

“Respect” and search for identity: Demand for recognition in the Municipal Civil Guard

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Introduction

In 2014, when I established contact with the first interlocutors in the Municipal Civil Guard (GCM) of Niterói, their statements indicated that one of the fundamental issues for the understanding of the institution is it related to the internal organization and the distribution of power, under the aspect of political influence, which directly governed the *modus operandis* agents'. This distribution of power, guided by the executive and / or municipal legislative power, dictated what the GCM would focus on its operational logic: sometimes identifying the city's traffic as one of its responsibilities, sometimes directing its actions towards the repression of walking trade.

The role of GCM in municipal and, at another time, state public security, has not been defined in a continuous way in almost or no moment in its history, and this would imply the construction of its institutional identity and its agents who, in contact with the structure, would adapt to each way of thinking and acting. This structure can be understood by looks that base the position of the GCM in public security policy, and the analysis can be made from peers, identified as police institutions at the state level, or by looking towards the municipal political structure, as powers executive and legislative.

“Respect” and identity in dispute

Following the promises of the City Hall and with the help of a favorable national situation¹, the discussion about the armament of the Municipal Civil Guard of Niterói gained

¹ It is worth highlighting significant changes in the political and social situation, elements that established the emergence of the public discussion on arms policies, with the electoral dispute for the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil in 2018 as one of the main stages for the debate. Since the days of June 2013, the Brazilian political environment has undergone significant changes, starting with a growing self-identified “supraparty” mobilization that took to the streets after the 2014 elections, but that after each demonstration was directed towards the polarization of the public as for guidelines that would deal with much more than the “20 cents”, referring to the increase in public transport tariffs, which were the trigger for the occupation of the streets. (PIRES, 2013).

greater prominence and protagonism in the agents' claims with the publication of the Statute General of the Municipal Guards in 2014. This debate was already relevant and recurring within the Guard, and this information was confirmed from several reports and speeches that I was able to witness and record during the research developed at the institution, and I include in this data the first interview I did when I had the opportunity to have an extensive conversation with a former martial arts master who, in addition to being a physical education professional, was also an agent of the Guard.

We talked for about an hour, without a closed or structured questionnaire, without further provocation in the questions and answers, armed only with the interest in talking with the agent, not with the master. First, on armament. Even without questions or directions about the possible use of firearms, the desire for armament appeared spontaneously in the agent's speech. It came up when he talked about "the population's respect for agents". It appeared when he mentioned situations in which, in his perception, they took "great risk" to his life and that of others. And it came up a lot when he talked about his private life, even describing an attempted robbery that was a victim when he was still a member of the Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro (PMERJ).

With long experiences in more than one segment of public security, the range of reports and situations experienced by colleagues is vast. Having more than 10 full years at GCM, he had a four-and-a-half year stint in the Army and was a PMERJ staff member for 5 years, until he was discharged. This experience allowed parallels and comparisons to be drawn between the institutions, presenting criticisms of the Guard's command structure that dialogued with a notion of companionship in the use of uniforms and in the search for the respect of the population, but that somehow focused the debate, mainly about the Guard, for the relationship of the agents with the use of the weapon. In one of his speeches, the agent established a direct comparison between the Guard's command structure and that of the PMERJ, making it clear that the exchange between these institutions was not, according to him, necessarily a good thing for the agents.

"In the guard, we see greater companionship. It is a barracks only, an institution only. So people know each other better. Inside PMERJ it is a very big thing, you know. There are several battalions. It is something like this, more family in Guarda, you get to know each other better. At PMERJ you are often transferred. But in Guarda it is much easier to have a link with a fellow in uniform. But at the leadership level it is also much worse. Much worse!

Because usually when a commander comes to command the Guard it comes with a military aspect, it already comes with military command and the guard is not a military institution. It is a paramilitary institution known as a civil institution as well. So much so that the name is Municipal Civil Guard. So it is very different from PMERJ, right.

The way to deal with the guard. I took a punishment when I joined the Guard because I didn't salute one of the Guard's commanders. At the time it was Colonel P., he came from BOPE. There is nothing in the Statute that you have to salute for a commander of the Guard. It is not military. It is a civil institution. I took a 15-day paycheck. I went to court, but the City Hall did not comply.

Since colonels are dictators, guards work in fear. He takes a punishment. If the municipality does not comply, he enters other penalties until the municipality complies. And so we are punished in the salary.

In addition, he orders the guards to carry out operations that the guards know are not supposed to be done, and as the guard has to defend the bread on his table and cannot lose wages through punishment, the guards go and do it.

That's why I think the Guard has to command the Guard. The PMERJ has to command the PMERJ. The fireman has to command the fireman. Each in its square. Because he will know what he suffered from down there. The guard suffers a lot from the PMERJ command. ”

One of the points that caught my attention was the fact that he mentioned “fear” as a negative factor of this military influence in the performance of the guards. This is because the category "fear" would be triggered by the guards in their demands for armament, but it would be denied in the statement "Here there is no guard! Here is the Municipal Guard! ”, Which presents a “ thinking ” about what an agent of the Guard is, or would be seeking to be (VIANA, 2017). In this way, we can see that the construction of a more military, or more civil, identity does not exclude or contradict the expectations of agents carrying a gun.

This demand appeared both in the statements of this agent as well as in the statements of others I had contact with, along with the perception of the need for a renewed view of the population towards the guards. In this “new” construction, in their view, the essential element is repeatedly expressed through the category of “respect”, which, by the way, for many would be achieved from the armament and a greater ostensible presence of the agents in the daily life of the City. And in that field, the guards found themselves competing for a “place in the sun” (VERISSIMO, 2009) with other institutions; military police mainly, but also with posture inspectors.

Thus, an important question arises here that identifies a dispute between the forces. This dispute, which is not recent, seems to be able to intensify with the project of renewal of the Guard based on armaments, with the objective of giving protagonism to the Guard in the

structure and logic of public security of the municipality. In practice, this generates important conflicts of space and assignments with the Military Police, as the agent reports:

“There is an undeclared feud between the guard and the PMERJ, because they notice that the Guard is taking over the space of public security, so they understand it as if they are dividing the space. Now they have a guardhouse divided between PMERJ and Guarda on Icaraí beach. And that even for the PMERJ commanders and the Guard commander to accept, it was a hell of a fight. But the Mayor thank God read the Statute because until then he did not know about the new rule and it seems that he is ready to invest in security. [...] Every police has its square. Each one will send or protect what is determined by law, that is, PMERJ will work more ostensibly, more directly in the fight against trafficking. The Guard will be directly focused on fighting the neighborhood, more focused on the municipality. The PMERJ is more focused on trafficking. Not that the Guard is not going to fight trafficking, because now it is the Guard's job too.”

In this interpretation, we can see that the investments, proposals and promises are not only aimed at improving the public security of the city, but reveal, in truth, a dispute for the protagonism of this improvement, with what resources, attributions and spaces. For Guarda, in the context of my fieldwork, this tension was expressed in the conflict over who should be armed on the city patrol and why this choice was made.

The second point to be highlighted in the first conversation, presents itself as one of the main problems of this article. I refer to his interpretation of the notion of “respect”. This notion, which appears repeatedly in many other conversations and situations, for my former master, was directly related to his criticisms of the military command. For him, the agents would not be “respected” because of the wrong instructions they receive from the command and, consequently, for the posture they end up reproducing in the street when they come into conflict with the street vendors, for example. In this interpretation, the dispute with the other institutions is again evident.

“What happens is that the population is used to seeing the guard fighting with the street vendor. This is not the attribute of the guard. This is the responsibility of the City Hall inspector. This is even a matter of the Mayor not knowing the organic law that goes through the City Hall, and knowing public security, he mixes things up a little. The Guard goes to inspection, where he shouldn't go. The guard is actually there to protect life, which is the good of the citizen. Protect the people of Niterói. Then, when a new PMERJ commander arrives, discord enters. When the guard has to go to the street to protect a good or life, he goes to piracy, he goes to inspection. Something that is a fiscal attribute of the City Hall. The guard has to curb crime and work for life.

Armament is a matter of necessity. You put a guard, nowadays with the level of crime that we are experiencing, with a baton and a handcuff on the street, you become a clown. It is better to put the guard to work in the circus than on the street. Because the violence is so great, crimes happen all the time, and everything that the population needs most today, in addition to health, is public security. It is a matter of necessity. Even for the security of the guard himself. Both

on duty and off. It happens a lot in service. When the guard is going to make a type of occurrence like a theft, he even gets beaten.

Second comes respect, if a guy is faced with an armed guard, he will analyze the fact and have a greater respect.

Here at the GCM in Niterói I see that it is a total necessity, because I see the guards in total desperation to go out into the street without a gun. Until a situation that I witnessed as soon as I entered, we went to make an apprehension and one of the guards collapsed. He couldn't take the situation. And after a week he had asked for his resignation. We got into conflict, in a melee conflict. And maybe in this situation, if we were armed, there would not even have been a hand-to-hand conflict. ”

The agent's speech allows us to insist, on the one hand, on the evident dispute over the attributions of Guarda and other institutions (PMERJ and inspectors). This dispute and lack of definition for competences also seems to lead, in a straightforward reasoning, to postulate the “need” of the weapon as a way of coping not only efficiently, but “safely” with the assigned functions. On the other hand, the weapon is not only seen as a "necessity" and as a factor of "security", but also as an instrument or means of "respect" for not staying on the street and "becoming a clown".

It is also worth mentioning that at no time did the agent refer to the lack of training that he had referred to in other moments of the conversation. His speech, when dealing specifically with the “respect” of the population and even of criminals in relation to guards, was focused on the importance of weaponry.

After a few years of this interview, this line of reasoning and arguments draws my attention because of the experience of working on monitoring the training of agents of the same Guard that this agent was part of. In my ethnography in the Training Course (VIANA, 2017), I report the disinterest of the agents and the institution itself in relation to training linked to the academy. One of the most evident and problematic questions that came up repeatedly during the Professional Training Course (CFP) classes² that I followed during the research, was based on the distinction presented by the guards as an opposition between "theory" and "practice". The question was always raised as the first argument to delegitimize

² The course was based on its previous edition organized in a partnership of the same type between the Fluminense Center for Studies and Research of the Federal Fluminense University (NUFEP / UFF), and the City Hall of Niterói, held in the years 2002 and 2003 This course also ended up being used as a basis for the Ministry of Justice and the National Secretary for Public Security to develop a national curricular matrix aimed at training Municipal Guard agents across the country, valuing the relevance of the project and its pioneering spirit when dealing with of the subject. The classes were taught in part by researchers from the INCT-InEAC / UFF and invited professors from other universities, and by agents of the Municipal Guard, military police and employees linked to the City of Niterói. (VIANA, 2019)

the knowledge of teachers / researchers who taught subjects in the course. At a certain point, this discussion presented itself as a declared and complicated barrier to be broken in the course execution. Situation already reported by Robson Rodrigues (2011), in which case the military police classified the classroom as the “fantasy island”, in the demonstration of a contempt for theoretical knowledge that had no personification from the speech of those who were not their "equals". In my case, the “equals” would be other agents of the Guard itself or other public security institutions. What would really be valid in their training and at the time of the action would be the theory based on the practice learned on the street, which they identified only as being “the practice”.

Considering questions already written for the case of the Military Police, Kant de Lima (2009) defined this problem as a conflict between theories. According to this line of reasoning, guards had the expectation that learning would target a theory that represented their practice, reproducing authoritarianism, informal filters, repression, command positions and other practices that are already institutionalized. The problem is that UFF, the academy's representative in this context of applying the CFP, took to the classroom a theory that, in their view, would not be legitimate, behold, these theories do not represent the practices and symbols present in the model of current public security disseminated and applied as a project that understands war and conflict as tools to fight crime.

At one point during the course, the guards who said they were ready to serve, act and, according to themselves, change the profile of the Guard, were dispersed in the classes and showing no interest in the proposed topics. This conflict was also evident through a distinction problematized by the guards between classes managed by the Guard and classes managed by UFF. Conflict that was noticed by teachers, monitors and me, through the days and the disparity between the guards' efforts in each of these two types of classes. While in the Guarda class what was seen in the classroom was the curiosity and attention of the agents, in UFF classes few showed interest. It is also noted that some others only intervened to discuss the issue of theory *versus* practice, always arguing that a teacher would not have the legitimacy to present realities reported through research that did not involve any kind of practice.

“That teacher is very good, the class was doing well, I could see that her research was very serious and that she really worked. But when we asked her how much practice she had the

answer was that she had no practice whatsoever and that everything she was exposing was the result of the research she did. It didn't work! How do they put a teacher to teach us about something practical, since she never worked with it and was not even from the police? ”

It was clear that what the guards expected were classes more focused on the routine of conflicts, but not on the characteristic mediation that the classes and the proposal of the professors of the Institute of Comparative Studies in Conflict Management (InEAC / UFF) put on the table. While the theory taught by teachers placed agents as mediators rather than characters in the conflict, what the guards hoped to learn were not ways to avoid or mediate it, but ways to act and put an end to problems through force and authority, which in this training space could be learned through self-defense, patrolling and immobilization classes.

“We are not going to use this class here for anything! We had to take a self-defense class, that’s what we’re going to use on the street! ”. This may have been one of the record phrases repeated by the guards, demonstrating that what they wanted was to be on the street “mediating” conflicts in the way that they believe to be the most correct and effective, thanks to the lessons already passed in their education and training, in physical contact with the conflict. Thus, it is important to establish a direct connection between the attitude that agents presented during their training processes and the way they interpreted their institutional identities. When they directly articulated the armament with the question of “respect”, they established a connection between the two topics as if these were complementary arguments. Thus, what it seems to me in fact that he, my former master, wanted to highlight, is that there is a problem in the training of agents, but that this does not even compare with the problem that is that they do not have a weapon at their waists. For my interlocutors, weapons speak for themselves.

As for the institution's armament promise, I would like to highlight an aspect that I consider significant. It is the contrast perceived between the levels of importance given, on the one hand, to the formation and working conditions of the Guard, be they structural or labor rights, and, on the other hand, to the claim for arms. It seems relevant to me that, even with public complaints from the agents themselves regarding the problems of the institution's structure, mobilization and demand have been organized mainly in the lobby banner for

armaments. Following tip Evans-Pritchard's (2005)³ to let himself be interested in what matters to our interlocutors (and not what we previously thought relevant), I changed my look and, therefore, my perception of the importance that agents gave to armaments. So, I let the agents talk freely about what was important to them and from that point on two issues became relevant to them: one related to the “neglect” of a portion of the new agents with the course that was being applied, mainly by the so-called “concurseiros”, and the other the need for armament to face “dangers” that they imagined they would have to face on the street.

As we can see, the hierarchy of relevant issues for agents again gave prominence to the institution's identity and armament, to the detriment, for example, of the institution's structure, which, in my expectations, would occupy an important place. This preference was also revealed on the street, such as vehicles that, at times, broke down due to lack of maintenance or even fuel, and many others within the operations center and distribution of tasks. Even the cabins shared with the Military Police were encountering difficulties later, denouncing the lack of maintenance and improvements in the Guard's equipment. Thus, it was exposed, then, a perspective that minimized the questions of structure and addressed them as points that could be easily resolved. In the agent's speech, it is clearly seen when his speech lists the measures that would be being worked on by the Guard command at the City Hall for the faster implementation of improvements.

“It's coming with a new barracks in Barreto. From what is planned, there will be a training center, a sorting center, a shooting center. The Municipality intends to adopt the armament. So far we haven't heard the Mayor say anything. We saw the model with the shooting stand. Even because it is what the Statute says, the municipal guards within the City Hall have up to two years to fall under the Statute. If within that time it does not fit, it will lose even the federal investment and at the risk of being fined, right. For not complying with the law. For not complying with our Statute.”

This statement seems to me relevant because, even speaking of the structure, the issue of armament is present, highlighting the part of the project that provides equipment and infrastructure for shooting (shooting center, shooting stand). Making this visit to the audio of the first interview and contrasting it with records of conversations in my field notebook over the 4 years of research that was carried out later, I see almost the same comment in all the

³ In “Some reminiscences and reflections on fieldwork”, Evans-Pritchard suggests that “the anthropologist must follow what he finds in the society he chooses to study” and exemplifies: “I was not interested in witchcraft when I went to the Zande country, but the Azande had it and so I had to let myself be guided by them”(2005, p. 244-245).

dialogues that I was able to record: Why the agents did they not build an agenda on improvements in the structure of the Guard per se, without the necessary relationship and prioritization of the armament issue as a fundamental element?

I did not find an objective answer to this question, but I was able to understand, from the reports, that the structure would only be the most important theme in their debates after the implementation of the armament. Even more: that one of the main positive balances of such a measure would be not only the consequent improvement in the structure, but the “respect” of the population. This is because in the logic presented by the agents, a “respected” Guard would be a Guard that had political strength to seek structural improvements both from the point of view about equipment, as well as from the point of view of the agents and training career plan. The right to own the weapon was thus presented as a first step.

The reference to training was also made following the line of reasoning of training for the use of armament and for the “extreme situations” that the street presents.

“My training had to run on the outside, because the Guard does not have this investment in training to date. I have always taken courses, within the martial arts, outside the martial arts, in the military area, security courses, progressive security courses. Paid out of my pocket. Until SWAT course. Expensive courses that I had to take out of my pocket. I had to run outside to become a good guard. Stay up to date on public security, updated by law because I also have to run outside because the guard does not give instructions. [...] I think that at the level of Guarda today, any course that arrives will be well received. Any dog training course *taser*, a course, a self-defense course. Any course that reaches the guard will be willingly, because the City does not provide it.”

The emphasis on “training” and capacity building is geared towards acting in the area of public security, referring primarily to the use of weapons (of different types), as well as to laws; both aspects, the military and the legal, highlighted by Kant de Lima et al (2012), as dominant in police training in Brazil. And this training, focused on practice, training, training, is what, in the agent's view, would make an agent a “good guard”. In turn, the demand is placed in terms of the neglect of municipal management in relation to this formation. While the interviewed agent blames the structure of the Guard for not providing internal training, he also finds it impossible to seek separate courses, since the salaries practiced make this search unfeasible.

“It is a practice of the guards to already make beaks. The guard leaves the shift sometimes tired and goes to get security for more than 12 hours, usually a street security, a pharmacy, a gas station. The guard has been doing this for a long time. The other guards even try to take a course, but as the salary is very limited, then it becomes difficult. If the guard doesn't have another one on the outside ... It's just that I have been working with fighting for many years, so I have mine “on the outside” and I have the Guard's. So what I can do is with my resource that I have outside. If I depended on the institution, I wouldn't have taken any courses.”

At the same time, in reading this agent, the CFP was only happening because of the planning for the implementation of lethal weaponry. From this connection established by him, I was able to understand that the armament symbolized, within the scope of the development of agents and the Guard, an instrument that would force the City to carry out investments on a continuous basis and that this movement would raise the institution's standard.

In this way, lethal weaponry, “respect” of the population and political and institutional protagonism in Guarda were presented in a unique dimension capable of enabling growth and the achievement of a relevant role within the planning logic of municipal public security. Directing all political and social efforts towards the implementation of armaments would be a way to elevate the Guard and its agents: all in a single package to promote the institution's development. In a second moment, as shown in the second quote, I could see that this demand shows an expression of the lack of structure that, as a consequence, leads to practices that are not necessarily legal, such as the “beak”, commonly practiced by agents. It seems to me that both aspects go together, since it is observed that the institutional sphere is also permeated by personal and political interests of the actors of the Guard and the field of public and social security in the city.

So what I perceive is a narrative with two possible interpretations. The first is based on the justification of the “nozzles” as a consequence of the low salaries of the agents, making them not exercise exclusive dedication and, thus, there is a precariousness of the service - but, at the same time, with the possibility of using this “From the outside” to ensure better training and performance, since the institution does not provide it -. The second possible reading is to look at the demand for armaments by the agents as a way to enhance their gains with the “nozzles” that, as my interlocutor said, happen for a “long time”. If, without the possession of lethal weapons, the agents already play roles in private security,

with the adoption of armament their possibilities would be expanded to an already established market and led by squads of the Military Police.

From hope to “no”

The path that I seek to trace in this article describes how the demand and the debate about the armament of the Guard evolved over the period of the research, specifically in relation to how to build an identity about what it would be “to be a guard”. As mentioned at the beginning of the text, the debate seems to start with an increase in guards' expectations from the moment the investment project in Guarda and its structure was presented in 2013; subsequently, with the discussion of the Guards' Statute in 2014 and the subsequent mobilization to discuss the topic in an organization movement by the guards; and, finally, after the legislative discussions and consultations that took place both in Niterói and in Rio de Janeiro already in 2017⁴. In all these instances, demands for the “respect” of the population and for the political and social recognition of the importance of the Guard's work were present.

In 2014, as mentioned, the expectations on the part of the guards around obtaining recognition⁵ were high, and hovered over the fact that the institution was finding the paths to the goal of arming itself and thus achieving a change in level, in status. By promising the construction of a new headquarters, the call of new agents for the Guarda staff and the application of a training course, the municipal management showed signs of a commitment and recognition of the institution's role. For many of the guards I was talking to, the next and almost natural step would be, little by little, to arm the agents and put them on the street in an active and coordinated way. In their view, the population could serve as “the best

⁴ As mentioned earlier, the political situation contributed to putting the topic under the spotlight of public debate, managing to be discussed in various spheres of society, whether in academia, in organized civil society events or in institutional settings of municipal policy. It was the relationship between public and civil debate with the political moment on the issue of armament that enabled the discussion to proceed in the legal sphere, forcing municipal executives to themselves position positively or against armament. In the State of Rio de Janeiro, at the same time, the debate took place in some municipalities such as São Gonçalo, Campos dos Goytacazes and Maricá. However, more concretely, the debate gained strength to be discussed and later put into practice in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Niterói. (VIANA, 2019)

⁵ “The demand for recognition takes on urgency in these cases, given the supposed links between recognition and identity, in which” identity “designates something like an understanding of who we are, of our fundamental defining characteristics as human beings” (TAYLOR, 2000) - in this case, “fundamental rulings” as agents of public security.

thermometer of the measure's effectiveness". Here the notion of "respect" appears as a result of the adoption of the previous measures, as a product of the recognition of the protagonism given by the City Hall.

The curious thing is that four years after the formation of these new agents, many of them, who remained as interlocutors of this work from the beginning, manifested the loss of the will to "transform the Guard into a 'new Guard'". Some blamed the question that the armament was more complex than it was supposed to be; others blamed those colleagues who saw the institution as only a stairway to other public tenders; others attributed this responsibility to the City on account of the promises that were made, but that were not made due to financial and / or political problems.

"[Mayor] is the only guy in all these years who has looked at Guarda, so most of them are with him. But many guards felt betrayed by this [public] consultation issue. Many believe that he did not comply with what he said in the campaign. He had already said he was going to arm and then sent this one from the popular consultation. So that made the guards very sad, disappointed."

Resentment⁶ with the Mayor appears in many of the speeches, almost all times accompanied by a consideration of how gains its management led to the Guard. New agents, new uniforms, training course, new headquarters and promises to make the Guard the protagonist they think it should be. These promises can be understood, following the proposal of Carla Teixeira (2000), as a political action that assumes the contracting of a debt that, if not fulfilled, runs the risk of being experienced as "betrayal". For as Cardoso de Oliveira argues, "the feeling of resentment is associated with the demands we make on others in relation to ourselves". (2002, p.115)

The point is that such promises, no matter how much they have been fulfilled, have not always responded in rhythm and temporality to the expectations created by the guards. This disappointment, expressed in the agent's speech cited as "betrayal", occurred specifically on the point of armament as a key element in the agents' understanding of this "advance". As well as the perception of Franco-Quebecers in the context of the vote *patrol* where the

⁶ Understanding "resentment" from the definition offered by Strawson: "Let us consider, then, occasions for resentment: situations in which one person is offended or injured by the action of another and in which - in the absence of special considerations - the offended person might naturally or normally be expected to feel resentment." (STRAWSON, 1962, p. 8). As Cardoso de Oliveira argues from Strawson, resentment would be provoked by the intention or attitude attributed to the offender.

interpretation of the process - the approval of the proposal made by Ottawa and the non-granting of veto power to Quebec, where the denial of the recognition of Quebec's distinct identity was expressed - was that, there too, there had been an act of betrayal. (CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, 2002, p.118)

In general, the weapon topped the list with specific mentions about the material lack of equipment, but also, and more relevant to this work, about the “lack of respect” of the population for with Guarda as an institution and with agents as operators and mediators of conflicts in public security⁷. This “lack of respect” is linked to the lack of armament because, for them, the population does not “respect” the work of the guards. This is because they are never sought to act in situations that they claim they could act on, according to their duties. In their readings, the lack of search is linked to the absence of (lethal) weapons in their belts, preventing action in these situations would require its use as a guarantee of safety and effectiveness in the intervention. The routine descriptions reveal a population's demand mainly for the resolution of issues that, in their perception, diminish them as agents, reaching their professional identity and their self-affirmations as “agents of the law”, or “agents of public security”. In this way, as already exposed, it is the population's “lack of respect” in relation to agents: when they feel treated as “guardians”, when they are sought “only” to give information about buses, addresses or traffic issues . This change in status in his identity was one of the great expectations that, in the training course environment, the new agents reaffirmed and attributed to the Mayor's promises.

In this line of reasoning, the search for this “respect” of the population becomes a significant demand for agents, as it involves a longing that was considered fundamental: the process of building and affirming their professional and institutional identity. This process allows me to conclude not only by the involvement of the competences attributed and the functions performed by them, but also by the treatment that the population should offer or defer to them. In other words, the perspective of understanding how “they actually work” and what “they really are”. What is at stake in the complaints raised seems to me to be

⁷ It is important to highlight that the “lack of respect” on the part of the population differs from the notion of “disrespect” that I had contact with in conversations with street vendors, where the moral insult would be experienced in the clash between Guard agents and traders. Thinking with José Manuel Resende (2013), “lack of respect” and “disrespect” appear as categories that sound similar, but that represent different levels of distance.

constituted, to a certain extent, as a “demand for recognition” in terms of their status or social position (CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, 2004).

“Crescer” reaffirming an identity

As mentioned earlier, the expectations of agents around armaments accompanied the ups and downs of the different moments of the debate that could have as a key point and reference, in the case of Niterói, the public consultation, determinant in this process. At this moment, establishing the contrast between the yearnings of the year 2014 and what in 2018 was already configured as a frustration, permeated by resentments, I return to the promises about the renovation of the institution and the improvements in the structure of the Guard. After the inauguration of the headquarters and the already denied⁸ armament by the population, the agents' perspective that the armament would be the beginning of a turn in the issue of “respect” for the institution and in the gaining of political power was evidently frustrated. It was observed in the political field the change in the institution's speech, now based on the return of the appreciation of the structure and working conditions. Thus, a guard explained to me in a conversation in 2019:

“Are you having a problem? OK! As hell, a lot! This new structure is very beautiful on the outside, inside you have to see: several infiltrations, cracks, a pool that forms when it rains because the ceiling is bad. All rooms are air conditioned, 98% do not work. It was delivered with a lot of trouble. The structure on the outside seems to be excellent, good terrain, but on the inside it is very bad. What has less problem is the headquarters of SEOP [Public Order Secretariat], because they keep the money and forget the Guard. The City Hall does not pass it on, the SEOP does not pass it on. Several vehicles downloaded. As long as there are military police officers in charge, we will have this problem here, they do not want us to grow. So there are structural problems due to the lack of investments. ”

The agent's speech highlights the clash between the expectation presented in 2014 and the material and symbolic reality of what was built and put into operation until 2019. With the weapon's dream disapproved, the guards saw, in reality, that care and attention with the institution stood aside. Without weapons and without structure, the Guards saw their

⁸ In the consultation, the population voted against the armament of the Municipal Civil Guard in 45 voting points spread throughout the municipality. Adherence was considered by many to be very low, as only 18,990 of the 37 1,736 possible voters in the municipality moved to cast their vote, that is, 5.1% of the total voters. The proposal was rejected by 13,478 of the Niteroi people who went to the polls. Only 5,480 of the participants in the public consultation voted in favor of the proposal, while 32 people voted white or null. Thus representing, respectively, margins of 70.1% against 28.9% of the population. RESEARCH,

situation even more aggravated by the appreciation of the partnership between the City Hall and the State Government. This is because, when carrying out a joint operation, they felt that the role that was supposed to be exercised by the Guard in possession of lethal weapons was transferred and rearranged to the structure of the Military Police.

In addition, this state of mind raises the conflict of interest both with the Military Police and with the Secretariat of Public Order and, in particular, about the historical practice of appointing former military and reserve military officers as secretaries of public order in the city of Niterói and in charge of Guarda. The agent's criticism attributes to this dispute not only the possible lack of investment, but, even more, the impossibility for the Guard to become a protagonist - to "grow" - and to be recognized. Reflecting on these soldiers in command and the guards as commanded, supporting me in what Taylor (2000) clarifies about the "modern concern with identity and recognition", for some to have honor, it is essential that not all have, thus giving rise to a "politics of difference", full of "discrimination and refusals that produce second-class citizenship", or in this case, second-class agents, without respect, without political force and, especially in this context, without weapons.

These criticisms intensify when the way in which the discussion process on armaments was conducted in municipal management is questioned, summing up to a public consultation, a factor that greatly displeased the agents and, according to their speeches, contributed to things did not go the way they had been planning for them since 2014.

"In a popular consultation, you are not obliged to leave the house to vote, already in a plebiscite, yes. So we started to fight for it to be a referendum, but it didn't happen. [...] The thought of the guards, more than 90%, because there are guards who do not want them to arm, found this all a great joke."

Again, the image of the "clown" or, in this case, a "clowning", seems to reflect a recurring feeling: the agents feel cheated and "not respected" in relation to their demands and expectations that, many times, were adapting to the monitoring of the political movements of the Mayor and his team.

Final notes

When in 2014, the idea pulsed that the Mayor would, at any time, authorize the beginning of operations with lethal weaponry, an expectation that was driven by the purchase

of weapons carried out by the Municipality and the forwarding of license applications with to the Federal Police, an institution responsible for registering weapons and permits for agents to use the equipment. The problem, as explained by them, lay in the fact that the Mayor was "afraid" to take responsibility for the armament. In other words, fear of becoming a target when called upon to assume possible problems in improper actions by the guards.

"He [the Mayor] went limp. He even made 30 guards take a course of fire. They fired more shots than PMERJ soldier in recruiting. A PMERJ soldier fires less than 100 shots, the guards fired more than 300. Initially, these 30 guards would go out into the street to start armed service, and later more guards would qualify. That was before the vote."

"The [name of the Mayor] went limp", "The [name of the Mayor] was afraid". These were phrases that I heard repeatedly after the denial of the population. In the view of the guards, the implementation should not have followed any type of consultation because, after all, "everything was there black and white in the Statute". In my view, the reading of the process that best synthesized this perception was presented to me by an agent while we talked about the history of confrontations with street vendors around the city and the negative repercussions of this for the guards in relation to the recognition of the population.

"This armament business was a bad fuck, because it was going to make the Guard focus more on security, then they said "no, the guard is crazy! You'll want to intimidate street vendors! ", This has been going on for a long time. Do you know who else is apprehending on the street? It's the SEOP, turn and move they come with a car with a seizure bucket. They are making more apprehension than the guards used to do. The armament was not meant to intimidate street vendors, it was to focus more on security, on preventive patrolling, because it is not even ostentatious, it is preventive. Many times a person comes to the guard and says that he was robbed, that the guy had a gun, and what are we going to do with a nightstick and *taser*? What's up? How does it work that way? We could act more if we had working conditions, the weapon would be a point in this regard. "

This speech has the ability to condense several aspects dealt with in this article. First, because the disputes of the Guard, in terms of performance and identity, with other institutions are transparent; in this case, the highlight is with SEOP, but we found this also in relation to PMERJ. Second, the perception of a lack of definition in the functions assigned by the Guard, which seems to have a negative impact on the affirmation of an identity. That is, a yearning for action in "public security", understood only in its repressive aspects, and a reality that throws them to other unwanted tasks. Finally, the recurring assertion that the desired performance by them has as main obstacle to the realization of the lack of the right to a weapon. The frustration intensifies when it is assimilated that the denial is based on the

“misuse” that the agents would make of the weapon. In contrast, they argue that a more efficient performance⁹ would cause the desired break with the history of confrontations with street vendors and this would influence the change in the perception of the population about the importance of the Guard and the performance of its agents, recovering, or establishing, a respect and a admiration lost, or, still, to be conquered.

Taking Goffman's analysis of stigma (1980), we can emphasize that the search for agents for a rupture is based on the way they themselves deal with the negative consequences of the population, consequences arising from the material and symbolic history of their interactions with guards and their ways of acting. Thus, it is exposed that the agents' virtual social identity has characteristics that approximate their real identities, which means that, according to their perception, the Guard's reputation is discredited and that the “lack of respect” on the part of the population is felt so hard. The “lack of respect”, thus, presents itself as a symbol of the lack of definition of an identity, whether in terms of formal structure, or from its militarized practices conducted by other institutions, or in the more subjective plane of the affirmation of a social, political and professional recognition. In a way, the guard, when he says that he is “not a guard”, that he “falls forward” and that he “needs” a lethal weapon to “act as one should act”, is seeking to reaffirm his identity so that, “To be seen as a guard should be seen”, overcoming the barrier of discredit.

⁹ Understanding the notion of efficiency while expanding the capacity for immediate employment in a larger set of environments liable to the performance of agents due to the expansion of their instruments of coercion and use of force

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