The Normative Complexity of Private Security: Beyond Legal Regulation and Stigmatization

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the normative complexity of private security. It critically debates the stigmatization of private security companies and the limitations of legal regulation, and highlights the role of self-regulation in the form of corporate ethics and (international) branch standards. Based on a review of scholarly literature, (inter)national cases, and examples from fieldwork in South Africa, the chapter captures the growing plurality of actors and voices in a vastly diversifying private security sector. In order to overcome the traditional bias towards private security and its corporate sector, it advocates an organizational anthropological approach to uncover regulatory alternatives and the ethical and normative diversity that is essential to a comprehensive understanding of the privatization of security.

Keywords

Private security, stigmatization, normative complexity, regulation, ethics, security, organizational anthropology, South Africa

Introduction

This chapter critically assesses the debate on the privatization of security through the lenses of (international) law, politics, organization studies, and anthropology/ethnography. We argue that the debate regarding the private security sector is biased and preoccupied with its

legal regulation. This preoccupation is grounded in the understanding that the current (legal) regulation of the private security sector is inadequate. We will show that the debate discounts not only the conceptual and practical limitations that are inherent in the law but also the idea that, beyond law, there is an authoritative normative space that guides the sector. This authoritative space includes self-regulation, social and corporate responsibility, and sector ethics. In order to capture this normative complexity, we need to move beyond the concepts and methodologies of law to understand the dynamic interaction between principles and practices. The way forward, we propose, can be found in organizational anthropology.

The use of private agencies that offer military and/or security services dates back centuries (Noortmann 2011; Noortmann and Chapsos 2015). However, since the 1990s, private security has re-emerged, as is evident in the truely global proliferation of private security companies (Godfrey et al. 2014). It is a result of a new type of 'top down, or post-modern privatization [which] is purposively planned and implemented by governments' (Wulf 2008: 192). The private security industry, which currently has an estimated global market value of $180 billion and a workforce that outnumbers public police officers (Provost 2017; Sorensen 2015), has become the subject of a largely normative debate. A number of reported incidents and political affairs involving so called private military companies (PMCs), and the increased outsourcing of security in military conflicts in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century have led academics, activists, and journalists to investigate and criticize the private security sector as a whole. They call for more robust (inter)national accountability schemes, regulations, and supervisory mechanisms. The tone of this evolving, post-1990 narrative was set by general predispositions against privatization and/or more specific biases against the privatization of security. This has sparked societal and academic discourses that question and criticize both the limitations of the law, in terms of regulation and oversight, and the ethics of the private security sector.

The security discourse has come to recognize that security in our time and age is 'simply too important and too complex to be left to one group of specialists' (Wiliams 2008: 11) and requires a 'multidisciplinary analysis of how, why, when and by whom security is deployed, constructed, institutionalised and structured' (Bourbeau 2015: 2). However, the dominating tenor still reiterates legal regulation, and governmental oversight, and it echoes the stigmatization of the security sector. Legal scholarship has predominantly focussed on legal accountability associated with contract and crime (Kelly 2012), while the social sciences, including anthropology, have mainly concentrated on 'security' and 'security spaces' (Goldstein 2015; Maguire et al. 2014; Samimian-Darash and Stalcup 2017). The relevant disciplines have thus largely failed to produce accounts that include the multiple voices of the industry and/or maintain a proper level of critical self-reflection. What is missing is an *interdisciplinary deepening* of the academic discourse by (structurally) researching the private security sector *from within* – which requires, as we will show below, both access to multiple stakeholders and a tolerant and unprejudiced mindset with respect to these stakeholders. The failure to take these measures, we contend, must be explained with reference not only to enduring sentiments and biases towards the privatization of security and private security companies, but also to disciplinary traditions of law and anthropology.

We illuminate in this chapter the normative complexity of the privatization of security by discussing: (1) the main limits and biases in the current discourse on the privatization of security, (2) the existence of an authoritative normative space beyond law, and (3) the role of organizational anthropology/ethnography in uncovering biases and stigmas that interfere with the assessment of the sector. The chapter also offers a glimpse of what this approach can reveal through examples and illustrations based on fieldwork undertaken by the authors in South Africa in 2016 and 2017.

The current debate: the limits of legal regulation and stigmatization

The current discourse on the privatization of security proliferated with the growing employment of private security companies in military conflict zones, especially in Iraq. The post-modern governmental outsourcing of security in military conflicts reintroduced the stigmatized concept of mercenarism, which states had gradually abandoned in the second half of the nineteenth century (Percy 2007: 94). In the post-1990 debate, 'mercenarism' became the notion around which the discussing revolved (Adams 1999; Avant 2004; Brooks 2000).

Perplexed by the activities of so called PMSCs (Private Military and Security Companies), scholars started to address and critique general and specific issues of law such as accountability (Finer 2008; Cullen 2000), corporate criminal liability (Collins 2015), litigation (Ryngaert 2008), home state responsibility (Francioni 2009), and U.N. regulations (Gómez del Prado 2011). The corresponding debates differed from pre-1990 debates on private security in terms of the sheer numbers of contributions to them, but not necessarily in terms of approach (Hoover 1977; Mourning 1981). Unfortunately, the post-1990 discourse lacks a level of historical reflexivity (but see, Percy 2007).

Today's corporate, for-profit, private provider of security is a modern, not a post-modern phenomenon. It merely has stayed under the radar of public attention until the 1971 publication of the Rand Corporation Report on 'the private police industry' in the United States. The report, which was commissioned by the U.S. National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, explicitly aimed to 'describe the nature and extent of the private police industry ... *its problems, its present regulation and how the law impinges on it … the costs, benefits and risks to society*' (Kakalik and Wildhorn 1971: iv; italics added). It resulted in a first serious critique of 'regulation and legal remedy':

‘Licensing and regulation of private security businesses is at best minimal and inconsistent, and at worst completely absent. Sanctions are rarely invoked, Moreover, current tort, criminal and constitutional law has not been adequate – substantially or procedurally – to control certain problem areas involving private security activities, such as searches, arrests, use of firearms, and investigations, Finally, current law has not always provided adequate remedy for persons injured by actions of private security personnel’ (Kakalik and Wildhorn 1971: viii).

In the United Kingdom, a similar ‘general indifference’ (George and Button, 2000) existed with respect to an emerging private security industry. The sector did not face critical questions until 1979, when the U.K. Home Office issued a discussion paper on ‘The Private Security Industry’ (Wilkinson 2007) to be followed a full 12 years later by an (unpublished) ‘Private Security Industry Background Paper’ by the Home Office. In South Africa, which is widely considered to be the ‘absolute champion’ of private security (Diphoorn 2015: 9), PSCs started ‘to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s in the mining sector and farming sector’.[1] According to Tessa Diphoorn (2015), the South-African government facilitated this development as a means to free policing resources so that they could be used against the mounting political resistance.

In the 1970s and 1980s, academic publications on private security were notably limited and mainly informed by law (Draper 1978; Bassiouni 1977) and political science (Lipman 1988). The post-1990 academic discourse demonstrates a similar preoccupation with law and politics, which in many respects resembles the mainstream discourse on the liability of multinational corporations (Kamminga and Zia-Zarifi 2000) and overlaps with general discourses on privatization (Boycko et al. 1996) and security studies (Wiliams 2008).

[1] Interview with anonymous research participant, 31 March 2017, Western Cape region.

Today's dominant scholarly arguments push for more and/or improved regulation, based on a perceived lack of jurisdictional clarity and on concern for victim protection (Caparini 2008; Krahman 2008). Human rights are regularly brought into the debate, which recounts of the absence or inadequacy of law, whether national or international (Francioni 2009; Baker and Pattison 2012; Karski 2018). The fixation with law and legal regulation, and the idea that the law's limitations can be overcome by more legal rules, is found not only among legal scholars. The traditional methodological differences between mainstream legal scholarship and social scientists are bridged by adopting similar normative approaches. Within scholarly circles there was, and in our opinion still is, little opposition to the politically correct view that the activities of private security companies must be legally curtailed and that their actions are questionable.

From a legal perspective, the limits of law are conceptually and practically given; but these are largely ignored in the private security debate. First of all, there is the indispensable conceptual distinction between public (criminal) law and private (contract) law, which reflects – as Tully (2007: 122) puts it – the conflict between 'public accountability and regulation of free enterprise'. The questions that have been raised by critical scholarship regarding that essential liberal distinction remain marginal (Norrie 2010; Cutler 2003), also with respect to its consequences for the freedom of contract and the prerogative of the state to enforce the law. Second, in practical terms the state's sovereign prerogative to legislate, adjudicate, and enforce both public law and private law may be limited. In order to mitigate some of the consequences of these limitation's states have adopted bilateral and multilateral agreements that regulate potential conflict of national private law(s) and such issues as criminal prosecution and extradition. Procedural guarantees of suspects, however, cannot be legally circumvented. Third, and equally relevant, are the practical limitations that states face in supervising and controlling the industry, due to a lack of resources and capacity.

These three different types of limitations are reflected in the criminal and tort proceedings against Blackwater Security Consulting and Blackwater employees, in the contractual dispute between Sandline International (a PMC) and Papua New Guinea, and in the pressing lack of inspectors that the South African Private Security Industry Regulation Authority (PSiRA) is facing. The criminal and tort proceedings against Blackwater and/or its employees are well discussed in the media and academic articles. The debates on the claims for immunity from prosecution and/or litigation, based on accepted doctrines, existing jurisprudence, standing legislation, and/or such orders as the infamous 'order 17', and the resulting verdicts, have received ample attention by journalists and researchers (Scahill 2007; Kelly 2012; Prince 2013). Less well-known is the case between Sandline and Papua New Guinea over an 'Agreement for the Provision of Military Assistance', amounting to 36 million U.S. dollars, which revolved largely around the determination of the applicable law (English, Australian, Queensland, Papua New Guinean, or international) in order to determine, in turn, whether the contract was valid or not (Dorney 1998).[2] The actual difference between the number of inspectors that the South African Private Security Industry Regulation Authority (PSiRA) can put in the field (approximately 60) and the number of South African PSCs (some 9,000) and private security guards (around 2.5 million) shows the pressing practical problem for some states in supervising a booming industry (PSiRA 2018).

The conceptual and practical limits of the law hamper, in their own way, a better understanding of the privatization of security. At the same time, and closely related to these limits, there is an undertone of bias in the debates regarding the very existence of private security companies and the validity of outsourcing of security – which is considered to be a public good – to private entities. This part of the debate has generated a considerable amount

[2] Agreement for the Provision of Military Assistance dated this 31 day of January 1997 between the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and Sandline International (http://www.privatemilitary.de/pool_doc/documents_sandline-png.pdf – accessed on 7 November 2018).

of naming and shaming of private security and military companies as 'War PLC' (Armstrong 2008), 'corporate warriors' (Singer 2008), 'mercenaries' (Kwakwa 1990; Adams 1999), or 'dogs of war' (Joachim and Schneiker 2012; Sorensen 2015), which engage in 'twilight policing' (Diphoorn 2015). This 'image' problem is no longer restricted to the military side; it also affects private security organizations and has not contributed to a balanced debate on the roles and responsibilities of the private security sector. The painting of these organizations and their employees and owners as 'immoral' and 'ruthless' has created an '"anti-mercenary norm" [that] has become "institutionalised" across not only media outlets but also national and international governmental organizations and in wider public discourse' (Brewis and Godfrey 2018: 338). Albeit PMCs are especially subject to societal scrutiny, the sector as a whole has to deal with stigmatization.

Compared to debates on security in the fields of law, international relations, politics, and international studies, research on the private security sector from an organizational and/or anthropological perspective has been slow to catch up (Godfrey et al. 2014; Maguire, Frois, and Zurawski 2014). Since their engagement with this topic, however, neither field has really moved away from the stigmatization discourse. In organization studies, stigmatization of both the industry and its employees has resulted in an interesting debate on the impact of stigmatization on the identity of a sector and/or its employees. Drawing on Ervin Goffman's (1963) major work, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, an increasing body of research addresses how professions and workers in stigmatized settings manage such stigma and the 'dirty work' they are doing, including in the security sector (Higate 2012b; Hansen Löfstrand et al. 2016; Vergne 2012)

Tommy Jensen and Johann Sandstrom (2015: 128) define organizational stigma as 'stigma associated with a particular category of organizations (core stigma organizations) that is transferred to a group of people of single individuals (within or outside of the organization)

who have to conceal, transform, or resist this stigma transfer in social encounters'. It is argued that morally stigmatized occupations (for instance, private security companies) tend to be regarded as 'dirtier' (i.e., more stigmatized) than physically or socially stigmatized occupations (such as working in a slaughter house) and that these morally stigmatized occupations will engage in very robust organization-level defensive tactics (Ashford and Kreiner 2014).

In research on organizational stigma, a lot of attention is given to coping with stigma and less with questioning the lingering tendency to stigmatize as such. Examples of mechanisms for coping with stigma include the construction of a professional identity by the private security firm contractors, which is achieved by minimising the impact of their presence on the ground. For instance, keeping a low profile is seen as 'integral of good security practice' (Higate 2012a: 340). Other examples include the creation of a narrative highlighting the importance, necessity, and virtues of their work by security officers in Sweden and the U.K. (Hansen Löfstrand et al. 2016) and by private security guards in hospitals (Johnston and Hodge 2014). British contractors active in Iraq and Afghanistan have stressed 'just cause' and (military) professionalism (Brewis and Godfrey 2018), whereas others reverted to strategies of lessening disapproval of them by diversifying, as when arms firms also set up as elderly care home providers (Vergne 2012). Ashford and Kreiner (2014) observed the reframing, recalibrating, and refocussing of work as a defensive tactic in order to mitigate the stigma attached to 'dirty' work, the ultimate aim being to create positive meaning.

In short, the literature on organizational stigma in private security investigates the management of stigmatization. Attempts to move away from the stigma-debate are hard to find; one example is the work by Jutta Joachim and Andrea Schneiker (2012), who argue that, due to an increase in civilian missions for private security firms, there is scope to

reframe the stigmatized 'dirty' worker/'dogs of war' in private security as 'new humanitarians'. Based on the above, two points of critique have to be made: first, this line of research cannot rid itself of a conceptualization of private security organizations as stigmatized; and, second, there is hardly any attention devoted to private security at the micro-sociological level (Higate 2012b; Higate 2012a; Joachim and Schneiker 2012).

To enhance research that considers the micro-sociological dimension of private security, anthropology would offer a very suitable lens. In the recently published edited volume, *The Anthropology of Security*, Mark Maguire, Catarina Frois, and Nils Zurawski (2014: 4) argue for a 'critical anthropology of security … with historically informed anthropological perspectives on the politics of security, the key areas of policy and policing, and of course, experiences of security in different domains'. This is a much-needed addition to security studies, which are still dominated by the field of international relations and by state-ism. However, it is somewhat unfortunate that the authors do not take into consideration the experiences and stories of those active within the private security industry. Private security companies are virtually absent, save for comments, in the introduction to this volume, about the contract of G4S, a private security company, with the Lincolnshire Police Authority to 'built and staff many functions within a police station' – which the editors describe as '*disturbing portents* … foretell[ing] a vision of the future already available elsewhere' (Maguire, Frois, and Zurawski 2014: 13; italics added). Here as well, we see unease with the private security sector. This is where organizational anthropology might have an important contribution to make. We return to this point following the next section.

Regulating private security beyond the law

There exists an immeasurable field of norms, standards, and procedures beyond the confinements of the law. Law, however defined, is but one normative, regulatory system among others that are *not* law. The difference between legal norms and non-legal norms is the constructed and cultivated authoritativeness of the former; legal norms are overall considered to be of a higher normative value than non-legal norms. In order to avoid that this doctrinal difference between law and non-law determines the outcome of specific normative debates, there is a tendency among legal scholars and anthropologists of law to define non-legal norms as law. This can be done in a variety of ways such as the upgrading of 'custom' to 'customary law' or conceptualizing 'transnational law' as a new legal system. Both exercises, in effect, secure the legal character of the debate by suggesting that the arguments can be located *within* the limits of law. While the construction of concepts such as 'customary law' and 'transnational law' is highly relevant for an engagement with law beyond 'black letter' national and international law, they create, in effect, a new plurality in law. Indeed, legal pluralism engages with the complexities of law that legal positivism seeks to avoid (Noortmann 2001), but that 'legal' approach equally fails to appreciate and engage with normative systems that are not law. Legal pluralism's conceptualizing characteristic is still the ultimate distinction between law and non-law (Merry 1988).

Any inter-subjective agreement on a definition of law that would be more inclusive of non-state *law* would still exclude regulations, procedures, and disciplinary mechanisms in the 'social field' that do assert authoritative normative value, but which are *not* law. Bringing all norms under the general heading of 'law' by simply labelling them as such prevents us from understanding the relevance of otherwise authoritative norms and their relationship with legal norms. Researchers on private security have to look beyond 'security practices that create a multiplicity of perhaps seemingly in-compatible versions of *law*', as Susan Bibler Coutin (2001: 502; italics added) asserts, and include relevant normative spaces beyond law. These

normative spaces consist inter alia of collective voluntary self-regulation mechanisms that are initiated by branch organizations, published social corporate responsibility commitments of individual private security companies, and ethical standards that are held by individual private security contractors and by owners and staff-members of private security companies.

The idea that the private security sector is capable of meaningful self-regulation has triggered a contentious debate between civil society and activist scholarship, on one side, and corporations, on the other side. The *War on Want's* opinion that voluntary codes in the private security sector are 'a licence for abuse' and a tool 'to legitimise the industry and governments to sidestep proper controls' (War on Want 2013) is telling. Simon Chesterman and Chia Lehnardt (2007: 2) reflect scholarly concerns in stating the following:

'Acceptance of … [the private security] market will largely depend on the reality and the perception of accountability mechanisms … [A] central question is whether the normative framework and accountability structures adequately address the new environment. 'Most commentators agree that they do not'.

Indeed, private codes and instruments of self-regulation in the private security sector have not met with much approval. In order to properly value normative development beyond the law, however, we must first of all accept that 'we may not like all the norms being articulated at any given moment, [but] it will do no good to ignore them or insist on their lack of authority' (Berman 2007: 329). This, we argue, is precisely what is happening with respect to the private security sector: ignoring or dismissing collective self-regulation, corporate social responsibility schemes, and individual ethics.

The private security sector has established a range of generic and specific national and international branch organizations, which have adopted a variety of standards and

guidelines, as well as certification and oversight mechanisms. The International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA), for example, monitors and assesses the compliance of its members with the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers (ICoC). To that extent the organization has established a complaints procedure. National security sector branch organizations such as the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) and also smaller more specific organizations such as the South African Intruder Detection Services Association (SAIDSA) also develop their own certification and training programmes. One of the research participants, who is a member of SAIDSA, stated that SAISDA membership is 'good for insurances and for standards and for marketing'.[3]

The perceived benefits of self-regulation in the private security sector indicate a relationship between standards and business. These private branch initiatives work next to and often in cooperation with semi-public or public/private branch organizations such as the South African Private Security Industry Regulation Authority (PSiRA) and the U.K. Security Industry Authority (SIA). These 'authorities' are based on the 2001 Private Security Industry Regulation Act (SA) and the 2001 Private Security Industry Act (U.K.) respectively. Both organizations perform similar licencing and supervision functions that are authorized by law, but they are also independent and linked to the sector, developing their own non-legal norms.

In addition to the development of specific branch standards, some of these organizations also participate in the development of more generic standards that can be adopted beyond the organization by national governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations such as the International Standard Organization (ISO), which has issued such standards as the Management System for Private Security Operations (ISO 18788:2015) and Guidelines for Private Maritime Security Companies, pertaining to

[3] Interview with anonymous research participant, 27 April 2017, Western Cape region.

privately contracted armed security personnel on board of ships (ISO 28007-1:2015). On the ISO website, these standards are formulated, respectively, as follows:

'This international standard specifies requirements and provides guidance for organizations conducting or contracting security operations. It provides a business and risk management framework for the effective conduct of security operations. It is specifically applicable to any organization operating in circumstances where governance may be weak or rule of law undermined due to human or naturally caused events' (https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:18788:ed-1:v1:en).

'This part of ISO 28007 gives guidelines containing additional sector-specific recommendations, which companies (organizations) who comply with ISO 28000 can implement to demonstrate that they provide Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on board of ships' (https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:28007:-1:ed-1:v1:en).

These kind of standard-setting activities support Lindsey Cameron's (2009: 115) conclusion that security companies 'cannot set international standards themselves when it comes to activities that are already regulated by … law; rather, they may merely regulate in order to achieve a better compliance with existing standards. It is conceivable however, that they may set standards for matters that are not already governed by applicable law'. Her opinion that 'a will to self-regulate … [is] laudable, but people handling weapons in situations of armed conflict clearly need to be bound by more than a voluntary code of conduct' (Cameron 2009: 138) can be met with a similar argument that 'people handling weapons in situations of armed conflict clearly need to be bound by more than a *legal* code of conduct'. Indeed, the legal regulation for the handling of weapons provides no guarantee

that abuse will not happen. Anne Peters, Lucy Koechlin, and Till Förster (2009: 549) recognize the value of private standards in 'deploy[ing] an extremely strong compliance pull, which resembles "public" authority and enforceability'. Private security companies understand and work with the differences between legal rules, which, as one of our research participants expressed it, 'we have to comply with', and 'standards that are associated with professional "accreditations" and "good ethics"'.[4]

Apart from creating branch organizations that develop standards and guidelines, many private security organizations have also adopted social (corporate) responsibility schemes that include reference to such issues as sustainable development, human rights, and corruption (G4S 2016) (https://www.adt.co.uk/corporate-social-responsibility). Christopher Kinsey (2008: 83) concludes that 'it seems that industry is aware of the concept and that it applies to them [but] that there appears to be a lack of understanding about exactly what it represents. And yet … companies generally act in a socially responsible way'. According to Kinsey, this can be explained by 'competition and future markets' (Kinsey 2008: 83), which, as Anne van Aaken (2015) suggests, creates compliance incentives.

The relationship between corporate and branch ethics and individual/professional ethics, is considered to be a critical one (Soares 2003; Bénabou and Tirole 2010). There is a reflexive awareness within the sector that the potential negative reputation of the sector 'boils down to ethics. And very few guys can spell it these days'.[5]

At the corporate level, ethics are considered to reflect privately held norms of 'social responsibility', which inform individual positions but which are considered to lay outside a specific security 'function' or 'mandate'.[6] With the growing diversification in the sector comes a new dynamic of what Asa Kasher (2008) calls 'interface ethics'. Kasher (2008: 235)

[4] Interview with anonymous research participant, 24 April 2017, Western Cape region.
[5] Interview with anonymous research participant, 2 May 2017, Gauteng region.
[6] Interview with anonymous research participant, 3 April 2017, Gauteng region.

assumes that 'ethical problems emerge where actions are performed at one and the same time and one and the same place by members of two [different] organisations'. Assuming that the 'ethical problems of interface' are the result of 'simple exposure' ignores the development of ethical standards from cooperation between different organizations.

Interface ethics and resulting new interface norms are no longer confined to the interaction between public and private security providers. Increasingly, they are extended to interactions between different private security providers as well. Professional diversification in the sector comes with the introduction of new ethics and new norms. The traditional background of security personnel (former police officers and military personnel) is waning. In the new generation, executive officers, managers, and owners come into the sector with MBA degrees and add a new sense of business ethics to police and military ethics:

'New generations come up with new ideas, different backgrounds, education-wise … [which] brings business forward'[7] … [but it is also] increasingly difficult to do business properly … [I]n the old days you'd have a guarding company that would just do guards [but now] you can't sustain your business model just with guards or just with alarms or just with CCTV. It's impossible'.[8]

Moving *into* the private security sector

As stated by Robert M. Cover (1983: 4–5), 'no set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning … [I]n this normative world, law and narrative are inseparably related'. We have argued that a reconciliation of different

[7] Interview with anonymous research participant, 27 April 2017, Western Cape region.
[8] Interview with anonymous research participant, 20 April 2017, Western Cape region.

norms in the privatization of security is seriously impeded by a combination of factors, including, especially, the dominant norms and notions of law and the biased questioning of private security sector ethics, as reflected in the stigmatization resulting from the naming, shaming, and blaming of the private security sector. This results in a normative debate that ignores the development and creation of norms beyond traditional legal instruments of accountability and regulation, as we have shown in the previous section.

There are a few approaches, such as critical security studies (Buzan et al. 1998) and the study of global security assemblages (Abrahamsen and Williams 2017; Higate 2017), that recognize the growing complexity and the multiple stakeholders engaged in today's security landscapes. In our view, however, these approaches have not yet been able to investigate the full complexity outlined above, as most studies focus on only a limited number of actors within the wider field. The way forward lies in an approach that investigates the private security sector from within and in its full complexity. Anthropology and ethnography, as the study of cultural and social life through close-up and context-sensitive research (Eriksen 2015), are very well placed to do so. However, as we have also shown, legal anthropology and social anthropology do have their limits, due either to a focus on regulation or to a general uneasiness with the 'field' as such.

Private security organizations are intriguing (and dominant) actors in the wider security landscape, but comprehensive research on these organizations and their relationship with other security actors in the sector is missing. The noted bias and stigma seem to prevent further understanding of the level and impact of their activities (Godfrey et al. 2014). This neglect begs the question of what these organizations (and their staff) are about. How did they get started and why, what drives them, how are they organized, what do they want to contribute to security, what is their take on regulation, and how do they make sense of their role within the wider security landscape? And of what does that landscape consist? These are

the kind of questions we used in our research into the security sector in South Africa (with fieldwork in 2016 and 2017). By using an organizational anthropological lens and integrating our legal, anthropological, and organizational expertise in an attempt to 'go beyond' existing ideas and representations, we encouraged security actors to tell us 'their' story.

Paul Bate's (1997) core text 'Whatever Happened to Organizational Anthropology' is a good starting point to address the merits of this approach. From anthropology, the approach adopts fieldwork, a narrative style, and the premise that thought and behaviour can only be understood in the context in which they are situated. Since Bate's main work, organizational anthropology (or organizational ethnography) has attained an important position, in particular in the field of organization and management studies (more so than within anthropology). Its objects are the human networks of action we call organizations (Ciuk et al. 2018), which may be understood as 'systems of meaning and interpretation' (Schubert and Röhl 2017: 5). Organizational ethnographers are 'concerned with understanding how organization members go about their daily working lives and how they make sense of their workplaces' (Ciuk et al. 2018: 278).

Organizational ethnography strives to combine 'subjective experience and individual agency with a sensitivity to the broader social settings and the historical and institutional dynamics in which these are embedded' (Yanow et al. 2012: 335). This careful attention makes it possible to show how organizational actors go about and make sense of their daily lives, and it enables organizational ethnographers to shed light on hidden dimensions of organizational life (power and politics), to place actors in context, and to make polyphony audible. It asks the researcher to be open-minded, not to prejudge, and to study a particular organization on its 'own terms' (Burton et al. 2018:, 11). In short, it offers the necessary 'mindset' to 'move into' the security sector and study the privatization of security and private security organizations in particular.

There is a dual-meaning to 'moving *into*' as we use it here. There is of course the literal meaning of seeking access to the wide variety of stakeholders that make up the private security sector. These include private security companies – from small family firms to large international corporations with divergent expertise in maritime or landward security, surveillance, armed response, and/or specialized equipment installations – as well as regulatory bodies, local police, neighbourhood watches, campus security, municipality representatives; and receivers of security. To do justice to the complexity, we made contact with all of these and did not take refuge in engaging with only one of these core players. In most cases; our being there meant that we just knocked on doors or approached these stakeholders on the street if necessary. They were all very willing to talk to us. This is related to the other, more metaphorical and maybe more important meaning of 'moving into'.

The metaphorical 'moving into' implies a tolerant and open appreciation of the various stakeholders and their roles and work. Stakeholders in the security industry are very aware of the stigma, ethical questions, and demand for regulation that befalls their organizations and activities. In all cases, we made contact by asking them to 'tell us their story'; and they did, often in great detail and with historical momentum. Being partners in the conversation who were able to understand both the legal and regulatory issues as well as the organizational and cultural dynamics made us privy to engaging and sincere stories and narratives, as some of the statements made by research participants, quoted above (and below), indicate. It also led to invitations to come and visit their sites, surveillance rooms, and private homes, all of which added necessary contextualization to the stories.

South Africa is not a homogeneous society. Therefore, research into the South African private security sector faces an 'extra complexity', in the words of one research participant.[9] In addition, the South African security sector is immensely diverse:

[9] Interview with anonymous research participant, 20 April 2017, Western Cape region.

‘When you talk about private security, you’re talking about a wide spectrum of services. You’ve got those who are providing security guards and those that are specializing in close protection, those that are providing dog handlers and the canine sector, and you also have locksmiths. You have those that are providing private intelligence, and so on and so forth’.[10]

This contextual complexity and diversity alone make general comments on the regulation of ‘the sector’ and the ways in which the sector or private companies work particularly problematic. It also indicates that ‘moving into’ and ‘going beyond’ is of utmost importance in doing justice to what is ‘actually’ going on out there.

It is well-known that South Africa grapples with substantial crime rates. In 2017, South Africa published a ‘White Paper on Safety and Security’, with the aim of promoting an integrated and holistic approach to safety and security, in support of its National Development Plan objective of ‘Building Safer Communities’. This White Paper reaffirms that building safer communities is the collective responsibility of both the state and its citizens, and it emphasizes the need for an active citizenry, civil society, and private sector to contribute to the on-going efforts of government to promote safety and to prevent crime and violence (South Africa White Paper on Safety and Security 2017). The ‘moving into’ created a wide range of connections, and while in the field we came into contact with such a security initiative. We were able to follow it and to conclude, on the basis of this example, that the ‘cowboy-image’ of private security companies is a one-sided view:

[10] Interview with anonymous research participant, 10 April 2017, Gauteng region.

‘So we’ve taken all the private security companies, the University, local law enforcement agencies that we have, and we’ve all combined them into one grouping, and they all work towards one major aim, and that is to be pro-active towards crime-prevention instead of re-active … So all of them are working together in all the different areas, assisting one another sharing information. And yes, we’ve been very successful’.[11]

The point to make is that focusing on stigma, accountability, and/or regulation is a far cry from what is actually taking place in the day-to-day ‘realities’ of the various actors involved in the security landscape. The following quotation attests to the fact that not all private security companies are building on fear to make money:

‘What I realised was, very quickly … there’s a lot of people making an enormous amount of money out of people’s misery rather than trying to fix problems. There’s a complete disconnect here, and if people can sell you fences, gates, electric beams, and cameras, they will make a lot of money. They aren’t necessarily fixing the problem of the person who’s asked them to go and do that. My approach has been completely different: it’s to teach people how to actually live their lives in a different way … If I teach people’s mindsets, then I’m going to push away the idea that people are making phenomenal amounts of money from selling people stuff rather than teaching people how to live their lives in a safer way. That’s where I go. That’s what my business is all about’.[12]

Academic research has not yet done a good enough job of tackling the more pertinent questions and offering a plurivocal ‘insider’s’ view. Going beyond law and beyond

[11] Interview with anonymous research participant, 5 April 2017, Western Cape region.
[12] Interview with anonymous research participant, 31 March 2016, Western Cape region.

anthropology, but combining their expertise in novel ways – a journey we have started on – is in our view a promising way forward.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have argued that the current debate on the privatization of security and the private security sector displays a normative bias towards the sector that finds expression in a preoccupation with the legal regulation of private security companies and with the 'kind' of work they are engaged in. This bias has largely prevented researchers from looking beyond the law and exploring the private security sector from within, and it has led them to ignore regulatory alternatives and diversity within the sector. We have argued, first, that the law is conceptually and practically limited, which constrains effective public regulation; and, second, that a deeper, unbiased research engagement with the security sector reveals a plurality of actors and voices as well as the existence of norms and standards that can be authoritative and effective in their own right. We have shown that organizational anthropology, conducted at the cross-roads of law, anthropology, and organizational studies, can uncover an ethical and normative diversity that is essential to a comprehensive understanding of the privatization of security and of private security organizations.

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