

Title	Privatisation, security and spaces of simulation in the new city: gated communities in the metropolitan area of New York.
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PRIVATISATION, SECURITY AND SPACES OF SIMULATION IN THE NEW CITY: GATED COMMUNITIES IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF NEW YORK

Abstract: *This study considers the proliferation of private residential developments, and especially gated communities, regarding them as a phenomenon that reflects the main characteristics of the most recent general urban trends. The nature of these developments reflects a series of more general changes that have taken place in the urban setting. These include the privatisation of urban spaces, an increased emphasis on security, and the treatment of the city as a theme park or simulacrum.*

The characteristics of these new residential developments contribute to processes of privatisation and urban fragmentation and generally engender and promote new patterns of social segregation.

In the first part of the article, we examine the relationship between the diffusion of new private residential products, the construction of the postmodern and post-industrial society, and the impact of markedly neoliberal globalisation processes. Residential enclaves provide their own amenities, are privately managed and administrated, and seem to constitute the ultimate in neoliberal residential formulas. What is more, this formula has succeeded in converting itself into a generally available product that meets the wants and needs of the global consumer.

In the second part of the article, we analyse the factors that explain the diffusion of the phenomenon of gated communities in the USA. By analysing different case studies in the metropolitan area of New York, we seek to make a more detailed characterisation of the component parts of the real estate product and to highlight some of the most significant tendencies observed in recent developments. Within these gated communities, the growing tendency for privatisation is expressed through such elements as: enclosure and controlled access, the provision of private amenities and services and their formulas for self-government. The privatisation and fragmentation that have brought about the previously mentioned factors (privatisation-security-self-government) have also created an important new form of spatial and social fragmentation.

Residential escapism, whether achieved through enclosure and/or the portrayal of an individual or collective fantasy or themeparking, is another growing tendency. Enclosure and themeparking are two factors that have been combined in the construction of spaces of simulation: spaces whose purpose is to deny a reality or a context that could provoke feelings of anguish and insecurity.

PRIVATISATION, SECURITY AND SPACES OF SIMULATION IN THE NEW CITY: GATED COMMUNITIES IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF NEW YORK

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1 Gated communities and private developments as a global residential pattern

Residential enclaves and private real estate developments, such as large condominiums and gated communities, do not constitute a homogenous real estate product and are not a new phenomenon, but they increasingly characterise new residential landscapes.

Although such residential developments, and specially gated communities, were originally reserved for quite an exclusive sector of society, and have traditionally been predominantly occupied by a small, rich, elite, more recently, they have become much more commonplace, housing a wide range of social groups, as demonstrated in various studies involving different geographic contexts (Caldeira, 2000; Le Goix, 2003). The global diffusion of this real estate product has also been accompanied by a greater standardisation of production and a wider diversification of typologies, although always maintaining a series of common characteristics: controlled access, delimited perimeters, private development and management, and the presence of more or fewer amenities and services.

This rejection of the traditional city, which is what these gated communities largely express, has therefore become more widespread and democratic. If only a few years ago there was talk of the secession of the rich; the withdrawal of the select few, today the possibility of abandoning the city, and living apart from the public and social services that it provides, is an option open to a far wider percentage of society. (Harvey, 2002; Degoutin, 2006). In recent years, the majority of the gated communities created in the USA have been aimed at middle to high income groups, although some others have also targeted the middle classes. Diversity is increasingly important: a specific product is now being offered to each existing or perceived sector of the market (Blakely and Snyder, 1999).

The real estate product has also been successful in adapting to change with great efficiency. It has been able to meet the needs of very different markets by imposing a new form of housing that fits in perfectly with the model of global consumption. Its expansion has been particularly rapid in the USA, throughout Latin America and in South Africa; contexts that are all characterised by the presence of striking social inequalities (Webster, 2001). In recent years, this model seems to have also experienced a process of notable diffusion in countries such as Russia, Egypt, Turkey and China. Beyond simply exhibiting diversity, the existence of enclaves and the construction of private residential areas appear to be worldwide tendencies and a product of global consumption ⁽¹⁾. The quest for security, social prestige, property value, an escape from the city and protection from what lies outside, are the main reasons for the success of these developments. Nevertheless, their real significance can only be fully understood with reference to the precise context within which each of these developments is located.

¹ - The appearance of international forums has made it possible to observe this phenomenon in many, very different, contexts. It is particularly relevant to highlight the work carried out within the www.gated-communities.de; a forum hosted by University of Mainz.

The development and extension of private residential developments during the last 25 years may be easily associated with the diffusion of neoliberal thought and practice. Gated communities can be seen as a response to the social and economic insecurity generated by this framework, and have even become a residential product that responds to the wants and needs of the global consumer.

1.1 A neoliberal and postmodern residential product

The diffusion of gated communities and private residential developments could, in fact, be interpreted as an initiative promoted by, or born out of, neoliberal tendencies (Bislev, 2004). As with any other initiative developed by free market economic theory, there is an underlying belief that the market can resolve matters in the most efficient way possible through privatisation and self-government (Peck and Tickel, 2002). Residential complexes that are able to provide their own services and amenities and that are privately managed therefore represent the best possible formula for a neoliberal residential project.

Furthermore, the new *governmentality* provided by Foucault, contains not only a preference for private ownership, private provision, self-reliance, individual choice, and market mechanisms but also an emphasis on managerialism; the professional organization and operation of institutions (Foucault, 1978; Dean, 1999).

These residential real estate products also offer the ideal refuge in which to escape from all of the insecurity and uncertainty generated by postmodern society. Economic restructuring and the dismantling of the welfare state seem to have had a direct bearing on the weakening of social relations and the traditional mechanisms for maintaining order and social control. According to Giddens, the different phenomena that characterise the so-called late modernity, such as increasing geographical and social mobility and the impact of new technologies, expose the individual to new types of insecurity, or at least lead him/her to perceive new types of insecurity (Giddens, 1991). The perception of risk, worries about security and the diffusion of the culture of fear are, to a large extent, consequences of the growing emphasis that our society has placed upon individual choice (Ellin, 1997). To choose and select, the individual looks for information and analyses the possible consequences of his/her actions. In doing so, he/she becomes even more aware of apparent threats and a risk culture develops (Beck, 1992).

This sense of insecurity is not only linked to criminality, although this may be one of its principal causes in determined contexts. It seems to also have its roots in the instability of the main parameters of life in society and to be due to an accumulation of factors that disrupt our customs and habits (such as the instability of work, competition, social mobility, etc.). In fact, this generalised feeling of insecurity is perhaps just one of the side-effects or consequences of living in a consumer society.

1.2 Residential answers to the sense of insecurity

A first response to the fears provoked by the permanent sensation of instability and insecurity is to hide away from the greater part of society in ever smaller, more controlled and safer units. Gated communities are perhaps the residential typology that best corresponds to this response. These are clearly delimited units in which there is almost total control over the environment: access is controlled, uses and users of space are controlled, as is the physical form of the development (Le Goix, 2003; Low, 2001; Lang, 1997).

A second response is escapism. This would imply escaping from the contexts that generate these insecurities and trying to create perfect and fantastic parallel worlds. These are worlds that recreate personal fantasies that actively deny the problems or contexts in which the causes of these feelings of insecurity are generated (Ellin, 1997; Boyer, 1992). The residential *resorts*, club-type communities, cities and spaces that have been created under the influence of the *New Urbanism* movement, that has pervaded urbanism in the USA, could be understood as clear examples of this second response, as we shall explain below.

These are spaces in which people try to recreate utopias; spaces of simulation in which they play with settings and environments in order to deny the realities and contexts that cause people anguish and make them feel insecure. In this way, residential space becomes a parallel reality, an absolute simulacrum that recreates the fantasies of a perfect urban environment (Braudillard, 1986).

A social discourse has been gradually developed around this phenomenon, in which these private residential developments, and particularly gated communities, have merged as a physical, visible and evident manifestation of the mutations undergone by post-industrial society (fragmentation, individualism and communitarism) and of the penetration of security-minded ideologies promoted by different political and economic agents or agencies (municipalities, real estate developers, and companies and societies). These transformations are not, however, features that are exclusively limited to residential landscapes. It is possible to understand these self-governed, large-scale residential complexes with ever-wider and more extensively controlled access and facilities as both the result of, and a driving force behind, new urbanisation processes.

1.3 New residential developments in the connected city

Traditional academic literature has associated processes of urban fragmentation and privatisation with determined uses and functions. These include: spaces dedicated to production (industrial parks), spaces dedicated to business parks and office complexes, leisure and consumption (private urban centres, commercial centres, theme parks) and those associated with other uses such as cultural centres, educational and university centres, convention centres, airports and transport stations. In the last two decades, however, these privatisation processes have also had a clear impact on residential uses, in the form of different typologies (gated communities, condominiums, residential and country clubs) and, as previously commented, they have become a familiar feature of almost every urban area on the planet (Webster, 2001).

These different urban enclaves share the same characteristics as their namesakes: they are highly specialised (depending on the specific function, service, or lifestyle in question), private, dispersed, thematic spaces that are closed off from their closest and most immediate surroundings but open to regional and international communications and transport networks. These fragmented urban enclaves configure the new city and form the basis of a new urban model. Somewhat paradoxically, the more open and necessary the network and its connections are and the greater the possibilities are for interrelating with others, the more these enclaves tend to physically close in on themselves (Degoutin, 2006).

Considered as a whole, these different (residential, commercial, science parks, transport nodes, etc.) urban enclaves form a complete city, with a discontinuous string of private or privatised environments structured by (physical and virtual) communication networks. These networks constitute or become the public spaces of the new networked-city (Castells, 2000). Topologically speaking, this networked space consists of a series of islands connected by technological and physical networks that are superimposed upon the traditional city, creating a parallel reality that seems to ignore/deny the existence of the traditional city, which has become simply "the other city".

2 Residential space in the new urban reality. News from privatopia in metropolitan New York

Since 2001, the *American Housing Survey* directed by the national *Census Bureau* has kept official estimates of the number of residential developments with controlled access in the USA. By 2003, there were around 7 million homes, located in developments to which access was restricted by walls or fences: this corresponded to 6.6% of total USA housing. Furthermore, according to data facilitated by the same organisation, the rhythm at which this type of housing

development is appearing has continued to grow, with housing units located inside *gated communities* possibly now accounting for as much as 11% of total housing production.

These residential enclaves are by no means a new phenomenon. The development of gated communities partly owes its origin to the exclusive communities built in Europe and the USA in the 19th century (Mckenzie, 1994; Le Goix, 2003). To the previous signs of exclusivity, the developments built in the middle of the 20th century, added the philosophical and Protestant value of the environment in which they were located; the urban periphery. Exclusivity and anti-urban ideology provided the inspiration for these romantic residential developments and for the subsequent evolution of American *suburbia*. However, unlike other contemporary collective utopias American *suburbia* created its own particular vision of the community, with maximum emphasis being placed on private property and the importance of the individual family (Fishman, 1987).

The large residential enclaves of today have been very effective at combining these dreams, values and historical models in order to create an efficient and effective real estate product. None of the elements concerned is particularly new in itself. The novelty comes from the interesting mixture of different elements: the more or less exclusive nature of the complexes, the anti-urban ideology that has inspired them, and the structures of self-governance. Marketing and promotional actions tend to take care of the rest. (Le Goix, 2003)

Other elements that seem to emerge from case studies, that involved analysis of the real estate market and interviews with agents who work in this sector, include the extent of the privatisation and thematisation processes, reflected by the new gated communities. These same processes are reflected not only by new residential developments but are also generally evident in new urban enclaves. These are aspects that we shall now look at in greater depth in subsequent points through an analysis of various case studies from the metropolitan area of New York (²).

1.4 The privatisation and fragmentation of the city

The elements that most clearly express the process of privatisation associated with residential development are: enclosure and controlled access, the provision of private amenities and formulas for self-governance. These elements characterise not only the new American *suburbia* but also more central areas resulting from urban renewal processes that give rise to the creation of urban fragments that are: safe, private, and isolated from their most immediate environment, yet at the same time interconnected through a series of different urban networks (Sorkin, 1992).

- Controlled access and the quest for security

These are seen as the main aspects of any new residential development, regardless of where it is located or the social group that it may target. The derived sense of security and all of the elements that help to reinforce this feeling, which include the design of space and a variety of physical, technological and/or surveillance services, are the main selling points for this type of residential development. Moreover, although it is true that closed communities do not, in fact, lead to a reduction in crime, but only to it being displaced beyond the borders of the enclosure that they protect, they do offer a pragmatic solution to the problem of the deterioration of the urban environment. The inhabitants of these communities are very efficiently protected by their walls and controls. But in this way, they turn their backs on everything else and thereby effectively contribute to the further degradation of the wider urban environment (Low, 2003; Degoutin, 2006).

There has been a generally observed increase in the introduction of (urbanistic and architectural) measures to control access and improve security, an extension of security (surveillance, guard, and patrol) services and increased use of technological elements (such as

² - This field work was carried out in the metropolitan area of New York supported by a mobility grant for university lecturers from Spain's "Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia". During the stay at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), between March and June 2005, it was possible to study 14 different communities.

cameras, alarms and sensors) in a wide range of different types of residential development (Blakely and Snyder, 1999). This has occurred to such an extent that these concepts now form a habitual part of the language used to promote this type of residential real estate product. The *security factor* has finally become a central concept forming an integral part of the general marketing of this type of enclave, as if it was just another associated service.

Walls and fences, but above all controlled access, are the elements that generate the sense of security on which these developments base their success. The gates of these communities, and all of the paraphernalia that is usually located around their entrances, serve both symbolic and didactic functions. In many communities, the wall or fence does not so much serve for protection and security but rather as a way of reinforcing prestige; it becomes an element that symbolises the power of the development and of its inhabitants. But it also constitutes an element that acts as a reminder to anyone entering the community that this is effectively another world; a world protected from all of the risk and insecurity found on the other side of the fence.

Figure 1: Controlled access in Regency (Monroe Township, New Jersey), Hamlet Olde Oyster Bay (Plainview, Long Island) and Oceana (Queens, New York)



Source: Carmen Bellet

Gated communities can, in fact, be understood as part of a formula that very efficiently combines settings, services and management and places them at the disposal of security, privacy and control. These mechanisms and measures create what Foucault referred to as the panoptic effect associated with spatial systems characterised by surveillance and control: this is a characteristic part of the new, and above all safe, private utopia.

Explaining the origins of the initial fears that provoke this sense of insecurity would seem, however, to be a rather more complex task. The reasons for it could be many and varied, with some appearing quite banal. They range from very concrete factors to aspects that are far more abstract and general. Reasons commonly given include: the fear of criminal acts, of properties losing their value, of others - and particularly those who are "different", and the fear of the unknown. Control over their immediate environment (home-community) provides people with a certain sense of security and at least guarantees, in the words of one of the residents interviewed in *Regency at Monroe*, "that your neighbours are like you and want the same things as you". In fact, and as other authors have already pointed out (Davies, 1992) and empirical studies conducted in the USA have shown (Low, 2003), this desire for security often hides an underlying fear of diversity and social and ethnic mixing and a fear of potential changes to existing lifestyles.

The level of security was one of the most evident differences between the different communities that were visited. The simplest of the residential developments featured in our case studies, *Magnolia Court* in Queens, was only equipped with barriers activated by cards with magnetic strips and its perimeter could be described as only weakly fenced. The security systems were more complex in communities targeting the middle and upper income groups such as *Hamlet Estates* on Long Island and *Pierson Lakes* (Rockland County).

Fences and security measures are also more readily adopted in what might be described as hostile environments. In our study, this term could be used to refer to developments in The Bronx and in the south part of Queens. Even so, it is significant to stress that communities built according to the tenets of the *New Urbanism* movement, which is also known as *Traditional Neighborhood Design* (TND), oppose these forms of security (Katz, 1994). Their historicist and

nostalgic language harks back to a utopian past. From their point of view, the best guarantee of security comes in the form of the classic elements of the traditional community: the neighbours themselves, a structural layout that avoids *cul-de-sacs* but dissimulates accesses, individual security measures and the patrols and services of private surveillance. (Harvey, 200?)

Barriers, fences and controlled access points are some of the elements that best define the physical construction of the contemporary city. These physical and technological barriers both reflect and promote processes of socio-spatial fragmentation in the postmodern city (Harvey, 200?; Davies, 1990). These are fragments whose internal logics are privately managed and administered and that have an influence not only on the physical structure and characteristics of the urban space, but also on questions such as how it is organised and how the city works in general (Dear and Flusty, 1998; Judd and Swanstrom, 1994).

- Private services and facilities for the exclusive use of the community.

The majority of the private real estate developments studied, including the simplest developments analysed, offer the promise of a series of commodities that will allow residents to live as if they were at a resort and to enjoy all the benefits of *suburbia* but within the city. These benefits include security, exclusivity and a number of amenities and services specifically reserved for members of the community. The *community* cannot be built without spaces to house functions that promote sociability and social relations, and for this reason, collective spaces have a fundamental importance. This is what is offered by residential products that try to turn collective experiences into a type of consumer good, in which the communal spaces and services are private, safe and exclusive (Princen, Maniates and Conca, 2002).

The scope and range of the facilities and services provided depends on the social group targeted, the size of the community in question and the lifestyle offered by the specific real estate product. Most of the time, these may ultimately be of lower quality and fewer in quantity than originally promised by the commercial agent and associated publicity.

Owners' associations, or their appointed administrators, are responsible for maintaining these amenities and spaces and for providing other services traditionally associated with the public sector and with local administrations, such as: repairing and maintaining basic public facilities (roadways, the distribution of drinking water, sanitary systems, etc.), looking after communal spaces, collecting and managing waste, cleaning roads and removing snow, etc.

Whereas the real estate products offered during the 1980s seemed to focus on the provision of amenities (golf courses, sports fields, clubs, gymnasiums and swimming pools), more recently, the emphasis has switched to providing more personalised services (management of leisure and free time activities, transport on request, etc) with new communities presenting an ever-greater array of novelties (Schmitz, 2003). A good example of this tendency can be observed at *Hamlet on Olde Oyster Bay*, a community aimed at the medium-high and high income groups in Long Island. The community houses a restaurant that offers catering and restaurant services, while the reception service organizes leisure activities, transport needs and trips for families. Organising transport and leisure activities is also one of the basic functions of communities that target *active adults*.

The services offered are increasingly personalised and offer a variety of solutions for everyday problems. Commodification is ubiquitous: the ownership of land and housing, the carefully planned sense of community and the overall image of the residential development have all been commodified. Property developers market a total living experience, with everything forming part of the package acquired, and everything being bought and sold. The real estate market sells more than just properties and images; developers market a total living experience which is converted into a theme that needs to be carefully controlled in order to produce a specific real estate product (Roming, 2005). In this way, residential space could pass from being a space for social reproduction to being a space for super-consumption, thereby adding to the transformation that other urban spaces have already undergone (Zukin, 1998; Sorkin, 1992).

These facilities and amenities contribute to what are increasingly more privatised and exclusive environments and that foster a process of socio-spatial fragmentation. These fragments are quite homogenous in terms of the ages, social groups and lifestyles of their residents, and tend to be self-governed and increasingly isolated from the collective responsibilities of society as a whole (Sennet, 1977). Each community represents a microcosm, a small homogeneous fragment whose fate has little or nothing in common with everything that surrounds it. This microcosm is also self-governed, with the consequent danger of socio-political fragmentation that some other authors have already underlined (Mckenzie, 2005).

- A form of parallel administration, micro-governments within the city.

Perhaps one of the most striking interpretations of the diffusion of private residential developments is that related with the transformation of urban government. Several authors have pointed to the medium and long term tendency for the traditional general structure of urban administration to fragment into more specialised entities or units: for example, in the USA, there are transport authorities, port authorities, and *Business Improvement Districts* (BIDs). In the USA, private residential developments also form part of specific organisations (*Common Interest Developments*, or CID) whose mission is to defend the common interests of these communities identified by their statutes or norms (CCRs – *Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions*).

The so-called *CIDitization*, or expansion of private residential communities, cited by Evan McKenzie (2005) would fit in perfectly with processes involving the privatisation and fragmentation of urban government: in fact, this is a process that implies creating a special district (in this case a residential district) that provides a series of, more or less extensive, amenities and is self-governing. However, the process by which the management of these communities becomes privatised could also be interpreted as just another step in the American tradition of encouraging direct democracy and greater autonomy at the local community level (Hayden, 2004; Degoutin, 2006). This was precisely one of the debates that gained most force in the USA in the 1990s. Some people see these developments as proof of the emergence of a new form of territorial organisation that fragments the traditional political structure of local urban administration (Mckenzie, 1994). For others, however, including the lobby created by the association of communities and called the *Community Associations Institute*, these communities represent the ideal form of organisation for a new style of local democracy.

The owners' associations (*Homeowners Association*) are regulated by a set of statutes (CCRs – *Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions*) through which it is intended to promote and maintain the lifestyle and specific characteristics of the community in question. These norms and regulations may be minimal, but they can also be very restrictive. They range from, more or less rigid, controls over architecture and landscapes, to the regulation of lifestyles, the use of collective space, and norms governing residents behaviour. For example, at *Regency*, a community for active adults at Monroe-New Jersey, there is a rule stating that at least one of the occupants of each house must be over 55 years old and that no-one less than 49 years old can live at the community on a permanent basis. There is also a regulation stating that any visitor can continuously stay at the community for up to a month, but never for more than two months within a given calendar year.

The CCRs, which at times are perhaps a little too strict, may provoke legal conflicts affecting inhabitants of the community and even involving external institutions. For this reason, large communities and groups of large communities often prefer to constitute themselves as municipal authorities. Some authors have even reported that in the *Sunbelt* states, and particularly in Nevada and California, the most important communities have been constituted as municipal areas and have thereby achieved significant quotas of political power (Mckenzie, 1994, 2005).

The most important of these associations may find themselves managing budgets that are as big, or even bigger, than those of some cities. Whatever the case, they create situations of inequality in which some groups can continue to use public facilities and services as well as their own, while the rest can only use the public ones, which tend to deteriorate with time as financial resources tend to move to the former.

The regulations governing these exclusive residential developments; the CCRs – *Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions*, establish and safeguard their lifestyles and thereby effectively determine who can and cannot reside in them. As a result, a possible buyer or potential inhabitant also becomes part of the real estate product. In fact, it is the lifestyle that is sold, and which forms part of the price, and this is the main element that generates segregation, though without openly discriminating. If segregation is regarded as politically incorrect and unacceptable, choosing a community on the basis of its lifestyle is, on the contrary, an attitude valued as positive and one that fits in perfectly with North American history and tradition (DEGOUTIN, 2006).

B 2 – From segregation based on distance to segregation at close quarters

The phenomenon of segregation is certainly not new, but the rhythm and scope of the newest form of segregation, which is associated with the diffusion of these more private typologies, certainly is. They create forms that are more closed to the outside world and, above all, which reinforce the private management and government of collective services and spaces. The privatisation and fragmentation that the previously mentioned factors provoke (privatisation-security-self-government) result in an important degree of social and spatial fragmentation. These physical elements of management and government in fact reflect a rise in social and inter-community inequalities (Carter, Schill and Watcher, 1998).

The *Homeowners Association* governs homogenous community units normally formed by people from a single social category. The predominant lifestyle system, which is protected by the norms and rules of the community, combined with tendencies in the real estate market tend to reinforce a trend favouring segregation. Segregation generated by marketing frees the social space from small individual differences and allows each socio-professional category to live within it, converting each category in a group that colonises an isolated fragment of the new urban space.

This process of self-imposed segregation, with the associated urban secession, is not a new phenomenon in the USA; from the very start, the development of *suburbia* has been linked with guaranteeing the satisfaction of the user and his/her family and with not having to worry about the rest of society (Fishman, 1987). The process has now, however, taken on a new dimension, creating different living spaces and urban fragments relating to different lifestyles and targeting specific segments of market.

The residents and owners of these communities share common interests (collective zones and facilities, natural spaces, a range of amenities, etc.) or search for a lifestyle or common identity (golf communities, active adult communities, communities of based on sports, religious communities, etc.). The community has, therefore, developed its own setting, which is not just based on socio-economic and, in the majority of cases, quite homogeneous ethnic characteristics, but rather on a common search for a specific lifestyle. This community spirit, which forms an integral part of the American dream, therefore leads towards the fragmentation of society (Hayden, 2004; Fishman, 1987).

New technologies and formulas for enclosure have also brought about an interesting change in the location patterns of these communities and therefore a corresponding change in traditional patterns of urban segregation. The increased sense of security, deriving from design or controlled access, has permitted processes that favour gentrification in urban centres and the migration of these communities towards more centrally located urban settings (Smith, 1996; Zukin, 1998). With this, classical patterns of social fragmentation, based on housing price and physical distance, have been replaced by other patterns of segregation that allow the proximity of groups and the immediacy of differences, while still maintaining exclusivity and privacy (Webster, 2001). In the metropolitan area of New York, we found a good number of examples of this phenomenon, including Oceana on Coney Island, Harbour Pointe in the southern part of The Bronx and Astoria in Queens. These developments were conceived as islands that exist within a hostile setting, with which they maintain little or no direct contact.

Security measures, and the provision of more or less select services, allow real estate developers to build projects in quite central locations that can be sold with the label of exclusivity, thereby allowing the developer to obtain greater profit margins. The higher cost of the land makes it necessary to reduce the size and importance of the collective spaces, which is compensated for by targeting these developments on the middle and upper income sectors of society with a notable increase in the number of personal services provided, including: dog walking, laundry, shopping, catering and exclusive restaurant services as well as transport on demand.

These segregation patterns are both close at hand and very intense and are not only explained by differences in housing prices but are also dictated by the lifestyle that each community promotes. A specific product is attributed to each segment of the market, with each group developing its own theme and creating its own particular private utopia. This is a segment of the market that is perfectly defined and orchestrated by real estate developers who produce specialised products aimed at specific groups (Judd and Swanstrom, 1994).

The proliferation of private residential developments, and especially of gated communities, can be interpreted as the ultimate residential formula for the postmodern society. It can also be seen as the real estate response to a new social order that conceals, displaces and regulates people and/or activities rather than eliminating them (Foucault, 1984).

B 3 – Residential escapism and spaces of simulation: the club, resort and utopia behind the fence or gate.

As already mentioned, one of the responses to the insecurity that accompanies postmodern society is escapism: people locking themselves away and/or recreating an individual or collective fantasy. The creation of residential resorts, gated communities, large condominiums and spaces, clearly represent this second response. They are spaces where people try to recreate fantasies and utopias but, in this way, they also end up becoming spaces of simulation that play with images and moods yet deny the realities and contexts that tend to cause us anguish.

Simulated spaces put an end to all references and, as Jean Braudillard points out, in contrast to a utopia, the simulacrum begins with the principle of equivalence and with the radical denial of the sign as a value, eliminating any references (BRAUDILLARD, 1978). It is no longer a case of imitating or reiterating, nor even of parodying, but of supplanting what is real and replacing it with the signs of what is real. In this way, residential space becomes a hyper-real space, in an absolute simulacrum that supplants and denies the real city.

Denial of context, isolation, simulation and recreation are the mechanisms at the service of those who produce new residential spaces and they are ultimately also at the service of the features involved in the production of the new city:

- . Negation: the new architectures and styles tend to negate the geographical and socio-economic context in which they are located, producing a standardisation of the landscape.
- . Isolation: it is a case of isolating the individual from the exterior, by technological, physical and/or scenic means. Walls, fences, controlled accesses and private security guards contribute to the sense of physical isolation that is reinforced by the lifestyle apparent in the different developments.
- . Simulation: the construction of sign-spaces that supplant reality and eliminate all meaning and the whole context associated with what has been replaced. Through the recreation of neo-traditional forms of architecture (reproducing "Tuscany", or adopting French styles or those of pioneer settlements), and thereby reformulating the truly urban character of the city.
- . Recreation: leisure, *paradise-resorts*, and the reinvention of residential space as a club form are part of the new residential language. The architectonic and functional references of these communities are increasingly sought in tourist *resorts*, and references that also play with publicity: "live as though you were at a *resort*".

Converting places into theme parks is one of the most used resources in the construction of the modern city (Sorkin, 1992). Some of the gated communities that we visited could be described

as veritable residential theme parks conceived with reference to a central concept. Each segment of the market has been assigned a particular theme, around which the identity of the real estate project has been built, adapting to it some of the basic principles of theme park development.

This *themeparking* can be found in both peripheral enclaves and in more or less centrally located renewal/rehabilitation projects. Amongst our case studies, we find at least two redevelopment projects that illustrate this concept; *Arverne*, in the southern part of Queens and *Harbour Pointe* in The Bronx. The former is a community that has emerged from the renewal of a degraded area. The new spatial languages are based on the criteria of the *New Urbanism* ⁽³⁾ a clearly historicist USA movement that can be assigned to the most typical North American community tradition. While the latter, located in The Bronx, seeks to recreate an exclusive setting within the context of an exclusive club and residential *resort*. Both languages, (the former) a simulacrum of a community based on supposedly neo-traditional models and (the latter) the construction of an exclusive residential *resort*, effectively deny and reject, each in its own way, the contexts in which they are found.

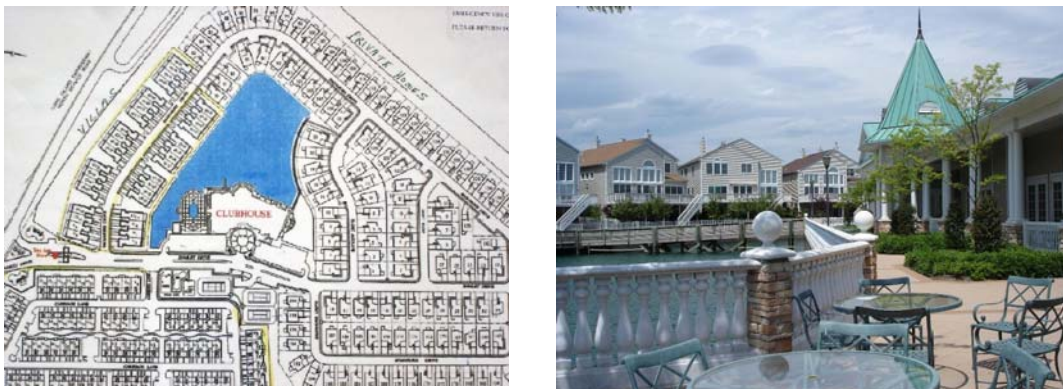
Figure 2: The themeparking of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright at *The Hamlet Estates* in Jericho (Long Island)



Source: Carmen Bellet

Another clear example of these landscapes of simulation is provided by the community of *Hamlet Estates* in Jericho (Long Island, New York). This very exclusive, walled community, whose architecture - as explained in the promotional prospectuses and proudly proclaimed by the sales agent - is inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. The result is a pastiche that mixes elements of the most emblematic architecture and design, though without contextualising it; haphazardly mixing elements from different periods and various works. The final result is a development that resembles a residential theme park inspired by the work of Wright in the heart of Long Island.

Figure 3: The resort-type development of *The Hamlet on Olde Oyster Bay* in Long Island.



³ - One of the clearest values of the so-called New Urbanism is the promotion of the community. Mitchell Dean relates this project and all the demand for communities to neoconservadurism and neoliberal ideology, because it has managed to mix "belief in the market with individualistic thinking and communitarian features" (Dean, 1999).

Source: Carmen Bellet

The most extreme example of residential simulation is *Hamlet on Olde Oyster Bay* in Plainview (Long Island) ⁽⁴⁾. In fact, the development recreates a resort enclave, a maritime development with similar architectural elements to those found in Florida. As the sea is some distance away from the site and it is difficult to understand the *resort* theme without water, the developer decided to construct a large artificial lake around which the main areas for collective facilities were located (a social club, swimming area and management offices) and also the most exclusive houses. Everything there is, and seems, excessive: the width of the roads, the size of the houses, the lake with its pedalos and fountains, the size and services of the club and the gourmet restaurant.

The idea of simulated space does not only apply to the physical plan but also to the very concept of developing a *community*. A gated community does not only consist of a group of housing units that are well-delimited by a walled/fenced perimeter, but also seeks to sell a spirit of community; the idea of a collective sharing similar values and visions (Kunstler, 1993; Hayden, 2004). No other country has such a rich tradition and inheritance for producing the physical materialisation of utopias (whether religious, political or social) or the force of direct democracy and local administration that gives these different communities such a large level of autonomy (Fishman, 1987; Braudillard, 1986; Judd and Swanstrom, 1994). The spirit of the search for the ideal community that attracted the first pioneers who came and explored the new world still persists today, albeit only, in the majority of cases, using this as an advertising slogan and a sales strategy.

C – The end of the public city? Final considerations.

Private urban enclaves (whether residential, commercial, educational-universities, leisure, offices, industrial and technological parks, transport centres, etc.) now form part of the new urban reality; the new discontinuous, fragmented, controlled and private city. They constitute part of the different urban enclaves that configure the new city, which are characterised by their closed nature and privacy and by their private management and administration.

Although, in their origins, gated residential developments were exclusive consumer products aimed at elites and *the few*, they have now become a rather general and more commonplace product offering housing for people from very different social groups. Gated communities have become a universal and global real estate product. In fact, the product has managed to adapt itself, with great efficiency, to very different markets and has imposed a new way of living and in so doing has converted itself into a global consumer product.

Residential complexes that provide their own facilities and that are privately managed and administered represent the ultimate neoliberal residential formula. In such developments, there is a clear preference for private ownership, private provision, self-reliance, individual choice, and market mechanisms but also an emphasis on managerialism, professional organization and operation of institutions.

The combination of these factors and theme parking explains why gated communities can be regarded as the ideal shelter within which people can take refuge from all of the insecurities and uncertainties that are generated by postmodern society. Private and walled residential products can be understood as one of several responses to these insecurities: withdrawing from wider society into smaller units that are safer and more controllable. The fences that close the perimeters of the new residential units and the gates that control access to them are the physical expression of that response to insecurity. Another response could be escapism; escaping from the contexts that generate these insecurities and creating perfect and fantastic

⁴ - After considerable hard work locating this development, we finally gave it the nickname of "the community of lies": it is not a *hamlet*, it is not an old development, and - despite its name - it is not even near the bay.

parallel worlds. Languages of recreation and simulation actively help to negate the problems or contexts in which these fears are generated.

Gated communities, condominiums and private club-type residential developments – which we could call residential *resorts* – would therefore constitute the physical expression of that privacy, security and escapism; the three factors that characterise these new residential spaces. But these are also three of the factors that characterise the production of the new city.

The inhabitants of private residential developments and the users of other private urban enclaves do not renounce consumption of public space or consumption of the traditional city, but rather tend to shun them and expressly renounce their construction and maintenance. There is no interaction with the traditional city or with the public sphere, only pure consumption.

The only way to reverse the process would involve regenerating the conditions that had previously made the city worthy of inhabiting, the same conditions that a good number of these enclaves have recreated; the provision of security, a natural environment and healthy setting and the presence of all the essential collective spaces, amenities and services.

The cited conditions, which were once provided by the public sphere, are now more efficiently provided by private interests. While citizens are busy with the task of reformulating the dimensions and characteristics of that what is, or what could still be understood as public, and demand that the different administrations maintain the conditions of the city, the private enclaves continue to advance. In a democratic context, these communities should be forced to show greater transparency and concurrence, not only in their management and administration, but also in their fiscal mechanisms. This might allow the social recuperation of urban added values and generated incomes, which could be used to maintain the other city; the public city.

All in all, it is a case of constructing and maintaining a city that makes it possible “to protect the integrity of individual identity against the collective identities or what is considered as general” (Innerarity, 2006, pp.37). This implies reformulating what constitutes and/or could be considered as being of general interest in order to try to construct and manage the new common city. In turn, this means defining general and common interests with the help and participation of all the interested parties. Is this perhaps just a public utopia?

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