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## **URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND GATED COMMUNITIES: A FRAMEWORK TO MAP THE (RE-) PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE AND ITS IMPACT ON URBAN GOVERNANCE**

### **Abstract:**

South-African cities are continuously changing. As a result, new models of urban territorial production emerges, driven by a need for increased safety and security, efficient local governance, stable investment and greater social control. Do these models and developments facilitate envisioned social change and democratic urban governance and what are their implications for future South African cities?

In order to address this question, there is a need explore the various aspects involved in urban transformation and the nature of interaction between these aspects. The focus is on the cycles of change in cities and the processes involved, specifically in South Africa, although some of the learning is more generic. The practical manifestation of these processes is explored through a conceptual framework developed to understand the making and re-making of physical space, and more specifically the transformation of space through gated communities.

It was found that gated communities are a significant mechanism of urban transformation with a significant impact on urban governance. It was also established that the framework is relevant to the study of urban spatial transformation of neighbourhoods in cities and that it is applicable to explore many of the relationships involved in the spatial evolution of cities. Given this, an argument is also presented for a broader approach to “gated communities” research, as well as spatial research, through a multidimensional, dynamic and multi-scale approach.

# URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND GATED COMMUNITIES: A FRAMEWORK TO MAP THE (RE-) PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE AND ITS IMPACT ON URBAN GOVERNANCE

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## 1 Introduction

Cities and neighbourhoods are constantly changing. These changes occur on different levels and are influenced by various drivers. Often, however, people that have to deal with these changes tend to consider them only from one dimension, for example focussing on either society or the built environment. This has also generally been the case with the studies on gated communities or attempts from local governments to address the challenges surrounding their development or governance.

Gated communities are closed-off spaces, representing a transformation of open space to closed space through physical boundaries. The study of gated communities is, therefore, concerned with the physical transformation of space. There are many relevant interpretations of space, involving a spectrum of theoretical and personal interpretations, highlighting the complexities surrounding the debates around space. These debates raise many questions regarding how to apply different definitions of space to the study of spatial transformation in cities and where to start. The different interpretations of space also often give rise to a different focus by various disciplines. Architects and urban designers tend to focus on the physical space, being concerned with the modification of built form. Sociologists and anthropologists tend to focus on social space, for example, political or cultural influences. This dissociation between different disciplines has resulted in a widening gap in the spatial debate and responses to urban problems (Tschumi 1990; Madanipour 1996). Consequently, many studies of urban developments and neighbourhoods have considered these from either a physical or social space perspective. However, this often neglects the influence of society on the built environment and vice versa.

This paper focuses on the process of urban transformation, illustrating how society influences the transformation of physical space and how this in turn changes societal behaviour. Given that there are so many different interpretations of space and separate descriptions of some aspects involved in the process of spatial transformation, the significance of this contribution relates to the introduction of a coherent framework to map the process of spatial transformation and illustrate the relationship of the different aspects involved. The paper commences with a brief description of this conceptual framework, followed by the application of the framework to illustrate the process of urban transformation in South African neighbourhoods through the development of gated communities. The penultimate section then assesses the practical implications of these findings, followed by the conclusion. The research findings discussed in this paper is based on case study research and proceedings from Public Hearings in two South African municipalities<sup>1</sup>. The data analysis was guided by a conceptual framework developed to understand the transformation of space in cities.

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<sup>1</sup> Two case study areas (an enclosed neighbourhood and large security estate), were selected in the municipalities of Johannesburg and Tshwane; hence a total of four cases. The responses from other actors were obtained through attendance of and a detailed documentation review of the proceedings from the public hearings on gated communities / road closures in the cities of Johannesburg and Tshwane.

## 2 Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Transformation of space in cities

The overall process of place-making has to do with the transformation of space to place. The making of these places for living, through the process of binding space involves certain aspects. These aspects include space, order and form. They constitute the aspects of the physical process. This process does not occur in isolation, but is usually the result of people's wishes to change existing spaces in response to a specific need, desire, and/or demand, influenced by various ideas. The physical transformation of space also has an impact on different dimensions of social space, through the interactions of many actors involved in the process and the interpretation of the transformed spaces. Given this, the aspects of physical space therefore have to be combined with the aspects of the social process to consider the physical space in relation to the social space that forms an integral part of the production of the built environment. As such, the discussion also introduces the aspects of need, idea, production and management and meaning, and finally points towards a framework to link space, place and time. Each of these aspects will be discussed briefly.

#### 2.1.1 Space

The overall process of place-making has to do with the "binding" (Norberg-Schultz 1988) of physical space to establish place. Space needs to be bounded and directed (or "defined" according to Tshumi 1990) to play a more meaningful role in human experience. To create a new space means to implement patterns of existence into a given natural or existing man-made space and create an interaction between certain intentions and a given situation. This interaction comprises a certain freedom in the sense that people are not entirely shaped by their environment, but may shape it according to their needs and perceptions (Norberg-Schultz 1986).

#### 2.1.2 Need

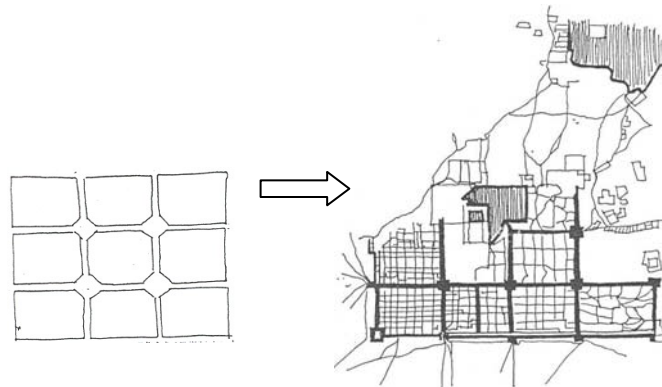
Need refers to human needs and requirements. According to Dewar and Uytendogaardt (1991) there are four sets of needs that are particularly important and that fundamentally inform the management of settlement growth, and therefore, also spatial transformation, namely urban generation, access, social contact and interaction, and individual needs. The first set of needs is that of *urban generation*, which refers to the creation of economic, social, cultural, and recreational opportunities and facilities through the physical agglomeration of large numbers of people. The ability to create these opportunities is not solely related to demographic size; it is also affected by the way in which the city is structured. The second set of needs refers to ease of *access* to the opportunities and facilities that exist. Movement on foot should define the primary scale of urban development, supported by a well-functioning public transport system. The third set of needs relates to the promotion of *social contact and interaction*. Appropriate urban strategies should therefore focus on the collective activities of urban life and the need to accommodate these, rather than on private needs, the form of resolution that is best determined by individuals. The fourth set of needs is *individual needs* that require to be met to engage fruitfully in urban life (Dewar and Uytendogaardt 1991:17).

### 2.1.3 Idea

Dewar and Uytendogaardt (1991) point out that *idea* translates the need and requirements into defined physical relationships. This idea, however, needs a specific context and process to make it a design – i.e. to concretise it into form. “Ideas ... are abstract: they do not take concrete physical form, although they are the beginning of design and without this design cannot proceed. Idea contains within it the generative form which supersedes the social, developmental and natural specifics of context” (Dewar and Uytendogaardt 1991:16). Therefore, ideas need places where they can develop into concrete physical form. This happens through order and form. This process is often influenced by existing ideas or tried solutions for specific needs. These may take the form of trends, styles or paradigms that are prevailing at a particular period in time, or cultural constructs that prescribe certain generic qualities – for example, the use of the *mandala* in Indian city-design.

### 2.1.4 Order and form

Norberg-Schultz (1985) refers to typology and morphology when describing the process of settlement design or transformation. Topology is concerned with spatial order and is concretised as “spatial organisation”. He uses the word “topology” to indicate that architectural and urban space derives from place (Greek: *topos*), rather than from abstract mathematical space (Norberg-Schultz 1985:27). This emphasises the contextual link and the process (socio-spatial) in which an abstract idea may be concretised into physical form. Urban morphology, on the other hand, is concerned with urban form (Moudon 1983; Norberg-Schultz 1984). The process of place-making can therefore occur on different scales – from a building (architecture) to a neighbourhood or city (urban design). In an urban design context, order is represented by the structure that organises urban elements and forms and facilitates actions. In this way it provides people with a sense of orientation. It also becomes the guiding force that provides a foundation to accommodate changing needs, such as use (social space) and form (physical space).



**Figure 1: Indian mandala as used as the "idea" in the design of Old Jaipur to inform order and guide built form, India.**

Form represents the two-, three- and four- dimensional concretisation of order and binds space through boundaries: when it manifests itself within the boundaries of the phenomenal world, it takes on a circumstantial aspect reflecting in its physical

appearance the situation of its occurrence at a particular place at a particular time” (Norberg-Schultz 1983:70). Form becomes the way of expressing order. In terms of urban design, form becomes a way to give figural quality to the environment.

### **2.1.5 Production and management**

Place-making is, however, not only limited to one person. Many people influence the modification of space. In this sense, it is also necessary to understand the production and management of space in a wider context, as well as the meaning it embodies for different actors. Cities are produced and reproduced, constantly changing and evolving to address emerging needs and accommodate new ideas. Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between perceived, conceived and lived spaces. Short (1996:371) expands this notion and distinguishes between the city as investment, the city as text and city images. He explains the production of the city in terms of these three themes: the production of the city through capital flows and consequent resistances; the production and reproduction of social and political power as embodied in the form of the city, and the production and consumption of the symbolic representation of the city in myth, ideologies and images. As such, changing space is also closely related to the meaning of space.

### **2.1.6 Meaning**

Urban form provides the setting for human behaviour and social interaction, which in turn provides the basis for meaning. For example, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, was constructed as a symbol for socialist China. However, due to the mass killings in 1989, the Square became associated with brutal repression and out-of-touch, aging, political leadership. In this way, the Square, built to commemorate Chinese communism, became a symbol of its tarnished reputation (Short 1996:40). This implies that meaning related to physical objects is not fixed and can also change over time through behaviour or specific use of space. Meaning is, therefore, not only conveyed through urban form, but also through images or perceptions of space, place or physical interventions (Levebre 1991; Short 1996).

### **2.1.7 Response**

If one maintains that physical space embodies meaning and that meaning may be interpreted differently, it is fair to assume that different actors will not always respond in a similar ways or, in the words of Short, “Between the production of urban form and its consumption falls the intervention of multiple, contested, changing readings” (1996:406). Due to contested meanings, various responses may often elicit tensions and even conflict within the urban environment. What is often less obvious is that these tensions are the end result of a long process of spatial transformation<sup>2</sup>.

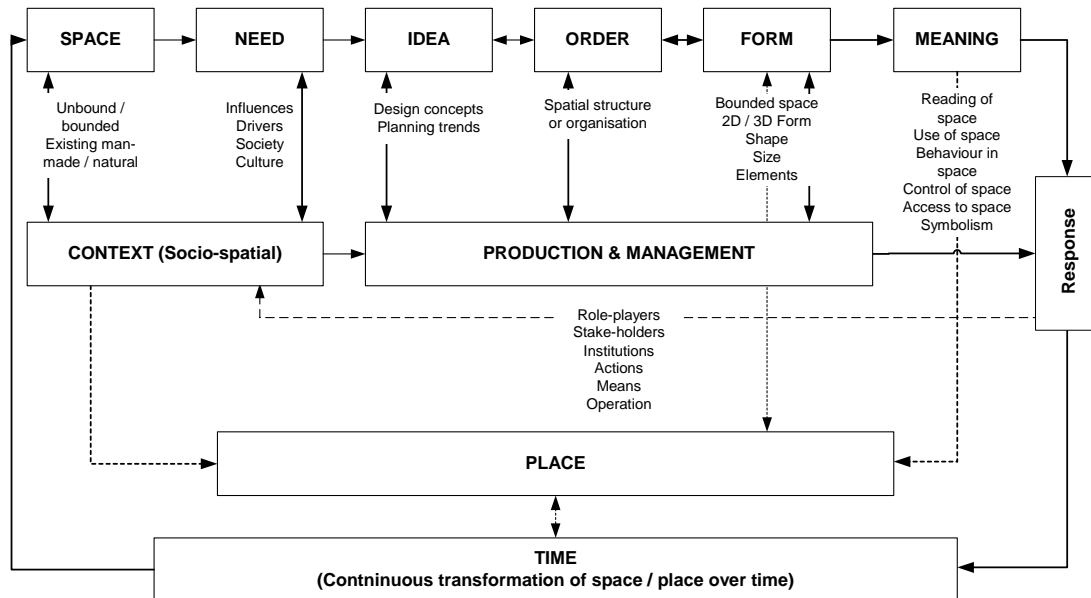
## **2.2 A Framework to understand the transformation of space**

This paper argues that in order to understand the transformation of urban space, one has to understand urban space and the aspects influencing its changes. The best way to

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the conceptual framework, see Landman (2006).

understand the urban development process is to concentrate on development agencies, the structures they interact with in the form of resources, rules and ideas, and the social and spatial contexts in which they operate (Madanipour 1996:154). This emphasises the close relationship between space and society: social drivers influence spatial change, which in turn contributes to specific social interpretation and response. This process is summarised in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: A conceptual framework to explain the process of changing of urban space.**

This framework offers a way to understand spatial transformation as a multidimensional process. This happens through a process that includes space, need, idea, order, form and meaning, and parallel with these, the production and management of the spatial intervention in a specific context. Space refers to the unbound natural or existing man-made space. This does not happen randomly. It is usually informed by particular needs or desires at a specific time (related to the context). The need/demand gives rise to an idea on how to address this need. This is the beginning of order, of structural organisation to manifest the idea in practice and guide form. Built form is the physical manifestation of the need and idea and takes on a particular shape, texture and size, which is measurable. It reflects the character of a space (immeasurable) and contributes to the creation of a particular place, which in turn can be modified over time. Space and place are not arbitrary. They encompass meaning. Spaces or places can therefore be “experienced” and can appeal to people’s feelings or emotions, for example, feeling comfortable in a place and feeling safe. In such a way it can also influence the use of space and thus people’s behavioural patterns. It is therefore not strange to accept that people can react differently to different spaces and places. Their reaction may depend on a number of predispositions, current feelings and experiences. Places can elicit a number of responses, which in turn can add to the transformation of specific spaces if deemed appropriate by a sufficient number of supporters. This returns the cycle to the beginning, where a need arises to change existing physical space. This process is influenced by a range of actors involved in the production and management of space, which constantly influences the need, idea, form, order and meaning in settlements.

Although this framework illustrates a highly simplified version of a complex process, it offers a way to conceptualise space and place in the urban design process and hence in practice; as well as understand some of the aspects involved in the process of urban transformation; although in a generic way. It can also be argued that this is a design process that is based on an individual designer's process and may therefore prove difficult to apply to a complex social process where many actors are involved and no one design the outcome. While this is true, a broader interpretation will allow for a wider application, where this framework becomes a representation of multiple processes where need represent a multiple range of needs, and production and management a wide range of actors involved in many actions that occur simultaneously and on a constant basis. If one takes such a viewpoint, the framework starts to offer a way to interpret spatial transformation and design in urban areas as part of a much broader socio-spatial process, building on previous research (Boyer 1995; Liggett & Perry 1995; Madanipour 1996, 2001; Short 1996; Graham & Healey 1999; Massey 1994; 1999). In addition, the conceptual framework provides a platform to explore specific spatial phenomena, for example gated communities, and how these developments relate to urban and neighbourhood transformation in general terms.

### **3 Applying the framework to analyse and understand urban transformation through gated communities**

The relevance of the framework is tested by applying it to analyse urban transformation through gated communities in South Africa. The research findings have indicated that gated communities<sup>3</sup> are a significant mechanism of urban transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, changing both neighbourhoods and cities in many ways. This raises the question as to how the issues discussed above translate into broader patterns regarding the process of transformation. This section highlights the main research findings and identifies the issues and patterns involved in this process in terms of the existing context, need, idea, order and form, production and management, meaning and response. It therefore serves to highlight the actual changes occurring in practice in a specific context (place and time) through a brief discussion of each aspect<sup>4</sup>.

#### **3.1 Context: perception of dangerous cities and people**

The South African urban landscape has been characterised by tremendous changes, not the least of all the major political transition from an authoritarian rule to democracy in 1994. This has also resulted in many other changes related to the production of a new spatial order in post apartheid South Africa and the interpretation of a new urban space.

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<sup>3</sup> Gated communities in South Africa are broadly categorised into two groups, namely enclosed neighbourhoods and security villages. *Enclosed neighbourhoods* refer to existing neighbourhoods that have been fenced or walled in and where access is controlled or prohibited by means of gates or booms that have been erected across existing public roads. *Large security estates* are private developments where the entire area is developed by a private developer. These areas/buildings are physically walled or fenced off and usually have a security gate or controlled access point, with or without a security guard. They offer an entire lifestyle package, including a secure environment; a range of services (garden services, refuse removal, etc.); and a variety of facilities and amenities such as golf courses, squash courts, cycle routes, hiking routes, equestrian routes and water activities.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Landman (2006).

The existing urban spaces are therefore reinterpreted within the context of post-apartheid transition.

The research indicated that the South African city is often perceived as a dangerous place, a place where “there was a certain level of nervousness about reversing into the street”, especially when certain groups were observed such as “black people in white BMWs”. The perception is that South Africa is more dangerous than disorderly cities abroad and that “crime ... goes on more here”. This can either relate to the entire city or in some cases to particular neighbourhoods, where the existing neighbourhood is perceived as disorderly, for example in the neighbourhood studied in Pretoria before the roads were closed. As indicated by Horn (2004b), there is a close relationship between the perception of social disorder and crime. This perception is furthermore fuelled by the media, which contributes to the increase in the fear of crime (Schönteich and Louw 2001). A national victim of crime survey conducted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in 2003 revealed that, despite the fact that South Africa’s crime rates have decreased or stabilised during the past five to seven years, the public’s fear of crime has increased between 1998 and 2003 (Mistry 2004).

### **3.2 Need: searching for safety, a sense of community and the ideal place**

As pointed out previously, spatial transformation is usually informed by particular needs at a specific time within a particular society or culture, reflecting the social context. The growth of gated communities in South Africa is based on a need to address a range of fears, insecurities and desires of predominantly middle-higher income South Africans, but not restricted to them. Residents expressed fear of crime, of strangers, of unknown people frequenting neighbourhood spaces, of different cultural groups or neighbourhood heterogeneity and of neighbourhood degeneration related to social and physical disorder, including a lack of or ineffective management and maintenance of infrastructure and open space. These fears create much insecurity regarding the future of the neighbourhood and city, the value of properties and the quality of life possible within these spaces. As a result, they are translated into a need for greater safety, a sense of community and the ideal living place.

The need for enhanced safety and security dominates in all the cases studied, including the need to feel safer. Security and safety is also linked to a greater sense of community and identity, the need to bring the entire community together to support common ideals and values. This resulted in a desire for ideal places that would be able to fulfil these needs. In the enclosed neighbourhoods the primary desire is for old suburban neighbourhoods, a “typical ... South African suburb of 20 to 30 years ago, where people used to walk around and play in the street”. Another recurring theme notion is the desire to live in a village, preferably one reflective of far-away places such as England or Italy (Tuscany).

### **3.3 Idea: contained neighbourhoods**

These needs and desires give rise to ideas on how to address them. These ideas are based on abstract concepts translated to specific design models or planning trends that are often imported from abroad, combined by local variations or adaptations. In the case of enclosed neighbourhoods, residents combined concepts of Crime Prevention through

Environmental Design (CPTED) with ideas to recreate old suburban neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods combined ideas from Howard's Garden City concept and Perry's neighbourhood unit such as rural-like residential neighbourhoods with a central park for neighbourhood and community activities, as well as self-contained and inwardly focused residential areas with access to green open space.

Larger security estates incorporate a wider range of ideas, based on selective notions of the Garden City and Neighbourhood Unit, similar to those mentioned above, combined with a partial inclusion of elements from both New Urbanism's Ideal Neighbourhood and in some cases limited notions from the Urban Villages movement, such as an appeal for a rural-like village atmosphere within an urban environment. In this regard is it more reflective of the old concept of Garden Cities, retrofitted to be applicable in a new context of growing insecurity. All these elements are combined with a selected application of CPTED, based on the principles of territoriality, defensible space, target hardening and access control, to create the ideal living place, probably best described by the terms "lifestyle estate" or "lifestyle village", depending on the nature of the security estate.

What also becomes apparent is that in order to address the fears, insecurities and desires, the demarcation of territory becomes increasingly important; hence the idea of the "contained" neighbourhood though hard boundaries and strict security measures to control access. As such, there is a growing "fortress mentality" in South Africa. In this way the idea is the beginning of order, of structural organisation to manifest idea and guide the built form.

### **3.4 Order and form: changing space through walls and gates**

In enclosed neighbourhoods in South Africa, interventions were restricted to what is possible in an existing neighbourhood within the policy framework of the local authority. These included interventions such as fencing-in the neighbourhood, closing roads through gates or booms, and in some cases upgrading existing neighbourhood spaces such as the park or providing additional infrastructure for example neighbourhood lights, traffic calming measures and additional road signs. Some of the roads are completely inaccessible as the gates are locked permanently, while others allows restricted access through booms or gates that are either operated by remote control or manned by security guards. The incorporation of facilities depends on what were available prior to closure.

New developments on greenfield sites allows more freedom to incorporate a wider range of ideas. Security estates in South Africa incorporates all the physical elements related to security including perimeter walls and fences, often electrified and enhanced with surveillance cameras or alarm systems, access control measures such as booms and/or gates combined with visitor check-in-booths, and/or PIN numbers or access disc for residents. In most cases there are separate entrance lanes for residents and visitors. The design of these features, including very elaborate entrance gates, also contributes to the image and identity of the estate and reflects the implementation of an aesthetic of security in South Africa. The layout of the estates features organic ("village") road networks structured around prominent parks or gardens, natural features such as hills or rivers and/or amenities such as a golf course.

### **3.5 Production and management: mobilizing community and council support**

The process of physical transformation in cities is influenced by a range of actors involved in the production and management of the physical space. The process of establishment and management differs between the two types of gated communities studied. Enclosed neighbourhoods are established through a process of community mobilisation led by a homeowners association (HOA) in municipalities that makes provision for road closures for security purposes. The role of the HOA is to promote the idea, obtain community support to require the stipulated percentage of support from residents, manage resistance or objections, acquire the relevant crime statistics and commission a traffic impact study, compile an application and submit it to the local council, and manage the transformation of the neighbourhood, including the erection of gates and fences and acquiring the services of a private security firm in many cases. The HOA is also responsible for the ongoing management of the neighbourhood, which may include management of the security initiatives, finances and in some case upgrading and maintaining existing infrastructure.

Large security estates are established by private developers, usually on private undeveloped land on the urban periphery. The developers buy the land, obtain the development rights, develop the infrastructure and sell the individual plots. In order to attract potential buyers, developers have to focus great attention on the marketing of the estate. After an initial phase, the neighbourhood management is usually transferred from the developers to the newly established residents association in the estate, which is responsible for all the day-to-day management, the maintenance of the amenities, such as parks and golf course, the estate finances, security and compliance with estate rules and regulations. Changing the nature of physical space through extensive fortification has therefore also paved the way for the transformation and privatisation of local management.

As is the characteristic of many current developments world-wide (Harvey, 1990; Madanipour, 1996a), the built environment in South Africa is also treated as a commodity as evident through the establishment different types gated communities, to be produced and traded by those with influence. Therefore certain residents will only buy property in enclosed neighbourhoods or stay on in neighbourhoods if they are closed-off, while others desire more than that and are prepared to pay for the entire lifestyle package. The dynamics of investment flows therefore becomes an important factor affecting the contemporary South African city. Within this context, the management of the particular commodity, gated communities in this case, becomes very important. These processes start to reflect the creation of an additional level of governance, namely that of micro-governments responsible for their demarcated neighbourhoods or territories. It is also indicative of the privatisation of local governance through the establishment and operation of strong HOAs. These trends contribute to the creation of a new form of collective power that facilitates a new mechanism of local control.

In both of the types of gated communities studied, the transformation of physical space is closely related to the control of neighbourhood space. This includes control of who enters and control of behaviour inside. Access control is partly obtained through fences and gates. However, these elements cannot always guarantee social behaviour, which introduces the security guards as significant actors, combined with strict rules,

regulations and controls of what should be allowed and what not, especially in the case of large security estates. The legal framework in large estates therefore becomes a way to preserve lifestyle standards and safeguard land and housing values. The nature of access restriction and extent of control in enclosed neighbourhoods depends on the local authority rules and regulations for public space. However, in practise new urban spaces and territories are created that are neither purely public nor purely private, as also indicated by the conference organisers.

### **3.6 Meaning: Creating exclusive neighbourhoods and groups**

As mentioned before, the built environment encompasses meaning and according to Short (1996) any significant physical intervention will condense the different levels of meaning based on competing ideas, differing values, and antagonistic political and economic forces. This has been clearly demonstrated through the manifestation of gated communities in South Africa. The different levels of meaning relates to access to and use of space, behaviour in space and management and control of space.

Enclosed neighbourhoods contribute to the privatisation of public space, and often the opportunities and facilities contained within by restricting access into exiting neighbourhoods through booms or gates across roads. This has a major impact on traffic and movement patterns, especially where there is a large concentration of gated communities in area. As a result traffic congestion and travelling time increases, while pedestrians and cyclists have to negotiate these busy arterials. Consequently, their vulnerability is increased, as well as levels of discomfort and travelling time. In this way, through the privatisation of what lawfully still remains public space, accessibility is restricted to such an extent that has a major impact on the daily use patterns of urban residents in Johannesburg and Tshwane. Common urban space for recreation is also privatised in security estates, along with facilities and amenities such as walking trails, sports facilities and parks, offering no access to any one outside the estate, except on invitation from residents. In this way, urban spaces are created in South Africa that are simultaneously 'public', but not open to all and private, but open to many co-owners, as is the case internationally (stated by the conference organisers).

This creates a dilemma: while public spaces are effectively privatised, legally roads and other spaces inside the neighbourhoods remains public property. This has many implications for access restriction and the violation of human rights. Through the case studies it became clear that this is a very sensitive issue and that the right to freedom of access to public roads have in fact been violated in many enclosed neighbourhoods. This also leads to the reconstruction of social space through gated communities through concepts such as "our place" - "we're saying that this is our place, we are here, leave us alone". This in turn creates fertile ground for stereotyping and exclusion, where particular groups who "looks suspicious", blacks and groups of young males are refused entry. Actions such as these start to create resentment and resistance and eventually lead to conflict between those who lobby for neighbourhood transformation, i.e. closing the neighbourhood and those against neighbourhood closures.

### **3.7 Response: dividing the city**

According to Short (1996) residents are concerned in contradictory ways with different environments. Residents often respond to proposed or existing developments in the physical and social environments to obtain facilities or services in the resource environment, contributing to conflicts and contradictory spaces (Levebre 1991). This can happen in two ways namely through stopping or protecting and getting or enhancing. Therefore different groups of residents respond differently in order to either protect or gain resources in urban environments (Short 1996). This is illustrated very well through the response to gated communities in South Africa, especially through opposing responses at the Public Hearings in both Johannesburg and Tshwane.

It was perceived by many outside gated communities that those inside are getting or enhancing control over local resources inside, including former public spaces such as roads, sidewalks and parks, as well as a range of facilities and amenities. It also included the privatisation of natural resources such as dams and rivers or access to these. Many saw their own role as that of stopping these actions as a civil duty to all the residents in the city and towards greater freedom of movement as advocated by the post apartheid ideology. These antagonists questioned the moral implications of physical interventions and maintained that the levels of crime have been exaggerated to justify physical enclosure or that crime was used as a smokescreen for other motives. Enclosed neighbourhoods were also perceived as providing an unfair advantage to its residents in terms of increased property prices at the expense of those outside. This also gave rise to many questions regarding the implementation of democratic governance and fair taxation. Given this, transforming urban space through gated communities was perceived as “social injustice”, “land grabbing”, “a new form of apartheid”, and “images of anarchy”. In this way the response to gated communities in South Africa reflects a divided city and contributed to further division as different groups lobbied either for or against them.

The tensions between the different opposing groups become so heated that local authorities were forced to intervene. In the initial phases there was a deflection of the existence and impact of gated developments, as municipalities recognised the need for safety and almost turned a blind eye to these developments. In the cases of security estates, some officials acknowledged the benefits for the council related to private infrastructure development and a large tax base. However, as time passes and the impact and implications become more apparent, the local authorities are taking a stronger stance, revising their policies and enforcing stronger regulations and control.

Changing physical spaces and places can therefore elicit a number of responses from different actors based on contested meanings, which in turn can add to the transformation of these spaces if deemed appropriate by a sufficient number of supporters. Over time, this re-establishes a need to change existing physical space, for example to remove certain gates and fences that are illegal, as occurred in the City of Johannesburg.

### **3.8 Mapping the process of gating in South Africa**

This discussion illustrates how particular needs and ideas in South Africa influenced the transformation of the physical space through order and form and how this in turn

influenced the social space through the experiences and behaviour of different groups within the cities. It also highlights the close relationship between the re-production of spaces and the interactions of various private and public actors to counter or support a range of actions and reactions, related to both physical and social space. This process is summarised in Figure 3.

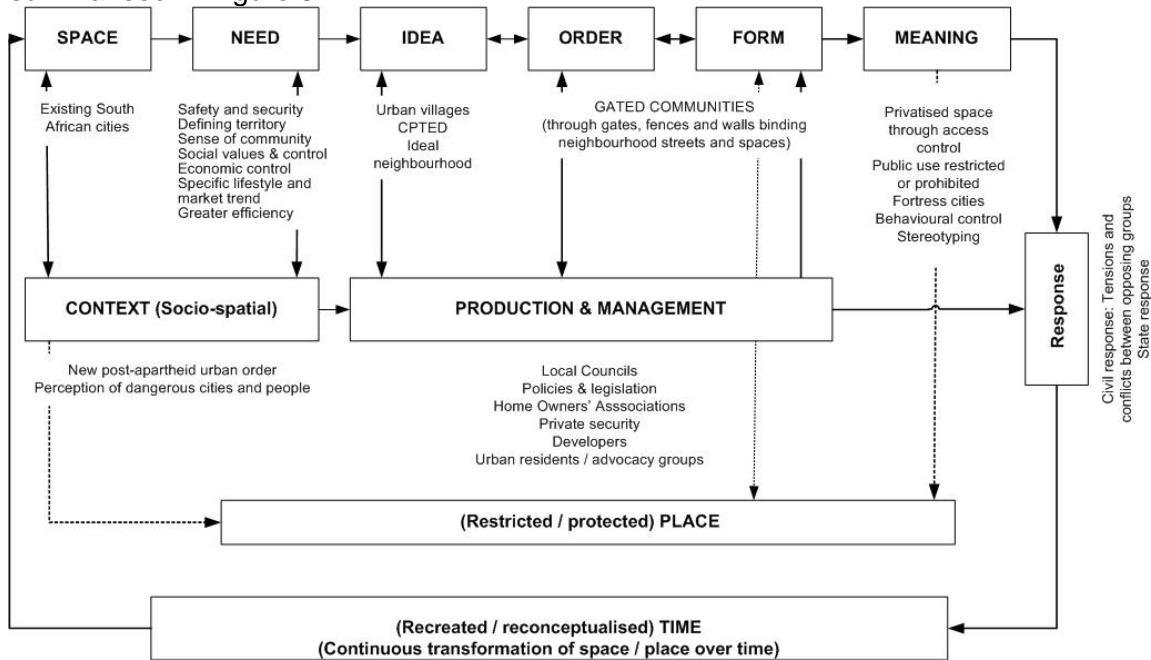


Figure 3: The reconstruction of urban space through gated communities in South Africa

## 4 Transformation of public space and its implications for urban governance

### 4.1 Transformation of public space over time

Urban form is dynamic and continuously changing in direct relationship to its producers and inhabitants, through a continuous process of spatial transformation. Therefore, when needs or urban activities change, urban form has to adapt to these and change as well. Tensions, however, emerge when over-emphasis on individual places leads to the transformation of public spaces into privatised common spaces for only a selected few through, for example, privatisation and access control. The question is whether this poses a problem in cities. In order to address this question one needs to explore the relevance of public space in cities. There are many definitions of public space, highlighting different aspects such as the common ground (Carr et al)<sup>5</sup>, sharing through contact with strangers and peaceful coexistence (Walzer)<sup>6</sup>, or free access (Tibbals)<sup>7</sup>. In

<sup>5</sup> For example, one definition considers public space as “the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routine of daily life or in periodic festivities” (Carr *et al.* 1992, cited in Madanipour 1996a:146).

<sup>6</sup> For Walzer (1986), “Public space is space we share with strangers, people who aren’t our relatives, friends, or work associates. It is space for politics, religion, commerce, sport; space for peaceful coexistence and impersonal encounter” (cited in Madanipour 1996a:146).

essence, public space can be summarised as "... space that allows all the people to have access to it and the activities within it, which is controlled by a public agency, and which is provided and managed by public interest" (Madanipour 1996a:148).

Public space is important because it "expresses and also conditions our public life, civic culture, everyday discourse" (Walzer cited in Madanipour 1996a:146). Tibbals points out that the public realm is "the most important part of our towns and cities. It is where the greatest amount of human contact and interaction takes place" (in Madanipour 1996a:146). It is therefore important that the development of urban public space, as part of a larger public sphere, addresses the tensions inherent in the contemporary transformation of the urban public realm and contributes to the emergence of an urbanism which promotes social integration and tolerance (Madanipour 1999:879).

## **4.2 Practical implications: relevance for urban governance**

The development of gated communities contributes to the creation of a series of contradictory spaces in the city and starts to raise fundamental questions about the relationship between the public and private realm within cities. Gated communities contributes to the restructuring of urban space through the transformation of physical spaces from open spaces to closed spaces or neighbourhoods through physical objects such as gates, booms, fences and walls. This has a number of spatial implications. Physical objects, such as gates, booms, fences and walls, create physical separation between neighbourhoods in the city, contributing to spatial fragmentation and segregation in the city, often hampering accessibility on various levels. This is especially the case where traditional public spaces such as parks, roads, and smaller neighbourhood facilities are privatised on such a large scale that the proportion between public and private space are completely skewed, leaving limited and often under-developed public spaces for those who are not welcome or cannot afford to live within gated communities.

Restructuring the physical space also facilitates the creation of a new urban order through new mechanisms of local control in the form of micro-governance. This has begun to reflect the creation of an additional level of governance through the establishment of powerful homeowners' associations, which manifest many forms of private governance at a neighbourhood level. These private micro-governments rely on private security, as well as strict rules and regulations, to control their demarcated territories and ensure social control and appropriate behaviour. This is indicative of how territorial control underlies social control, or how a specific structure facilitates a particular function.

The social implications relates to the reconstruction of social relations within the city between those who have access to the newly established private spaces and those who are excluded for a range of reasons. Experiences of social space differentiate between the levels of access to newly privatised common spaces, ranging from experiences of inclusion to those of exclusion. In this way gated communities facilitate the production and reproduction of social and political power as embodied in the form of the city, often

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<sup>7</sup> Another definition of the public realm is concerned with access: "all the parts of the urban fabric to which the public have physical and visual access. Thus, it extends from the streets, parks and squares of a town or city into the buildings which enclose and line them" (Tibbals, cited in Madanipour 1996a:146).

evident through the establishment of private micro-governments. This creates problems regarding democratic representation and the accountability of the micro-governments and their private security forces, which exacerbates the large inequalities in these cities and contributes to the violation of human rights. Many of these micro-governments start to challenge the authority of local councils and the state police, which may significantly undermine the achievement of greater democracy in the post-apartheid South African city, unless a way can be found to mitigate rising tensions between different opposing groups.

## 5 Conclusion

The process of spatial transformation or re-production of urban space is constantly influenced by a large number of actors, development agencies and tools present in a specific place at a particular time. In this way the production and management of the city is closely related to the meaning of the built form, as certain actors, both public and private, start to enforce or restrict behaviour through the modification and management of physical space. In order to start mapping the elements involved in this complex process of spatial transformation, the paper introduced a conceptual framework that was found to be appropriate to map the process of spatial change through gated communities and highlight the relationships of the different aspects involved.

The discussion highlighted the multiple complexities of spatial transformation within the South African context. It also confirmed that there are a variety of interpretations of space and spatial change, depending on the observer and observed within a particular urban context. Questioning the nature of existing space in a specific context at a particular point in time can therefore also lead to the redefinition of the nature and meaning of physical and social space by a particular group, such as a neighbourhood association. This in turn has a significant impact on the role of and interactions between public and private actors, as evident through the privatisation of neighbourhood space and governance. Consequently, the establishment of gated communities contribute to the creation of a series of contradictory spaces in the city and start to raise fundamental questions about the relationship between the public and private realm within cities, the scale of enclosed spaces and the proportion of public space to private space. It is therefore important to re-consider the nature, role and relevance of public space and the inherent tensions created between various groups through the privatization of many of these spaces and their governance in South Africa.

The conceptual framework also offers a way to engage in further research. The framework could be used to study any neighbourhood-scale development in cities, how it contributes to spatial transformation and the impact and implications of this process of transformation (especially if multiplied across the city) for metropolitan planning and local urban governance. It offers a way to engage a multi-dimensional and dynamic approach to spatial research and establishes a foundation to commence an inter- and trans-disciplinary inquiry around the nature and transformation of the public/private realm in contemporary cities and its implications for urban governance. Through a multidimensional and trans-disciplinary approach to spatial research, the study of spatial transformation can be greatly enhanced to include an understanding of the complexities of the process and offer a practical way to decision-makers and interveners to deal with constant urban changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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