City Improvement Districts and gated communities in Southern African cities: Security, identities and competing legitimacies

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Abstract

The past decades witnessed the rapid expansion of private security in Southern African cities. Two models have gained momentum at neighbourhood level: while gated communities have became emblematic of the heightened protection of residential suburban areas, the North American model of Business Improvement Districts was adopted to secure public spaces in commercial, corporate as well as residential areas in suburbs and inner cities. The spatial spreading of these models has brought up significant shifts in the way that urban space is being controlled, used and shared. Significant changes are also underway in the organization and governance of these neighbourhoods: the growing involvement of the private sector in security provision and urban management puts into question the role of the state and blurs the boundaries between public, community-based and private stakeholders. Drawing on a collective research conducted in South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique, the analysis shows how the issue of control over local space, heavily linked to security matters, and community identities, is an object of competing legitimacies.

Keywords: Gated communities; City Improvement Districts; Security; Identities; Southern Africa.

Introduction

The past decades have witnessed the rapid expansion of private security in Southern African cities fed by feelings of insecurity linked to high levels of crime and violence or perceived as such. Two models have gained momentum at neighbourhood level: while gated communities have became emblematic of the heightened protection of residential suburban areas, the North-American model of Business

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Improvement Districts (BIDs) was mainly adopted to secure public spaces in commercial, corporate as well as residential areas in both suburbs and inner cities.

The rise of gated communities has been observed in Southern African countries (South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique) since the 1980’s, while the other continents have attracted much interest, few studies have been devoted to analyzing this phenomenon in the African context, in particular in a comparative perspective, with the notable exception of work on South Africa (Landman 2000, 2003, 2006; Jürgens and Gnad 2000; Boisteau 2003; Lemanski 2004) and Ghana (Grant 2006). Factors of emergence, forms and implications of the development of gated communities in highly segregated cities and in countries in political transition have received little academic attention so far. The BID model is a more recent phenomenon on the African continent and only concerns a few countries besides South Africa (Gabon and Kenya). It has been adopted since the 1994 democratic transition in several South African cities (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, among others) under the name of City Improvement Districts (CIDs) as a tool to support urban and economic regeneration. A growing body of literature has analysed various aspects of CIDs, from the process of policy transfer to security and governance arrangements (Morange and Didier 2006a, 2006b; Peyroux 2006, 2008; Miraftab 2007, Dubresson 2008; Didier, Peyroux and Morange 2009; Didier, Morange and Peyroux, forthcoming).

The spatial spreading of these two models at the metropolitan scale has brought up significant shifts in the way urban space is being controlled, used and shared. Such developments have an impact on urban forms, spatial practices, but also and especially on social relations, the internal dynamics of communities and the relationship between citizens and state.

Significant changes are underway in the organization and governance of these neighborhoods: change in both public and private policing has lead to a growing complexity of security provision and policing arrangements that is reflected in the current debates on the pluralization, commodification and privatisation of policing (Johnston 1999; Bayley and Shearing 1996; Newburn 2001; Jones and Newburn 2002). The growing involvement of the private sector in security provision and urban management puts into question the role of the state, as well as its relations with society and its legitimacy in light of developments already observed under the effects of globalization (du Bois de Gaudusson and Medard 2001; Medard 1991). The private provision of security also blurs the boundaries between public, community-based and private stakeholders. Furthermore, in the context of decentralization and participatory urban governance (based on global principles adopted unevenly in the different cities studied), neighbourhoods have become a scale of growing importance in urban management (Brenner 2004; Jaglin 2008) and pits stakeholders in competition against each other. Even if security has never been (not less than elsewhere in Africa) a state monopoly (Garland 1996; Jones and Newburn 2002), the state is nonetheless constantly trying to reassert its presence in a crucial sector for its domination over wider policy.

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2 Case studies have been mainly carried out in the North American context (Blakely and Snyder 1997, Le Goix 2006), in Europe (Atkinson and Blandy, 2006; Billard, Chevalier and Madoré 2005, Charmes 2005), in Latin America and Asia (Caldeira, 2000, Capron 2006), as well as in a comparative perspective (Glasze et al. 2005, Bagaen and Uduku, 2009).

3 See Peyroux and Bénit-Gbaffou (2009) for a detailed presentation and contextualisation of the debates in Sub-Saharan African cities.

4 The starting point of the programme in 2003 was to understand the multiplication of road closures in Johannesburg, Nairobi and Ibadan – in a spatial, security and urban governance perspective. A comparison of road-closures in Ibadan, Nairobi and Johannesburg was conducted with a common methodological framework combining statistical and cartographic tools (e.g. GIS) with qualitative methods. The results of such a comparison are presented in Bénit-Gbaffou, Owuor and Fubiyyi (2009). The research was later extended to other forms of privatisation of security (within gated estates, CIDs, commercial areas such as the Cape Town Water
Institute of South Africa (IFAS) and the French Institutes for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nairobi and IFRA-Ibadan) (Bénit-Gbaffou, Fabiyi and Peyroux 2009), this paper focuses on the development of gated communities (in Cape Town, Maputo and Windhoek), and of CIDs (in Johannesburg and Cape Town) and assesses their socio-spatial and political implications. The focus on Southern Africa allows pointing out the specificity of these two phenomenon and putting into perspective North American and European approaches. Beyond the apparent similarity of forms observed across continents, there are indeed a variety of processes rooted in the specific context of Southern African cities. We believe this specificity can be best explored by looking into issues related to the control over local space in a context of changing spatial and social boundaries within the cities.

The first section of the paper locates gated communities and CIDs in the context of Southern African cities and presents the local definitions and the issues surrounding them, emphasizing the importance of taking into account the processes of democratic transition and the legacy of urban segregation and inequality patterns. The second section explores the driving force behind the studied objects, and more particularly the complex and multidimensional nature of the fear of crime and the feelings of insecurity, linking it with current processes of social and spatial change. The final section addresses the conflicts and tensions around social control issues in public spaces. The comparative analysis shows how the issue of control over local space, heavily linked to security matters, and community identities, is an object of competing legitimacies.

Gated communities and CIDs in context

Democratic transition and the legacy of urban segregation patterns in Southern African cities

Three specificities regarding the political contexts can be pointed out as they shape the issues of security, identities and legitimacy at stake in this analysis.

The three countries studied are in a context of democratic transition: since the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa and Namibia (early 1990’s) and since the end of the civil war in Mozambique (1980’s). These countries are young nations in the making: they witnessed the adoption of a multi-party political system, market-based economy and free elections. Mozambique is recovering from three decades of civil war that led to a strong control of the dominant party, but left a weakened state administration; South Africa and Namibia, which emerge from decades of apartheid, are actively building their democracy. These elements produce specific contexts: democratic transitions often allow a large enough opening to unprecedented experience of security governance (as is the case for example in South Africa), but the fragility of these states in the making also places security as a strong national issue and a central object of political struggle, between state and non state actors, or within states themselves.

A second specificity is affirmed with respect to discussions on the North: the importance of daily insecurity, affecting all social classes (even if the forms of insecurity vary), and a lack of public response supplemented by a set of private or collective, more or less formal, alternatives, which have been amply highlighted by Baker (2008) in his analysis of "multi-choice policing".

A third specificity, related to the first two, is the importance of violence as a mode of regulation of social relations marked by a high level of social inequality (in the form of sporadic violent attacks, of everyday forms of popular justice or self-defence as the case in South Africa). The extreme social inequality, especially in large cities, also leads to the “banalisation” of "enclaves" (Dorier-Apprill et Front), including vigilantism. The methodology used in the other case studies mostly relies on qualitative methods (in-depths interviews with residents and key public and private stakeholders, observation, press analysis).

5 The team included researchers from the universities of Nairobi, Ibadan, Lagos, Maputo, Windhoek, Wits; universities of Paris-X, Paris-XIII, Marseille, Reims, Ecole Normale Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Lyon, Institut français d’urbanisme.
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al. 2008) as a means of protection of elites in line with the dual colonial urbanism. complexes, residential enclosures, neighbourhood patrols, and in general all forms of local protection against an enemy or a danger perceived as an outsider and as a potential threat, represent perhaps in Sub-Saharan African cities, an urban “norm”, whose social legitimacy is less contested than in Northern contexts.

Urban contexts share both commonalities and specificities: All cities are characterised by strong patterns of segregation and intra-urban inequalities, with various degrees depending on the colonial legacy and the capacity of recent trends to overcome inherited patterns. Johannesburg and Cape Town are post-apartheid cities characterised by slow desegregation processes. Windhoek exemplifies the combination of the colonial segregated African city and of the apartheid city characterized by long lasting imported traditions of town planning. Maputo epitomizes the segregated colonial city funded by the Portuguese and reshaped by the socialist tradition of town-planning, its commercial and administrative city centre contrasting with informal settlements scattered all over the city. Neo-liberal contexts in Mozambique and South Africa have particularly exacerbated social inequalities.

There are however contextual differences linked to the size and positions of the cities. Cape Town and Johannesburg are two globalising South African cities (respectively 9 and 3 million inhabitants for the Gauteng and the Cape Metropolitan Areas\(^6\)) that drive South Africa’s economic development. Windhoek and Maputo are medium-size regional nodes and capital cities (220 000 and 1 050 000 residents respectively\(^7\)).

**Gated communities and CID}s: local definitions and related issues**

The **gated communities**, also referred to as “Gated Residential Developments” (GRDs) by some of the authors (following the terminology of Smith Bowers and Manzi 2006), studied in this paper refer to the three forms of gated communities distinguished in the typology of Blakely and Snyder (1997) (“Lifestyle Communities”, “Luxury Communities”, “Security Zone”). However, as has been noted in other contexts, the boundaries between these categories are porous and vary greatly from one country or one city to another. If gated estates in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Maputo, and in Windhoek in a lesser extent, can be compared to “prestige” and “lifestyle” gated communities, some subdivisions for middle income earners sometimes do little more than the function of guarding and security, public facilities being rare or absent. In South Africa, the common names for these gated estates are security villages, security estates, cluster houses or townhouse complexes (also prevalent in Windhoek). They emphasize the security dimension as well as the forms of these complexes (Morange and Vivet 2006). The term *condominium* used in Maputo is the term used in the Latin American context and refers to the legal nature of the complex (a shared property) (Capron 2004).

Gated estates in the three cities studied house a large segment of the urban population, ranging from upper income to lower middle-income households (this is however more noticeable in Cape Town and Windhoek than in Maputo where private estates are mostly occupied by expatriates) (Folio 2007). Private stakeholders such as developers operating at regional and international level, estate agents, Multinational firms, NGO’s and international aid networks (in the case of Mozambique) have been instrumental in the circulation and spreading of the gated communities model in Southern Africa (Morange, Folio, Peyroux and Vivet 2009).

The phenomenon of **road-closures**, also known as “residential enclosures”, corresponds to security zones identified by Blakely and Snyder: These are residential areas whose originally opened access is barred by the residents themselves and where areas are monitored by security guards hired by the residents. Patrols conducted by private security companies or the residents themselves can also be found. If this phenomenon has become widespread in Johannesburg, it is virtually unknown in Cape

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\(^6\) South Africa CSS, 2001 population census.

In South African cities, the enclosure is mostly part of the repertoire of relatively affluent neighbourhoods. Lower income neighbourhoods instead resort to patrols to protect the residents.

If these enclosures share some characteristics with gated estates (the presence of a wall or a fence, the surveillance of residential areas), they differ in several respects. First, the motivation for road closures is mainly the search for security (and in some cases the wish to protect land and housing values) while gated estates meet other needs. While the security argument is in the core of discourses and practices of developers in Johannesburg, and to a lesser extent in Cape Town, it is secondary in Maputo and Windhoek (Folio, Marlen and Chicamissé 2009; Morange et al. 2009). Quality of life, services and infrastructures, investment and patrimony are mentioned first in estate agents discourse in both cities. The fortress-like aspects of the GRDs are also contrasted. Second, the phenomenon of enclosure represents a de facto privatization of public space, as the roads remain the property of the state unlike in the private complexes. This is the subject of heated public debate in post-apartheid Johannesburg. This public debate not only confronts citizens and state but also divides citizens themselves as shown by the public hearings launched by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) in 2004. Opponents stressed the illegality of some of the road closures and the subsequent usurpation of law-making and law enforcement by residents (Bénit-Gbaffou 2006). They also pointed out that road closures violate the constitutional rights of freedom of movements enshrined in the Constitution and the non-discrimination principles that laid the ground for the new South Africa (Tshelha 2003). The social and spatial impacts of road closures (especially their negative effect on traffic patterns and mobility) were criticized as well (Kruger and Landman 2003; Mabin et al. 2001). Accordingly, the enclosures are being constantly renegotiated between the state and the residents, and require the constant mobilization and contribution of residents (in time and money). These elements (the negotiated character of road-closures, the voluntary nature of collective mobilization) make the enclosures resemble other forms of community policing. Finally, they also strongly differ in terms of management: gated estates are fully private, and the residents’ contribution is purely financial, and regulated by mandatory condominium/body corporate rules.

The clarification of the differences between gated estates and road closures is important for analyzing the factors of emergence as well as the issues and conflicts surrounding them.

City Improvement Districts (CIDs) in Johannesburg and Cape Town are geographic areas within which property owners and/or tenants agree to pay an additional tax (levy) in order to provide supplementary services to those supplied by the local authorities: this includes security, cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, and also increasingly marketing, branding, and landscaping. These services are only provided within the selected perimeter (it is based on the principle of ring-fencing). The BID model originated in North America in the 1970’s and the 1980’s before spreading to other countries like Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Japan, Germany and some countries in Eastern Europe (Hoyt 2006; Ward 2006; Pütz 2008). The transfer of BIDs in South Africa, analyzed by Didier, Morange and Peyroux (2009), share similarities with other contexts: it is a voluntary transfer orchestrated by private actors and it highlights the influential role played by international professional networks. The explicit reference to BIDs as ”best international practices” based on Western experience underlines the attraction of iconic U.S cities like New York.

CIDs have been mostly established in business and corporate districts in inner cities and suburban economic nodes in order to provide a secure environment for employees and customers and support

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8 This is not the case in cities in Nigeria and Kenya, where one can also find "enclosures of the poor" in low income neighbourhoods (see Bénit-Gbaffou, Owuor and Fabiyi 2009).
9 Although there is no standard definition of community policing, this term refers to a form of production of security based on cooperation between local residents and police. This cooperation aims at fostering integration and responsibility (accountability) of the police as well as the empowerment of residents. The approach is based on local problem-solving activities.
property values (Peyroux 2008). They form part of wider local economic development strategies that promote both business and leisure tourism. The adoption of the CID model in densely populated residential areas illustrates the mobilization of this tool for the rehabilitation of inner city neighbourhoods heavily marked by the degradation of public spaces, overcrowding and the deterioration of relations between tenants and landlords (Didier, Peyroux and Morange 2009).

Although the perimeters of the CID are not enclosed, the logic is similar to gated communities: the demand for security is one of the driving forces behind mobilization (Morange and Didier 2008). CID spend a large budget for monitoring activities of public spaces, especially in downtown Johannesburg where crime and insecurity have risen sharply since the early 1990s. The formula of CID is perceived as an ideal solution accommodating both the demands of the fight against crime and insecurity and the need for urban regeneration in a neoliberal context (Didier, Morange and Peyroux 2009). They participate in a process of neo-liberalization practices and urban policy (Didier, Morange and Peyroux, forthcoming) that has been widely analysed in the Northern context (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez 2002; Brenner and Theodore 2002). The justification of the North American model is rooted in international and local policies that promote the role of the private sector, both commercial and non-profit (Baron and Peyroux, 2011), and the search for competitiveness as part of a trend towards "urban entrepreneurialism" (Harvey, 1989, Hall and Hubbard, 1996). The choice of the paradigm of "World-Class African City" by public authorities justifies and reinforces these policy choices. Associations of property owners also play a leading role in partnership with public authorities. Finally, like gated communities, CIDs are intended to control and regulate the uses and practices of public space. They are debated regarding their consequences in terms of local democracy, privatization and commodification of public space (Toepfer; Eick and Sambale 2007).

Fear of crime and local identities in a changing political environment

Political change and communities identities

One of the major and most discussed assumptions about the rise of private security and gated communities refers to the levels of crime and the growing feelings of insecurity among the urban population.

In South Africa, explanations for gated communities have primarily emphasised the fear of crime and the high levels of feelings of insecurity among the wealthy white population (Landman and Schönteich 2002). Rising unemployment and the abolition of influx control had already fostered fears over security among the white population in the 1980’s (Parnell and Pirie 1991). Surveys conducted on the reasons explaining road closures highlight the belief of the majority of residents that gates and booms make people safer and that they are a way of relieving the fear of crime despite a lack of statistics showing that enclosures reduce crime (Naudé 2004).

Sociological surveys have shown how fear of crime is a complex phenomenon whose roots are subjected to different theoretical explanations (Body-Gendrot 2000; Bannister and Fyfe 2001; Johnston 2001). The disparity between objective risks and subjective fear has been stressed for a long time in the sociological and criminological literature. Studies conducted in the European and North American cities tend to point out that a significant part of what one takes to be the fear of crime represents a “displaced” urban anxiety including attributes such as “insecurity with modern living”, “quality of life”, perception of “disorder” or “urban unease” (Silverman and Della-Giustina 2001). Davis (2006: 224) underlines how “the social perception of threat becomes a function of the security mobilization itself, not crime rates”. In this case, it relates to other forms of social insecurity as already pointed out by Blakely and Snyder (1997) in their analysis of gated communities in the United States: fear of crime acts as a surrogate of other social anxieties and becomes a symbol of the underlying tensions in the social fabric.
While not denying the crime and violence situation, the South African case studies offer examples of fear of crime linked to a context of political transition, which generates anxieties and uncertainties that have been emphasized in other studies (Shaw 2002). As such, residential confinement is analyzed as a fallback strategy in a "comfort zone" (Ballard 2005) in which social homogeneity is preserved and the access of "undesirable populations" controlled, and even prevented. Crime, whether real or imagined, provides a justification for it. Dirsuweit and Wafer (2005) see in the phenomenon of enclosure a new form of identity of class, an "invented" community forged in a time of crisis. The threat of crime acts as an organizing principle for the mobilisation of communities. The border becomes a way to create an identity. It becomes a symbolic representation of the anxiety of the transgression. In his analysis of gated communities, Murray (2002: 4) points out how the "new post-apartheid rhetoric of entitlement [...] has been translated into a spirited defence of property, privilege and social status".

This issue, closely linked to the ones of identity and alterity, can be related to what Ballard (2005) calls "identity-construction-through-othering". This process, analysed as part of the building of a local community, refers to the fear and suspicion of what is perceived as "unhomely": someone who is not familiar in the sense of belonging to one’s social environment, one’s home, someone who gives the feeling of not sharing the same social values.

Political change and local identities in South Africa also play a role in the emergence of security schemes in affluent Cape Town neighbourhoods (CID and Trust Fond) (Didier and Morange 2009). Whereas the security argument is also put forward to justify the adoption of residential CIDs, the difficulty for residents to cope with economic and social change in South Africa also feeds feelings of insecurity. CIDs appear as a tool for activating or reactivating local identities. This helps understand what is at stake besides providing security: strengthening communities, creating and maintaining social cohesion, but also producing a sense of both social and territorial identity. The definition of a security scheme relies on the definition of the geographic origin of the threats, and tends to foster space-based exclusionary practices. The fight against crime represents a fight for the protection of a mythical local identity, the product of a constructed sense of place fed by "nostalgia". As in other case studies, the authors emphasize the reification and exploitation of security schemes.

**Fear, changing boundaries and spatial practices: regulating social inequalities within cities**

From ‘fortress cities’ (Davis 1990) and “carceral archipelago” (Soja 2000) to panopticon architecture and planning (Foucault 1975; Coleman and Sim 2000), the search for security led to specific architectural and urban forms, conceived, designed and managed by a wide range of stakeholders (urban developers, security providers, CCTV technology specialists and urban designers). As illustrated by gated estates and road closures, groups of residents transform their environment through individual and collective measures of self-protection. Residents’ spatial practices adapt to real or perceived insecurity by, for instance, sideling feared spaces, imposing specific time and spatial patterns to their movements (Koskela 1999), changing their use of public space (Mitchel 1995).

Indeed, fear creates efficient physical barriers, as shown in the study on the impact of road closures on mobility patterns in Johannesburg, Nairobi and Ibadan (Bénit-Gbaffou, Owuor and Fabiyi 2009). In this case, the barriers are not only self-imposed by actual local residents, but are also imposed to the rest of the metropolitan residents and this strongly affects their daily practice of the city. Road closures have important impacts on traffic at a metropolitan level; and on accessibility of enclosed neighbourhood (although these impact vary in time and space, and according to the social category of users). Globalisation may allow for growing mobility and broadening networks (at international scale, and through virtual contact, see for instance Charmes 2005); but fear brings daily urban practices to be restricted and constrained, and seriously limits choices, in metropolitan areas, to very localised and limited spaces around places of residence, and to an archipelago of ‘safe places’ linked to the former by a web of freeways, illustrating Dear and Flusty’s (1998) fragmented city model.
Fear also creates invisible barriers as illustrated by the analysis of the spatial practices of the residents of a gated complex in Northern Johannesburg through mental maps (Ruyssen 2009). The author describes the “extreme stress” of the residents vis-à-vis the external environment, how they feel fragile and vulnerable when outside, and how this affects their daily mobility and their perceptions of the city. Fear and representation of danger in the city shape wealthy suburban residents’ spatial practices, in such a powerful way that residents impose themselves huge detours to go from one part of the city to another, to avoid passing through what they consider no-go areas. City centres, these ‘traditional public spaces’, are discarded and fled, and sometimes not even considered in the urban representations and practices of these residents. In urban settings in North and South, the regeneration strategies of inner cities are trying to reverse the trend and put the city centre on the (mental) map of urban dwellers, by encouraging public organization of arts and cultural events intended to revive the soul of the city (Cheshire 2006; Pieterse 2006). In South Africa, one of the objectives of the inner city CID is also to bring people back to the streets.

In this regard, the regulation of space can be considered not only as a response to insecurity, but also as a way of managing social inequality in the city, especially to control the risk, always present, in everyday social interactions. As already underlined, gated complexes grew in South Africa and in Mozambique in contexts where socio-economic and lifestyles contrasts are extreme, and/or increasing. Fear of contact, which has racial and racist connotations in South Africa, and the inability to share the same basic codes in everyday interaction in public spaces (Goffman 1972) (such as stopping at a red light), may drive people to physically and mentally retreat behind walls. These “walls” are used to avoid or limit such interactions (Ruyssen 2009), or mark the insurmountable social distance between what the affluent residents and their poor neighbours are encouraged to consider as two different worlds, juxtaposed in the same local area. Thus, gated complexes in Maputo are not so much a response to high crime levels or even feelings of insecurity: rather, they offer the opportunity to build luxury housing on well located urban areas (on the coast), but occupied by vast slums. The walls are not above all a way of securing the area: there are relatively few incidents of crime in the immediate vicinity of the complexes. They are mostly a symbol of social distance between the two "worlds", a form of daily management of inequality between affluent new residents and slum dwellers. The wall is also a reflection of social transition and urban areas: they lose their direct utility when all the slums have been razed and their inhabitants relocated to far peripheral areas. In the meantime, they make possible both spatial proximity and social distance. This is one of the conclusions reached by authors working in Latin American cities (Caldeira 2000; Salcedo and Torres 2004), who attribute this function (the possible coexistence between very different social groups) to gated complexes that develop in low-income neighbourhoods. Salcedo and Torres (2004) even see this phenomenon as a form of social desegregation – driven by gated complexes, even if they are careful not to overestimate the importance of social ties between the two groups. In Maputo, however, such social coexistence may be very short because the shoreline is a highly coveted urban space, where property values are increasing in a context of rapid economic growth based on significant international investment.

Conflicts and tension around the nature of social control

Exclusion and discrimination: debates about the decline and the "disappearance" of public space

Many studies have critically analyzed the risks and issues related to the development of gated communities: the privatisation of public space, the commodification of security and the infringements of democratic principles by Home Owners Associations have been explored as well the processes of social segregation and urban fragmentation (McKenzie 1994; Flusty 1994; Caldeira 1999; Glasze, Webster and Frantz 2002; Landman 2002, 2006; Glasze 2003; Le Goix 2005). The risk of social and political secession as a way of escaping the issue of redistribution of wealth and escaping political responsibilities to promote a more equal society has been pointed out (Reich 1991).
The case studies in Southern Africa crystallize a number of issues related to the access to public space. The privatisation of space for security reasons leads to various dynamics of exclusion (towards street children and beggars in malls, outsiders in gated residential complexes and enclosed neighbourhoods, informal settlers around gated residential complexes). Urban public space, its evolving nature and use are at the heart of much debate (Light and Smith 1998; Capron and Haschar-Noah 2007; Ghorra-Gobin 2001). Many researchers have highlighted the "loss" or "disappearance" of public space in contemporary cities (Jacobs 1961; Sennett 1977; Davis 1990; Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1995; Mitchell 2003). The analysis distinguishes public properties that were sold ("privatised") or rendered off-limits to all and those which "disappeared" only for certain segments of the population, usually marginal social groups - street vendors, prostitutes and homeless people - to the benefit of high-income consumers, tourists, employees of the city centre and, by implication, segments of the capital which have commercial traffic (Gulik 1998: 136). This criticism refers to a "safe and sanitized" public space, with a "vision of civility consumable" accessible to those who can pay the price of admission and adhere to strict rules of conduct "(Zukin 1995: 119).

In South Africa, tensions and conflicts around the implementation of CIDs, if they remain moderate in the context of Johannesburg and Cape Town, crystallize around the exclusion from public space in downtown cities. They also relate to safe practices that are sometimes considered excessive in residential areas with high incomes, which are seeking to use CIDs primarily as security instruments. The criminalisation of poverty (with the eviction of street kids, hawkers, beggars from "premium spaces") has become a normal practice to enhance security (and the feeling of security) in the shop windows of Cape Town included in CIDs (Didier and Morange 2009). These practices are dealt with by the private sector – and tacitly acknowledged by the state, for whom delegation of policing is a convenient way of avoiding public debate and of blurring responsibilities as to who leads segregationist policies (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008b). If a new rhetoric of social concern has been noted among the organisation managing CIDs in central Cape Town, it is not sure that the actual practices of policing have changed, and that the newly expressed social concerns are much more than window-dressing. The privatisation of policing can be understood as a political device for the state (and in particular local government) to have the poor evicted from prime spaces at a low political cost (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008a).

Even in wealthier communities, local practices can infringe on individual rights. Road closures are seen as spaces where a white or at least class privilege can be reproduced and maintained – in the refusal of changes taking place in post-apartheid democracy (Dirsuweit 2009). More directly, stories are numerous showing the implicit adoption of specific norms of social control in community- or security company-controlled restricted areas (be it in wealthy or low-income neighbourhoods). In a gated residential complex in northern Johannesburg, for instance, where residents perceive crime to derive mainly from the external workers employed on building sites within the complex, workers are not allowed to walk in the streets of the complex: they must be driven from the door of the gated community to the building site in the morning, and back in the evening. These implicit codes of local order are numerous, not easy to capture since their implementers keep them informal (as they are fully aware that they are infringing constitutional rights): but they are doing so in the name of pragmatism in a situation they regard as a permanent crime crisis.

Other debates question the "narrowing" or the "tightening" of the public sphere and refer to forms of private governance where democratic control is threatened (Briffault 1999), as shown in the analysis of gated estates in terms of “saving clubs” or “shareholder democracy” (Webster 2002; Glasze 2003). In Maputo, the study on the development of gated estates to the detriment of existing informal

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10 In their analysis of the A & V Water Front in Cape Town, Houssay-Holszchuh and Vivet (2009) have a different analysis of the privatization of space and are more optimistic about the possibility of existence of public spaces open to various social and spatial practices in an uneven urban society. The authors emphasize the fact that this place of business and leisure is a relatively racially and socially desegregation area, including white and black populations, middle income groups, employees or unemployed.
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Settlements is approaching this debate (Quembo 2009). Here, this is the disappearance, or rather the multiplication of obstacles to the emergence of a political public sphere, which is underlined. There is a ‘privatisation’ of conflict management as evictions and negotiations with the residents of informal settlements are conducted directly with private developers, the municipality being conspicuously absent. This tends to defuse collective discontent and break the resistance of the inhabitants. Although the reasons for the lack of collective resistance are not fully elucidated, the slow process of eviction and the ‘divide and rule’ strategy led by private developers contribute to fragment and sedate the already ill-organised deprived communities.

Conflicting visions of democracy and citizenship: another forms of fragmentation?

There is a risk of fragmentation when forms of policing have different visions, conceptions, goals and finality and when they are in confrontation between each other regarding the legal and social norms they convey (Peyroux 2005; Bénit-Gbaffou 2008a). Evidence from the case studies would tend to show that it is often the case. Dirsuweit (2009), as well as Benit-Gbaffou, Owuor and Fabiyi (2009), show that conflicts over road closures between groups of residents and the state correspond to different visions of democracy and conceptions of citizenship. They oppose for instance citizen-ratepayers claiming for their ‘right’ to services – therefore, their right to stop paying taxes if the service is not delivered; to a conception of citizenship based on duties towards a redistributive state or a metropolitan traffic management, preventing such type of ‘exit’ behaviour, for instance. Conflicts over road closures in Johannesburg can be interpreted as an attempt towards political secession and constitutes a challenge for the post-apartheid state (Dirsuweit 2009). More generally, as stated in several case studies (Benit-Gbaffou, Fourchard and Wafer 2009 on Johannesburg community security initiatives; Morange and Didier 2009 on Cape Town CIDs), ‘residents’ participation’ in policing does not have the same meanings for suburban and for township residents in South Africa; moreover these meanings often conflict with the state’s understanding of ‘community policing’. This leads to various conflicts in legitimacy when the state tries to impose standardised forms of community policing to local security initiatives.

However, policing fragmentation is much less obvious in the case of business-led security initiatives, as in the CIDs, in Cape Town and Johannesburg. In this case, the convergence of state’s neo-liberal policies and business agendas (that could be analyzed in the broader framework of growth coalitions), explain the lack of open conflict between public and private policing norms and practices.

Conclusion

This paper shows how international models such as gated communities and CIDs carry the imprint of Southern Africa’s political, social and organisational contexts. The nature of political transitions strongly influence issues related to feelings of security and the control over local space.

By giving a sense of vulnerability to those whose privileges and status are threatened, these contexts makes them more sensitive and responsive to real or perceived threats to social order, in whatever form it may take. The establishment of barriers and the retreat into a “comfort zone” represent an attempt to regain control of one’s environment in a context whereby the efficiency of the state receives little acknowledgment from the population. This may also be interpreted as an attempt to recreate social bonds, a form of community solidarity at a time when national and local identities are being rebuilt. These “comfort zones” are partly spaces of assimilation as gated communities also house non-white middle-income households; but they also represent areas of avoidance and exclusion of another segment of the population, who is perceived as “unassimilated”.

These case studies therefore raise a number of risks associated with local forms of policing. Most of the authors stress the multiple forms of exclusion and marginalization of groups and individuals who do not conform to a social norm defined locally - the poor, blacks, foreigners, pedestrians, street
children, beggars, prostitutes, women, non-Muslims, construction workers, youth groups ... all may be regarded as "suspects" or "criminals" according to local circumstances. In this sense, the empowerment of residents who are entrusted with responsibility for the production of safety and encouraged to "own space" led to the implementation and the legitimation of exclusionary practices (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008a). While they may be compared to exclusion mechanisms related to community policing in the Northern contexts (Crawford, 1998), the social fault lines vary across contexts. The definition of what constitutes a "crime" is certainly more nebulous and more contested in the African context (see in this regard Olaniyi 2009). This context is marked in particular by the importance of informality, regularly denounced as "outside the law ", and is affected by successive waves of oppression and eradication attempts (especially under colonialism, but also in the contemporary period of neo-liberalization of metropolitan policies). But the "criminalization of poverty" is not an African specificity (Wacquant, 2004) and the Anglo-Saxon "theory" of the "broken window" and its corollary "zero tolerance" as much blur the definitions "crime" in the North. The analysis of such phenomenon in African cities gives more visibility to the intrinsic continuity of forms of appropriation of space by residents for security reasons and forms of social exclusion.

Finally, these case studies raise important and wider questions about contemporary urban societies: the fact that only this type of public space (private and closely controlled) can emerge (or are encouraged?) in South Africa today raises questions about the (spatial and social) place of the poorest in urban societies.

References


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