Bunkers for the Psyche: How Gated Communities Have Allowed the Privatisation of Apartheid in Democratic South Africa

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Abstract

This paper has sought to locate 'gated communities' within a family of spatial strategies used by white South Africans in order to manage a core contradiction between the identities to which they aspire, and the place in which they live. The identities to which white South Africans have aspired were 'European', 'civilised' and 'modern' in the past and 'Western' and 'First World' in today's language. Yet they described the region in which they settled as 'uncivilised', 'backwards' and 'third world'. In order to create a space for their identity to flourish, systems of segregation were intended, in part, to harmonise senses of self and senses of place. The impulse to manage living environments so that they accorded with identity did not evaporate with the transition to democracy in 1994, even though this was no longer a task of the state. The fear of mixing that once drove the colonial and apartheid state projects, as with many modernist projects around the world, is now a privatised fear. Initially it was hoped that the property market would ensure that suburbs would retain their character sufficiently, and that upwardly mobile black individuals could be assimilated into the established norms. While this has indeed played out in some places, the property market was bypassed in other places by the arrival of informal settlements. More active mechanisms were therefore required by those keen to avoid encounters with others. One spatial strategy has been emigration, where individuals move to parts of the world that they consider being more unambiguously 'First World'. Another has been dubbed 'semigration' which is an attempt to have the best of both worlds. Through mechanisms such as gated communities, one is able to opt out of urban life, and with it uncontrolled mixing and what is seen as the increasingly 'African' and 'Third World' character of the city. England could be brought to South Africa and defended against the increasingly African urban environment. In the absence of the state's attempts to manage social diversity, smaller groups of 'like minded' individuals would have to band together to restore a level of homogeneity, and thus predictability and security, in their lives. This is entirely consistent with the hostility to diversity that characterised suburbs elsewhere as they developed since the Second World War. Gated communities are, thus, simply suburbs that no longer trust the state to be performing a series of functions on their behalf to ensure their survival. In post-apartheid South Africa, as in the West, the prospect of racial and class mixing going unmanaged by the state is leading many to resolve the problem with their private resources.

About the author

Richard Ballard is a research fellow at the Centre for Civil Society, School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. His research interests include urban desegregation, urban governance and social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. He has recently published the following articles on white responses to desegregation: "When in Rome: Claiming the Right to Define the Neighbourhood Character in Post-apartheid South Africa", *Transformation*, Vol 57 (2005); "The Ant and the Grasshopper: Rationalising Exclusion and Inequality in the Post apartheid City", *Theoria*, No 105, December 2004; "Dislocating Modernity: Identity, Space and Representations of Street Trade in Durban, South Africa", *Geoforum* Vol 35, No 1 (with Jeffrey Popke, 2004); and "Middle Class Neighbourhoods or "African Kraals"? The Impact of Informal Settlements and Vagrants on Post-apartheid White Identity", *Urban Forum*, Vol 15, No 1 (2004).

Richard can be contacted at: Ballardr@ukzn.ac.za

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> **Bunker:** … **1** a reinforced underground shelter for use in wartime. **2** a hollow filled with sand, used as an obstacle on a golf course. (South African Concise Oxford Dictionary 2002)

INTRODUCTION

In Hillcrest, a suburb to the west of Durban, there is a growing cluster of gated communities. The pioneer was *Camelot* which has a caricatured castle wall surrounding the perimeter complete with authentic looking turrets and somewhat less authentic looking electric fencing. There is little inside to indicate that the community is actually located in Africa. The occupants are primarily of European descent. Rather than draw from the rich stock of indigenous African trees, conifers are used to recreate a more temperate landscape. The architectural style is mock-Tudor, except for the six full scale recreated castles scattered throughout which are occupied as homes. White flight from more centrally located, and increasingly multiracial, suburbs to peripheral areas is resulting in the current growth of this urban form. The sugar cane fields adjacent to *Camelot* are steadily being converted into more gated communities. The billboard for *Le Domain* features a grinning Ian McIntosh, the former coach of the South African rugby team, pictured sitting astride a motorbike. At the time of writing *Cotswold Downs* directly over the road consists of nothing more than a billboard and behind it lies the as yet un-grassed landscaping for a golf course. Plastic lining has been set into the ground ready for sand. They seem to have started with the bunker and are working outwards from there.

Just a few kilometres north there is a steep pass down to the township of Inanda which has disbursed peri-urban settlements in its outer areas and denser township settlements towards the east. It links to the vast complex of townships including KwaMashu and Phoenix – the destination of many black and Indian people relocated from the 1960s under apartheid. In the past, the cliffs along the edge of Hillcrest and Kloof served to symbolically and physically divide these settlements from the suburbs reserved for white residence. Today, with the state no longer in the business of regulating the movement of people by allocating them passes and allowing access only to authorised people, this has become the job of developers and is taking place at a much smaller scale. Cliffs, rivers,

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open spaces and other 'urban buffers' have morphed into castle walls and other forms of equally impenetrable perimeter fencing. The spirit of Stallard's famous injunction in 1922 to remove all surplus black people *but* retain the labour of some lives on in gated communities. Private security firms ensure that if these domestic workers have not 'swiped out' by their allotted time, they will be searched for (Durington 2005).

The following discussion locates the phenomenon of gated communities within a series of related strategies used by white[2] South Africans to attempt to create comfort zones.[3] In the past, comfort zones were created through formal segregation. In order to create living environments which would facilitate their modern, European, sense of themselves minority governments removed those people, values, behaviours, languages which were seen to contradict this identity. However, from the 1970s formal segregation became increasingly untenable. Minority governments began to promote the idea of assimilation in which a 'black' middle class would be allowed into the comfort zones of white people in exchange for the sanctity of private property and a property market that would continue to filter out more 'undesirable' people. However, as squatters and street traders have demonstrated, it is possible to usurp land in the city with little regard for the property market. The implication for some is that the living environment no longer functions to affirm a Western, 'modern', sense of self and is no longer a source of security and safety. The extreme response to this dislocation is relocation to another country which accords better with the identity to which individuals aspire.

Short of emigration, however, there are local responses which reflect a similar desire to shift the boundaries of one's comfort zone. Borrowing a word used in the media, 'semigration', or partial emigration without leaving the borders of South Africa, is a useful notion to encapsulate the alternative path to full emigration. If the market fails to keep away undesirable people, then certain steps can be taken to avoid them. Semigration can be used to understand withdrawal from democratic South Africa, to achieve some of the effects of emigration without actually leaving the borders of the country. Spatial practices such as gated communities and enclosed neighbourhoods are examples of this.

Using interview and newspaper material, this discussion traces the evolution of white strategies to find comfort zones and suggests that assimilation, emigration and semigration are derivatives of the same racism that produced segregationist apartheid. The paper argues that the demise of apartheid, although almost universally welcomed amongst white people, has produced a crisis for their sense of security as a result of apartheid-informed understandings of the sources of insecurity. The convergence of exclusive urban formations created by developers or local neighbourhoods in South Africa, and similar structures elsewhere in the world, suggests to us that the end of apartheid was a particularly vivid example of global trends towards high levels of inequality which the state no longer seeks to manage on behalf of the affluent. The discussion draws from

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[2] The term 'white' in South Africa is a commonly accepted way of referring to the descendants of European settlers. The enduring currency of apartheid's racial categories is a source of much concern in the literature (e.g. Maré 2001). The intention of using the term in this discussion is not to reinforce any notion that it reflects an actual racial structure in society, or that there is a sense of essential characteristics of this group, but rather to engage with the construction of the category.

[3] Of course, gated communities are occupied by groups other than white people. This paper specifically attempts to contextualise the motivations of white residents of gated communities and does not seek to explain those of other groups. There may be considerable convergence between the values middle classes of various groups, but further research would be required to confirm this.

Bauman (1991, 1992, 1993, 2001, Bauman and Vecchi 2004) to argue that gated communities are a response by the well resourced to the insecurity associated with the end of comprehensive state programmes to create order. Bauman describes the mood of this time in western history (and by extension many postcolonial contexts) in the following way:

> The most widely and keenly coveted goal is the digging of deep, possibly impassable trenches between the 'inside' of a territorial or categorical locality and the 'outside'. Outside: tempests, hurricanes, frosty gales, ambushes along the road and dangers all around. Inside: cosiness, warmth, *chez soi*, security, safety… let's carve out, fence off and fortify a plot distinctively ours and no one else's, a plot inside which we can feel ourselves and to be the only contested masters. The state can no longer claim enough power to protect its territory and its residents. So the task that has been abandoned and dropped by the state lies on the ground, waiting for someone to pick it up. (Bauman & Vecchi 2004:59)

This sentiment is demonstrated in the following extract of a South African community newspaper article reporting on the comments of the chairperson of the chairperson of Glenwood and Umbilo Ratepayers' Association in Durban, Brendan Willmer:

> Let the message go out to all he low-life scum who infest our suburbs – we've had enough and we're fighting back! … 'If the state will not protect us, if the police cannot clean-up our streets, then we must do it ourselves' said [Mr Willmer] … 'A tidal-wave of crime has engulfed us and it's up to us to fight back' … Mr Willmer said as a result of crime-infestation, property values were dropping, insurance premiums had rocketed and law-abiding citizens were living behind bars. (Calderwood 1997)

In the absence of state projects designed to ensure order and progress on behalf of the middle classes, they take this task on themselves in a private capacity. Gated communities are overwhelmingly constructed as a response to insecurity. This is expressed first and foremost as a fear of crime. Yet it is not the only form that insecurity takes. Insecurity also stems from the anxieties generated by broader social change that South Africa (along with many other societies) has undergone. Crime may well be identified as the source of insecurity, but it also is the receptacle of a host of other sources of unease that are not as easy to name. Prior to the transition, expectation by many white people feared that democracy would result in nothing short of apocalypse. After the transition, spiralling crime and the collapsing value of the Rand, wholesale institutional restructuring and job losses did little to reassure. Expectation of apocalypse was then gradually suspended for many by the optimism of Nelson Mandela's leadership, but not yet dispatched in the wake of events in Zimbabwe and the less comforting tone of the Mbeki presidency. Gated communities are one response to this insecurity. Gated communities are, then, not a search for community in and of itself, but rather an investment in a certain kind of constructed community as a defence against a chaotic and unpredictable postcolonial context.

TRADITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CREATING COMFORT ZONES

Our sense of space and sense of self are mutually constitutive. As much as we try to shape our worlds to fit in with our identities, our environments also shape us, challenge us and constrain us. We attempt to find comfort zones within which it is possible for us to 'be ourselves'. These are places that do not challenge our self conceptions. Home in its ideal form is the best example. It is a place where we feel safe and can let our guards down. Some people say that their homes are an extension of themselves. Home is a manifestation of our values, visually and in the things done and words spoken in it. The walls of our home are our ultimate barrier against the ravages of the outside world. If our home feels unsafe it is very difficult to feel existentially secure. Or to reverse the equation, existential insecurity can be most powerfully conveyed through the perception of threats to the home. Those with resources attempt to do their best to ensure that home is a safe place and that it matches their sense of themselves. If this is a shared project, home transcends the literal building and becomes metaphorically extended to the neighbourhood, city, even country or continent. To freely say that South Africa is my home requires me to be sufficiently comfortable with the values, practices and words spoken within its boundaries. It must be a source of safety and security both physically and metaphorically.

Apartheid can be understood as a process which was the production of a home away from home on behalf of a settler community. Apartheid was a process through which a powerful white minority identified and managed its 'others'. Melissa Steyn (2001) and Aletta Norval (1990) amongst others have argued that white identity construction was facilitated through the definition of racially inferior others. Following the logic frequently deployed in cultural studies, I understand othering as a key conceptual process in which inferior qualities were projected onto, and seen as, the property of racialised others. Such others were seen as lazy, licentious, criminal, dirty, and so on. The effect of such classifications was to produce a positive self image for Europe/ the West/ 'European' people as hard working, moral, clean: broadly, as civilised. The identity of 'European' people became cast as white supremacism, where a secure self image came from one's 'whiteness' or at least Europeanness to which the virtues of civilisation were automatically attached. The dominant strategy for managing this social hierarchy was ensuring that others were far away (Sibley 1995:50). The problem for European people living in colonies is that if they choose for themselves a civilised and western identity, it is at odds with the identity they have given the colonised region. 'Uncivilised' others are not voyeuristically experienced as by temporary western tourists, but are an ever-present threat, or an "intimate enemy" (Werbner 1996:20) that has to be controlled and managed. By logical extension it was feared that contact with this unreformed otherness posed a terminal threat to the civilisation of Europeans attempting to live outside Europe. By relocating from the region that they considered the origin of their superiority to a region they believed to be the antithesis of this superiority, settlers in colonies had to find new strategies for managing their relations with this intimate other. Colonialists had to neutralise the effects of 'uncivilised' and 'barbaric' people that populated the land in order to secure the viability of their own identities there.

In South Africa, there were two dominant responses. Liberals hoped that the problematic otherness of those considered racially inferior could be overcome through education. Possessed by the 'civilising mission', these settlers sought to assimilate others into their (putatively superior) society. In 1902, Sir Gordon Sprig, the Cape Prime Minister, argued

that there was no longer any 'reason for refusing to allow the natives to associate with the white population'. In doing so, natives would emerge from barbarism "so that they might no longer be a source of danger" (Swanson 1977:399). However, by the start of the 20th century, a growing black middle class produced precisely by this civilising mission prompted growing unease amongst more conservative quarters, particularly since the stakes had become much higher with the advent of mining. Rather than create civilised places by civilising the uncivilised, all problematic people would ideally be excluded or managed. In trying to reinforce white identities as 'modern' and 'Western', identities which depend on the rejection of 'traditionalism' and 'Africanness', it was imperative to try and create living environments which were also modern and Western with firm defensible boundaries. Cities were posited as the centres of civilisation and progress, a claim that was made possible not only by virtue of the presence of the supposedly civilised (white) people that lived there, but also by the exclusion of 'uncivilised' people. From 1913, the physical relocation of 'surplus' 'bantu' represented a new drive to create Europe in Africa by removing all (unnecessary) non-Europeans.

The segregationist drive culminated in the ideology of apartheid, which sought to achieve what Bauman, speaking not about apartheid but modernity more generally, describes as the close correlation of social space and physical space typical in many "modern" Western countries (Bauman 1993:150). When it was useful to allow non-Europeans into cities, this was done under strictly controlled conditions in which they were regulated, tracked and made to leave once they became superfluous. Parts of the city were zoned as racially-specific areas. Inter-racial contact was, of course, frequent but under these conditions, people of other races were denied "normative influence" (Bauman 1991:66) over white spaces, thereby securing these spaces as civilised, modern and Western. Spaces zoned for white use were the ultimate comfort zones. In Bauman's words, they "stood out from the rest of social space for the absence of strangers, and hence the satisfying, secure fullness of normative regulation" (Bauman 1993:151). It was through exclusion that 'Europeans' felt they could contend that they lived in civilised, modern, first world cities.

The effect of apartheid, in the words of H. F. Verwoerd, had been to create "a piece of Europe on the tip of the African Continent" (quoted in Magubane 1996:xvii). It was within this piece of Europe that 'European' people could feel secure in their self-conceptions as modern, Western, and civilised. The diabolical project of creating Europe in Africa appeared possible through pass laws, the Group Areas Act, and segregated amenities. Through such mechanisms people attempt to control those things that threaten their identity. What the colonial and apartheid projects in South Africa had created were identity-affirming spaces for European settlers within which Europeans could feel *at home*. The boundaries around one's sense of oneself are matched and managed through spatial boundaries. Social distance and spatial distance are thus closely coordinated.

The homely comfort was in sharp contrast to a potentially overwhelming series of threats. White minority governments had specialised in creating a sense of fear and their very basis of legitimacy was the supposed threat of catastrophic disaster in the form of 'oorstrooming' (being overwhelmed), 'swart gevaar' (black peril) from within, and 'rooi gevaar' (red/communist peril) and the 'total onslaught' from beyond the borders. Through the policies of apartheid, white people's very sense of security and social order was underpinned by racial segregation and black disenfranchisement. Every threat by black

people to break out of their allocated positions on the landscape, in society and in politics was read as potentially disastrous. The 1976 Soweto Uprising by school children was a particularly dark moment which seemed, for many, 'the end of the world'. Rian Malan describes his experiences on that day:

> Towards sunset, I went out into the streets of Jo'burg, and it was as though the world had ended. There were no people, no cars, no city sounds. The black work force had rushed home to Soweto as news of the trouble spread, and whites were cowering behind locked doors, waiting. We all knew this was coming, you see; we knew it in our bones. A day would come when the blacks would rise up and surge through the city, and we'd all wind up on the roofs of our burning American-dream split-levels, begging the baying horde for mercy. (Malan 1990:78)

Fears of a politically-motivated apocalypse hark back to colonial fears of safety of Europeans in colonial contexts (e.g. Taussig 1986:100). An extract for J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* reminds us that such moral panics are a perennial colonial fear:

> In private I observed that once in every generation, without fail, there is an episode of hysteria about the barbarians. There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters. These dreams are the consequence of too much ease. (Coetzee 1980:8)

Bauman reminds us that for the 'lazy and passion-ridden masses' civilization meant, first and foremost, a curbing of the morbid predilections which they were assumed to harbour and which, if unloosed, would explode orderly cohabitation. "… To put it bluntly: the emancipation of some called for the suppression of others" (Bauman 2001:26). Apartheid posited itself as a solution to entropy, the lifeline of Europeans living in Africa.

ADAPT OR DIE: THE RETURN TO ASSIMILATION

From the 1970s, of course, apartheid's crisis of legitimacy began to escalate. This prompted the return to an old idea that had been rejected for much of the 20th century: namely that people of other 'races' were capable of integrating into modern urban society. In its final two decades, the white minority government was forced to abandon orthodox Verwoerdian thinking and its last roll of the dice was to turn to the market as a possible sustainable means of keeping problematic others out (Posel 1987:419). The white hegemony began to allow for the possibility that some non-white people, with sufficient education, 'development' and acculturation into Western ways of life, had the potential to become 'modern' and 'civilised' and could therefore be assimilated into the Western, first world, 'developed' section of the population.

With democratisation in the 1990s (and arguably in the 'reforms' of the 1980s), South Africa's moral position on racism has shifted to be broadly in line with that of the West which itself underwent a transition several decades earlier. The holocaust, Jim Crow racism (i.e. segregation laws in the US), colonialism and apartheid were all underpinned by the belief that some groups were justified in the extermination, subjugation, segregation and exploitation of others simply on the grounds of their 'race'. It is now rare to find such

rationalisations in the mainstream. The enormity of this shift in the moral thinking of previously racist powers should not be taken for granted. However, various analyses have considered the extent to which this shift falls short of a truly comprehensive abandonment of all the effects of these racist pasts (e.g. Barkan 1992, Frankenberg 1993, van Dijk 1993). While racism is no longer as explicit as it once was, defensive identity-making processes have continued.

What has happened through the moral shift of the latter half of the 20th century is that this mode of identity-construction-through-othering has become deracialised. Since a sense of 'racialised' superiority is no longer acceptable – both publicly and in the minds of most white people themselves – it is no longer the explicit origin of white people's positive self image. White people now seldom articulate their identity in terms of their 'whiteness' but rather in terms of their 'ordinariness' as citizens of the modern Western developed world. This is not peculiar to South Africa and the fact that white identities are unmarked and invisible while other identities are marked, is a widespread feature of social differentiation globally (Bonnett 2000:140, Frankenburg 1993:17, McGuinness 2000:227, Sibley 1995:23). For Norval (1990:146), the "conception of white identity had become less important than the notion of a system, a way of life, which linked SA to the "free West"". The fact that most people they classify as part of this developed community in South Africa are white is seen as a matter of overlap, rather than their being an acknowledged causal link. Markers such as 'developed', 'modern', 'Western', 'first world' euphemistically replace the now less acceptable 'civilised', and have become explicitly detached from race. Being first world is not a necessary property of 'whiteness' in South Africa. Thus, while the 'racial' framework under which white people historically understood themselves and social difference is now seldom expressed, much of the content of the way white people understood themselves and others continues.

The acceptance of other 'races' into 'former white areas' was conditional upon the conformance of these assimilated groups to the culture, norms and standards laid down by the 'host' white group. In this way segregationist ideology adapted away from orthodox apartheid towards a discourse not as easily identifiable as racist. Yet the racist implications should not be underestimated. While non-'whites' would be accepted, they would only be admitted if they made themselves acceptable as defined by white people (Schutte 1995:334). The qualified acceptance of people from 'other races' abounds in post-apartheid white discourse. To illustrate with interview material, a New National Party local councillor in Durban put this bluntly when he said he refused to live next to a coolie or a kaffir, but would quite willingly live next door to cultured person of any race (Interview August 2003). Other respondents expressed this logic more politely:

> Lindsay: You've got to accept [integration]; the thing is that economically I think you will get a better class, you won't just get the one who shouts and you know, when they talk to each other (Interview August 1997).

> Jane: … basically you're paying quite a sum of money to live in various exclusive areas and you find that those people generally have high powered jobs or jobs where they're working hard and they actually have moved away from certain traditions (Interview September 1997).

While the acceptance of 'other races' was billed as a moral shift away from the evils of

apartheid, the change from segregation to assimilation is not necessarily a weakening of the white social agenda but a shrewd move that ensures the sustainability of white social control within the suburbs. The strategic potential of assimilation is that it allows for "inclusionary control" of what is classified as deviant behaviour in a way that appears progressive relative to the blunt exclusionism of the past (Sibley 1995:85). In other words, strangers are challenged to 'conform or be damned' in an attempt to prevent the introduction of 'alienness' into the space which the social engineers seek to control (Bauman 1991:162).

A STRANGER IN MY FATHERLAND, A PRISONER IN MY HOME

While many placed their salvation in market-regulated assimilation, this strategy was limited since some people classified as undesirable do not always obey the market. Through 'land-invasions' or other kinds of occupation, informal settlements came to be established on land near to elite living spaces despite market forces which would otherwise exclude them. Similarly, informal street trade emerged in cities in the 1990s as and where it pleased without the permission of any authority. The much-cherished market filter – whereby only 'desirable' people are able to move near to the suburbs or take up occupation in cities because of the high cost of renting or buying property in these areas – is being contemptuously flouted (Emmett 1992:78). Such people are not upwardly mobile and their bypassing of the market system means that there can be little confidence that encounters will be same-status. Otherness, therefore, has let itself into the suburbs via the back door.

Events are therefore overtaking those who would control them and this problem is exacerbated by the slow pace or impossibility of assimilating the newcomers. If liberal optimism derives from the hope that the upward mobility of others is indeed possible, liberal pessimism arises from belief that apartheid prevented sufficient opportunity for others to 'learn from whites'. One resident commented on street traders in the following way:

> It didn't upset me in the sense that seeing [street traders] there is not the problem, it's a question of cleanliness. Why don't they keep the place tidy and neat and clean? And then I don't blame them entirely because it's a question of have we educated them into that area? Have we taught them, have we taken the trouble to give our time to educate them to say why we want the place clean? It's one thing telling a person 'clean that' and sit on him with your foot in his neck demanding that he clean it. It's better to get him to want to keep it clean himself. I feel we've lagged in not educating. That's just one area, I mean there are many areas where I feel there's a lagging in this, ... [education is also] cultural and to learn to do things. If we want them to be and behave the way we would like to see [them behave] we must train them, teach them why. They must want to learn to be like we feel they should be (Interview September 1997).

Urban change is happening too quickly, therefore, for those who feel they know best to 'educate' those not endowed with this knowledge. The viability of modern urban living is therefore under threat since, to push this logic to its most basic, people who do not know how to live in cities are making a mess of it. It is feared that the massive influx of poorer black people into cities is simply too much to deal with.

If the wrong kinds of people are flouting the market system, and if there seems to be little prospect of 'educating them' in order to diminish the pernicious effects of their otherness, local living environments no longer function as comfort zones. Once firm boundaries have now broken down and are being transgressed (Cresswell 1994, 1997, Douglas 1984, Sibley 1988, 1995, and Stallybrass & White 1986). Otherness is brought into the lifeworld in a way that upsets the norms of that space. In Zygmunt Bauman's words, these others are 'strangers':

> The stranger undermines the spatial ordering of the world – the sought-after co-ordination between moral and topographical closeness, the staying together of friends and the remoteness of enemies. The stranger disturbs the resonance between physical and psychical distance: he is *physically close* while remaining *spiritually remote*. He brings into the inner circle of proximity the kind of difference and otherness that are anticipated and tolerated only at a distance – where they can be either dismissed as irrelevant or repelled as hostile. (Bauman 1991:60)

As Bauman went on to elaborate in later work, the most frustrating thing about strangers is that they are not a temporary phenomenon. Instead they "stay and *refuse to go away* (though one keeps hoping that they will, in the end) – while, stubbornly, escaping the net of local rules and thus remaining strangers" (Bauman 1993:151).

I would argue that much of the uncertainty experienced by white people in the 1980s and 1990s stemmed from a fear of the unregulated access by people previously excluded to 'their' cities. The very basis of white identity as 'civilised' and 'modern' – as created through spatial segregation – was, for some, under threat by the presence of others. Robert Wilton explores this through Sigmund Freud's notion of the 'unheimlich':

> Spatial proximity weakens the social distance between self and other and challenges the integrity of individual identity. What is normally projected beyond the ego can no longer be completely distinguished from the self. Interestingly, if we read the unheimlich as unhomely, what produces anxiety is an encounter in a place we think of as our own with people who don't appear to belong. (Wilton 1998:178).

Unlike the identity-affirming role previously played by spaces such as city centres, they now have the opposite effect: they are seen to undermine modern and western identities. For some, the arrival of street traders in the CBD altered that space from a more or less European city to a 'third world' or 'African' market place. Many of those who once tramped its streets as its proud citizens now became uncomfortable there and avoided it. Squatters in particular threatened the stability of the suburb. They were capable of transmitting Africa right into the heart of what were previously called European areas, bringing litter, unprocessed sewerage, smoke, loud taxis, violence and crime. Some suburbanites suggested they felt they were now living in a *kraal* (African homestead) or that it made them feel that they were right 'in the middle of Africa' (Dixon et. al 1994; Saff 2001). Even closer to home, new black suburban residents, upon whom much hope in the potential of assimilation was placed, were able to shatter the western suburban sense of place. In the 1990s, a moral panic played itself out in the media around ceremonial animal killing by new residents of suburbs. This panic signified that there was no

guarantee that suburban newcomers could assimilate into suburbs without bringing with them 'uncivilised' and 'barbaric' 'African' practises. Cities which were once the foundation of a European identity for those whites who identified in this way are now for some what Bauman (1993:153) describes as "either normless or marked with too few rules to make orientation possible". Spaces that once generated a reassuring sense of white achievement are now experienced as 'uncanny' or 'heterotopic', terms that describe the 'unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate "objects" which challenge the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered' (Hetherington 1997:42; also see Gelder and Jacobs 1995). Quite simply, home now feels 'unhomely'. One speaker at a Conservative Party rally lamented: "I feel like a stranger in my own fatherland" (Schutte 1995:113).

Such feelings of estrangement were compounded by the spiralling sense of threat to personal safety. I asked a resident of a suburb that had recently experienced the establishment of a squatter settlement nearby whether she felt South African as a citizen. She replied:

> You know I always have done but recently I'm beginning to doubt whether I really want to live here the rest of my life because I'm very unhappy about it, I'm actually nervous. I don't know; you live from day to day, and you wonder if today's going to be your day that someone will stick a gun in my head. I mean especially when I go out in the morning I'm very nervous…You're conscious all the time. When I open the garage I look behind me, get in the car look behind me, lock my door, reverse out fast, jump out the car, look behind me again make sure there's no one there, lock the garage, get back in my car; that's the routine and night time is even worse if I'm going out to get children. So I am nervous, yes, and… I can't actually tell you if we're going to live here the rest of our lives, I can't actually tell you that, it depends if we can sell this house. At the moment we are prisoners. I am actually a prisoner here. We don't have a choice, we cannot sell the house (Interview July 1996).

It is clear that this respondent's immediate surroundings are not a source of security or safety, let alone comfort. Violent crime is not only a literal bodily threat, but also a metaphor for the threat experienced by whites to their way of life in a broader sense. These threats funnelled into the space that was now the last refuge of white senses of security, namely the home. Narratives of the threat to safety in the home were widespread in the media. As land invasions began in Zimbabwe many white Southern Africans felt that their worst fears of post-independence apocalypse were being realised. These invasions were lead by 'war veterans' who were led by Hitler Hunzvi, the symbolic embodiment of this threat:

> Hitler Hunzvi is going to eat your lunch. He is at your dining table, his hand up your daughter's skirt. His men defile the most personal possessions in your home, which they say is theirs, then slaughter your spouse and children. That is nightmare number one right now in the white suburbs of Southern Africa … the Zimbabwe land invasions pierce an eternal archetype: the home as the castle and safe as a house. Fear ripples out from Harare to Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. (Fife 2000)

Fears about crime have been repeatedly deployed as reasonable responses to a very real threat. Yet it is crucial to recognise that the fear of crime is in the service of other agendas. At the very least it suits a lucrative security and gated community industry to increase its revenue (Bauman 2001:142, Durington forthcoming). Furthermore, the fear of crime is part of the repertoire of the way in which people construct their identities and, accordingly, choose their neighbours. It becomes apparent that claims to reasonableness form a cloak around continuing racist expectations of African people's proclivity to rape and pillage and the need to vigilantly and rigorously police and repress that tendency. If this is not a racist fear then it is part of a global fear by the wealthy of those less fortunate than themselves. Robert Reich (1991:303) suggests that, in a tacit recognition of the unsustainability of growing inequality, elites feel increasingly unable to "protect themselves, their families, and their property from the depredations of a larger and ever more desperate population outside". As argued above, apartheid was an attempt to contain precisely this threat. Since its demise in the early 1990s, it is assumed that with unregulated mixing and uncontrolled access by the masses to all parts of the city, one should expect crime and dispense with notions that one's life is in any way secure. Such comments are likely to provoke anger amongst some who will point to the objective reality of crime. This objective reality is not in question here, nor is its tragic effects. What is being highlighted here, however, is crime's second tragedy which is the way in which it becomes the vehicle for claiming legitimacy for fears of others; the same fears that were a core motivation of programmes of segregation in the past.

RE-ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

The assault on the colonial, modern, civilized psyche and a more general sense of threatening change has prompted a variety of responses, all of which are an attempt to restore the coordination between this sense of self and sense of place. As the above interview extract suggests, emigration becomes one logical outcome of this fear. Not only does it allow the escape from personal physical threats, it also allows the restoration of harmony between a sense of self and sense of place. If one identifies with western, modern and first world values, and if one is no longer certain that such values are embodied in the place where one lives, then where better to *be* Western, modern and first world than in countries which people felt could be more unambiguously characterised as such? To be exact, it puts the Other at a more comfortable distance. The United Kingdom, the former colonial metropole, is a favourite destination for emigrants, as are its former 'deep settler colonies' such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

But emigration obviously requires significant resources and particular life circumstances and is not a viable solution for many. Furthermore, regardless of a loss of normative social control in the greater city, South Africa is the place in which some white people want to make their home. Certainly, many 'whites' have a strong commitment to South Africa (Steyn 2001:xxiv). Many have simply stayed right where they are, dug in and fortified. A vast security industry sprang up. Walls around properties rose ever higher (Schutte 1995:180). Burglar bars were attached to windows. Electric fencing and razor wire laced more and more suburban properties. Remote-operated electric gates and garage doors were installed to avoid having to get out of the car before being inside. Hi-tech alarm systems with motion detectors were fitted. At one level an entirely rational and understandable response to the reality of crime, such rationalisations also presented the opportunity for the fearful middle classes to steel themselves against the brewing storm,

the retreat to the bunker. Guns are brought out of gun safes every night and placed next to the bed. Crates of bulk purchase baked beans were stock piled to see out a crisis. There might be more in common between middle class suburbanites and right wing extremists living in the mountain hide-outs bracing themselves for the impending apocalypse than the former would willingly concede.

Yet this personal apartheid was frustrating. Many complained of being prisoners in their own homes. The problem with fortification of the home is that it set up a ratio that was too high, between 'our family' and the rest; and it not only separated one frightened family from enemies, but it also separated it from friends. The safety in numbers principle cannot come into effect. Banding together with others under siege offers comfort and strength. Their source of frustration, then, was that the scale of defence was too small and that what they really wanted was a sense of community (Bauman 2001:114). Middle classes want picket fences, not prickly fences. Razor wire hardly invokes the desired sense of first world. It suggests a conflict zone rather than a comfort zone. It represents failure to sufficiently assimilate others and the uncomfortable reminder that exclusion remains necessary.

Placing the fence around the neighbourhood rather than the home therefore became imperative. Over the last decade and a half, there has been an intensification of reports in newspapers announcing plans of particular communities to enclose their neighbourhoods behind fencing and booms across roads (Kirk 1996, Perkins 1997, Nagoor 1997, McGreal 1999). In some neighbourhoods, organisers attempt to raise money from all residents in order to fence off the perimeter, or a vulnerable section, to erect booms across access roads and to pay for guards to operate them. One area of the Johannesburg metro council reportedly had 360 road closures consisting of booms and gates set up to regulate access (Landman 2000a:2). Proposals were also made to fence off public spaces such as parks in order to prevent access to all except local residents (Paul 1995).

In green-field residential developments, organisers attempt to raise investment in new fortified villages that will allow secure comfortable living behind protected barricades and controlled access. Developers have thus seized on general frustrations with having to defend the home and offered this fortification at the level of neighbourhood. For example George Hazeldon, a developer, was featured in an article on his plan to build a fortified village near Cape Town (McGreal 1999). The planned town, called *Heritage Park*, was to consist of 2,000 homes and intended to be self-sufficient, providing jobs for most residents and meeting all their retail, health, education, religious and recreational needs. Hazeldon describes the planned town in glowingly utopian terms, an attempt to recreate a sense of community free from worry. The landscape of this 'ideal town', as is suggested by its name, is inspired by colonial European architectural styles such as Cape Dutch and Tudor English. In order to defend this utopia, barricaded entrances, electric fencing and dozens of patrolling security guards would be put in place. Plans for the town had to confront the existence of a squatter settlement of 1,000 residents on the proposed site. To solve this 'unsightly' problem, Hazeldon planned to flatten the squatter settlement and construct a township located, naturally, on the outside of the electric fence.

The appeal of Hazeldon's vision for many rests not only on the idealised neighbourhood free from others, but also on the potential avoidance of the city as a whole. Cities are seen

to be unpleasant places, primarily because of the unregulated mixing and unrestricted access they permit (Hook and Vrdoljak 2002). Middle class South Africans join middle classes around the world in seeing the city as "a deteriorated world pervaded by not only pollution and noise but more importantly, confusion and mixture, that is, social heterogeneity" (Caldeira 1996:309). Garden-city landscapes of parks, salmon-filled lakes and views of mountains as proposed in *Heritage Park* contrast with the disturbing CBD environment. By offering 2a self sufficient town' from which some 'lucky' people will seldom have to venture, residents will be able to avoid the city all together (Caldeira 1996:314). Many have therefore abandoned the hope of the achievement of a modern first world city and have found their 'peace of mind' by establishing privatised fortified enclaves, effectively "islands to which one can return every day, in order to escape from the city and its deteriorated environment" (Caldeira 1996:309).

It is in this moment that the discourse of security transcends the simple bodily threat of crime and invokes instead a far greater sense of insecurity that comes with the abandonment of government-led programmes for the definition and production of order. Bauman argues that

> Safety, like all other aspects of human life in a relentlessly individualized and privatized world, must be a 'do-it-yourself' job. 'Defence of the place', seen as the necessary condition of all safety, must be a neighbourhood matter, a 'communal affair'. Where the state has failed, perhaps the community, the *local* community, the physically tangible, 'material' community, a community embodied in a *territory* inhabited by its members and no one else (no one who 'does not belong'), will purvey the 'being safe' feeling which the wider world evidently conspires to destroy? (Bauman 2001:112-113)

Spaces such as gated communities function, metaphorically speaking, as bunkers for the psyche seeking refuge from an exhaustingly threatening outside world. They allow its occupants once again to feel *at home*.

The home that is being recreated sets out to reinvigorate Verwoerd's triumph of having created 'pieces of Europe on the tip of the African continent'. Explicitly 'African' behaviour is forbidden. For example, the thirty page contract signed by new residents of one gated community specifically prohibits 'slaughtering' (Durington forthcoming), the practice which provoked much anxiety in the suburbs as it was marked as barbaric and African. The choices around the production of a visual landscape within gated communities, in which architectural styles and building options are vigorously policed by the managers, serve to achieve powerful symbolic effects of what the 'in here' is meant to stand for. By explicitly referring to England or implicitly referring to the First World these spaces seek to distinguish themselves from the *African* landscape. In its more literal manifestation, the use of architectural styles such as 'Tudor' is an aesthetic which specifically invokes the feeling of "old rural England" (Weiner 1981 cited in Jacobs 1996:115). The Tudor revival can be traced back to nineteenth century English "nostalgia for the life of the gentry" (Jacobs 1996:115). As Jacobs (Ibid) notes, "[w]hen the country house style was transferred to England's colonies and former colonies it became doubly coded, signifying not only the status of gentry which it did in England, but also an abstract concept of Englishness which was seen by Anglophile elites as the most prestigious ethnic

identity". That these architectural styles continue to find currency in late twentieth century housing estates for descendents of colonialists in former colonies is telling indeed. They function, it seems, as a refuge from Africa and serve to convey its occupants daily off the continent and northwards to their spiritual home.

Yet the surrounding environment and people from which they seek to escape is not a threat so much to the modern, first world civilised sense of self so much as its foundation. Indeed the generalised threat is an essential reference point in the construction of the safe in-here. As Bauman suggests, "ramparts and turrets will be places where the seekers of communal warmth, homeliness and tranquillity will have to spend most of their time" (Bauman 2001:15). The identification and exclusion of others becomes the obsessive ritual in the production of the self. Not only do fences act as physical barriers, ostensibly to keep out criminals, but they also act as powerful symbols to pedestrians, and others who may not be resident in the area but may have wanted to pass through (Landman 2000b:6). Social boundaries are thus "architecturally policed" (Davis 1990:223) and, as the journalist David Le Page comments,

> An enclosed neighbourhood essentially appropriates to a small community the public spaces within it – roads, parks and greenbelt. It infringes the right to privacy of those who would move within it, by demanding that they provide personal details in order to enter a space in which they have every right to move unhindered. (Le Page 2000)

The process of othering, described above, which was the basis for traditional strategies for creating comfort zones, maps into space by attempting to remove or regulate people who threaten the Western, modern, first world identity. In a situation where such traditional strategies (i.e. apartheid) are no longer in place, private boundary maintenance becomes a vital tool. Barriers regulating access to neighbourhoods are physical statements regarding the kinds of people who belong and the kinds that do not. They are an attempt to restore a certain sense of 'our' identity through boundary maintenance, prompted by the disturbing presence of others which "threatens to overwhelm the boundaries of individual and collective identity" (Wilton 1998:183). Vividly using the metaphor of the body and infection, Le Page highlights the way in which defensive mechanisms such as security check points are orientated around the health of the suburban neighbourhood: "[Roads] are suddenly closed off and fenced off at the ends, like cauterised veins... Specially enlisted antibodies – security guards, dogs, little huts, booms and visitors' registers – cluster around every foreign body" (Le Page 2000).

All the while, crime is cited as the primary justification for these measures. Yet crime is not conducted by some faceless perpetrator against arbitrary victims. The threatened are seen to be innocent (often white) middle class suburbanites and the threat comes from the impoverished (black) masses. While there might be rationalised acknowledgements that poor black people are themselves more likely to be victims of violent crimes, it is from the fear of an apocalyptic end to white presence in Southern Africa (outlined above) that a poor black mass is a particularly frightening thing. One resident in Manor Gardens, Durban, was quoted in the newspaper as saying "[t]his was a beautiful area before the squatters moved in. But now I lie in bed at night when the dogs bark and I can't sleep I'm so fearful. I'm keen to pay to block off our road" (Perkins 1997). A real estate analyst:

"foresees the tendency for middle-class and upper bracket home-owners to live behind high security walls increasing in the next five years. "In the Middle Ages people lived behind their drawbridges because they feared for their lives, and that is what is happening here"" (De Ionno 1993). Property developers themselves have adopted the terminology of medieval fortresses. George Hazeldon likens his envisioned *Heritage Park* to the ancient French fortress monastery of Mont St Michel (McGreal 1999). The 'upper bracket', then, is likened to landed gentry in the middle ages forced to build defensive architecture to fend off the marauding hordes.

Security, then, refers not only to personal bodily security but also to a search for security in which a middle class life is materially viable and in harmony with the living environment. The privatisation of space through fortified enclaves also enables the exclusion of those who are seen as both criminally threatening *and undesirable* (Caldeira 1996:311). In the process of establishing such urban forms, those who benefit from them are, by necessity, undertaking a process of defining some types of people as safe (desirable) and others as a threat (undesirable). Having done this, such communities are able to restore the kind of exclusive living environment they feel comfortable in.

SECESSION

The material dimension to this story is that modern, first world and affluent living environments need to be funded somehow. In the past, the reserve system served to ensure sufficient exploitative labour to generate revenue for the production of cities as 'pieces of Europe on the tip of the African continent'. Citizenship of many black people living in South Africa was transferred to homelands and, unless their labour was useful to whites, they were relocated to homelands in order to look after themselves (Wolpe 1972). With the advent of democracy, the prospect of sharing citizenship of South Africa with these previously excluded individuals, not to mention the possibility of measures to redress these injustices, was seen as a material challenge to the viability of the much treasured civilized life. Emigration made a lot of sense for this reason alone. Those who wanted to remain in South Africa toyed with the idea of political secession. When the shape of post-apartheid South Africa was being negotiated, the strong interest in federalism and an Afrikaner homeland represented a tension between wanting to remain in South Africa and to withdraw from a democratic future—to secede (Hook & Vrdoljak 2002).

Happily, for those who do not want to throw their lot in with all others in South Africa as equal citizens, changes in the practice of citizenship in other parts of the world rendered political secession redundant. Robert Reich (1991: 268) argues that in the US rich and poor once saw their fortunes as being linked but the affluent are now "disentangling" their lives from others in society. The idea of the welfare system, where affluent members of society were taxed to fund the improvement of the lives of those who were poorer, has lost much of the sway it once had. Collective investment for the improvement of society still continues but is now pooled amongst the successful only in increasingly privatised mechanisms including gated communities. These affluent groups

> …take on responsibilities of citizenship, but the communities they create are composed only of citizens with incomes close to their own. In this way, [they] are quietly seceding from the large and diverse publics of America into homogenous

enclaves, within which their earnings need not be redistributed to people less fortunate than themselves. … As public parks and playgrounds deteriorate, there is a proliferation of private health clubs, golf clubs, tennis clubs, skating clubs, and every other type of recreational association in which costs are divided up among members. (Reich 1991:268-9)

No longer are elites obsessed with organising and policing others (Bauman 2001:128); rather, they want sufficient security to conduct their own lives the way they choose even if others foolishly do not want to know the good life. A normless relativism sets in in which elites resign themselves to a life surrounded by the poor that cannot be helped and will not help themselves. The task then is not to micro-manage others – that lost cause will only sap energy – but rather simply to withdraw from disorderly society.

Affluent South Africans, therefore, did not have to secede politically, nor did they have to emigrate. They had merely to join affluent groups around the world in their economic-secessionist movement into gated communities. The outcome is a kind of hybrid of emigration, secession and segregation. Some in the media have used the term 'semigration' as a way of describing these strategies:

> …while many whites continue to emigrate – notably the young in possession of sought-after skills – others are 'semigrating', as the business leader puts it. That is, they are remaining in South Africa, but 'withdrawing, opting out of being citizens'. Many of these whites are convinced – and who can convince them otherwise? – that they can never be anything other than second-class citizens in the present government's eyes. So, they ask themselves, why concern themselves with the obligations of citizenship? (Barrell 2000)

Semigration emerged specifically to describe the migration of many from Johannesburg to Cape Town in the 1990s. Christopher Hope suggested that Cape Town creates the illusion of 'not really being part of Africa at all' (Hope 1998). However, taking Howard Barrell's logic, we could include other practices under the 'semigration' rubric, such as gated communities. In its extreme, semigration is the creation of a 'self-contained town' from which residents seldom need to venture. While they happen to be located in South Africa, they would like to have as little to do with it as possible (Hook & Vrdoljak 2002:202).

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to locate 'gated communities' within a family of spatial strategies used by white South Africans in order to manage a core contradiction between the identities to which they aspire and the place in which they live. The identities to which white South Africans have aspired were 'European', 'civilised' and 'modern' in the past and 'Western' and 'First World' in today's language. Yet, they described the region in which they settled as 'uncivilised', 'backwards' and 'third world'. In order to create a space for their identity to flourish, systems of segregation were intended, in part, to harmonise senses of self and senses of place. The impulse to manage living environments so that they accorded with identity did not evaporate with the transition to democracy in 1994, even though this was no longer a task of the state. The fear of mixing that once drove the colonial and apartheid state projects, as with many modernist projects around the world, is

now a privatised fear (see Bauman 1992:xviii). Initially it was hoped that the property market would ensure that suburbs would retain their character sufficiently and that upwardly mobile black individuals could be assimilated into the established norms. While this has indeed played out in some places, the property market was bypassed in other places by the arrival of informal settlements. More active mechanisms were therefore required by those keen to avoid encounters with others. One spatial strategy has been emigration, where individuals move to parts of the world that they consider being more unambiguously 'First World'. Another has been dubbed 'semigration' which is an attempt to have the best of both worlds. Through mechanisms such as gated communities, one is able to opt out of urban life, and with it uncontrolled mixing and what is seen as the increasingly 'African' and 'Third World' character of the city. England could be brought to South Africa and defended against the increasingly African urban environment. In the absence of the state's attempts to manage social diversity, smaller groups of 'like minded' individuals would have to band together to restore a level of homogeneity, and thus predictability and security, in their lives (Bauman 2001:116). This is entirely consistent with the hostility to diversity that characterised suburbs elsewhere as they developed since the Second World War (Bhabha 1997:299). Gated communities are, thus, simply suburbs that no longer trust the state to be performing a series of functions on their behalf to ensure their survival.

By using the 'privatised apartheid' notion I do not mean only to suggest that gated communities are like apartheid, but also to suggest that apartheid was like a series of giant state-sponsored gated communities. White suburbs were, in effect, enlarged gated communities surrounded not by walls but by 'natural' barriers such as nature reserves with cliffs, train tracks, highways, and rivers. It can be argued that the Group Areas Act was simply a strategy for the production of western style suburbs in the colonial context. Now in South Africa, as in the West, the prospect of racial and class mixing going unmanaged by the state is leading many to resolve the problem with their private resources.

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