The Policing of a Homeless Shelter:
Private Security Patrolling
the Border of Eligibility

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❯ **Abstract_** *This article investigates the work of private security officers policing a municipally owned and operated homeless shelter in a major Swedish city. In the professional rhetoric of the city's social services, temporary accommodation at the shelter was to be merely the first stepping-stone towards re-integration into mainstream society. In reality, however, it was only made use of as a last-resort solution for a residual group of city residents, leaving the official rhetoric of inclusion to clash with the actual function of the shelter. This article looks at the policing of homelessness carried out at the 'marginal space' that the shelter represented. In particular, it investigates the concrete 'border work' performed by private security officers policing the shelter territory, those housed in it and their conduct, and analyses how – through and in the course of that policing work – physical and behavioural borders were established and defended. As the results show, the private security officers' work demarcating the boundaries of eligibility in the shelter context ultimately amounted to patrolling the border of eligibility of the welfare state (its services), such that they de facto performed a significant public function.*

❯ **Keywords_** *homelessness, homeless shelters, policing, private security*

Introduction

Studies on the policing of homelessness have mostly focussed on the spatial exclusion of homeless people from the public space (Smith, 1996; Mitchell, 1997; Mitchell, 2003; Doherty *et al.,* 2008; Thörn, 2011) or, as it has also been termed, 'prime' spaces (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Snow and Mulcahy 2001) – neighbourhoods, recreational areas, shopping malls and other areas inhabited and/or frequented by affluent citizens. In light of the many studies on the topic and research results suggesting that the policing of homelessness varies according to the type of space involved (e.g., Yarwood, 2007), there has been a call for research on the forms of homelessness policing in *marginal* spaces, where it is the homeless persons themselves who are the inhabitants of the space (DeVerteuil *et al*., 2009a; 2009b; Stuart, 2014). Responding to that call, this article investigates the policing of homelessness at a municipally owned and operated homeless shelter in a major Swedish city – a marginal space par excellence within the local administration's jurisdiction. In the official rhetoric of the municipality's social services, temporary accommodation at the shelter represented only the first step on the path towards the presumed re-integration of homeless persons into mainstream society. In reality, however, the shelter served as a last-resort housing solution for the municipality in its homelessness work; it functioned as a storage room or a container for those excluded from other types of homeless accommodation in the city but who were nevertheless entitled by law to at least a roof over their heads (Löfstrand, 2005; Hansen Löfstrand, 2012).

As societal institutions, shelters have a long history and they existed long before explicit policies to combat homelessness developed (Hopper, 1990; Hopper and Baumohl, 1996; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007). Hopper (1990), looking at the historical function of shelters, refers to shelters as 'hybrid institutions' with a twofold function. As such, they have provided a place of temporary respite to the (temporarily) unemployed who will return to the workforce whenever possible and also functioned as a last resort solution for the 'penniless poor' who, due to mental illness, alcoholism and/or physical impairment, are deemed to be permanently out of the workforce. In both senses, shelters function as a form of poverty management – in shelters people deemed as "unneeded but potentially troublesome" are contained (Hopper and Baumohl, 1994, p.524). Shelters are used recurrently in response to homelessness (see e.g., Snow and Anderson, 1993; Hopper and Baumohl, 1994; Sahlin, 1996; Wagner, 2005; De Verteuil, 2006; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007; Knutagård and Nordfeldt, 2007). However, the existence of shelters has never solved the issue of homelessness (Hopper and Baumohl, 1996; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007). On the contrary, the existence of shelters seems to increase the number of homeless people (Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007).

A related debate about the shelter industry arose in the US during the 1980s and 1990s, with regards to New York City. Mental health professionals argued that the problem with the growing shelter system was an outcome of poor mental health policies (Gounis, 1992). The debate was launched by Jeffrey Grunberg and Paula Eagle, who depicted shelters as "hellish places" (Marcus, 2006, p.65; see also Gounis, 1992). Grunberg and Eagle (1990) used the term 'shelterization' to refer to the way that homeless individuals adapted to the demoralising nature of shelter living, to a homeless identity and to a shelter subculture within which crime was a pervasive aspect. The authors suggested that these negative effects could be counteracted by "onsite psychosocial rehabilitation programs" fostering "positive social networks and affiliations with social service and mental health providers" (Grunberg and Eagle, 1990, p.521). This emerging understanding of homelessness and emergency shelters also gained foothold among other professionals and was soon being referred to as a 'syndrome' that explained the persistence of homeless-ness (Gounis, 1992; Marcus, 2003). The debate also initiated research that, in a similar vein, focused on what goes on inside the shelters. Dordick (1996), for example, conducted an ethnographic study of the social dynamics of shelter life and found that shelters are social worlds, characterized by gang-like structures and hierarchies that heavily constrain the lives of shelter residents. Other researchers strongly criticised the idea of 'shelterization' as a psychosocial and behavioural syndrome explaining the persistence of homelessness (see e.g., Gounis, 1992; Marcus, 2003; 2006). Gounis (1992), for example, stated that:

> The shelter manufactures violence, hopelessness, and all the symptoms of social pathology that the authorities attribute to the very victims of these processes as self-inflicted.… Shelterization is a state of captivity, not a disease (Gounis 1992, p.692).

In a similar fashion, Lyon-Callo (2000) sets out in detail how homelessness in a Massachusetts shelter environment is governed. He lays bare the shelter industry's medicalised discourse of deviance, which produces homeless subjects who "willingly comply with more surveillance and reform of their bodies and selves" (Lyon-Callo, 2000, p.341), and learn to individualise the causes of homelessness. However, ethnographic studies specifically exploring the on-the-ground policing of homeless individuals inside shelters have been neglected.

To partly help fill this gap, this article uses ethnographic fieldwork to investigate the policing of homeless persons at a homeless shelter as performed by private security officers in conjunction with other on-site policing actors. Policing here is understood as a particular form of social control encompassing purposeful activi-ties aimed at maintaining security within a given social order, which sometimes involves an array of agencies (cf. Loader, 2000; Button, 2002; Crawford, 2008).

This type of policing has long since become pluralized, with a variety of public, municipal, commercial and civil sector actors involved in the task today, frequently in partnerships (Crawford, 2008; Loftus and Skinns, 2014).

A number of actors were involved in the policing of homelessness at the shelter studied for this article: municipal social service staff, private security officers, police officers, nurses and paramedics. The private security officers working at the shelter regularly requested assistance from the police and worked in close collaboration with the municipal staff and the nurses at the site, making them an interesting subject for the study of how policing as a form of social control is performed in this context in practice and how its goals are accomplished. An inherent characteristic of policing as a social practice is the delineation and defence of the territory to be policed, and the subsequent spatial displacement that this demarcation entails, whether under public or private control (Lister *et al*., 2008). In this study, this involved the construction and defence by private security officers of borders delineating the 'shelter territory', within which the general conduct and behaviour of shelter resident were monitored, controlled and penalized as part of the 'border work', which was carried out in co-operation with other policing actors (Rumford, 2012). Making the actual construction of borders into the object of study enables the asking of questions about what constitutes borders and who is responsible for carrying out the border work, as well as how the defence of borders is accomplished. Since the security officers working at the shelter in this study were authorized to make decisions about which of the shelter's residents should or should not be considered eligible for the services that the shelter represented and provided – and because they regularly did make such decisions in practice – their work can also be analysed more broadly in terms of patrolling the borders of eligibility of the welfare state and its services; the security officers thus performed a significant *de facto* public function in society.

Data and Methods

The ethnographic study reported on in this article was completed as part of a broader project investigating the delivery of policing by private security companies contracted to carry out work for public organizations and institutions. The data was collected through informal field-based interviews and 'shadowing' (Czarniawska, 2007) private security officers at a homeless shelter in one of the major cities in Sweden. The private security officers were shadowed while carrying out their normal work tasks at the shelter, which meant that I observed what their work consisted of and informally interviewed them about their views on working in private security and, specifically, at the homeless shelter in question.

A total of six private security officers, all employed by the same large multinational security company, were shadowed and informally interviewed during the fieldwork. Two of them worked twelve-hour day shifts at the shelter (from 7am to 7pm, when there was only one security officer on duty), while four worked night shifts (from 7pm to 7am, always with two security officers working in tandem). The security officers were shadowed on fifteen different occasions in 2012 for a total of 128 hours. On two occasions, the shadowing sessions lasted six hours, on two occasions they lasted twelve consecutive hours, and on the remaining occasions they lasted between seven and eleven hours. The observations made and noted during those periods of observation were collated and analysed together with the results from the field-based interviews.

Before proceeding to analyse the data obtained, however, a brief description of the specific setting of the study is in order. The section that follows therefore outlines the main features of the general approach to homelessness in Sweden, of the studied shelter itself and of the work carried out by the private security officer at the shelter. Following this, three central themes emerging from the data are presented, analysed and discussed: the delineation and defence of 'the shelter territory', the policing of homeless people (i.e., the defence of borders through the control of conduct within the territory) and the challenges of policing partnerships. Finally, the findings are discussed in terms of the complexities involved in contracting private security officers to perform public sector functions and interpreted in light of the punitive measures espoused by the shelter management and staff. The latter are discussed in relation to the ideal of the public sector 'ethos', involving values such as equity and transparency and reflecting the principles of dignity, integrity and security/safety.

The Study Setting

In Sweden, eligibility for (temporary) homeless accommodation has typically been made conditional, with the conduct of the homeless client determining their ability to access and stay in the accommodation assigned to them. Absolute sobriety and 'good' behaviour have become the main criteria in this respect (Löfstrand, 2005; Hansen Löfstrand, 2010; Hansen Löfstrand, 2012), with the result that some of the homeless clients who had previously been determined as eligible for housing and thus given access to special municipal housing organizations were later evicted due to rule violations, often involving alcohol and drug use. Those who have been ejected and excluded from all other parts of the special municipal housing systems may be referred to homeless shelters as a last-resort solution. Clients staying at a

shelter may arrive and remain at the shelter even when under influence, but are not allowed to consume either alcohol or drugs on the premises or in the areas immediately surrounding the shelters.

The shelter studied for this article consisted of around eighty single, sparsely furnished rooms (each with a bed, a chest of drawers and a closet, but no bathroom or cooking facilities) located over eight floors. On the first floor, there was a reception area and a special holding unit staffed by medical and psychiatric nurses, to which the security officers at the shelter took those residents judged to be too drunk and/ or behaving in a disorderly fashion when entering the building; individuals from elsewhere in the city who were picked up on the streets for being overly drunk and disorderly were also taken to this unit by ambulance or police transportation. The second floor of the building consisted of a special healthcare centre for homeless people, which was accessible not only to those staying at the shelter but to all homeless people in the municipality. Floors three and four, as well as six and seven, consisted of single rooms and a shared kitchen for every two floors. The fifth floor also consisted of single rooms but it was reserved for those who only needed – or were only permitted by the city's social services – to stay at the shelter for no more than a few nights. Floor eight was reserved for shelter residents deemed capable of taking care of themselves on their own by the city's social services and the shelter staff. CCTV monitoring was installed on all floors except the ground floor where the reception desk, lobby and the holding unit were located, the second floor where the healthcare centre for homeless people was located, and the fifth floor, where monitoring people in real time was considered a far clearer violation of rights and integrity, as those staying there, as security officers and shelter staff put it, 'really could be anyone'. In the evenings after 8pm, there were no more municipal staff on duty in the shelter building, apart from two persons who worked exclusively on the fifth floor and the nurses manning the first-floor holding unit.

During the day shift, the work of the private security officers manning the shelter consisted mostly of working the first-floor reception desk and CCTV monitoring the premises and the immediate vicinity of the shelter building. Apart from providing various tangible services to shelter residents and staff (sorting and delivery of mail, issuance of key cards, delivery of personal alarm buttons, and sharing of information about shelter residents and incidents with shelter staff), their work tasks also included making decisions about, and carrying out, expulsions of unwanted people from the shelter and its adjacent area, mediating in conflicts and fights between shelter residents inside the shelter area, reporting out-of-place behaviour to staff, seeing to it that the degree of intoxication was controlled where required, and punishing excessive intoxication and disorderly behaviour of shelter residents by expelling the troublemakers from the building or the shelter area. In contrast to

these daytime work tasks handled by one officer on duty, the night shifts had two officers handling the same tasks who also patrolled all but two floors of the building as well as its immediate surroundings at regular intervals.

Patrolling the Border of Eligibility: Private Security Performing a Public Function

Delineating and defending the shelter territory

The general task of the private security officers policing the social order in and around the shelter consisted of the surveillance and control of the territory, people and conduct there. The security officers and the municipal staff working at the shelter, as well as shelter residents, referred to the area under the responsibility of the security officers as 'the shelter area' or 'the shelter territory'. The work of the security officers in delineating and defending this territory involved making and justifying claims concerning the legitimate use of power, authority and, sometimes, direct force.

In practice, the work that the security officers carried out to delineate and defend this territory entailed straying, in the course of their day-to-day activities, beyond the limits of their authority and responsibilities as authorized Swedish 'väktare'.[1] Moreover, in doing so – for instance, when making the decision to expel someone from the shelter (which, strictly speaking, was something only the municipality's social service authority was entitled to do, given that such a decision is ultimately about a citizen's right of access to welfare services) – the private security officers de facto accepted, or to at least some extent were transferred tasks and responsibilities not formally within their remit. While most expulsions they implemented were on the basis of decisions made by the municipal staff working at the shelter, they also sometimes made such decisions by themselves. In these latter cases, however, the decisions still had to be discussed with the municipal staff and validated by them retroactively, as these were essentially decisions that only public authorities could make, and they were carefully documented by the security officers. In practice, however, through their contractual relationship with the municipal social service authority, the security officers could make decisions about which shelter

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[1]   The security officers studied for this article all worked as 'väktare', which meant that they were authorized only to use force in self-defence and carry nothing more than a baton and handcuffs on duty. Just like all private citizens in the country, however, they had the right to use violence in self-defence and to apprehend persons caught in the act of committing a crime or fleeing from the crime scene if the crime being committed was punishable with a prison term of any length. Acting on suspicion alone, however, was prohibited to them by Swedish law, and they had no obligation to intervene in criminal situations; their only legal obligation in such situations was to document what was being witnessed and report it to the police.

residents should be deemed as having forfeited their right to the shelter's services, about who ought to be judged no longer eligible for them anymore and, thus, about who should be expelled. These decisions were sometimes executed in co-operation with the shelter's municipal staff and implemented with the help of the city's emergency services (the police and paramedics).

The security officers' efforts to map out the shelter territory by establishing and then defending its boundaries (both physical and behavioural) should be viewed as an attempt to control it, through determining who should inhabit or pass through it and how those residing within it should behave and act. As observed by Lister and colleagues (Lister *et al.*, 2008, p.33), this aim to control territory, people and behaviour "applies across almost all policing agencies and not just to the public police" and implies physical displacement as a strategy. The concrete means by which the delineation and defence of the shelter territory in this study was pursued were visual surveillance and control. The shelter area was constantly surveilled from the security officers' position behind the reception desk, where there was a computer screen showing, in real time, images transmitted by several CCTV cameras placed around the shelter territory. This CCTV surveillance was legitimized by stressing the need to protect the shelter staff and prevent and manage possible violence on the premises.

Apart from enabling surveillance of the insides of the shelter building, CCTV cameras were also used to monitor certain parts of the area surrounding the shelter building: the parking lot outside the shelter entrance and an area with benches and a table, where shelter clients often gathered to sit and talk and sometimes drink alcohol, which was forbidden. A fairly high wooden fence stood behind the table and the benches, demarcating the boundary of the shelter territory by preventing CCTV monitoring of activities going on behind it. Some shelter residents, indeed, argued that the area behind the fence was not part of 'the shelter area', implying that one should not be monitored and controlled when there and that the security officers had no authority to expel anyone from that area. "The clients think that we can't see past that fence", one security officer objected, "but [through the CCTV cameras] we can see through the gaps in the planks if something seems to be going on, and then we of course intervene." To 'intervene' here implied a security officer leaving his desk, located right by nearly wall-sized windows providing an excellent view of what was going on in the shelter area *not* covered by CCTV cameras, to check out on the activities behind the fence. If the behaviour of those engaged in the activities in question was judged as being within the parameters of what was acceptable within the shelter territory, the outcome was just a moment spent in shared small talk; if, however, people were found drinking, doing drugs or engaged in other behaviour judged as unacceptable for shelter residents within its territory, they were asked to leave the area, with alcoholic beverages poured out onto the

ground and all items deemed capable of being used as a weapon confiscated. The large windows by the reception desk were tinted, which meant that, if one was unaware of the surveillance cameras, it was not immediately evident to those on the outside that they were being watched.

Technically, the territory within which the security officers could, in their formal capacity, legitimately claim authority consisted of nothing more than the shelter building itself (for which reason the entrance to the building constituted a particularly important border). However, in practice they controlled and regulated behaviour in a much greater area, including large sections of the space around the building. As one officer described it:

> Officially, the entrance of the shelter building is where our boundaries lie, but the people here of course know that in practice it's more like the railroad crossing where they are. If you're on the other side of the railroad crossing, you're outside the [shelter] area. On this side, it's a bit like a small country with its own laws.

There was no clear consensus among individual security officers about what exactly constituted the boundaries of the shelter area. One security officer said that, during a nightshift, she had actually consulted the district police authority about what these were, to clarify what the precise territory was within which she and her colleagues were allowed to exercise their authority, power and control. The official response she received was that, besides the shelter building itself, it included the area outside covered by the CCTV cameras: the parking lot in front of the building as well as the courtyard, including the corner with its table and benches, but not the area behind the wooden fence, the railroad crossing beyond the parking lot, the public road or the back sides of the building, except for a small area on one side of the building where there was a garbage container used by the shelter staff. However, since the railroad crossing, as already noted, nevertheless constituted an unofficially established border, it, too, was defended, and the security officers working the nightshift were asked by the public authorities that had contracted them to include the entire area around the shelter in their patrolling, including the back side of the building. The security officers had agreed to do that, not only, as they reported, as they wanted "to be nice to the owners of the local businesses right next door, to do them a favour [by including these businesses within the scope of their nightly patrols]", but also, and primarily, to be better able to keep unwanted visitors out of the area. It was the latter that they saw as their main goal in extending their nightly patrols to all areas around the shelter building. As two of the security officers that were shadowed during some of these night-time patrols put it, this was done to keep the area free of drug dealers and, in particular, to prevent entry to the area of a character known as 'the Debt Collector' – a local underworld figure who supplied drugs to some of the shelter residents:

If we notice the Debt Collector somewhere around the building area when patrol-ling outside, we tell him to leave the area. That's also the message from the top… that they don't want him around, because he scares people here and they get all hysterical; so it's our task to get him out of here.

At the same time, another security officer (on another occasion) claimed that "[w]e can't expel anyone from anywhere that's not part of the shelter area", thus indi-cating that the security officers did not have a legal mandate to do what they were doing. Yet, the fluidity and contested nature of the borders of the shelter territory enabled the security officers to advance claims about the scope of their legitimate powers and authority. In doing so, however, the officers were caught in a difficult position: trying to comply with their customer's (the municipality) wishes and desires without exceeding their formal, legally specified powers and authority as authorized *väktare* in the process.

Policing homeless people: defending borders, controlling conduct

The main goal of the policing activities of the security officers at the shelter was to maintain (or re-establish) security, by preventing and solving problems of undesir-able conduct (cf. Kempa *et al*., 1999). These activities essentially consisted of social sorting, meaning that clients who consented to rules and regulations – as enforced through consensual or communicative control strategies – were rewarded for their good conduct and behaviour. However, when consensual control strategies were not enough, security officers resorted to coercive forms of control, normally resulting in spatial displacement. As part of their job description, municipal staff and the private security officers employed at the shelter could make decisions, either jointly or independently of one another, about what actions, conduct and behaviours were acceptable inside the shelter territory and which ones constituted grounds for temporarily barring someone from entering the building or for expelling someone from the building and its surrounding area. One of the security officers explained it as follows:

They [the municipal staff] make their own rules: 'You are not allowed to do this, you are not allowed to do that, and if you do those things then you get expelled.' I'm not saying that this is wrong; it is, after all, done to prevent violence, and many [shelter clients] in fact comply very well.

The day-to-day work of the officers manning the reception desk in the lobby was dominated by what Lister and colleagues (2008) have termed 'communicative surveillance', which consisted for the most part of letting people know that they were continually being monitored, watched and scrutinized. Shelter clients were, for instance, engaged in small talk as they entered the building and made their way towards the elevators. To facilitate their information gathering, the security officers

attempted, in their own words, to appear "nice and friendly, just leaning back on my chair" and "us[ing] my entire body language to show that I'm not threatening", rather than giving the impression of someone alert and tense. From the policing point of view, all this was to serve as a way of imposing discipline to encourage shelter clients to conduct themselves in an acceptable manner (Rose, 2000; Lister *et al*., 2008).

The shelter's clients always knew they were being watched, but usually accepted it as an unavoidable fact of life, even though many actually experienced it as something unpleasant and even objectionable. Indeed, there were some who resisted the behavioural borders established by the shelter staff and private security officers. In their cases, communicative or consensual control strategies were typically regarded as insufficient and were substituted with coercive control strategies (Kempa *et al*., 1999), which usually took the form of expulsion and spatial displacement (Lister *et al*., 2008). During the course of this research, several examples of this kind of situation were observed, but they all tended to follow a certain pattern.

As the homeless clients approached the broader shelter area, they first walked over the railroad crossing before arriving at the entrance to the shelter. In the lobby area inside the building, they encountered the security officer on duty, whose main task was to assess and judge the approaching clients' conduct: their overall condition, degree of drunkenness and general mood. As already noted, clients were allowed access even when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but they could not *appear* 'too intoxicated' or 'disorderly' and they were not allowed to bring alcohol or drugs into the shelter building. Since the security officers were not permitted by law to act on suspicion only – to, for example, conduct frisk searches of shelter clients – they could only, as one of them put it, "act on what we are able to see", referring to visual inspection of the clients' general conduct and appearance. Individual clients judged 'too aggressive' or 'too drunk' were asked to leave the premises – to 'wait outside' – for two hours, and if, upon returning, they were still judged as not being in a condition to enter the premises, they were asked to leave and come back in four hours, regardless of whether it was day or night.

The municipal employees at the shelter sometimes informed the security officers about individual clients who seemed 'not too sober', 'in a bad mood' or, more generally, 'not in a great shape'. They could also ask officers to keep an eye on individual persons and let them know when these persons entered the shelter area or were seen approaching it. The officers performed this kind of social sorting often, even deciding directly who was going to be allowed inside and who was to be barred from entering the shelter either temporarily or – occasionally – on a permanent basis, with the latter case resulting in the person's eviction. Sometimes,

however, security guards were also asked merely to act on or implement decisions taken by the staff: "If they [the staff] tell me 'he needs to wait outside for a couple of hours', I'll be the one taking him outside."

When shelter residents complied with the decision of security officers and/or the shelter staff to bar them from the premises, a few hours spent outside was often deemed enough. However, if they resisted the decision, they could end up being transported to a police station by police officers called to the scene. In one example of the former happening, a shelter resident was barred from entry into the building for a period of two hours for behaving inappropriately; he was informed that he would be allowed back inside again afterwards if he behaved appropriately. The man in question went outside but soon returned to explain to the front-desk security officer why he had been angry: he had just gone to fetch his clean laundry from the laundry room in the premises, but had then realized that his clothes were nevertheless:

> still dirty, and I didn't discover it until it was too late, and now I look like a bum again…. So I got sent outside for two hours just because I raised my voice a bit and used a serious tone of voice with them.

The man then sat down on a bench in the lobby inside, but the front-desk officer informed him that because he was now barred from entering the shelter for two hours, he could not stay there. The man responded by saying that he was not feeling well, that it was freezing outside, and that he was not wearing clothes that were suitable for being outdoors. To this, the officer responded that he had to "look elsewhere for warmth". At that, the man sighed and walked out. After one and a half hours, he returned to the lobby, saying he thought it was now time for him to be let inside again, to which the officer responded, "You know it's not until ten past twelve, they told me." The man then requested permission to use the bathroom and, having been allowed to do that, returned outside once more. Another man in the lobby then raised his voice, stating to the officer: "Two hours in the penalty box, he got."

On another occasion, however, there was a situation that resulted in the arrest of a shelter resident, where a security officer handcuffed the man and pinned him to the floor until the police arrived. The decision to call the police was taken when the man started throwing small objects at the officer in anger. The latter described his reaction and his reasoning behind it as follows:

> It's not me – it's not us – who create such situations. There's no desire to start picking fights with people here. It was he who started spouting off about everyone being idiots and animals, so I kindly asked if there was some problem, if I could help him with something. He just went on and on. So I decided that I didn't want him there in the building. I really don't want to put handcuffs on

anyone; I try to avoid that for as long as I can, for sure. It's a terrible way to restrain someone – a violation. But it's like at the pub: you don't want the problem inside, so you tackle it at the door.

In this incident, the shelter resident breached an important behavioural rule and transgressed a major boundary. As a result, he was expelled from the shelter area, was transported away by the police and was not allowed back. What his example further illustrates, however, is that the security officers were dependent on swift assistance from other policing agents for the successful completion of some of their work tasks – in this case, the police.

Punishment for disorderly conduct was an important tool used by the security officers in their work defending behavioural and territorial borders. In addition to being expelled for a couple of hours (but allowed back inside again) and being transported away by the police (and consequently being permanently listed as 'barred'), the punishments used in the shelter included the issuing of warnings. On one occasion, for instance, two men staying at the shelter entered the building in the early hours of the evening. The security officer on duty greeted them both with an "hello", addressing them by their first names before inquiring "and your bag: is it empty?" The two men seemed to understand immediately that they were to show the contents of the bag they had with them, as one of them placed it on the reception desk straight away, thus complying with the request of the officer to have it checked out. The officer opened it and pulled out a saw, two pairs of scissors, a heavy iron bolt, a razor-sharp knife, a meat cleaver, a folding pocketknife and other similar objects. The men claimed that these were all 'work tools' that they used to extract copper from scrap. While waiting for a municipal staff member to arrive, the security officer and the man that had handed over the bag spoke about the weather in a relaxed and casual manner. When the staff member turned up, he greeted the shelter resident in a friendly manner and allowed him and his companion to come upstairs after having confiscated some of the items. Afterwards, the officer recorded the items that the shelter client had tried to take with him into the building; he made one list for his fellow security officers at the shelter and one for the municipal staff working there. He explained that he and his colleagues were to note down in writing "everything that's worth knowing about", adding that the shelter resident in question "will receive a warning for this": if he continued to contravene shelter rules in a similar manner, he would face expulsion from the shelter.

As already noted, the security officers did not have the authority to conduct frisk searches or demand shelter residents to hand over their bags so they could be examined. Nevertheless, the municipal administration that contracted the security company had instructed them to check all bags brought into the shelter by its residents. This task was also listed in the monitoring guidelines produced by the

security company's management for the individual officers working at the shelter. The latter usually solved the dilemma by asking the clients in a loud and stern voice if they could show what they had in their bags, with most shelter residents complying.

As described above, when behavioural borders were transgressed at the shelter, such as by aggressive behaviour or in a manner that could be perceived by staff and security officers as threatening, shelter residents were punished: they were temporarily barred from entering the shelter building (for either two or four hours at a time) before being allowed back inside. Issuing warnings for improper or inappropriate behaviour (such as bringing prohibited objects inside) was also commonplace. Moreover, as already noted, there were incidents that led to shelter residents being expelled for good from the shelter and its surrounding area; typically, this happened when violence was used towards one or several of the security officers, fellow shelter residents or municipal staff. This, indeed, was the most severe form of boundary transgression at the shelter and resulted in the harshest penalties. All of these punitive measures constituted essential tools in the defence of both the territorial and the behavioural borders, which in turn was understood as necessary for maintaining or re-establishing a secure and safe shelter environment (mainly) for the municipal staff.

The challenges of policing partnerships

The private security officers who were performing de facto public functions at the shelter received clear instructions on their tasks from the public authority that had contracted them. Interestingly, these instructions at times implied disregarding, in practice, the public sector ethos of transparency in decision-making and equal treatment of all clients. The security officers, for instance, were to check everyone entering the building to stop those 'too intoxicated', but those who were stopped in practice tended most often to be individuals using alcohol rather than drugs. One officer explained what he saw as his and his colleagues' dilemma in this regard:

> When they [the municipal shelter staff] made the decision that we are to stop everyone who *appears* intoxicated, I told them right away that that means we'll be stopping the boozers only…. 'Well, yeah, we know', they said. 'But don't you realize what'll happen when they figure out it's just the boozers who get stopped?' 'Well, yeah', they kept staying; the staff knew that, but they say it's calmer on their floors when those who are really drunk are stopped, because it's really them, those who drink, who cause the most trouble.

The security officers, in other words, were instructed by their customer to act (only) in cases of those who were visibly intoxicated. In reality, however, this meant leaving the door open for those doing drugs. These and other similar guidelines issued by the contracting public authority through the shelter management thus led to differ-

ential treatment in practice, which clashes with the public sector ideal of transparency in decision-making. In any case, however, even in the absence of such instructions it would have been difficult to uphold the ideal of equal treatment in the everyday reality of the shelter, given that drug users were more difficult to detect than those under the influence of alcohol, as explained by the above-quoted security officer:

> When they're on something they act almost like a normal person; it's when they haven't taken anything that they're showing it, twitching and shaking and whatnot. So [to detect if someone is under the influence of drugs] I'd need to go talk to them and check their pupils, but I can't do that, can I, because then I'd be acting on suspicion, and I'm not allowed to do that.

The situation led to complaints from shelter residents being temporarily barred due to being visibly intoxicated by alcohol. Such resistance, in turn, could be met with threats that the person would be taken away by the police. On one occasion, a shelter resident, having just been temporarily barred for being visibly intoxicated (by alcohol), uttered in anger to the security officer: "Hey you, you look like a fucking jailer, don't you; but you know, the cops won't take us, because we're peaceful and we're behaving nice." The nurses at the holding unit, the municipal staff present and the security officer all continued to insist on him leaving the premises, with the municipal staff members trying to calm him down: "Now, be sure to only drink water, and then you'll be able to come back inside again…. You *can* come back, you know; you don't have to stay out for the rest of the night." The now visibly upset man responded with "You, have a look over there", pointing towards the green area alongside the public road just outside the shelter area; "they're all just sitting around over there, taking drugs and smoking dope; I think this sucks, big time." To this the security officer replied with a firm "No; this is enough now; this is just too much talking going on and too little action", and he began to close up on the man as he exited the building.

A few days later, the shelter staff manager came down to discuss this male shelter resident with the security personnel. According to the manager, the security officers tended to stop and check this man in particular on a regular basis. "This is not a prison," the manager exclaimed; "we don't want to have any watchdogs here." As a result of the discussion, the security officer in question wrote a message to his colleagues telling them that they were not to stop and check that particular man any more. Not long after, however, the officers received a new set of instructions from the manager, this time advising them that they were now *always* to stop this man, check his bags and ask him to take the alcometer test. The security officers had the impression that not only were they implicitly asked to turn a blind eye to drug use (and drug dealing) in the area, but also that the police were slow to respond

to a request for assistance when it was about a shelter resident expelled by the security officers who was high on something other than alcohol. One security officer elaborated on this as follows:

> The police, they don't come [to take the expelled person to the police station] if the person is under the influence of drugs. They only come and pick them up if it's someone drunk who's being evicted. It's only if they're disorderly and aggressive when they're high on something that they come pick them up. So then you also often have to lie to the police to make them come pick them up: 'He refuses to take the alcometer test, is acting aggressively and is disorderly'…

Previous research has highlighted how police officers often only grudgingly accept the need to work more closely with their private-security counterparts (e.g., Loftus and Skinns, 2014). As in the above quote, the security officers at the homeless shelter in this study who depended on the co-operation of, and back-up from the police in their work at times depicted the latter as being unreliable in this respect. Indeed, they claimed that their work was sometimes directly hampered by the slow emergency response times of the police. Furthermore, as already noted, officers were de facto asked by the public authority contracting their services to disregard public sector values, such as equal treatment and transparency, in decision-making about punitive measures.

In the 'plural policing' (Crawford, 2008) of the homeless shelter, the private security officers working in co-operation with the municipal staff and the police thus sometimes found the policing partnership arrangement difficult to manage and implement. Many of them felt, moreover, that their customer (the municipality) had, at times, unrealistic expectations about what they should and could accomplish. Some voiced qualms about the very aim of their services: "They [our security firm] are selling the illusion of security, the illusion of safety, the illusion of being protected by someone who has the power and authority." Another officer added: "They [the customer, i.e., the municipality] don't realize that we're just ordinary guys in work clothes", referring to the officers' perceived lack of official authority and power.

Conclusions: Too Little or Too Much Security?

Metaphorically, the shelter studied for this article could be viewed as the last outpost of the welfare state, beyond which there was little or nothing to fall back on if expelled, and with the private security officers employed there performing what were essentially public functions of that welfare state in acting as gatekeepers to its services. The shelter functioned as a container for a residual group of homeless persons – a group of individuals with lengthy experience of 'the homelessness industry' (Ravenhill, 2008) who had in many cases been permanently evicted from other forms of temporary homeless accommodation in the city. In contrast to security personnel who are contracted in order to ensure that public and semi-public spaces such as shopping malls and residential neighbourhoods are attractive to the general population and local inhabitants by physically removing all undesirable elements from them, the security officers employed at the shelter had to co-exist with the population they targeted: the (homeless) shelter residents. Policing the social order in and around the shelter was accomplished through visual surveillance, video monitoring and other means of controlling the territory, people and conduct, including the degree of intoxication, behaviour, general conduct and appearance of shelter residents. Those deemed 'overly' intoxicated, aggressive or a disturbance were issued warnings, temporarily barred or transported away by the police and told not to return.

In performing the tasks and duties assigned to them, the private security officers working at the shelter relied on partnerships with the shelter's municipal staff and the police. When making and enforcing the decisions of the public authority, they needed the back-up of the former, and when spatially displacing unwanted persons, they needed the support of the latter. The municipality, through the shelter management, at times requested 'more security' at the shelter in the form of even harsher measures to be applied, based on the assumption that some of the homeless clients staying at the shelter, as well as others not staying there but frequenting its territory, posed a serious threat to the safety and security of the municipal staff and security officers working there (and to the general public more broadly, which was the reason the homeless clients needed to be contained in the shelter in the first place). Indeed, this need for 'more security' had even come to be understood as necessary and natural from the point of view of the shelter management.

While the party pushing for this increase of security in the premises, for instance by instructing the security officers not to let certain residents inside and to inspect everyone's belongings at the entrance, was typically the contractor of the security services – the municipality, through the shelter management – the officers themselves were well aware of their limited powers and authority as private *väktare*. This was well illustrated by their complaints that their customer was unaware that they,

the security officers, were 'just ordinary guys in work clothes' and that the security company they worked for was selling merely 'the illusion of being protected by someone who has the power and authority'. At the same time, their ability to police the shelter population effectively according to the instructions given depended on a lack of awareness among those policed of the exact powers and authority of the security officers as *väktare*. From time to time, the officers acted beyond the scope of their authority in order to better defend the borders of the shelter territory, take control over situations and live up to the expectations of their customer. It also happened, on the other hand, that the same customer criticized – via shelter management – the very work done by the officers to satisfy its expectations; they instructed the security officers not to act like 'watchdogs' and make the shelter appear like 'a prison'.

The initial interest in carrying out this study on the private policing of a municipally owned and operated homeless shelter as a case of private security performing essential public functions, was to examine whether or not frontline public services could be provided by private actors without losing the public sector ethos. While the policing of homeless people in the shelter territory did indeed rely on disciplinary measures often perceived by the shelter residents as fundamentally unjust, inequitable, humiliating and degrading, these measures were for the most part initiated by the shelter management in its role as representative of a public authority, rather than by the private security officers charged with the task of policing. The latter were often following the instructions and wishes of those contracting them to patrol the border of eligibility to the services of the welfare state using harsh disciplinary measures for maximum efficiency. Quite conceivably, these measures were, however, ultimately counterproductive to their stated aims in actually contributing to a less secure and safe shelter environment. As Desai (2000) has noted, CCTV surveillance, for instance, means that individuals may be watched at any time, even constantly, without knowing. While an awareness of this possibility may encourage docility, in the case of the homeless shelter studied, at least, it seems that the panoptic effect of CCTV surveillance and the general style of policing employed were more likely to increase than decrease the likelihood of the very kind of conduct they were installed to prevent by provoking aggressive responses, contemptuous behaviour, 'bad moods' and threats of violence among the shelter residents under surveillance. Accordingly, where security is the objective, 'more security' might not always be the best approach, especially when coupled with even more severe forms of control and punishment.

While 'security' is typically presented as an unquestionable public good, it relies in reality on coercion and social exclusion of the unwanted – those perceived as a security threat (Zedner, 2003). Besides being counterproductive to its own aim at times – a poorly chosen strategy – coercion as a means to security may also be problematic in another respect. While at the shelter in this study, too much security probably produced more un-security, it did that in two different ways: it provoked threats, aggressiveness and violent responses among those controlled, but it also caused highly insecure and unsafe situations for shelter residents who were expelled and barred from the shelter and who ran the consequent risk of finding themselves back on the streets again. The daily work of establishing and main-taining security at the shelter thus potentially counteracted another goal: that of reducing the number of homeless people in the municipality. As exclusions and expulsions are built-in features of systems of homeless accommodation, they will always create a new need for bottom-of-the-barrel homeless accommodation (Juhila, 1992; Sahlin, 1996; Löfstrand, 2005; Wagner, 2005). If (as the professional rhetoric suggested) temporary accommodation at the shelter in this study repre-sented only the first step on the path towards re-integration into mainstream society, other means of ensuring security are needed here and in places like it – means that can ensure the fair and inclusive provision of security without violation of the rights of shelter residents as clients of publicly-provided social services and as citizens in a welfare state.

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