

**Land policy by other means:
democracy and the military in contemporary urban Brazil**

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between the Armed Forces and the land market in Brazilian metropolises. Highlighting the important of the urban dimensions of this relationship, this research sheds light on agents usually invisibilized by the literature in an attempt to understand their role in land policy. The practices, meanings, and outcomes of the Armed Forces' involvement is reflected in the decision-making conditions that characterize Brazilian democracy. By establishing a dialogue with a well-known aphorism from Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz, that war is the continuation of politics by other means, we present and analyze land policies as continued by war operators. As we analyze military management practices and the commodification of public spaces, we find the city's production dynamics are galvanized by Army generals. Beyond security, surveillance, and population control, the Armed Forces have carried out a complex set of strategies regarding the occupation of cities, fueling debates around the nature of democracy underway in contemporary Brazil.



Since the onset of Brazil's post-dictatorship democratic cycle until 2020, the country has held eight general elections (both at the federal and state levels) and nine municipal elections.[1] During this four-decade period, Brazil has consolidated and instituted new legal systems that have displaced old frameworks shaped by the Constitution promulgated in 1988. Despite procedural institutional transformations, certain elected representatives have failed to champion official guidelines through their actions and words, instead praising the former corporate-military dictatorship and lauding authoritarian practices[2]. More explicitly, a shadow has been cast over Brazilian institutional policy in recent years, fostering suspicions over the ongoing process of democratization. Is Brazil in fact shaping a democratic regime, or is it merely promoting *sui generis* arrangements between the military forces and elected representatives?

In this article, as I strive to explore the myriad of issues within this universe, I investigate the relationships between military agents and the transformations underway in major Brazilian cities. In view of the importance of the urban dimension for understanding the country's everyday reality (circa 87% of the population lives in urban areas, the fifth largest proportion in the American continent and the first among the largest countries in the world, as of 2020), this paper provides an alternative approach to more formalistic interpretations of political procedure. Rather than focusing on agents commonly analyzed by different theoretical perspectives, I turn my attention to generals occupying the chains of command of the Armed Forces and their role in land policies across different cities. In the following pages, I outline the practices performed through these roles and explore their implications for decision-making processes and Brazilian democracy more broadly.

The title of this paper dialogues with a well-known aphorism by Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz: war is the continuation of politics by other means. While the original formulation echoes a period of violent nationalist conflicts in nineteenth-century Europe, it remains topical insofar as the connections between war and politics maintain their relevance in the present-day world. Beyond signaling connections between "war" and "politics" as "means" in themselves, Clausewitz's reasoning suggests an essentially articulative nature through which these modalities combine themselves in the daily operations of the State. As we unfold this notion for analyzing cities and the control of urban land, this article explores the continuation of land policies by other means, linked to the belligerent dimension of political life.

By outlining military practices behind the management and commodification of public spaces, I explore how these agents have galvanized dynamics of city production. Beyond the dimensions of security, surveillance, and population control, I employ the notion of *military urbanism* to grasp a complex set of forms, organizations, and facets of the occupation of cities as spearheaded by military agents (Graham 2010; Michaels 2016). For the purposes of this work, I define *military*



personnel as members of the Brazilian Army, the largest corporation of the Armed Forces, which concentrates the greatest roster of organizations and land under its administration.

Occupying the higher ranks of the military hierarchy, generals also serve as administrators of these organizations and their divisions. In 2015, 151 chiefs commanded 190,000 military personnel, which, proportionally speaking, makes the Brazilian Army one of the largest armed forces in the world in terms of the number of commanders.^[3] In addition to the concentration of power, this structure symbolizes the very forms and objectives of the “military affairs” and their purposes.

In addition to serving as state agents in the field of public security and national defense, the Army has performed a twofold role as landowners and developers of real estate projects in cities. In this regard, by considering Army generals as actors for urban capitals, we infer that there are no differences in the actions of these agents from other business executives whose accumulation and profitability stems directly from the city’s production (Marques 2016). Thus, an analysis of Army commands and their management of public lands reveals a discrepancy between political forms and practices, as well as theoretical and analytical challenges as we strive to understand the urban sphere as a phenomenon. While Rio de Janeiro is by no means a singular case in Brazil, the city’s extensive concentration of military areas overtly reveals these dynamics, as well as the effects and limitations of these practices.

To shed light on and analyze this particular dynamic, the following sections detail some of the military projects and initiatives that have had an impact on essential aspects of urban life, such as urban mobility and the use and commodification of public spaces. The first section emphasizes ongoing urban land management practices as troops have been displaced to the nation’s countryside and border regions. The second section details the institutional conditions and legal assumptions that have authorized the Armed Forces to directly negotiate the donation and even sale of public land. The third section analyzes how these generals have ingrained themselves within the housing market, as we explore their role in land development through a financial-housing institution tied to the corporation. In the final considerations, I interpret some of the implications arising from this military urbanism, bearing in mind the trends behind such activities and the resistance strategies that have emerged in recent years. As such, this work hopes to contribute to a broader debate regarding the country’s democracy amidst the implementation of land policies in contemporary Brazil.



Troops and areas in transit: military mobilities and the city

The city of Rio de Janeiro holds a peculiar position in Brazil's political history, having served as the nation's administrative capital for the longest period, dating back to the country's colonial era until the mid-20th century. The change in the city's administrative status did not entail a radical change in the presence of federal organizations in its urban space, particularly the Armed Forces. To this day, the city concentrates the greatest number of military organizations in Latin America, and subsequently experiences the more intense effects of military flows.

When addressing the Army's territorial occupation in the city of Rio de Janeiro between 1961 and 2011, historian Francisco Corrêa-Martins identified flows of troops and their organizations away from the former country capital. Within this period, the corporation's manufacturing facilities were deactivated, "security areas" were converted into environmental protection facilities, and the forts lost their military function and acquired new uses. In general terms:

As we look towards the future, it seems that the army's presence in Rio de Janeiro will be ushered, above all, by military education schools as well as military museums. Operational units will be gradually transferred to the North, West and South, perhaps preserving a small operational hub in the city (Corrêa-Martins 2011, p. 16).

According to the historian, the Army's "operational hub" in Rio de Janeiro is the Vila Militar de Deodoro. In addition to harboring an important cluster of urban infrastructures such as residential houses, hospitals, squares, and organizations such as barracks and training centers, the Military Village landscape includes watchtowers, walls, and a peculiar urban planning method, characterized by lower density occupation and orthogonal road networks (Bonates 2016).

Despite maintaining this "hub", Army commands have negotiated the sale and exchange of other areas in the city. In 2006, a military area in the Campinho neighborhood was sold, formerly an Artillery unit and laboratory; in its place a supermarket and a private residential condominium were built.^[4] Over the years, small lots in the Realengo neighborhood were negotiated with local business executives (Viana 2010). The Island of Bom Jesus was sold in 2012 for the construction of a technology park harboring different companies, while other land lots were exchanged with the City Hall in planning for major sporting events (Davies 2017).

In recent years, former military areas have gained new uses and destinies in Rio de Janeiro, but the city is hardly an exceptional case. According to Maria do Carmo Braga (2009), in recent decades, the city of Recife has also witnessed the disincorporation of public lands through the decision of generals: in the 1990s, negotiations between the Northeast Military Command and engineering companies resulted in land donations in Olinda, Santo Amaro, and Graças in exchange for construction services for officer housing facilities in other localities. More recently, a shopping

mall was inaugurated in a former barracks district in Olinda, while different lots in other parts of the city are still under negotiation.

In view of the ongoing transits and their impacts on the city, this discussion refers directly to the issue of military mobilities. More than a research subject, mobilities have served as an analytical paradigm critical of the static perspective that is frequently found in the literature. By emphasizing flows and frictions, studies that thematize mobilities have questioned the naturalization of movement and inertia in social dynamics. When exploring the processes concerning the Army's presence in the country, the concept of military mobilities thus articulates not only the contingent of professionals and materials belonging to the Armed Forces and other security forces, but also the variety of service providers, indirect operators, data volumes, and equipment that accompany such agents and their activities (Woodward & Jenkins 2014).

Through this approach, military mobilities comprehend ways of occupying as much as representing spaces through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, which encompass the enemy's space as much as the home for which one must fight. More than soldiers on the move, the debate about mobility encompasses a particular set of dynamics for the production and transfer of infrastructure, service provision, and various other dimensions for the permanence and activity of these contingents.

Troop movements, therefore, entail more than troops on the move. The negotiation of urban lots by Army generals occurs within a context of retracting military activities in major cities, as detailed above. Inertia has been a vital condition for these operations and the land appreciation of these territories, which sometimes wait years or even decades for a new project before being transferred to a private entity.

Armed Forces managers have also striven to acquire housing facilities for military personnel, often leading to the purchase of residential properties through self-financing programs in the form of arrangements between financial and military institutions. Through real estate production, military mobilities have articulated themselves with financial agents and reinforced the commodification processes of Brazilian cities.

By integrating different analytical questions to explore different intersections of social life, the next section explores the impacts of the imbricated relationship between military mobilities and urban lands. The reallocation of military organizations from state capitals and metropolitan regions to the nation's countryside and border regions has triggered opportunities for the construction of housing facilities through the incorporation of former military areas, converted into real estate and offered to a select population, albeit not limited to military personnel.

The next section explores the analytical meanings of military mobilities, considering how they might be used to understand broader Brazilian and Latin American contexts.

Here and there, the military on the move

For decades, scholars have emphasized mobilities as an object of study and, more so, as a privileged analytical paradigm of contemporary reality. By considering that movements constitute the functioning of society, investigative efforts have addressed the relationship between movements and the regimes and systems that organize, or at least attempt to, control them.

Inspired by Georg Simmel's sociological approach, researchers have focused on mobility as a hallmark of modern life. However, contributors to the so-called New Mobilities Paradigm, especially John Urry and Mimi Sheller (2006) as the group's main exponents, differ in that they draw attention to the "fluid interdependencies" between these processes, unrestricted by the very systems and regimes that structure them and that transcend the individuals and contexts with which they are directly involved. From this perspective, one may rethink the ontologies that distinguish people, places, and ideas, considering that these dimensions of real life are also in motion, based on discourses, practices, and other collective efforts dispersed in time and space.

Through this theoretical reading, mobilities comprise not only movements, circulations, and flows, but also ruptures, barriers, and frictions. Central to this perspective are the conditions, agents, and processes that allow, restrict, and impede the ways to move through the conciliation of scales and dimensions that make up such possibilities.

Some analyses have empirically approached the military worlds, resulting in research dedicated to the forms and possibilities of military mobility. Taking into account the challenges of addressing such themes, scholars, especially in the field of Anglo-Saxon geography, have spearheaded this conceptual formulation, articulating investigations on different themes, levels, and analytical approaches.

A sample of this effort may be found in an article written in collaboration by six researchers from the "Military Mobilities" panel, during the RGS-IBG (Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers) Annual Conference, held in 2014 in London. Assuming the centrality of movement to military practices and institutions, the authors argue that the phenomenon may be investigated from three related themes: the role of technological innovation and the more-than-human dimension in militarized activities; the role of bodies and bodily experiences in military life; and the complex and intertwined relationship between civil and military worlds, spaces, and movements (Merriman et al, 2017).



In the framework proposed by the authors, technological innovations are always formulated and applied to specific spatial contexts in order to reach certain bodies. Furthermore, technologies reveal how civil and military dimensions have been redesigned (and also co-produced) through ordinary practices, according to the uses and meanings they establish in the transits they carry out. The group strives to perform a complex dual reading between these fields, drawing attention to the analytical richness in the intersection between the technological, corporeal, and border dimensions of what they call military mobilities.

In a complementary perspective, researchers such as Peter Adey and Rachel Woodward (2014) argue that the focus on technological and logistical dimensions should be extended to the mobility of the military contingent as well as their families and social networks. The convergence of these analytical fields ensures the inclusion of subjectification processes in readings about military life in motion, broadening the debate on the effects and consequences of these dynamics.

More than the military corps themselves, Isla Forsyth proposes that the study of military mobilities must assume beforehand that they are "inextricably mobilities of violence" (Merriman et al, 2017, p. 50). "Collateral bodies" also affect and are affected by military mobilities, which produce results beyond the space of the theater of war.

While such formulations have explored sensitive issues through a complex reading of reality, the experiences of military mobility in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States inevitably involve different aspects and characteristics when compared to Brazil and Latin America. A first aspect is the very relationship between the governmental apparatus and the military forces, which do not conform to the same standards and expectations. The colonial experience and recent periods of military dictatorships in the region have contributed to other roles and functions being given to military institutions. The discussion around a possible (re)militarization of Latin America further blurs this interpretative framework: in recent years has there been "remilitarization" or perhaps, at least in central aspects of civil life, has Latin America never "demilitarized"? (Escanez, 2019)

In his contribution to the panel of geographers, Forsyth recommends that instead of the focus on conceptualizing or assessing these mobilities, a more advantageous approach would be to explore the productive dimension of these processes, which are necessarily violent:

This conceptualization of the implementation and impact of military mobilities blurs the edges of what and where is considered to be military space. The speed and scope of military mobilities are accelerating and intensifying, and so too are their effects, with reverberations of war and conflict leading to a proliferation of violent and desperate mobilities which are experienced by and inflicted upon the most vulnerable. (Merriman, 2017, p. 50).

By understanding militarization as a socio-historical process of further expansion and investment in military institutions, as well as a reinforcement of their ways of interpreting and shaping reality (Lutz, 2018), we may consider military mobilities as the very dynamics of production and expansion of military domains. Here and there, under different presupposed conditions, military mobilities produce large-scale transformations, which must be considered based on the spaces and bodies to which they are directed.

The next section presents the main agents, institutions, and dynamics that have allowed military areas to be converted into subsidized real estate development. Arrangements between business executives and senior generals have spurred private residential projects to incorporate public land lots in major cities, thus reinforcing profitability as a guiding tenet of land occupation.

Military commanders, developers, and landowners

Operating as financial institutions in the housing market, the FHE (Army Housing Foundation) and the POUPEX (Savings and Loans Association) date back to the creation of construction funds for military housing, developed in the wake of social policies aimed at urban workers in the 1930s. Over time, these organizations underwent legal and administrative reconfigurations and began to operate independently within the financial system: they became, therefore, private companies, even if managed by a group largely comprised of retired generals appointed by the Army Command.

Promulgated by Federal Law 6,855 in 1980, the FHE is responsible for managing POUPEX. Just two years after their creation, another federal law (7,059, dating from 1982) authorized the “Ministry of the Army to donate, to the Army Housing Foundation (FHE), real estate belonging to the Federal Union, under its jurisdiction, whose use or development no longer meets the needs of the Army”, adding that “real estate properties, when put for sale or exchange, may be offered for acquisition by the Army Housing Foundation prior to any public bidding process”. Laws dating prior to the democratic order, therefore, sanctioned the donation as well as the abdication of public bidding processes for the sale and exchange of public land with the entity, considering the FHE as a privileged agent in the alienation of military areas.

Although largely managed by generals appointed by the General Army Command, the FHE/POUPEX are both private entities and therefore do not obey guidelines that regulate federal autarchies and corporations, even though general directors are paid by the Army to perform these functions. Despite being discursively associated with the promotion of housing for the “military family”, these institutions provide financing and credit services to any consumer. Among the products and modalities provided, the FHE/POUPEX offers its own real estate catalog of



condominiums and residential facilities built in areas transferred or exchanged with the corporation's commands, anchored in constitutional prerogatives provided by the 1970 and 1982 laws.

In addition to offering credit lines for housing and other financial products such as loans and insurance policies, the FHE-POUPEX has its own real estate catalog of condominiums and residential buildings, built in different cities across the country through contracts with construction companies. Therefore, the Foundation's participation in the Brazilian real estate market goes beyond mortgage financing: they also act as developers for housing projects built on lands acquired through *sui generis* legal arrangements with the Army Command.

In 1970, Federal Law 5,651, decreed by a military president-dictator, authorized the negotiation of public assets by the Ministry of the Army, while in the following year, Law 5,658 extended this prerogative to the Navy and Air Force Ministries. In other words, at the time of the foundation of FHE-POUPEX as army related companies, the Armed Forces commands were already allowed to negotiate and alienate assets under their management for the past decade. However, just two years after they were created (i.e., in 1982), another federal law (7,059) authorized the "Ministry of the Army to donate to the Army Housing Foundation (FHE), real estate belonging to the Federal Union, under its jurisdiction, whose use or development no longer meets the needs of the Army". In other words, in addition to instating an exclusive method for allocating real estate from the Federal Government to the Foundation and, indirectly, to private real estate production, the law envisaged that "real estate properties, when put for sale or exchange, may be offered for acquisition by the Army Housing Foundation prior to any public bidding process".

Rhetorically anchored on the need for budget supplementation and greater financial autonomy for the Armed Forces, the 1970 and 1982 laws granted, for all practical purposes, an exclusive authority to groups occupying the top-ranking hierarchical positions within these corporations to use public lands according to their individual interests.

Therefore, laws dating from the corporate-military dictatorship period and prior to the democratic order continue to authorize, to this day, the negotiation of public lands with these companies, legally defined as priority agents in the expropriation of military areas.

While certainly anachronic when compared to the current legal system, these land agreements have prevailed in court decisions, often ruling that military commands are entitled to freely engage in such practices. Disputes regarding the legality of these "maneuvers" or "patrimonial rearrangements" (as defined by the military authorities in official documents, laws, and records used in this research) have, in turn, often tilted towards the generals. Upon analyzing legal trials within the scope of the Superior Court of Justice (STJ), one finds that judicial decisions in favor of these negotiations are grounded on an alleged "(...) need for these corporations to have the

autonomy and means to fulfill their constitutional missions in accordance with the public interest – evaluated during every future potential asset relocation” (Gomes 2011, p. 164). In this regard, “autonomy” would emerge in accordance with “the spirit of the Magna Carta” and would not therefore contradict other explicit principles in the democratic constitution.

The STJ rulings justify the autonomy granted to Army commands for managing lands so that they may “fulfill their constitutional missions” by considering that such procedures are a “source of monetization” for corporations and the military (op. cit.). However, these institutions have their own budget, and these practices serve as exceptional measures to increase revenue: according to a report, the Army collected over R\$115 million from the sale and exchange of land between 2007 and 2011 alone^[5].

Military authorities have imposed classified restrictions on information concerning these negotiations, and therefore this article does not attempt to expound the volume of these operations, their scope, or representativeness within the national land and real estate production market. While these sources would be vital for understanding the transformations of cities through the uses and fates of “military areas”, there are limitations as to what they may effectively reveal due to the institutional control of the Armed Forces.

Despite these restrictions, the generals’ *modus operandi* in housing development seems overtly clear: in addition to the funded provision of housing through a private company, the generals themselves play the role of developers in housing projects. According to Eduardo Marques’ definition, development takes place through “(...) land overvaluation through use change, since urban land has no production price and is an irreproducible asset” (Marques 2016, p. 18). Developers are concerned with ensuring new uses for urban land in the production of urban space, appreciating the location and increasing profits.

When converting a land lot into an enterprise, a dispute begins between developers and owners over the final value of the negotiated land: the advantages of both parties in part depend on this outcome, since each operation offers an opportunity to monetize the land assets by transforming its use.

Thus, the “land problem” *par excellence* of the capitalist production of space (Ribeiro 1997) reemerges through possible arrangements of military urbanism. As army generals merged the role of landowners and developers, the pivotal issue of land as commodity ultimately dissolves, replacing a conventional situation of competition between parties with its opposite. Among members of the military high command, land income, i.e., the amount paid for land, is not disconnected from the overvaluation deriving from the transformed use of the lot into an enterprise. The relationship between those commanding the garrisons and those running the private companies has led to a harmonious arrangement within the realm of real estate production, as decisions are



made by the same group through the participation of different commanders at regional and central levels.

By exploiting laws dating prior to the 1988 Constitution, and given the lack of institutional control over their actions, Army generals have integrated the spatial dynamics of Brazilian cities in a particular way, profiting from the sales of real estate investments. According to 2020 data, the POUPEX program has already signed over 134,000 financing contracts since its inauguration and currently ranks 8th among the largest financial agents in Brazil's real estate market. Furthermore, the institution has over 1.6 million savers, since "any individual or legal entity can join POUPEX" by opening a savings account at Banco do Brasil, an associated financial entity^[6].

Barracks becoming condominiums

The autonomy and legal competence for managing public assets serve as an example of the generals' renewed political capacity within the Brazilian democratic game, preserving privileges from the long dictatorial period during which they ruled the country. While the 1988 constitution replaced the former legal framework and centralized the management of federal public assets under the Union Heritage Secretariat (SPU), the army generals retained the exceptional right to sell or donate land, the only condition being whether or not the "(...) land use or development no longer meets the needs" of the corporation, as defined in the 1970 law. Furthermore, as directors of a housing-finance agency, they can also operate the conversion of "military areas" into residential projects, thus participating at all stages of the process, from the conception and sale of the enterprise, to its consumption by the public.

Another outcome of the intense presence of Army commanders concerns the public that accesses the financing of these properties. Although POUPEX operates as an open market for clients interested in real estate financing lines and other financial products, new properties are preferably offered to the "military family", i.e., members of the corporation and their children and spouses. This public can acquire high standard properties with a low cost, as described by the institution itself on its virtual page:

For the past 40 years, the FHE-POUPEX has promoted the construction of housing projects aimed primarily at the Military Family in various regions of the country, according to the housing demand identified in purchase intention surveys among the Armed Forces. These are high-quality properties, sold at below market values with excellent mortgage financing conditions. [7]

However, the scoring criteria and the lottery that defines those eligible to take part in these projects hinders the participation of low-ranking military personnel. Due to their lower wages, they are typically rejected in the dispute for comfortable three or four-bedroom apartments¹.

A list of new POUPEX developments explicitly reveals this housing standard^[8]. According to information from the developer itself, 25 homes are being planned by 2026. From these future developments, only 9 feature apartment options with up to 2 bedrooms, with the majority being 3 to 4-bedroom housing options.

These development projects are spread out over nine states, while 22 out of 25 are concentrated in seven capitals and the Federal District, revealing the urban profile of POUPEX's real estate projects. We therefore find a direct relationship between military mobility and the commodification of public lands in major Brazilian metropolises.

Real estate production undertaken by military authorities reflects a close relationship between withdrawal and settlement movements across space, mediated by abandonment and devaluation practices typically found in land incorporation strategies. The land use and reuse practices by these managers do not transpire under different or dissociated conditions, but preserve "fluid interdependencies" that merit further investigation (Sheller & Urry, 2006).

Before this real estate development practice is explored further, it is important to outline the history of the first residential condominium inaugurated by POUPEX. Built in Rio de Janeiro on a former military industrial property, the Realengo Cartridge Factory, the pioneer Parque Real was inaugurated in 1985, only three years after the federal law defined the property developer as the beneficiary of the institution's unserviceable assets. A precursor within these investment practices, Parque Real consists of six residential blocks with a total of 432 apartments (Image 1). That same year, another development was inaugurated in the city of Porto Alegre, and in the following year another five projects were launched in four states: Pará, Amazonas, Minas Gerais, and the Federal District. From the first inaugurated project until 2016, POUPEX has launched projects in 21 of the 26 states (in addition to the Federal District)^[9], revealing the capillarity of such activities throughout the country.

¹ An application notice for interested parties in a condominium launched by POUPEX in October 2020 in Porto Alegre, in the south of the country, defines the target audience as Armed Forces personnel in "1) active career; 2) paid reserve; and 3) retirees" who will rank and score according to the amount invested in POUPEX savings account as well as the purchase of other banking services, thus suggesting an economic criterion for selecting the "military family". The condominium offers apartments from R\$ 816 thousand with 3 bedrooms and 104 square meters. To access the notice: <https://www.poupex.com.br/geopi/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Edital-Lan%C3%A7amento-Portal-de-Petr%C3%B3polis-definitivo-1.pdf>. Accessed on 09/01/2021.





Figure 1 Parque Real Condominium (Rio de Janeiro), first POUPEX project inaugurated in 1985 ^[10]

At the time, the use of public land for the construction of a private condominium led to an uproar among local neighbors. They would rather see the land of the old factory, deactivated since 1978, give way to “quality” public schools. The residents thus organized a movement, whose main target was the dispute over the fate of deactivated military areas in the neighborhood, marked by the presence of these institutions (Viana 2010).

Despite some initial hurdles when trying to establish a direct negotiation with the commanders responsible for administering these areas, the local movement persisted over time and the mobilization effort yielded results. Two other land lots of the Cartridge Factory remained idle until they were finally occupied in 2004 by a school building belonging to Colégio Pedro II and, in 2009, by a college campus of the Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro (IFRJ).

However, in recent years, a new POUPEX residential project envisaged the occupation of the largest and most important land lot of the former Cartridge Factory, located in a central and privileged region of the neighborhood. Covering over 142,000 square meters, this former military area was transferred to the FHE at the end of 2014 for the amount of R\$5 million for the construction of ten residential buildings, comprising 1,200 or 1,300 apartments in total. Appropriating part of the accusations raised by the local residents’ movement, POUPEX announced that the project would include a daycare center and a public park (Davies 2020). Although listed among future releases on the company's website, the new residential condominium is awaiting a court decision regarding a dispute between local residents and POUPEX.

As a compensation measure for the military departure from major Brazilian cities, residential buildings have been built aimed at account holders for financed purchases through financial institutions. In recent decades, new uses and applications for former military areas have been assigned in cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Brasília, as well as in Fortaleza and in the

metropolitan region of São Paulo. In general, an analysis of the mobilities of military organizations from their localized effects reveals the exclusive prerogative granted to military commanders for administering and negotiating public lands. Insofar as these activities occur away from institutional controls, they generate conflicts with residents and other organizations, as seen in the real estate projects in the Realengo neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro.

The disputes and decisions regarding these uses reveal the ambivalences and institutional frameworks that find value and legitimacy through Brazil's institutional politics. In order to understand the present policies underway, future research must address the issue by way of more complex readings, more attuned to institutional politics and the means through which they are produced. For the issues hereby discussed, land and real estate deals among Army generals are underpinned by a set of laws that grant privileges to a social group that once ruled the country, and which continues to govern today through the Bolsonaro administration, initiated in 2019.

As scholars attempt to tackle these ambivalences in future investigations, one must consider reality while confronting the conceptual and analytical challenges posed by such research. Mobilities convert barracks into condominiums within major metropolises, amalgamating agents, processes, legal records and times that are not dissociated, but which juxtapose themselves to provide meaning to these urban experiences.

Final considerations

More than four decades after Brazil's redemocratization process, the function and purpose of military areas have been reconfigured as Armed Forces organizations have withdrawn from major Brazilian cities. In an attempt to intensify their presence in the nation's countryside and border regions, the Army has transferred battalions and divisions, thereby alienating land-holding rights in urban settings.

In recent times in Brazil, the activities of these authorities have gained prominence on the research agenda, especially in view of the marked presence of military leaderships appointed to high offices in the Federal Government. While this trend is not new within Brazilian democracy, the phenomenon has been further accentuated during Jair Bolsonaro's administration, radicalizing an ongoing process: in a survey performed by the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU), in 2020, 6,157 military personnel (active and reserved) held commissioned offices in state-company councils and in top-ranking management positions, more than double the amount registered in 2018, when 2,765 soldiers held such offices in the final year of Michel Temer's administration^[1].

Despite the redemocratization process and new Constitution having instituted new contours in the country's political and legal framework, decisions by military commanders continue to define



the modes of circulation, occupation, and use of certain urban spaces. This article sought to understand the conditions through which judicial regimes and legal prerogatives coexist for different government agents, emphasizing the incongruities that enable and legitimate military commanders to manage the urban land market under their administration.

In addition to being an imperative contemporary political issue, analyzing such actions entails a myriad of theoretical challenges: on the one hand, there is a need to overturn restrictions on studies addressing military presence in the everyday life of Latin America, which is undertaken by liberal thought frameworks, the political left, and the conceptual schemes of political science (Carvalho 2005); on the other hand, we must move beyond contemporary readings that dissociate politics and space, and consequently politics and the city, whether due to rigid theoretical frameworks or the complete rejection of these schemes (Marques 2017). Furthermore, there exists a need to disrespect – in the best sense of the term – the static paradigm of urban studies. We must recover the sense of the city as movement and mobility (Freire-Medeiros; Telles; Allis 2018): the mobility of troops between the countryside, border regions, and major cities, between “military areas” and land incorporation strategies, between senses of public and private operating amidst these transactions, between civilian and military spheres, between bureaucracy and politics, and between subordination and autonomy.

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[1] Local government elections are held every four years in Brazil, which elect mayors (and assigned vice-mayors) and representatives for municipal legislative chambers, the city councilors. The first election after the democratic reopening took place still under a dictatorial regime, for the federal level, in 1982.

[2] During the new coronavirus pandemic, for example, a media report from September 2020 revealed that City commissioned employees would take shifts in front of city hospitals in an attempt to curb media reports, demonstrations, and other complaints regarding the offered health treatment. The activity was organized via WhatsApp groups, which included the mayor himself, Marcelo Crivella, and the municipal health secretary; one of such groups, named "Crivella Guardians", resonated across news coverages addressing this episode. In the same month the scandal was reported, Crivella faced another House voting round for his impeachment, and once again managed to stay in office. Cf. G1.



Guardiões do Crivella: entenda as denúncias sobre esquema para impedir reportagens sobre a saúde no Rio (09/01/2020). Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/09/01/guardioes-do-crivella-entenda-as-denuncias-sobre-esquema-para-impedir-reportagens-sobre-a-saude-no-rio.ghtml>. Accessed on: 10/01/2020.

^[3] According to the newspaper Gazeta do Povo, Brazil has over 5,000 generals in the reserve forces, i.e., retired army personnel who still hold ties with the corporation. GAZETA DO POVO. *Exército tem 5 mil generais de pijama que custam 1,7 bilhão por ano* (07/20/2018). Available at: <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/vozes/lucio-vaz/exercito-tem-5-mil-generais-de-pijama-que-custam-r-17-bilhao-por-ano/>. Accessed on: 08/07/2020

^[4] In 2007, the Federal Prosecutor's Office filed a lawsuit determining that the construction companies responsible for the real estate project should include in their sales ads that the land alienation process was still under judicial review, since the military command failed to follow proper legal formalities MPF. MPF/RJ: *Terreno de empreendimento imobiliário está sob litígio judicial* (06/08/2008). Available at: <https://mpf.jusbrasil.com.br/noticias/629002/mpf-rj-terreno-de-empreendimento-imobiliario-esta-sob-litigio-judicial>. Accessed on: 01/08/2020.

^[5] FOLHA DE SÃO PAULO. *"Venda de terras rende R\$ 114,4 mil a militares"* (31/07/2011). Available at: www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/poder/po3107201104.htm. Accessed on: October 1, 2015.

^[6] FHE. *Quem somos* (07/09/2020). Available at: <https://www.fhe.org.br/a-fhe/quem-somos/>. Accessed on: August 1, 2020.

^[7] POUPEX. *Imóveis novos*. <https://www.poupex.com.br/produtos/imoveis-a-venda/imoveis-novos/>. Accessed on: 03/01/2021.

^[8] The forecast of real estate development inaugurations defines the location, number of housing units, and type of apartments based on the number of bedrooms. Cf. POUPEX. *Previsão de Empreendimentos* (last updated in 13/01/2021). Available at: https://www.poupex.com.br/geopi/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Empreendimentos_FHE_POUPEX_2021.pdf. Accessed on: 01/03/2021.

^[9] According to a source published by POUPEX (Cf. Matos, 2016), the only states in which POUPEX has not yet launched real estate projects were Sergipe, Alagoas, Piauí, Amapá, and Acre.

^[10] Image taken from Matos, 2016, p. 103.

^[11] UOL Notícias. *Número de militares em cargos civis mais que dobra em governo Bolsonaro* (07/17/2020). Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/constanca-rezende/2020/07/17/numero-de-militares-em-cargos-civis-mais-que-dobra-em-governo-bolsonaro.htm?cmpid=copiaecola>. Accessed on: July 20, 2020.

