

ENTANGLEMENTS OF PRIVATE SECURITY AND COMMUNITY POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA AND SWAZILAND

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ABSTRACT

Security in Africa is seldom a public good provided by the state, but is frequently something you pay for or acquire by turning to various non-state or community actors. The privatization of security in African cities is reflected in the rapid growth of the private security industry, which is matched by the widespread involvement of civilian actors in neighbourhood watches and self-organized policing groups. Much of the scholarly debate on ‘plural policing’ and ‘security assemblages’ has focused on what the privatization of security means for the state, highlighting how the public–private divide is increasingly blurred as state police services interact with either private or community security actors. This article adds a novel perspective by exploring the entanglements between private security companies and civilian community policing groups in urban areas of South Africa and Swaziland. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, the article shows how these actors engage with each other in different, often informal, ways and across socio-spatial boundaries. The result is the simultaneous communalization of private security and privatization of community policing. However, these are not straightforward processes. Sets of actors slip in and out of commercial and community logics of security, but also frequently articulate their distinctions as part of positioning themselves in a competitive security landscape, thereby raising questions about the objectives and motivations that drive many security performances.

FOR MOST CITIZENS IN URBAN AFRICA, private security companies (PSCs) and civilian self-help or community policing groups constitute the most significant everyday providers of security. This challenges the idea of the state as the only legitimate provider of security and the welfare-state

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notion of security as a free public good.¹ Instead, security is something you pay for, if you can, or try to get by engaging in self-help policing. This has led scholars of urbanization to emphasize that the privatization of security reinforces urban inequality and class-spatial segregation: whereas upper-class citizens and businesses can afford private security, the poor, living in the growing slums, are left to fend for themselves or resort to under-resourced and untrained civilian policing groups.² This division is deepened by neo-liberal capitalist developments and is increasingly seen across cities in Africa and beyond.

The growing privatization of security across Africa reflects a global phenomenon that is typically associated with commodification of public goods and state withdrawal in the sense of less direct market regulation and public service provision. State withdrawal can be the result of deliberate neo-liberal policies or the unintended consequence of state weakness in the sense of reduced capacity to regulate and deliver public goods, or it can be a combination of both.³ Based on this perspective, the literature on policing and security in Africa has examined what the privatization of security implies for the role and authority of the state as public security provider. Rather than a simple eroding of state authority or a pure form of state withdrawal, studies have shown how the state's role is reconfigured through a plural policing landscape that is characterized by both competition and collaboration.⁴ As Bruce Baker argues, non-state policing has always been prevalent in Africa, because states have never managed to assert a monopoly on policing.⁵ However, pluralism is deepening, also in urban spaces, with the massive growth of a global private security industry and new forms of civilian self-help to mitigate rising fear of crime caused by youth marginalization, societal tensions, and political transitions.

1. Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams, 'Security beyond the state: Global security assemblages in international politics', *International Political Sociology* 3 (2009), p. 3; Ian Loader and Neil Walker, 'Policing as a public good: Reconstituting the connections between policing and the state', *Theoretical Criminology* 5, 1 (2001), pp. 9–35.

2. Asef Bayat, 'Politics city-inside-out', *City and Society* 24, 2 (2012), pp. 110–28; Dennis Rodgers, 'Slum wars of the 21st century: Gangs, Mano Dura, and the new urban geography of conflict in Central America', *Development and Change* 40, 5 (2009), pp. 85–96; Daniel M. Goldstein, *Outlawed: Between security and rights in a Bolivian city* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC and London, 2012); Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (eds), *Fractured cities: Social exclusion, urban violence and contested spaces in Latin America* (Zed Books, London, 2007).

3. Abrahamsen and Williams, 'Security beyond the state'; Jennifer Wood and Clifford Shearing, *Imagining security* (Willan Publishing, Devon, 2007); Trevor Jones and Tim Newburn, *Plural policing: A comparative perspective* (Routledge, London and New York, NY, 2006); Bruce Baker, 'Living with non-state policing in South Africa: The issues and dilemmas', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40, 1 (2002), pp. 29–53.

4. Tessa Diphorn, *Twilight policing: Private security and violence in urban South Africa* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2016); Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams, *Security beyond the state: Private security in international politics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011).

5. Bruce Baker, *Multi-choice policing in Africa* (Nordiska Afrika Institutet, Uppsala, 2008).

Different frameworks have emerged to analyse the plural policing landscape, such as the nodal framework, the network approach, and security assemblages. These have provided tremendous insight into contemporary security provision by showing the varied ways private/non-state and public/state policing bodies enrol, sustain, intersect, and overlap with each other. The result is new arrangements that blur the public–private policing divide.

In this article we draw on these plural policing frameworks, but add a novel perspective by exploring the relationship between private security companies and civilian community policing groups in mixed urban areas of South Africa and Swaziland. We show how PSCs and community policing groups engage each other in often informal ways and across socio-spatial boundaries, giving way to different entanglements of actors, practices, and logics. Commercial security logics coexist and merge with notions of communal care, popular punishments, and collective security arrangements. Our analysis does not deny the continued significance of the state or public–private relationships, but problematizes the tendency to treat PSCs and community policing in isolation or as distinct types of security providers that prevail in different urban spaces. Although some studies show how civilian community policing bodies are co-opted by the private interests of politicians and businessmen, and take fees for otherwise voluntary services, the role of PSCs is absent from the analysis.⁶ Conversely, studies of such companies focus predominantly on the relationship to the state and public policing or military bodies, with scant if any mention of civilian policing.⁷ These absences may reflect the fact that the entanglement of PSCs and community policing is a relatively new phenomenon due to the continued expansion of these companies in Africa and to the widespread implementation of community policing programmes since the late 1990s.

This article is based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork on security provision in Durban and Swaziland. Tessa Diphorn focused on the everyday policing practices of armed response officers, a branch of the private security industry in Durban, South Africa, and spent a total of twenty months in Durban between 2007 and 2010. Due to a focus on four

6. Mutuma Ruteree and Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle, 'Democratizing security or decentralizing repression? The ambiguities of community policing in Kenya', *African Affairs* 102, 409 (2003), pp. 587–604; Marco de Nunzio, 'Thugs, spies and vigilantes: Community policing and street politics in inner city Addis Ababa', *Africa* 84, 3 (2014), pp. 444–65; Lars Buur and Steffen Jensen, 'Introduction: Vigilantism and the policing of everyday life in South Africa', *African Studies* 63, 2 (2004), pp. 139–52.

7. Abrahamsen and Williams, 'Security beyond the state'; George S. Rigakos, *The new parapolice, risk markets and commodified social control* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2002); Kennedy A. Mkutu and Kizito Sabala, 'Private security companies in Kenya and dilemmas for security', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25, 3 (2007), pp. 391–416.

different companies that moved throughout the city, data were collected in diverse socio-economic neighbourhoods, ranging from very affluent areas to poorer townships. Helene Maria Kyed conducted eight months of fieldwork between 2011 and 2013 in the poor urban, informal settlement of Kwaluseni, bordering the largest industrial zone in Swaziland, and focused on a self-organized civilian community policing group. The article is not a comparative study of two different urban centres, but an attempt to bring out varied instances of entanglements between commercial and communal security across different socio-economic contexts.

Despite contextual differences, the entanglements are equally widespread. In Swaziland private security companies draw on the community police to intimidate those who are seen as security threats to their clients, and in South Africa community policing initiatives are increasingly acting like these companies. Conversely, PSCs in South Africa articulate notions of community to create and attract collective clients, whereas civilian community police in Swaziland act more and more as a paid service. The result in both contexts is processes of simultaneous communalization of private security and privatization of community policing. These are not straightforward processes. While actors in each set slip in and out of commercial and community logics of security, they also frequently articulate the distinctions between these as part of positioning themselves in what is a competitive security landscape. This leaves the question of whether security provision is for the community or for the money a complicated one to answer. Even if security is increasingly a commodity, this intermingles with expectations of communal care and security as a common good. The result is therefore not a pure privatization of security, but a mixture of logics and practices.

The simultaneous privatization and communalization of security provision is caused by a combination of political, economic, and social processes that vary in degree across the urban geographies of these case studies. We suggest that these processes can be identified across urban areas of sub-Saharan Africa, and thus we are confident that the claims made in this article can be echoed beyond the particular case studies. Politically, different trajectories of state withdrawal from direct security provision have enlarged the space for non-state actors, and are reconfiguring, but not eradicating, notions of security as a common good. This is caused by different degrees of a mixture of deliberate neo-liberal policies, which support self-governance, active citizenship, and privatization (as seen in South Africa), and state weakness in terms of low capacity and effectiveness to combat crime (as seen in Swaziland). Community policing schemes that enrol civilians can simultaneously represent neo-liberal policies of active citizenship and low-cost solutions to state

weakness largely based on self-organized initiatives, and are thus present across varied socio-economic contexts in different ways.

Economically, the global market expansion of private security companies is crucial, but purchasing power varies according to the size and expansion of the industry and income levels. In these respects, South Africa and Swaziland are very different, and thus PSCs are present in different ways. Whereas urban middle and lower-middle classes are increasingly direct clients, poor urban dwellers who cannot afford private guards are affected as PSCs present job opportunities and are expanding into commercial and industrial sectors around low-income neighbourhoods. Another significant economic factor is that growing urbanization is unmatched by equal economic opportunities, a situation that causes high levels of (especially youth) unemployment and burgeoning feelings of insecurity and fear of crime across socio-economic settings.

Socially, urban insecurities contribute to communal distrust and divisions within and across neighbourhoods, and create a demand for more security provision both in terms of individualized purchases of security services, and wider desires for notions of 'community' to be re-articulated. These factors coexist with a shared perception that the state is incapable and/or unwilling to protect citizens from crime. Although African states have never fully provided free security to all, the idea of security as a common good is relatively widespread across the urban contexts. The state is delegitimized by failure to live up to this ideal, opening the space further for private and communal actors, who mobilize around and mix prevailing notions of common communal care or 'community' and expanding commercial logics in different ways across the socio-economic contexts.

Before moving to the case studies, we first provide a brief introduction to the debate on plural policing in Africa. In the conclusion we bring together the insights of the two case studies and discuss the enabling conditions of the privatization and communalization of policing. Although we have chosen to leave out a focus on state security providers, the insights of the article should be seen not as a substitution for, but as an addition to, studies on the relationships between non-state policing bodies and state authorities.

Policing in Africa: towards a plural and relational approach

Increasingly over the past decade, studies on policing and security in sub-Saharan Africa have included non-state policing actors. This reflects a wider tendency in African studies to move past state-centric definitions of policing, instead approaching policing as a set of practices that can be

exercised and governed by a plurality of state, private, and communal actors.⁸ While non-state policing actors have been around for a long time in Africa, the ideological shift towards a plural policing perspective has come in the wake of global political and economic changes. The literature highlights the neo-liberal policies of state deregulation since the 1980s, which have led not only to a proliferation of citizen-led policing initiatives and private security companies, but also to a fragmentation of security governance away from the state.⁹ Simultaneously, many African governments have, often as part of international donor-supported security sector reforms, implemented community policing schemes to democratize the police and make it more accountable to citizens. This has involved police–community partnerships through the establishment of neighbourhood watches and community policing forums comprising volunteer residents from the neighbourhood.¹⁰ While drawing on neo-liberal values of citizen participation, community policing in Africa has also been used to re-assert state legitimacy by filling the vacuum left by an under-resourced state police. This has happened alongside the massive growth of PSCs, which are associated with profit-making motives and individual paying clients. Yet they are also increasingly taking over state police duties, and thereby have come to be regarded as threats to a fundamental aspect of state authority. This perceived threat is challenged by the emergence of numerous forms of collaboration between state policing bodies and PSCs, such as private security officers supporting police officers or government bodies functioning as clients of these companies.¹¹

These developments in the African security landscape have led scholars of policing to adopt a relational approach, using different frameworks such as ‘assemblages’,¹² ‘networks’,¹³ ‘nodal governance’,¹⁴ and ‘multi-

8. This perspective can be contrasted to earlier views, inspired by both Hobbesian and Weberian conceptualizations of the state, that the provision of security by non-state actors is automatically associated with state failure. See, for instance, Jones and Newburn, *Plural policing*; Baker, *Multi-choice policing in Africa*; Ian Loader, ‘Plural policing and democratic governance’, *Social and Legal Studies* 9, 3 (2000), pp. 323–45; Wood and Shearing, *Imagining security*; David H. Bayley and Clifford D. Shearing, *The new structure of policing: Conceptualization and research agenda* (National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC, 2001); Peter Albrecht and Helene M. Kyed (eds), *Policing and the politics of order-making* (Routledge, New York, NY and Oxford, 2015); Abrahamsen and Williams, *Security beyond the state*.

9. Abrahamsen and Williams, *Security beyond the state*.

10. Michael Brogden and Preeti Nijhar, *Community policing: National and international models and approaches* (Willan Publishing, Devon, 2005).

11. Abrahamsen and Williams, *Security beyond the state*; Diphoorn, *Twilight policing*; Sabelo Gumede (ed.), *Private security in Africa: Manifestation, challenges and regulation* (Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 2007); Tessa Diphoorn and Julie Berg, ‘Typologies of partnership policing: Case studies from urban South Africa’, *Policing and Society* 24, 4 (2014), pp. 425–42.

12. Abrahamsen and Williams, *Security beyond the state*.

13. Benoît Dupont, ‘Security in the age of networks’, *Policing and Society* 14, 1 (2004), pp. 76–91.

14. Clifford D. Shearing and Jennifer Wood, ‘Nodal governance, democracy, and the new “denizens”’, *Journal of Law and Society* 30, 3 (2003), pp. 400–19.

choice policing'.¹⁵ Instead of studying one specific provider in isolation, these frameworks are used to explore how different security providers and auspices relate to, oppose, and enrol each other. Studies have shown that security privatization does not simply lead to a further erosion of the state, nor necessarily turn out to be a symptom of state failure. Rather it has resulted in new security arrangements that cut across the public–private and local–global divides. Such structures are characterized by having no clear-cut centre of authority and no fixed hierarchical or vertical relationships.¹⁶ A key question that has preoccupied these studies is what the new security networks and assemblages imply for governance and, in turn, state authority.

A growing number of anthropological studies of local non-state actors – vigilante groups,¹⁷ gangs and abrasive citizen-led policing organizations,¹⁸ and government-supported community policing initiatives¹⁹ – have similarly shown how different entanglements between civilian policing actors and the state police not only reconfigure sovereignty, but also blur the state/non-state and formal/informal divides. State-based, traditional, and communal forms of justice and punishment frequently merge, and while community policing initiatives may be used to boost the state's capacity to police populations, often violently, they just as often revive traditional village policing styles.²⁰ As with private security companies, civilian policing actors engage with state institutions through complex exchanges and power negotiations.

The relational approach to policing has provided tremendous insights into the plural landscape of security in Africa, and also inspires our

15. Baker, *Multi-choice policing in Africa*.

16. This resonates with a Foucauldian understanding of power and governmentality, moving from the concept of government to governance (see Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1991). This perspective challenges a zero-sum conception of power and the notion that power is concentrated in particular institutions or positions. The implication for studies of security privatization is that the resurgence of private actors does not necessarily imply a reduction of state authority, but rather its reconfiguration through the enrolment of private actors.

17. David Pratten and Atreyee Sen, *Global vigilantes* (Hurst and Co, London, 2007); Buur and Jensen, 'Introduction'; Tomas G. Kirsch and Tilo Grätz, *Domesticating vigilantism in Africa* (James Currey, Weybridge, 2010).

18. Steffen Jensen, *Gangs, politics and dignity in Cape Town* (James Currey, Oxford, 2008); Sarah-Jane Cooper-Knock, 'Policing in intimate crowds: Moving beyond "the mob" in South Africa', *African Affairs* 113, 453 (2014), pp. 563–82.

19. Charlotte Cross, 'Community policing and the politics of local development in Tanzania', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 52, 4 (2014), pp. 517–40; Ruteree and Pommerolle, 'Democratizing security or decentralizing repression?'; de Nunzio, 'Thugs, spies and vigilantes'; Helene M. Kyed, 'Community policing in post-war Mozambique', *Policing and Society* 19, 4 (2009), pp. 354–71; Ted Leggett, 'Just another miracle: A decade of crime and justice in democratic South Africa', *Social Research* 72, 3 (2005), pp. 581–604.

20. Kyed, 'Community policing in post-war Mozambique'; Ruteree and Pommerolle, 'Democratizing security or decentralizing repression?'

analytical approach. However, an analysis of the interactions between community policing groups and private security companies is missing from most of these studies, probably for three main reasons.²¹ The first of these concerns the socio-spatial distinction between upper-class citizens in affluent areas who can afford private security and poor slum dwellers who are left to fend for themselves. Although these divisions do exist in South Africa and Swaziland, PSCs and community policing groups both move across socio-spatial boundaries. We suggest that this may be an expanding phenomenon, a result not only of state withdrawal, but also of the expansion of PSCs and commercial logics of security, with South Africa taking a lead in this development. Although this does not obscure social frontiers, it does blur the spatial divides between different kinds of security provision.

The second reason is a view of private and community security as representing distinct security logics: one oriented to (individual) clients and profit making, the other communal and voluntary. Some studies have shown that community policing is commercialized, serving to protect local private businesses rather than the community as a whole, but these studies do not include private security companies.²² The third reason is a strong preoccupation with the question of what security privatization implies for the state. While this is an extremely important question, we also highlight the need to explore interactions that take place ‘beside the state’.²³ The state, while certainly not absent as idea and as institution, is not always the most significant frame of reference. Therefore, rather than problematizing the public–private distinction captured in concepts like the ‘commodification of the public’²⁴ and the ‘publicization of the private’,²⁵ we look at the communalization of private security and the privatization of community policing.

21. Although there are exceptions, these studies mainly focus on North America and the UK, such as Jeffrey Brown and Randy Lippert, ‘Private security’s purchase: Imaginings of a security patrol in a Canadian residential neighbourhood’, *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 49, 5 (2007), pp. 587–616; Adam Crawford and Stuart Lister, ‘Additionally security patrols in residential areas: Notes from the marketplace’, *Policing and Society* 16, 2 (2006), pp. 164–88. The only studies in Africa have focused on South Africa, such as Monique Marks and Debby Bonnin, ‘Generating safety from below: Community safety groups and the policing nexus in Durban’, *South African Review of Sociology* 41, 1 (2010), pp. 56–77.

22. Ruteree and Pommerolle, ‘Democratizing security or decentralizing repression?’

23. Alice Bellagamba and Georg Klute (eds), *Beside the state: Emergent powers in contemporary Africa* (Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, Köln, 2008).

24. Ian Loader, ‘Consumer culture and the commodification of policing and security’, *Sociology* 33, 2 (1999), pp. 373–92.

25. Adam Crawford, ‘Policing and security as “club goods”: The new enclosures?’, in Jennifer Wood and Benoît Dupont (eds), *Democracy, society and the governance of security* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006), pp. 111–38.

For the purpose of this endeavour we find the assemblage framework particularly useful. It captures not only the entanglements of actors, but also of different security practices, technologies, logics, and experiences.²⁶ An assemblage is not a fixed entity with clear boundaries, but a decentred network-like formation that shifts across time and space. This allows us to include informal entanglements, along with formal and institutionalized ones, and to capture the blurred boundaries between different security practices and logics. However, as we discuss below, the security actors also frequently articulate the distinction between commercial and community policing as part of defining and positioning themselves. These switches make the private security companies and community policing groups neither fully private nor fully communal; instead a 'twilight zone' encompasses their ongoing negotiation of a particular place in the security landscape.²⁷

South Africa: collective arrangements between the 'private' and the 'community'

Non-state policing in South Africa is ubiquitous, including neighbourhood watches, PSCs, citizen patrols, vigilante groups, gangs, street committees, and business associations.²⁸ Since the 1994 transition, active involvement in crime control has constituted a criterion for being a 'good citizen'.²⁹ Citizen-based initiatives, often categorized as 'community policing', are plentiful and have been studied extensively.³⁰ There has been a particular focus on community policing forums, created by the state in 1997 for direct engagement between police officers and citizens.

26. Abrahamsen and Williams, *Security beyond the state*; Randy Lippert and Daniel O'Connor, 'Security assemblages: Airport security, flexible work and liberal governance', *Alternatives* 28, 33 (2003), pp. 331–5; Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, 'The surveillant assemblage', *British Journal of Sociology* 51, 4 (2000), pp. 605–22.

27. Christian Lund, 'Twilight institutions: Public authority and local politics in Africa', *Development and Change* 37, 4 (2006), pp. 685–707.

28. Mark Shaw, *Crime and policing in post-apartheid South Africa: Transforming under fire* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN, 2002); Monique Marks and Jennifer Wood, 'The South African policing "nexus": Charting the policing landscape in Durban', *South African Review of Sociology* 38, 2 (2007), pp. 134–60.

29. Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, 'Community policing and disputed norms for local social control in post-apartheid Johannesburg', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, 1 (2008), pp. 93–109; Tony Roshan Samara, 'Order and security in the city: Producing race and policing neoliberal spaces in South Africa', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, 4 (2010), pp. 637–55; Anne-Marie Singh, *Policing and crime control in post-apartheid South Africa* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008).

30. See for instance Bénit-Gbaffou, 'Community policing'; Tony Emmett and Alex Butchart (eds), *Behind the mask: Getting to grips with crime and violence in South Africa* (HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 2000); Diana Gordon, 'Democratic consolidation and community policing: Conflicting imperatives in South Africa', *Policing and Society* 11, 2 (2001), pp. 121–50; Wilfried Schärf, 'Community policing in South Africa', *Acta Juridica* (1989), pp. 206–33.

The private security industry is an even bigger player in terms of security provision, accounting for 2 percent of South Africa's GDP.³¹ In 2014, there were 8,144 registered private security providers and a 9.35 percent increase in the number of employed security officers from the previous year, attesting to the continued growth of the industry.³² The private security industry emerged in the mining sector, entered the urban centres in the 1970s, and exploded during the climactic political resistance of the late 1980s and the uncharted period of the 1994 transition. During apartheid rule, the state encouraged the growth of the industry as an ally of the state's armed forces. During and after the transition, the industry steadily grew amid increased insecurity and fear of crime, along with the perception that the state police could not adequately deal with it. This was matched by a growing number of suppliers, including ex-police officers and ex-combatants who were not merged into the new armed forces.³³ In addition, deliberate neo-liberal policies implemented by the state and a national crime strategy that stresses the need for 'partnership policing' have also supported a growth in security privatization.³⁴ State regulation of the industry further attests to state legitimization of private security companies. The South African case thus serves as an example of how both state weakness and neo-liberal policies of outsourcing have created an environment for non-state security providers to flourish.

Although much more can be said about private security companies in South Africa, the focus here is on 'collective arrangements' between such companies and citizens, which are widespread but much less studied. First, we address how these companies increasingly frame themselves in 'community-based' ways and appropriate community policing logics and practices. Second, we show how citizens incorporate commercial logics and practices, and thus how these arrangements incite competition, especially because community policing bodies increasingly operate as PSCs.

During apartheid the private security industry framed itself in terms of supporting state sovereignty,³⁵ but now it promotes private security as a commodity with growing investments in marketing campaigns. This shift has involved a rebranding of private security companies from military-style forces to 'community policing groups'. These companies want to be

31. Abrahamsen and Williams, *Security beyond the state*.

32. This 9.35 percent amounts to an increase of 487,058 security officers. Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority, 'Annual Report 2013–2014' (Government of South Africa, Pretoria, 2013).

33. Jacklyn Cock, "Guards and guns": Towards privatised militarism in post-apartheid South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, 4 (2005), pp. 791–803; Lephophotho Mashike, 'Age of despair: The unintegrated forces of South Africa', *African Affairs* 107, 428 (2008), pp. 433–53.

34. Gary Kynoch, 'Crime, conflict and politics in transition-era South Africa', *African Affairs* 104, 416 (2005), pp. 493–514; Shaw, *Crime and policing in post-apartheid South Africa*.

35. Diphooorn, *Twilight policing*; Singh, *Policing and crime control*.

seen as 'friendlier', comprising 'community policing officers' who cater to the needs of citizens and who are not only interested in profiting from crime. The shift was primarily orchestrated by the marketing sector of the industry and was promoted through newspaper adverts, radio commercials, newsletters, and flyers. Companies also began offering anti-hijacking and 'domestic watch' training,³⁶ and company representatives started attending community policing forums meetings. Yet the main strategy for 'getting connected with the community' has been the establishment of collective arrangements. This refers to schemes whereby citizens 'club' together to benefit collectively from private security. These arrangements often take the form of direct relationships between PSCs and community policing groups, such as neighbourhood watches. Some are formalized and involve contractual agreements between groups of citizens, while others are informal and based on *ad hoc* interactions.

For private security companies, collective arrangements are very lucrative and allow them to amalgamate pockets of clients to create 'strongholds' and 'dedicated areas'. Their profitable nature is also linked to their catalytic effect: the creation of a collective arrangement in one area often instigates the establishment of another in a neighbouring area. For this reason, collective arrangements are also a key source of competition between companies:

As soon as a community organization springs up or a road or area wants to set up something, we all jump, and we jump high! It literally happens like me phoning him, offering him so much money, then the next company will offer more, then I will offer something else. . . . This community thing has become the way to promote yourself.³⁷

For clients, a company's focus on 'community engagement' is very appealing, as one female member explained:

I wanted [company name] because they care about the community. They are involved with the community. They have this newsletter that lets me know what's going on in my neighbourhood. And once in a while, they phone just to see if I'm happy with them. It makes me feel like I'm looked after.³⁸

There are also the financial benefits of collective arrangements, because private security companies provide lower fees when numerous citizens subscribe. They are also perceived to be highly efficient in combating crime and instilling social order. This is because of the emphasis on 'community'.³⁹ Participants are described by others as 'family members' or

36. 'Domestic watch' training refers to security training given to domestic workers.

37. Interview, marketing manager of a large company, Durban, South Africa, 7 July 2010.

38. Interview, female client, Durban, South Africa, 1 December 2008.

39. The concept of community, and critiques thereof, are sources of rich debate across various disciplines. See for instance Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport, *The trouble with community: Anthropological reflections on movement, identity and collectivity* (Pluto, London, 2002); Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001). A detailed discussion of these debates is beyond the scope of this article.

‘close neighbours’, and slogans depicting such arrangements also highlight cohesion, such as ‘A united community is a strong community’ and ‘Together we stand’. Operating as a collective also provides clients with an increased sense of ownership, as a female member emphasized:

We did this whole thing to have more control over our security. We decided amongst ourselves what we want, and we are paying the company to do that. We expect them to meet our demands; if they don’t, we’ll find a company that does. We are in control here, as a community, and the armed response officers must meet our needs and demands.⁴⁰

For PSCs, collective arrangements are part of a direct marketing strategy whereby they frame their services along community policing logics. Entanglements of community and private security logics are most prominent, however, in those formal as well as informal collective arrangements that involve active community policing efforts rather than collectives that simply consist of a group of residents.

In 2007 a formal collective arrangement between a ‘community organization’ and an armed response company was formed in a mixed middle-class neighbourhood. It consisted of approximately 3,000 homes, each paying between 50–120 Rand (ZAR), depending on the household size. Before this arrangement, the community organization was a resident association and had few policing duties, if any. The formal arrangement meant that the community paid for an armed response vehicle as well as operating three of its own armed response vehicles. The company additionally operated a vehicle to serve clients who were not members of the collective. There were thus five vehicles operating in the area: three had the signage of the community organization and two of the private security company. Residents had several private security options: to be a (paying) member of the community policing group, to subscribe to the PSC, to do both for a reduced fee, to subscribe to neither, or to subscribe to another company.

The five different vehicles generally collaborated – in responding to alarms, for example, and in chasing and arresting suspects. However, there were also instances of hostility and conflict. For example, in 2008 an armed response officer from the company and another from the community arrested a suspect together and both provided a statement to the police. Shortly afterwards, the armed response officer claimed that he had been ‘forced’ to lie in his statement by the community officer.⁴¹ When this information surfaced, a range of accusations emerged from both sides about previous incidents of illegal activity and misconduct. This caused uproar between the client and the company and almost

40. Interview, female member of a collective client, Durban, South Africa, 11 August 2010.

41. The officer from the company stated that he was made to lie about finding the suspect exiting the house with the stolen goods, which he denied having witnessed.

resulted in the termination of the partnership. The issue was eventually settled, but lingering tensions showed how vulnerable such partnerships can be.⁴²

The arrangement meant that there were two types of armed reaction officers operating in the same area – those working directly for the community and those working for the private security company – all of whom owed their salaries to the residents. Different operational styles, different rules, and different salaries between the partners were the source and subject of friction and competition. Although the two types of actors shared the common objective of fighting crime, they did not always agree on how to do it. They also competed over new clients and the community-based organization increasingly became more profit-driven. This highlights how fine the line is between a community organization and a PSC when they provide similar services, and especially when they are ‘partners’. This makes it difficult to see where and when the community and the private constituents begin and end. When residents from the community were interviewed, many did not identify a difference between the two, and very often regarded the officers from the company and from the community ‘as the same’. This reflects how the residents’ association turned into a community policing organization through a formalized partnership with a private security company, and increasingly began to operate as a PSC through its operational procedures.

For other private security companies operating in the area, the provision of security by the community was regarded as a direct form of competition, exactly because it increasingly operated as a company. This was due not only to its partnership with one of their competitors but also to the fact that it was conducting its own policing operations. One manager of another company explained:

That whole thing going on in [area name] is wrong on so many levels. There’s some community organization acting like a private security company, arming their own guys who simply stand on top of the hill, watch the cars of other companies, and steal your clients. They call themselves a community thing, but they are private, they do what we do!⁴³

In addition to formalized arrangements, there are also numerous informal interactions between private security personnel and members of community policing initiatives. In several cases these interactions are collaborative, where they patrol together and share crime intelligence. However, there are also cases where neighbourhood watches compete with private security companies.

42. The ‘truth’ about this incident never surfaced. Not long after the event, both of the individuals involved were arrested for separate Schedule One offences and are currently imprisoned.

43. Interview, manager of a PSC, Durban, South Africa, 10 February 2009.

One example from a predominantly white neighbourhood is a neighbourhood watch with approximately 50 members (each paid 150 ZAR for administrative costs) that had a hostile relationship with several PSCs. Several members conducted regular patrols in the area, but they did not work closely with a company. The founder expressed an acute disdain and mistrust towards these companies and refused to patrol alongside them. He felt that the neighbourhood watch was a much more efficient 'community form of armed response'.⁴⁴ He believed that security officers were criminals or else associated with them and actively encouraged other residents to revoke their subscription.⁴⁵ He believed that private security increased crime and that citizens should act for themselves.

The founder's perception of private security companies resulted in competition between the members of this watch (particularly the founder) and the security officers working in the area. Information was not shared, encounters were often hostile, and companies lost clients. Dirk, an armed response officer who had worked in this area for a long time, respected what the neighbourhood watch was doing, but he also resented how they treated him. He felt that they monitored him excessively and intervened in his work. He also claimed that several clients who were not members of the watch had complained to him that the watch was encouraging them to end their contract. Dirk felt that he repeatedly had to 'fight' the initiative in order to maintain his company's clients.⁴⁶ This hostility between a community policing group and private security companies arose because the neighbourhood watch increasingly operated as a competing company. Such incidents are not solely cases of personal differences, but are typical of wider tensions reflecting changing security relations and networks in a neo-liberal era.

Swaziland: privatization of community policing

In Swaziland civilian community policing groups and private security companies have grown steadily since a crime wave hit the country in the 1980s. This was largely due to rising urban unemployment and the influx of refugees from warring Mozambique and apartheid South Africa.⁴⁷

44. Interview, founder neighbourhood watch, Durban, South Africa, 19 April 2009.

45. Mistrust and suspicion were also directed at many state police officers.

46. Interview, Dirk, armed response officer, Durban, South Africa, 2 December 2008.

47. Unlike in the case of South Africa, very little research has been conducted on community policing and private security companies in Swaziland beyond the work of Hamilton S. Simelane (see Hamilton S. Simelane, 'Cross-border cattle rustling and its socio-economic impact on rural southern Swaziland, 1990–2004', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 23, 2 (2006), pp. 215–31). On community policing see Helene Maria Kyed, 'Rival forms of policing and politics in urban Swaziland', in Peter Albrecht and Helene Maria Kyed (eds), *Policing and the politics of order-making* (Routledge, New York, NY and London, 2015), pp. 57–73.

A common explanation is that non-state policing actors have grown because of 'the failure of the state to provide security to its citizens' as crime became more violent and organized.⁴⁸ Police corruption is also highlighted as an important reason. As such, Swaziland exemplifies a process of security privatization by default caused by state weakness, rather than official neo-liberal policies of down-scaling the state police. Although a government community policing programme did draw on neo-liberal ideas of self-governance, with support from UK advisers, this was only implemented sporadically and has been used by the state police in an attempt to reassert lost state authority, rather than to decentralize policing.

By 2012 there were approximately 75 registered private security companies in Swaziland,⁴⁹ compared to only two in 1981.⁵⁰ This amount is an estimate, as there is no state register or any regulation of the private security industry.⁵¹ Most low-income urban neighbourhoods and rural areas have had community policing groups since 1993 when the Police Headquarters launched a formal recruitment process.

However, many groups, such as the one from Kwaluseni that is dealt with here, were formed by mainly young male citizens prior to or independently of the government initiative. This happened in response to growth in violent crime, including frequent attacks during broad daylight by organized gangs and individuals. Many residents blamed the young men who remained unemployed after coming to the rapidly growing area of Kwaluseni from other areas to look for jobs in the industrial zone. This reflected a wider deterioration of the Swazi economy, along with increased urbanization and widening economic and social inequalities. The state police hardly ever entered places like Kwaluseni due to fear, lack of resources, and police policies prioritizing the protection of affluent areas or the control of political opposition. Simultaneously, the traditional leadership structures in Kwaluseni, who are tasked with resolving disputes and ensuring communal order, had been weakened by internal leadership disputes and the influx of people from other areas of the country who did not necessarily owe loyalty to the native families. Most of the community police members were themselves among the foreign, young, unemployed men, and attacking criminals became something for them to do in lieu of ineffective state and customary institutions. Many of the community police groups, like the one in Kwaluseni, were incorporated over time

48. Hamilton S. Simelane, 'The state, the security dilemma, and the development of the private security sector in Swaziland' (Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 2007), p. 160.

49. This estimate is based on interviews with PSC managers in 2012.

50. Simelane, 'The state, the security dilemma', pp. 155–7.

51. Interview, private security company owner, Thwale Matsapha, 4 December 2012.

under state police coordination, but the relationship has remained inconsistent.

As with the private security companies, there is no law regulating the community police. This legal situation leaves the community police and the companies in a position to operate fairly freely. Although there are many examples of collaboration with the state police station and individual officers, the companies and the community police operate just as often on their own, including in investigating crimes.

The larger foreign-owned private security companies have their own internal regulations, some deriving from South Africa, which makes them more organized.⁵² The community police groups operate on a more *ad hoc* basis, drawing intermittently on directives from the state police, customary resolution mechanisms associated with traditional chiefs, and their own procedures. The companies are profit-making businesses, predominantly providing security guard services. The civilian community police have joined voluntarily to combat crime in their area of residency. Their own official rule is that their services are free. They have assumed extensive policing tasks, including patrols, arrests, investigations, and searches. They have their own court-like set-up in an open public space where they deliberate social and criminal cases. They have earned the reputation of effectively resolving crime with the use or threat of physical violence. As discussed in detail elsewhere, they have an ambiguous relationship with the state police, because while they draw on each other's services and sources of authority they also compete for the control of criminal cases.⁵³

In Swaziland there is a general perceived division between private security companies and community policing groups into socio-spatial 'zones'. The companies are associated with industrial and affluent urban residential areas, and community policing with rural and low-income urban areas. Kwaluseni is illustrative. The companies operate around the industrial zones, the banks, and the shops situated on one side of the highway, whilst the community police operate in the residential zone inhabited by low-paid industrial labourers, unemployed rural labour migrants, and a few affluent native families. No official collaboration exists between the companies and community police groups, and a general perception is that they do not mix. However, in everyday practice, a range of informal interactions take place. The result is a privatization of the community police, based on two sets of practices that are dealt with separately below. The first is that the companies sponsor community police members to perform specific tasks. The second is that community police members are

52. Simelane, 'The state, the security dilemma'.

53. For a detailed account of the contested relationship between the community police group and the state police see Kyed, 'Rival forms of policing'.

employed as private security guards and increasingly charge for their services.

The private security companies in the industrial area all sponsored community policing groups by providing t-shirts, ID cards, batons, boots, handcuffs, torches, and food and drinks for meetings and parties. They did not do this to secure more clients in the residential areas, as in Durban, because here people could not afford company services. Rather it was to motivate the community police to combat crime in the residential area and to secure their loyalty. According to the general manager of a PSC, this motivation is important 'because the government does not pay the community police' and 'with the RSP [state police] there is very little you can achieve'.⁵⁴ This was based on a widespread belief that the community police had succeeded in reducing crime in the whole Kwaluseni area. Despite a desire for crime reduction, most companies also hired the community police to provide two types of services that directly served their interests. These were on a case-to-case basis and the community police were paid variable amounts, and were only paid if they did the job successfully.

First, the private security companies hired community police to investigate the companies' own security guards suspected of stealing from clients or collaborating with criminals. The community police members revealed information about company guards in exchange for monetary rewards. One company director made it clear that this was off the record, because of the violence involved:

We know they [community police] talk hard to them [guards], because we can see this when our guards come back. They look a bit bashed. They get information out of them in the hard way. We don't care. We don't want to know. We just want the information.⁵⁵

The second kind of service revolved around using the community police to investigate, track down, and apprehend criminals who had stolen from the company's corporate clients. The community police received up to Emalangeni 3,000 if they succeeded. One example was when copper wire had been stolen from a corporate client of one of the companies. The crime was reported to the police, but the community police were called to investigate the case, which they did for two months until they apprehended two culprits. After returning the stolen goods, the culprits were handed over to the police. A senior security guard of this company explained:

We call the community police because we know exactly the attitude of the police. They do not give their best shot to find the criminal. The community police are better. They do

54. Interview, PSC general manager, Matsapha, 24 October 2012.

55. Interview, PSC director, Matsapha, 15 January 2013.

not get training but they are close to the people and they know the main culprits. And the approach they use of pinning down suspects is very effective. They simply tell you in the face that they will beat you thoroughly if you don't speak the truth.⁵⁶

He further explained that the state police and the companies are afraid to use beatings because they fear getting sued for 'unfair punishment'. With the community police, he believed, this is more difficult, 'because they are just ordinary people, who people will always find hard to sue'.⁵⁷ This way of looking at the community police underlines their capacity to use violence *outside* the law, which in addition is supported by their position as a community structure. Thus, while the use of community police by PSCs is not a matter of community legitimacy, their capacity to deploy beatings is associated with the community police being *of* the community, in the sense of being outside the strings of the law and the policies of the companies. These matters also meant that the companies, as a rule, did not permanently hire community police members. This was too risky, because 'they are too used to doing their own thing', including using violent means. 'The relationship between the company and the community police must not be known officially,' one company director explained.⁵⁸ It was important to distinguish the company as a separate entity from the community police. This was mainly because *de facto* their relationship relied on the companies paying the community police to deal with crimes illegally. Another example of this was when the community police were paid to scare off groups who were regarded by the companies as security threats to their corporate clients. For instance, one company director explained, 'off the record', that his company had used the community police to burn the houses and fields of the *Mdodi boys*, a term used for persons who live in shacks around the industrial area and steal metals from the factories. The director explained: 'The *Mdodi boys* don't touch our clients again, because the community police know how to speak the only language they know. It is rough, but the community police are tougher than them.'⁵⁹

In short, the private security companies paid the community police to do a 'dirty' job that they could not themselves do, and which could not be seen to be done publicly. The companies simultaneously distanced themselves from the community police: their violent practices were useful, but they were regarded as unprofessional and ultimately uncontrollable. On their part, community police members were informally drawn into private security, servicing paying clients of the companies, outside of their community. This compromised the ideal of a civilian community police voluntarily servicing their fellow neighbours, but the community police happily

56. Interview, senior security guard, Kwaluseni, 5 March 2011.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Interview, PSC director, Matsapha, 15 January 2013.

59. *Ibid.*

did the job: it gave them an income, if only an unstable one. It also earned them prestige. One member explained: 'They [PSCs] need our help. We are popular because of the change we brought in our area. Our area was notorious [for crime] so no one thought that we could turn it into a good place.'⁶⁰ An air of pride and also competition was evident in such explanations by community police members. They also underlined that they had often rescued security guards from being attacked by criminals. Whereas the companies were generally very positive towards the community police, each side claimed a territorial domain of security: one vested in industrial areas and private clients, and one vested in the low-income residential neighbourhood of 'the ordinary people'. This was a boundary that was frequently trespassed, including *inside* the neighbourhood.

To make a living many community police members worked as privately hired security guards for shop owners in the neighbourhood. They got these jobs because of their experience with community policing. Working as 'guards' signalled a kind of privatized extension of their community police position within the neighbourhood. At the same time the members continued, when not on guard duty, to serve the community as a whole, not distinguishing between users or clients. They switched between commercial and communal roles. When they spoke about it themselves, they made a distinction between security guarding as 'a job', for the money to survive, and community policing as 'a calling', a task done with the heart and the aim of doing good for others. The issue of money – and survival – was however precarious and heavily debated inside the community police group. A common view, also among neighbourhood residents, was that the community police are doing the job of the police and therefore ought to be paid by the state. If this claim revealed a public logic reflecting the state's obligation to provide security as a common good, commercial logics also entered the group's practices. Increasingly, community police members viewed it as acceptable to receive money from the neighbourhood residents they assisted.

In 2010 it was decided by the traditional leadership structure that the community police could collect five Emalangeni per household per month to cover operational costs (cell-phone air time, food, paper). This was considered a voluntary contribution. However, as one paying resident said: 'Those who do not pay five Emalangeni will still get help if the crime happens in public, but if they directly tell the community police that they will not pay, the community police will distance themselves from the house of that person.'⁶¹ The community police also increasingly received 'thank you gifts' for successfully recuperating stolen goods and retrieving money in debt cases. Although these gifts were not obligatory they were

60. Interview, Jabulani Dlamini, Kwaluseni, 15 January 2013.

61. Interview, resident of Kwaluseni, 5 March 2011.

expected. The members explicitly denied that they treated people differently, but in practice there was a clear tendency to 'speed up' and 'prioritize' a case if the offended party was 'known to pay'. Ideas of equal help to everyone in the community coexisted with a commercial logic of paying for services. What remained unacceptable was to receive money *before* a resolution was reached, because then the members could be accused of corruption and get thrown out of the group. This reflects how notions of security as a common good prevailed alongside an increased tolerance of monetary charges.

The community police were thus betwixt and between state, communal, and commercial logics of security. This occurs in a context where the community police fill the vacuum of security provision in poorer residential areas where people cannot afford private security companies and where the state police hardly ever enter and are seen as either ineffective or indifferent to poor citizens' security needs. Although starting off as community police with intentions to work voluntarily for the 'community', most are young unemployed men who need additional income to survive. Engaging with commercial logics assists them in their economic survival. Furthermore, the privatization of community security can also be related to a widespread conviction among residents that ideas and feelings of 'community' are suffering under pressure from increased individualism and livelihood uncertainties. This has been exacerbated by the ever-growing influx into the urbanized space of young people who are unable to find official jobs and who live without extended kin and other support structures. Increased prostitution, alcohol abuse, and domestic family disputes and violence were also cited as supporting increased divisions and social decay in Kwaluseni. The state is seen as largely indifferent to these disparities. Simultaneously, while still resolving cases related to land and inheritance, the traditional leadership structures and councils are being weakened by internal leadership disputes and an incapacity to enforce sanctions. In this context, people must fend for themselves and individual payments increasingly determine to whom security is provided.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we have shown the varied ways in which private security companies and community policing initiatives are entangled in urban areas of South Africa and Swaziland, and how different communal and commercial security logics and practices merge and interact. While expressed in different ways, the flipside of these interactions is that security is more commonly something you pay for, rather than a public good. However, this coexists with articulations of 'community', either as a marketing strategy and a more effective way of organizing security provision

(particularly in South Africa) or as a way to legitimize violent practices and to operate outside the law so as to combat crime more effectively to the benefit of residents and companies (particularly in Swaziland). The result of these entanglements is the simultaneous communalization of private security and privatization of community policing.

These processes challenge the perceived commercial–communal divide, so dominant in the policing literature, which hitherto has focused on public/state and private/non-state relationships. Our empirical examples likewise challenge a strictly socio-spatial segregation of security provision, with private security being the exclusive privilege of the rich, in affluent urban zones, and community policing being the only option for the poor. In South Africa, this divide is increasingly irrelevant with the growth and diversification of the private security industry into lower socio-economic areas, and thus is only absent in the very poorest urban areas. We recognize that South Africa may be unique in this regard, as this traditional socio-spatial dimension may be more prevalent in other urban areas of Africa. However, as the Swaziland case illustrates, even in places where socio-spatial boundaries seem clearer in terms of who can and who cannot afford private security, there is an increasing number of entanglements between private security companies and community police. In focusing on these entanglements it also becomes clear that exclusivity in access to security and in processes of defining membership is much more complicated and holds both for community policing efforts and private security practices.

By emphasizing these entanglements we do not argue that the frontiers between private security and community policing are disintegrating completely. Security actors articulate how they are distinct from each other as a way to position themselves in the plural policing landscape. Rather, our case studies show that the frontiers are fluid and negotiated, and that security actors, practices, and logics habitually move across them, thereby influencing one another. Through the establishment of collective arrangements and informal patrols with members of community-policing initiatives, the provision of private security services has changed. Similarly, by working for private security companies and receiving monetary payments, community police members also transform understandings and practices of policing. This unquestionably influences the end users of the various security services. As highlighted in the South African case, many residents could not distinguish between the community organization and the PSC in the formal collective arrangement. This not only influences public perceptions and expectations of security, but also very often consolidates particular socially constructed borders between communities, rather than amalgamating various policing efforts. The question of whether security

provision is for the community or for the money thus remains a complicated one to answer, even if people increasingly pay for security.

One important final question is why these processes are occurring and to what extent our case studies reflect wider tendencies across urban Africa. While non-state policing and the inability of states to deliver security as a common good has a long history in Africa,⁶² we have suggested that the simultaneous privatization and communalization of security in everyday urban policing is caused by different trajectories of state withdrawal, which are intertwined with economic and social processes that characterize urban African contexts to different degrees. Neo-liberal state policies, supporting privatization and self-governance, mix to different degrees with state weakness or at least with the public perception that the state (now) lacks the capacity and willingness to handle crimes. Economically, this sense of the state's failure to deliver security as a common good is perpetuated by unequal economic opportunities within growing urban environments, which give way to high youth unemployment and a growing sense of insecurity that enlarges the demand for more security provision. Civilian community policing initiatives may be a low-cost state initiative to meet this demand, articulated in a neo-liberal discourse of active citizenship, but it can also take the form of self-organized responses by young unemployed men, who seek an avenue for survival and communal recognition. The latter is very much the case in Swaziland, and in poorer neighbourhoods in general. The global market expansion of the private security industry is another important economic factor that deepens state withdrawal and socio-economic divisions, but which also creates new livelihood opportunities for poor urban dwellers. Thus, as shown in this article, while private security companies primarily have a client base among corporate businesses and the upper and middle classes, their scope of operations is expanding to the fringes of poorer neighbourhoods by enrolling community policing actors and initiatives to do their job. This development is more advanced in South Africa, but is expanding in informal ways in Swaziland.

Among various important social factors, the entanglements of commercial and communal security are also influenced by increased communal mistrust within and between neighbourhoods, caused by urban insecurities and social inequalities. This mistrust supports individualism and the acceptance of the private purchase of security, thus challenging notions of communal care and security as a common good. However, both case studies show that ideas about security as a common good still prevail in popular expectations, which is strongly articulated in the way that private security companies in Durban capitalize on 'community' notions to

62. Baker, 'Multi-choice policing'.

legitimize and enlarge their scope of operation. In Kwaluseni, community police operations are evaluated against notions of equal communal care, even as it becomes more acceptable to receive payments for the services provided.

State withdrawal and urban insecurities have created space – formally and informally – for new private and communal policing actors, who not only make a living from providing security, but who are also able to mobilize around, compete, and collaborate over prevailing notions of common communal care and expanding commercial logics of security. In the massively growing urban spaces of Africa these entanglements are likely to become more widespread, as the influx of people and growing youth unemployment combine with rising fear of crime, social inequalities, and communal mistrust. None of these processes are occurring independently of state practices, actors, and policies. However, in this article our main objective has been to move away from a state-centric focus on policing that persists despite the recognition that the state is not the sole provider of security services. Our core argument is that studies of contemporary African policing and security governance can benefit from expanding the plural perspective to include the ‘networks’ or ‘assemblages’ between private security companies and community policing groups. More empirical insights into the blurring of the commercial–communal divide can also provide a more holistic understanding of the entanglements between public and private policing bodies. In other words, understanding what occurs ‘beside the state’ also yields insight into what occurs within the state.