it, why should he have his “ears in the ground” (look away).

A good example came one day when I was on the way to my teaching position at the Catholic University. I had boarded the matatu on the street I lived where there is no official stop but they have an agreement with the police that they can stop there. I was sitting thinking about how my day at the University was going to go and we got stuck in a *jam*, a traffic jam. This happens all the time all over Nairobi. The driver of the matatu, then did what all kinds of motorists, not just the matatu drivers, do, which is to try and get around the traffic by driving to the side of the road where there might not necessarily be a road. In this case they went up on to the pavement or sidewalk and cut a corner off the traffic. Out of nowhere, in a flash, a policeman on a bike drove up to the matatu and stopped its progress. The conductor and the driver cursed their luck but pulled over. They rustled up a few notes and the tout/conductor went off to speak to the policeman who had moved out of view. The money was not enough and so the tout came back and the driver handed over some more notes. The tout went to pay the policeman and we carried on. As the incident was happening a man sitting next to me was chuckling to himself and looking over at me. I was also chuckling and looking at him and so, thinking that I knew about bribes in Kenya, I piped up and said “he will eat well tonight.” I was making an allusion to the fact that when people talk about bribes in Kenya they are usually talked about in terms of eating. So politicians eat from the public pot when they take bribes, and policemen are fat because

they take bribes. But the man sitting next to me said “No! this is for school fees, it’s the time of year for school fees and this policeman will be collecting for his kids. If he manages to collect 20,000” (I cannot remember the exact figure he said), “he will be able to pay his children’s school fees.”

During my time in Ngara my closest friend in the country, William, was rounded up by the police late at night just for being on the street. The story that he and others told me was that the police drove around Ngara picking up young men in order to fulfill a quota of arrests (and presumably bribe money) set by a new police chief in the nearby Parklands police station. William spent a gruesome night in a Nairobi jail with at least 15 other young men. They all knew that it was better to admit to the trumped up crime they were charged with and to face the judge than to contest the charge and be moved into a “holding” prison which many people describe as the Nairobi prison depicted in the film Nairobi Half-Life (terrible conditions). When they faced the judge in the morning the police officers were left red-faced as the judge let them go without charge after having laughed at the charges brought against the youths.

I use these examples to show the messiness of the actions of the police, where the money is taken from a member of the public and then put back into the public school system. These mixtures of public and private are very difficult to know in advance; the context and specificity of the different bribes are important. But given the quick acknowledgment shown by me and my interlocutor in the matatu, and the acceptance of the everyday reality of the bribes, as well as the judge in my friend’s case, the messiness is shown as central to the everyday functioning of the police and legal system. As Das and Poole describe the police and bribes become a “public secret through which the persons

who embody law, bureaucracy and violence that together constitute the state move beyond the realm of myth to become joined in the reality of everyday life” (2004:14).

Bodging

In the work of private guards in their everyday interactions with cash, they also ride roughshod over the messy inconsistencies. Because they look and act like state officials, they are able to tap into the power that comes with looking after the state property, cash. People trust the guards because of their uniform. Out of all of the different companies, the uniform of the Wells Fargo guards is the closest you get to a military or public uniform. As a manager of a company remarked to me, they look more like the police than the police. They have well maintained blue uniforms with blue berets, sometimes with badges on the front. They also have a chord that runs from the shoulder lapel to the front pocket. As one guard explained to me: “People have confidence in them (guards), people on the street, it’s easier people trust you in a uniform, you can’t do anything wrong publicly” (Interview Nairobi, June 2015). Guards look after national administrative buildings such as the Treasury in the center of Nairobi’s business district as well as the national museums that are run by the central government. For some national assets such as the pipes and oil run by the state corporation, Kenya Pipeline Company, the corporation itself has its own force of employees decked out in the uniform of private guards. This is the same for some of the big agricultural companies like AAA and Farmer’s Choice.

The paint used on the compounds of the different private security companies is particularly striking. As I mentioned elsewhere, there are a number of private security companies in the area known as Kilileshwa. They are in houses that have been changed into

private security headquarters. The thick paint on the walls of the compounds resembles that of the Kenyan colors painted on police office compounds.

Kenya is the center of NGOs for most of East Africa as well as the location for most of the embassies for countries all around the world. There are at least 150 different parastatal organizations, most of them based in Nairobi. The cars of these organizations stand out too in traffic as they have a green number plate. The state in Kenya must be understood from negotiations with these innumerable actors all at times using the power of looking like state officials and moving in and out of the formal and informal mechanisms of the state. The state is not necessarily undermined by all these mixes of public and private actors.

One day I was sitting in the back of the CIT vehicle speeding out of Westlands and making our way to the ATMs located on the East side of Nairobi. I was talking with Kevin who had been working in the CIT business in Kenya for a long time. He explained to me how most of the CIT administrators and workers who currently work for the newer companies like BM, KK, SGA and Securex were either formerly employed by, or taught by, a former employer of, either G4S or Wells Fargo who remain the leaders in the industry. Much of the industry knowledge comes from them. He explained to me how the banks do not like to use just one CIT service as a security measure and so many of the contracts are split between the companies. The individual bank branches are usually left to employ their own private security companies and so some of the bank branches will be managed by one company and other branches by another. Kevin used to work for G4S and made the move to one of these newer companies with, he told me, 13 colleagues. There was a legal dispute and the workers moved over to the new company when it became clear that G4S had

treated them badly. This may seem like a small point but it shows the centrality of social relations to the delivery of cash.

Another very informal practice was what I would like to call “bodging.” The Oxford English dictionary defines bodging as “making or repairing badly or clumsily” but I mean it more in the sense of getting by when there are no other options. When cash is part of your everyday work and you see large amounts of it as much as the cash handlers do, it becomes like normal paper. I noticed how quickly the mystique through which I saw money changed when I handled it every day: counting it out, seeing it crumpled and straightened and seeing how dirty it made my hands.

A lot of the guards’ time was taken up trying to fix broken machines or accompanying technicians to fix the machines. The private security company has the key to the machine and so they must be present for a technician to be there. The private security guards had learnt a number of tricks to ensure the machines would function to fix the machine without having to wait for a technician. For example sometimes the sensor that detected whether the cassette for rejected bills was there or not was not working and so the guards would roll up paper and place it in the space for the sensor.

Before leaving the machine they needed to run tests to make sure it was working and this was when a fault would usually be found. Sometimes notes would be jammed in the machine and they would need to be fished out. They usually had various tricks to make sure the system reset after each cassette was taken out and put back again. It is important that the count for the notes is always correct. A number of guards told me that if the count was down, then it would be taken out of their wages. On one occasion we found a thousand shilling note stuck down the back of the machine that had been ripped in half. The guards

accompanying me on this occasion explained that it must have been there for years and gone missing from an earlier count. Cash that came out of the cassettes would be rolled and put in a bag with a plastic seal tie as long as it was together with the other cash when it was returned to the cash center, the count would remain right.

Another example of bodging came one day when we had packed a bag specifically for the Donholm area of Nairobi but we used that bag for the Total gas station in Embakassi as the Donholm one needed the top-up less than the Total one we ended up visiting. Yet another example came from Steven the person in charge of all of the ATM CIT operations. He told me of a time that they were stuck in traffic and were unable to return to the base in time to restock and get the ATM cash reloaded within the time scale that the banks demand. Instead, they broke the seal of a different cassette and took the cash from that cassette and used it for the ATM that needed the cash.

The guards told me that there were security cameras in all of the back areas that you would sometimes need to access to get to the back of the machine and load the money. They said the security cameras went straight to KCB bank or the Co-Operative bank headquarters. Because of this we had to sign a registry book that was in the back area. Or sometimes the book would be with the guard looking after the ATM. This would allow the banks to see who had come and gone from the back area of the machine where the safe could be accessed and check this against the video recording.

Guards need to memorize the codes for the combination locks for the safes for the different ATM machines. They are not allowed to share these codes with anyone even their closest friends and family although I found different ways that people stored these codes. For example, one guard had a list of codes next to the phone back at his house so that he

could call his wife if he forgot one of them and she could read them back to him. Another kept a piece of paper in his shirt with an encryption code next to the combination to identify which ATM the code corresponded with.

Critical moments

The private security companies with their cars and branding are thus able to tap into the power of the state by using some of their branding and looking like state institutions. I suggest that being able to tap into this idea of looking after state property like cash, and assets like the police, allows private security to tap into the power of publicness replicating the “rationality effect” of state-type institutions.

For Veena Das (2004), the state is always present in the everyday lives of a population as a signature on one of the many different kinds of documents that one needs to be a citizen; a signature that is open to forgery, duplication, and use out of context. For Das, this illegibility is central to the functioning of the state. People tasked with upholding the rule of law and property rights can always move into and out of this zone of indeterminacy. But Das is also talking at a more abstract level of those people and things at the margins of the state in some way constituting what the state is at critical moments. In this section I describe a critical moment when the power of the private security company and its administration police officers is challenged but ultimately upheld.

CIT teams always work in pairs of two cars. The lead car has the money and one police officer and the chase car has two police officers on board. Out on the streets of Nairobi, the two cars in convoy stand out as different to other cars. The cars are very striking and uniform in color. This is partly to do with branding of the company so that

people recognize its cars but their high-visibility also makes them look a lot like state services such as the police, fire, and ambulance. The fact that the cars are carrying three administration police officers increases their resemblance to state services.

The way that Brian, the driver in the CIT team, and the other guards that I accompanied, drive, also resembles state services. Brian is emboldened by having administration police in the car and he uses them to enable him to drive fast and aggressively. The administration police sometimes admonish drivers out of the window if they have impeded our progress. And Brian overtakes other cars as though we have more reason and cause to get to our destination faster. There is no siren as an ambulance or police car has, but the striking color of the cars is enough to make people more wary and sometimes move out of the way.

But because private security companies often have access to better cars and equipment than the police they are called upon to do the job of the police in certain situations. One of the CIT guards that I worked with used to work for the company's ambulance service that was stationed around different areas of Nairobi. He explained to me that although they were not contracted to work for the government in any way, because their equipment was widely regarded as superior, if a call went through the company's control center, they had to respond. On the day of the attack on the Westgate mall, he was working nearby and had to respond to the call. He was one of the first services on the scene as a private worker called upon to work for the public. He said the incident was particularly traumatizing and he suffered for a year afterwards.

The clearest indication that we are different to other vehicles is in traffic jams. There are lots of jams in Nairobi and watching who is allowed to push past others and who is

admonished strongly for doing so, says something about the supposed value of the vehicle, its occupants and its business. People become so stuck in traffic jams that they cannot move out of the way for an ambulance with full flashing lights. It is in fact more likely the ambulance will have to use skillful tactics such as driving on the other side of the road or in the grass or sand or heavy mud to the side of the road to get through. Brian too uses areas of the road that should not be used in order to get through jams. Without traffic signs and signals and with people often taking no notice of the rules or where the road side starts and stops in order to overtake, his driving is not exceptional. But the point here is that other people will be scowled at and admonished whereas it is expected and more accepted that a private security car would push past. The cars are carrying administration police because they are carrying cash, a national asset. It is different to other companies transporting material that is private and will be privately sold and so in this respect there is a need for the guards to move faster than other vehicles on the road.

It is also expected and more accepted for matatus (public busses) to push past aggressively and it is not always clear whether private security or matatus are more entitled. Matatus after all are carrying wanainchi (the people). One particular incident stands out in this regard. A matatu cut off our vehicle by pulling out in front of us and nearly causing a crash. The private security driver, angered by this move, drove on the other side of the road and zoomed past other vehicles to then block the matatu. The guard berated the matatu driver who shouted back, but when it got more heated and the matatu driver did not look like he would back down, the administration police got out and remonstrated with the matatu driver too and he was forced to back down. Ultimately, the presence of the police decided who was in the right. The incident was extremely public as it

was in the middle of a busy roundabout that was enclosed on all sides by busy market and trading areas. The visibility of the incident then played into the power of private security companies and armed police to ultimately prove more state-like than the public bus system.

Conclusion

The police refund private justice through everyday acts such as using illegal vendors. The bribes they accept from members of the public are a “public secret” that might then go back into the public system in the form of payments for school fees. I argue that the presence of private security and their participation in things like the movement of cash around Nairobi are part of the displays of property ownership carried out by the state, businesses and wealthy individuals, that also mean they can tap into the authority of the state. They too are confronted with messy situations with cash, a national asset, and are forced into inconsistent practices. Nonetheless they too are able to ride roughshod over such messiness through bodging and relying on their friends and family and when their authority is challenged in a public incident, they are the ones who drive away with an order and an authority intact. There is something particularly everyday about this far from being a state of exception the incoherence in the practices of state officials and people like private security acting on behalf of the state, re-iterates through their everyday performances, the rationality of the state despite the messiness. The state does not just create order, it relies on the messiness of the work of private guards and the incidents such as the public confrontation described above to push through and ride roughshod over it. The state is always present in the lives of Kenyans in the form of cash but that does not necessarily

mean that the relation of the state to its subjects is always rational. Messy incoherencies are central to the functioning of the state in the delivery of cash around the city of Nairobi. Nonetheless a “rationality effect” comes through in the work of private security and police officers.

CONCLUSION: Re-appropriating Insecurity

In the UK and US we live in a time of an emerging and expanding global network of urban surveillance which is directly linked to access points to consumerism. Perhaps the best example of this is the widespread fear that proliferates around the influx of foreign illegal immigrants into Europe and North America. It is telling that G4S, the largest private security company in Kenya, is also the main company responsible for processing immigrants in the UK, detaining them at ports and forcefully removing them should they be deemed illegal. London is said to have 500,000 closed circuit televisions monitoring thousands of square feet and there are disproportionately more cameras in commercial hubs and wealthier areas of cities. Manhattan has over 3,000 cameras whilst the total for New York is only 6,000. A series of recent incidents has raised sociological interest in surveillance to new levels. Throughout the 2000s, Wikileaks released a huge amount of classified data previously guarded by American and other country's security networks. The largest revelations came when a former department of defense operative, Bradley Manning, handed over thousands of megabytes of protected data to Wikileaks. This was compounded in 2013 by the massive revelations of Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency worker who gave classified documents to a number of major media outlets.

The ubiquity of video cameras in the homes of at least half of the population of owners of phones and computers and the millions upon millions of photos, videos, and pieces of information that are uploaded, downloaded and circulated around the web, shows how the unidirectional gaze of Foucault's prison guard is being disrupted in two ways. First scholars now talk of surveillant assemblages to show the multiple media through which

bodies are tracked and the multiple different institutional organizations involved in piecing together this information. It is now well known that commercial websites give information over to security services and that telephone companies allow the tapping of their networks by secret government organizations. Second, those being surveilled online are empowered by their consumption choices, they show what they want meaning that the issue is less to do with picking out the weak, the psychotic, or the disabled because everyone is constantly being surveilled.

These processes show the ever-closer linkages between what Rose (1999) calls the securitization of identity and access to consumer markets. As mentioned above, this is most clearly felt in the huge numbers of reports in newspapers and by the government on border crossings and illegal immigrants, but it can also be seen at lower orders or smaller checkpoints such as private guards and their letting people into and out of buildings.

Foucault's key observation that such structures of surveillance mark bodies in certain ways rendering them more or less suitable for productive enterprise remains a salient point. The ways these bodies are represented through surveillance technologies means that people are no longer (if they ever were) just physical but hybrid or cyborgs made up of information collected through different media in different parts of the world. As Haggerty and Ericson (2007) explain: "the observed body is of a distinctly hybrid composition. First it is broken down by being abstracted from its territorial setting. It is then reassembled in different settings through a series of data flows. The result is a decorporealized body, a 'data double' of pure virtuality" (2007:108). In this ethnography I have shown that you do not need to think of the internet to see the myriad of competing interest groups that claim to be involved in your security in an area in Nairobi. All of these

groups are somehow involved in your decorporealization and all are somehow involved in the hybridization of people's identity.

The Comaroffs write that "it may be Africa's intrinsically more incoherent experience of the intricacies of modernity that makes it a source of inspiration about impasses that may be emerging and proliferating elsewhere" (Comaroffs 2012, quoted in Guyer 2016:178). If hybridity and the perceived insecurity that goes with multiple competing identities (think surveillance, G4S and immigration) are "inevitable products of modern rationalization" (Guyer 2016:168) then Kenyans are well situated to toil, invent and innovate. Through the racialized logic of colonialism, Kenya becomes a "security risk" on the international stage and Nairobi is a "bandit economy" in the literature. Kenyans were branded with an identity that was irrational, savage, and wild, but they used that to create a booming tourist industry that played on the tropes of exoticism and savagery. The Swahili word "safari" which means "journey" is known world wide for adventure.

On June 13th, 2015, *The Economist* ran an article with the sub-heading "more Kenyans now work in private security than in tourism" (Economist 2015). Kenya's continued interactions with the security/insecurity interface, its messy inconsistencies and incoherences, gives rise to all kinds of innovative ways to toil with the notion of security, whether that means being granted money by the US for help in terrorism, establishing parks and malls where foreign visitors are free from the hustle of Nairobi, providing secure gated communities for its middle classes, or building a nascent insurance industry that demands that assets are secured. Poor urban migrants in Kenya are particularly good at re-appropriating symbols of insecurity and particularly resilient when it comes to the barrage of insecure symbols thrown their way. If the ways that indigenous Kenyans have looked

after their property has not always been consistent with the ideals of outside observers, this is not because of a lack of knowledge or an inability to govern. It shows that the influence of outside interests have been kept at bay, resisted, deviated from typical trajectories. Because as we transition from tourism to security, Kenya is angling itself for investment. The pressures to be secure for investment come down to the individual who is “worthy” of a “gift” and some of the typical tropes we use for rationality such as visibility and authenticity might matter less here.

Branding on clothes in mutimba (second-hand clothes markets) just like the images on the side of matatus, are not to be thought of as pale, faded and worn imitations of the west. Matatus are given personal names and also the names of the different groups involved in their operation. I know for a fact that the Mungiki group for example is heavily involved in the Matatu industry and the names of various sacco (stands for) are also printed on the busses. Sometimes these are associated with particular *bases* the place that the group organizes itself, the mechanic workshop in Kisumu or Embu or Meru But the busses’ designs on the outside are usually based on foreign sports stars and celebrities or teams of strong company logos like Timberland, DC shoes, Nike, Reebok etc. As Matlon (2015) has pointed out, they are also based on, usually black male figures of authority like sports stars but also musicians, politicians, revolutionaries, and film stars. These global images of stars are re-appropriated by matatu owners and designers and the SACCOS that sponsor them. And they are very public too, not closed behind secret doors for corrupt politicians but plastered across matatus travelling all around Nairobi and suburbs and towns up and down the country. Far from the closed and secretive world of corruption and back-hand dealing there is a huge amount of life and social process that can be

documented. Social processes go with the walls of gated communities, it is never just a ripping apart of the social. The closing down or blocking off of areas of the city or public discussion can never be total, there are always slippages.

Impasse and intricacy

Whilst Actor Network Theory gave us the tools to talk about assemblages of security practices, the plurality and overlapping organizations and techniques of the police, private security, local residents' associations, local politicians and more, we are at, what Guyer (2016) calls an impasse if we revert to using violence and other typical depictions of rational government to understand these assemblages; an impasse that perpetuates the interface between "a claim to modernity and a designation of savagery" (168). I take inspiration from Guyer's description of the intricacies of everyday life in Africa that imply pattern but not necessarily in a recognizable or predictable way. There is, as we saw in chapter one, in the lives of Kenyans, a history to private security that takes elements from both the colonization of East Africa and the actions of indigenous groups.

Actor Network Theory is not a theory but rather a grounded reality that comes through detailed descriptions of the webs of interrelations between people and things. As we have seen, security is delivered to customers in Kenya through a web of relations between guards and police, the managers of private security companies, bureaucrats and NGO workers. What is that we pick out from this web and choose to make the focus of our analysis? For example, do we look at the ability of guards to close down public space, or the manner in which people decry the loss of public space? I have shown that much of the narrative about Kenyan insecurity focuses on one side of the interface, the monopoly on the

use of violence as a technique of rational government for example or the history of colonial property ownership. In order to avoid condemnation of “gifts” for chai in the kadogo economy which translate elsewhere as corruption, and the security provided by non-state groups, I have tried to give a closer depiction of the reality for Kenyan’s by moving between both sides of the interface; the point-counterpoints of state and non-state groups, the switchbacks between formal representations of security and the messy incoherence of the delivery of security services and cash, between the idealizations of free and open public spheres and the practices of the people that promote them that contradict those ideals. In this way we get to matters of concern rather than matters of fact (Latour and Weibel 2005:19). For example whether the resident of the apartment block will give the guard a gift of cash or whether the police will get their bribe. And yet despite all this messiness, the state comes through as a rational enterprise and people rely on an ideal of the public sphere. The state refounds its own logic in the daily experiences of the police and even private security involved in the cash-in-transit sector, riding roughshod over the messiness to produce a rationality effect, that sustains ideas of a public sphere and a rational government. But the messiness, the everyday toiling of guards and police, constitute what makes the state.

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