



# crisis states programme

development research centre



Working Paper no.10

## THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE WALLS: INSECURITY, IDENTITY AND GATE COMMUNITIES IN JOHANNESBURG

Jo Beall  
Development Research Centre  
LSE

February 2002

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## Crisis States Programme

### Working papers series no.1

*English version:*  
**ISSN 1740-5807 (print)**  
**ISSN 1740-5815 (on-line)**

*Spanish version:*  
**ISSN 1740-5823 (print)**  
**ISSN 1740-5831 (on-line)**

Development  
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Studies Institute



## Crisis States Programme

### **The People Behind the Walls: Insecurity, identity and gated communities in Johannesburg<sup>1</sup>**

Jo Beall  
DESTIN, LSE

#### **Introduction**

The carefully manicured lawns of Los Angeles's Westside sprout forests of ominous little signs warning: 'Armed Response!' Even richer neighborhoods in the canyons and hillsides isolate themselves behind walls guarded by gun-toting private police and state-of-the-art electronic surveillance...We live in 'fortress cities' brutally divided between 'fortified cells' of affluent society and 'places of terror' where the police battle the criminalized poor.<sup>2</sup>

Delete the word "Los Angeles" and the above quote from Mike Davis's celebrated book, *City of Quartz* could apply as well to Johannesburg as to California's most notoriously divided city. Former white suburbs, now home to a predominantly white but increasingly non-racial post-Fordist middle-class, range from ranch-style houses on large stands, to the more recent phenomenon of compact and often over-priced 'cluster homes' in secure housing complexes. What residents of both forms of housing share in common, with each other and with Davis's picture of Los Angeles's Westside, are the ubiquitous 'armed response' signs and a collective paranoia about 'security'. However, whereas Davis presents a picture of 'fortress LA' as a city where there is 'civil warfare' between those who can afford to protect themselves from the urban jungle and those who cannot, our picture of Johannesburg suggests that in a city fractured by past divisions and reeling under the onslaught of new ones, it is not only the wealthy who find ways to barricade themselves behind protective barriers.

Using different means of cutting themselves off, I identify in the case of Johannesburg, 'gated communities' among some socially disadvantaged communities as well. Sometimes for reasons of fear and insecurity, sometimes for purposes of their informal and occasionally illicit livelihood strategies, they opt to exclude themselves. Teresa Caldeira in the picture she paints of urban segregation and fortified enclaves in São Paulo, Brazil recognises that "residents from all social groups argue that they build walls and change their habits to protect themselves from crime".<sup>3</sup> However, like Davis she moves swiftly from this realisation to an analysis of public space and urban design. By contrast, I was equally curious about the lives of the people living behind the walls, and how their voluntary self-exclusion may be serving to undermine efforts by the city's new progressive planners to challenge the apartheid legacy of socio-spatial segregation.

In this paper I explore perceptions of insecurity and processes of social exclusion across two very different types of location in Johannesburg and our analysis draws on two sets of

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<sup>1</sup> This working paper is now published as a chapter in J. Beall, O. Crankshaw & S. Parnell, *Uniting a Divided City: Governance and social exclusion in Johannesburg*, London: Earthscan, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, London: Verso Press, 1990, pp.223-224.

<sup>3</sup> Teresa Caldeira, 'Crime and Individual Rights: Re-framing the Question of Violence in Latin America', in E. Jelin and E. Hershberg (eds), *Constructing Democracy: Human Rights, Citizenship and Society in Latin America*, Westview Press, 1996, p.197.

fieldwork. The first was conducted among the multi-racial but still mainly white residents of two gated communities in Johannesburg, one self-contained cluster-home complex in an affluent suburb to the north of the city and another in a lower-middle class suburb to the west. Second, research was conducted among the mainly isiZulu-speaking migrants of a hostel complex in Soweto.<sup>4</sup> Our analysis is set against an account of the realities and perceptions of crime and public safety in Johannesburg, a city renowned as a national ‘crime capital’ and one that enters the international public consciousness almost invariably by virtue of the dramatic crime statistics and horror stories on violence and crime reported by the media. I show how issues of crime, violence and insecurity are invoked to create fortress enclaves, both by the well off and the less well off. The relationship between space and social identity is explored and how both are mediated both by who you are and where you are. This case is made on the grounds that space and the built environment on the one hand, and social relations and institutions on the other are closely bound together.<sup>5</sup> The paper concludes with a comment on what these trends mean for urban governance.

### Crime City

It is increasingly acknowledged that rapidly expanding crime rates in cities of the South have negative consequences for economic development. With the notable exception of a number of recent authors focusing on the relationship between crime and urban social development,<sup>6</sup> it is the impact of crime on urban productivity and efficiency that has given rise to much research in this area.<sup>7</sup> Globally most urban crime is property based, for example burglary, or violent inter-personal crime such as assault, rape and murder.<sup>8</sup> South African statistics follow this pattern even though crime data can be ambiguous.<sup>9</sup> This is because there are differences depending on whether reporting is by victims or witnesses and on the quality of police records, problems that are aggravated by (often justified) public mistrust of the police. For example, crime surveys reveal 60-70 percent more crime than official statistics.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘hostel’ applies to the single-sex barrack-like dwellings that have housed migrant workers even before the apartheid era. Reflecting patterns of circulatory migration that had their roots in the twin processes of rural dispossession and controlled urbanization (A. Mabin, ‘The Dynamics of Urbanization since 1960’, in M. Swilling, R. Humphries and K. Shubane (eds), *Apartheid City in Transition*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), today they remain a symbolic remnant of apartheid urban planning.

<sup>5</sup> Jo Beall, ‘Introduction’ in J. Beall (ed.) *A City for All: Valuing Difference and Working with Diversity*, London: Zed Books, 1997, pp. 2-37; David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, London: Edward Arnold, 1973; D. Massey, ‘On Space and the City’ in D. Massey, J. Allen and S. Pile (eds) *City Worlds*, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 157-171.

<sup>6</sup> C. McIlwaine, ‘Geography and Development: Violence and Crime as Development Issues’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 23:3 (1999), pp. 453-463; C. Moser, & F. Clark (eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, London: Zed Books, 2001; C. Moser & J. Holland, *Urban Poverty and Violence in Jamaica*, Washington DC: World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> R. Ayres, *Crime and Violence as Development Issues in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Washington DC: World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 1998; P. Fajnzylber, D. Lederman & N. Loayza, *Determinants of Crime Rates in Latin America and the World: An Empirical Assessment*, Washington DC: World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 1998; F. Vanderschueren, ‘From Violence to Justice and Security in Cities’, *Environment and Urbanization*, 8:1 (1996), pp. 93-112.

<sup>8</sup> Vanderschueren (1996), pp.98-99.

<sup>9</sup> J. Kane-Berman, ‘No Major Changes in Crime Trends’, *Fast Facts*, 7, Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> M. Schönteich & A. Louw, *Crime in South Africa: A Country and Cities Profile*, Occasional Paper No. 49, Pretoria: Institute of Security Studies, 2001, p.1.

Shaw and Gastrow observe that South Africa is “riddled with violent crime” and that this leads to “an exaggerated fear of crime”.<sup>11</sup> This is fuelled by the national and international media, which has become obsessed with the subject of crime. South African society is increasingly characterised as one exhibiting levels of lawlessness, violence and crime that match or exceed those of Pakistan, Brazil and Venezuela, countries often thought to be at the top of the public safety blacklist. For South Africa as a whole, we know that between 1994 and 1999 the incidence of crime increased by 15 percent. Moreover, serious and violent crimes have increased faster than average, notably rape, assault, robbery with a firearm, car hijacking, housebreaking and common robbery, with one third of all recorded crimes being violent. It is also common knowledge that South Africa now has the highest per capita rate of reported rape in the world with 115.6 cases for every 1000,000 population in 1998.<sup>12</sup>

So how does the situation in Johannesburg compare to the rest of South Africa? Johannesburg is seen as South Africa’s crime capital.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there is no doubt that the city experiences high levels of crime.<sup>14</sup> A number of surveys reveal that for Johannesburg itself, crime is not only lower than in many comparable developing countries but for some crimes, the statistics are lower than for other South African cities.<sup>15</sup> Commensurate with the concentrations of wealth in the Province, most national property crimes occur in Gauteng and more than 50 percent of the vehicles stolen nationally, are stolen in Johannesburg. Fraud and computer crime are also concentrated in Johannesburg, as are many crime syndicates. In addition, residents of Gauteng Province are more likely to have experienced a crime than South Africans living in other provinces.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Johannesburg experiences high levels of *violent* crime. Between 1993 and 1997 two-thirds of Johannesburg’s residents were victims of crime, most commonly burglary, with nearly a quarter of the respondents (24 percent) reporting this crime to a victimisation survey conducted in Johannesburg in 1997,<sup>17</sup> but the second most frequently reported incidents were violent crimes: mugging and robbery (17 percent) and assault (16 percent). Most of the assaults were of a serious nature with 84 percent involving a weapon.<sup>18</sup> However, here it should be noted that although a large proportion of violent crimes committed nationally occur in Johannesburg, the statistics are

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<sup>11</sup> M. Shaw & P. Gastrow, ‘Stealing the Show? Crime and its Impact in Post-apartheid South Africa’, *Daedalus*, 130:1 (2001), pp.235-237.

<sup>12</sup> Monitor, ‘Resolve Crime and Security Solutions: Safety and Security Sector Report for the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council’, Unpublished report prepared for the *iGoli 2010* Partnership, Monitor Company, Boston, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> It might also be argued that the crime paranoia has a racial dimension, fuelled by emigrating or potential émigré South Africans who find crime a more acceptable rationale for explaining their departure than the challenges posed by the change to a non-racial democracy.

<sup>14</sup> There are two key sources for crime figures available on Johannesburg, those derived from the South African Police Services (SAPS), compiled on the basis of reporting rather than real incidence, and those derived from victims’ surveys. Johannesburg has been the focus of several victimisation surveys, two conducted in 1993 and 1995 respectively, as part of the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS), and one administered in July 1997 by the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) (A. Louw, M. Shaw, L. Camerer & R. Robertshaw, *Crime in Johannesburg: Results of a Victim Survey*, Pretoria: Institute of Security Studies, 1998). The latter formed an initial component of a process to design a safer cities strategy for the GJMC (GJMC, ‘Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council Integrated Metropolitan Development Plan, 1997/8’, Unpublished Report, GJMC, Johannesburg, 1998). Victim surveys are known to have their limitations, largely deriving from problems of definition and interpretation. However, in the Johannesburg context, when taken together with official police statistics, these two main sources point to similar trends. Both sources were used for the safety and security analyses undertaken for Johannesburg’s medium-term planning framework (ISS, 1999, cited in Monitor, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998).

<sup>16</sup> Monitor (2000).

<sup>17</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998), p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998), p.17.

worse elsewhere. For example, it is Cape Town that has the dubious reputation of being the nation's "murder capital".<sup>19</sup> Police records suggest that Johannesburg's murder rate is the second highest of all police areas in the country. Nevertheless, second place for attempted murder goes to Soweto, which falls under a separate jurisdiction for the South African Police Force, although it is located within the boundaries of the GJMC.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, crime does not affect all residents of Johannesburg equally and the main victims of crime are not the affluent white population whose fears are so widely publicised, but rather the African poor. There are a number of different interpretations provided to explain it. They include the argument that the institutional violence perpetrated by the apartheid government and the political violence that characterised the fight against it, has led to high levels of domestic and interpersonal violence. An alternative view is based on socio-economic explanations that point to links between rapid urbanisation, a slow growing economy, poor levels of education and high expectations on the part of historically disadvantaged groups, especially the young. More contingent explanations include high levels of gun ownership, uncontrolled levels of alcohol consumption in an environment of poverty and the perception on the part of offenders of impunity from prosecution. The latter relates to problems in policing, which include poor community-police relations, high levels of police corruption, and the fact that police resources remain unevenly spread across the country.

Not surprisingly, property crimes disproportionately affect areas that offer the greatest opportunities for theft. These are the historically white and Asian residential areas. However, the use of violence in the course of property crimes is more common when Africans are the victims than for other groups.<sup>21</sup> The occurrence of car hijackings, which is considered to be a serious crime as it is often armed, is highest in the north east of the city where there are high-income residential environments. In this area there is a high percentage of car ownership and it is also an area very accessible between two major highways. The 1997 Johannesburg victims' survey reported that over 12 percent of respondents were subject to car theft between 1993 and 1997 and of these, as many as six percent experienced violent car theft in the form of hijacking. Of this latter group, however, 73 percent of victims were African.<sup>22</sup> Police records show that the highest occurrence of murder in Johannesburg occurs within a crime corridor that stretches from Soweto in the west through the central business district to the high-income residential areas to the east. This corridor also corresponds to the mining belt, which contains vacant land that is often not secured or occupied on a 24-hour basis and most hostels and deprived residential areas are also located in this belt.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of gender dynamics, the 1997 victims' survey found men to be most at risk of violent crime in Johannesburg. However, this probably relates to the fact that sexual attacks and domestic violence are likely to be under-reported in a street survey.<sup>24</sup> More recent data suggests that middle class men are the most common victims of crimes perpetrated by strangers with guns. However, taking all victims of crime in Johannesburg together, it is most likely to be young black men and women who are victims, with 38 percent of firearm deaths being in the 24-34 year age group.<sup>25</sup> While the proportion of middle class whites in

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<sup>19</sup> Camerer *et al.* (1998).

<sup>20</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998), p.29.

<sup>21</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998), pp.17-18.

<sup>22</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998), p.17.

<sup>23</sup> GJMC (1998).

<sup>24</sup> Louw *et al.* (1998), p.22.

<sup>25</sup> Most offenders are also young and, it is thought that 70 to 80 per cent of crime in Johannesburg is committed by 5 to 10 per cent of the young male population (Monitor, 2000).

Johannesburg affected by crime is unacceptably high, it is nevertheless the case that the types of crime to which they are exposed are less serious than those experienced by other population groups. Moreover, a significantly large proportion of Johannesburg's victims are women in the home.<sup>26</sup> Just as murder is the crime most likely to be reported, domestic violence and rape are those known to be most under-reported. Despite under-reporting, official figures still point to 2.27 rapes per 1000 population as the average for Metropolitan Johannesburg.<sup>27</sup>

Despite almost certain under-reporting, more than one in five Soweto women across all age brackets admitted to being a victim of marital violence, while one in ten women were victims of routine or serious abuse.<sup>28</sup> A study conducted by the Johannesburg Sexual Offences Forum in 1997, which sought to overcome the bias imposed by under-reporting of rape, found that over 70 percent of the 786 victims interviewed from people reporting to district surgeon's offices in hospitals and clinics across Johannesburg were African women, with the majority being aged between 13 and 30 years.<sup>29</sup> According to official police reports the highest incidence of rape reported to police stations was in Greater Soweto (849), followed by the densely settled area of Alexandra in north east Johannesburg (314) and Hillbrow in the inner city (311).<sup>30</sup>

However, the most significant crime statistic, given our focus on 'gated communities' is that as shown by Table 10.1, in Soweto one of the most common sites of crime was at home. Similarly for Johannesburg as a whole it has been shown that most inter-personal crime is likely to take place at home or in a bar, tavern or shebeen, with heavy involvement of guns and alcohol.<sup>31</sup> With these statistics in mind, it is both sad and ironic that the response to insecurity is so often a retreat into the home. This reinforces the view that insecurity is as much about the fear of crime than crime itself and that fear of crime can serve to mask fear of race and social difference.

**Table 10.1 Sites of crimes experienced by Soweto residents, 1997**

(Source: Own analysis of Soweto in Transition Household Survey, 1997)

| Location of crime           | Percentage Distribution of crimes experienced |
|-----------------------------|---|
| In your home                | 39  |
| On the street               | 47  |
| At school                   | 0.2   |
| At work                     | 1.0   |
| In the Johannesburg CBD     | 7   |
| In a taxi or at a taxi rank | 0.4   |
| On the train                | 3   |
| Other town                  | 1   |
| At relatives house          | 0.4   |

<sup>26</sup> Monitor (2000).

<sup>27</sup> The controversy over the number of rapes that are reported in South Africa has risen to cabinet-level debate. Estimates range from 1 in 35, according to the NGO, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), and to nearly 1 in 3 according to the police (Monitor, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> M. Morris *et al*, *Change and Continuity: A Survey of Soweto in the Late 1990s*, Johannesburg: Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Louw *et al* (1998), p.22.

<sup>30</sup> GJMC (1998).

<sup>31</sup> Monitor (2000).

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| At hostel | 0.1 |
| Total     | 100 |

### **Walls, Malls and Treadmills: Johannesburg's Middle Class Fortress Enclaves**

One of the most remarkable things about Johannesburg is that when in public spaces, middle class people are most often seen behind the wheel of a car. Alternatively they confine themselves to relatively protected public spaces such as clubs, schools, coffee shops and restaurants. In this not much has changed since the latter days of apartheid except that now the middle class is increasingly racially mixed. One observable change over recent years, is that you are less likely to see the once ubiquitous suburban jogger. In a country obsessed with sport and fitness, men and women of the middle-classes have replaced pounding the suburban streets with pounding the treadmills of membership gymnasiums. Such spatial enclaves are a frequent response to fear of insecurity and social difference. Ranging from shopping malls, to office complexes, from business parks to sports clubs, these fortress enclaves include gated residential communities. A familiar image in the city's suburbs are the high walls, electric fences, boom gates and lugubrious security guards lolling in their post-modern 'keeps'. Less familiar, is a sense of who it is that lives behind these barricades. What is certain is that the arrival of these gated communities on Johannesburg's landscape predated the end of apartheid as described by Mabin:

While pseudo-suburbia sprouted on the fringes of townships, the form of the white suburbia which it imitated itself began to alter. As white population growth tailed off in the seventies, the population aged; other conditions change, the nature of the property market altered. Rising land prices (though they remain relatively low by world standards) and security concerns, as well as departures from high-rise apartment land, drove a new form of development in the eighties: the so-called 'townhouse' complex, really not much different from row housing, and usually developed in the furthest flung sections of suburbia...They are the new compounds of urban South Africa, representing tightly defended social segregation.<sup>32</sup>

The two middle-class townhouse complexes researched in fact were both built in 1994, the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa. Both complexes were multi-racial although residents remained predominantly white. The research conducted in these townhouse complexes involved both white and black residents in rough proportion.<sup>33</sup> While the research is neither statistically reliable nor generalisable, the lifestyle patterns identified and the perceptions elicited are interesting and indicative.<sup>34</sup> One complex was located in an affluent northern suburb where the majority of residents were homeowners and comprised

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<sup>32</sup> A. Mabin, 'The Creation of Urban Space: Contributions of South African Cities to Justice and Injustice', Paper presented to the Conference on the Social Geography of Divided Cities, New York University, 26-28 February 1998, p.16.

<sup>33</sup> In the northern complex, we held focus groups and interviews with women, all of whom were English-speaking whites, and with men who were all English-speaking but included one South African Indian. In the complex to the west of the city, residents spoke both English and Afrikaans, and both the male and female focus groups comprised one third African and two-thirds white discussants, as did the individual interviews. It is difficult to assess how typical their views might have been, not least of all because people who choose to live in secure complexes may be a self-selecting group.

<sup>34</sup> The methodology employed both in the case of the secure housing complexes and of the hostels was not designed to understand the extent or distribution of wealth or poverty within them, or between their residents and other groups. Rather, it was designed to analyse the social relations and institutional processes that accompany social exclusion and perceptions of these processes.

mainly young couples, a few families with young children and a number of retired people. The complex comprised 74 units, the majority being two-bedroom but also including one and three-bedroom homes. Each had its own garage or garages, a walled garden and individual intercom connections to the central gate. Communal facilities included a squash court, a large and well-maintained swimming pool, poolside recreation area, a clubhouse, a games room with pool table and a well equipped children's play area. The complex as a whole was fully walled with an electric fence, had automated electronic gates at the central entrance and 24-hour access control by a security guard. All maintenance services, such as painting, gardening, pool care and security, were contracted out to professional service providers. They were paid for by a monthly levy and were coordinated by the managing agent. Only day-to-day issues were in the hands of the elected Residents' Association.

The other complex was located in a lower middle class, former white area to the west of the city and close to the Westgate Shopping Centre, which is the largest mall serving Soweto. The majority of residents were owners, with households comprising a mixture of retired people, young couples and families with school-going children, including a number of women in single parent families. The complex comprised 72 units with either two or three bedrooms. Units were allocated covered parking spaces rather than garages, walls did not separate individual units and residents shared a communal lawn and swimming pool. The complex itself was fully walled and had an electric fence but this was not in working order at the time of the research. There were automated security gates at the central entrance but these were operated by the 24-hour access control guard rather than from the house by individual householders, so there was less control over who came in and out by comparison with the complex to the north. There were countless complaints from residents about the inefficacy of the arrangements and the failings of the professional security company charged with looking after the complex. In addition the complex exhibited generally poor maintenance, which was surprising because although the purchase prices of these homes were considerably lower than those of the complex to the north, the monthly levy paid per unit was double.

Mabin has made the point that the late nineties saw a shift from 22 percent of managerial positions in the civil service being occupied by blacks to 60 percent.<sup>35</sup> When combined with increased employment of blacks in the private sector and the movement to Johannesburg of former 'bantustan' elites, this suggests an enormous new demand for middle class housing. That such people tend to choose townhouse accommodation was confirmed in an interview with a young African computer specialist working in a multinational company, who himself moved into a townhouse after a frightening experience of armed robbery, leaving his new free-standing house, which had also been in a former white area. He explained his reasons as follows:

Before it used to be more on the whites you know, because in the townships you got this thing of saying 'The white man has got money and that's my forefather's money'. Ja, if you are a black they never used to bother you. And now because you are staying in the northern suburbs, you are just like a white man. 'You think you are a white man now? Why are you staying in the white suburbs?' So if you are a professional, if you have got a proper job and people know you have got a proper job, then you are also under threat. It's now equal. Whether you are a white man or a black man, as long as you've got money.

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<sup>35</sup> Mabin (1998), p.20.



Interestingly and as illustrated by Table 10.2, for most residents this kind of living was not part of a process of upward mobility, en route to a larger or grander free-standing house. Indeed, most informants had moved to a townhouse complex from a free-standing house and most intended to stick to protected cluster-home living. Not all had had a personal experience of crime but a number of the discussants and interviewees knew of someone close to them who had been a victim of crime.<sup>36</sup> Without exception, everyone gave as their reason for moving, fear of crime and the search for safety and security.

**Table 10.2: Residential profile of 12 residents of two townhouse complexes**

|  | <b>Upper Middle Class<br/>Complex to the North</b>         | <b>Lower Middle Class<br/>Complex to the West</b>      |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Place of Previous Residence</b>         | House/flat in ex-white area 5<br>House in ex-Indian area 1 | House in ex-white area 5<br>House in ex-African area 1 |
| <b>Next Anticipated Place of Residence</b> | This or another complex 5<br>Overseas 1                    | This or another complex 5<br>A safer town in SA 1      |

### *Insecurity and the Fear of Outsiders*

When asked why they had opted for cluster-home living, without exception all the people interviewed offered safety and security as their main reason. In the responses there were similarities across class but there were interesting gender differences. With men there was some reluctance to admit fear on their own account but rather on behalf of their families. As one of the discussants put it:

I fear for my wife and son. I feel that I can take care of myself. Sure I'll most probably lose a lot if that happens but I feel I can do a better job than what my wife and my son can. So I fear people who threaten my family.

By the same token, women mainly expressed fear on behalf of their children. One said her biggest fear was being hijacked with her child in the car and as a result had stopped putting her toddler in a child's car seat and relied simply on a seatbelt so that it would be easier to get him out:

The way we live in Johannesburg is not nice. They don't care if they shoot you. They don't care if they take your car with your child in it. They don't care about other people...They have no value for life.

The racism associated with insecurity was often thinly veiled and it did not take much probing to uncover who 'they' were perceived to be. Articulated in terms of 'those guys', 'strangers' and 'outsiders' it was clear who it was that they feared. According to the men they said they feared:

People walking around here. In this area especially, there are a lot of people walking around.

<sup>36</sup> Most of the crimes raised by interviewees and discussants had happened to others, and not always necessarily in Johannesburg. In terms of their experiences within the complexes, in the north the only crimes reported were bicycle thefts; while in the west, individuals continued to suffer from constant car break-ins and vehicle thefts.

The thing is with guys around here...if you show them you're afraid that's when they look at you and they say this guy is vulnerable. That's why you don't show your fear.

All the unknown people outside.

I love the country to bits but I don't know what's going to happen. It's not knowing – that's what I fear.

Fear of crime is often used to justify spatially separate urban forms in ways that disguise other motivations.<sup>37</sup> Judd goes so far as to suggest that fear of crime is a “code word” for fear of race.<sup>38</sup> Certainly a sense of insecurity was offered as a synonym for fear of difference by most of the townhouse residents interviewed, fuelled as elsewhere by “everyday talk of crime”.<sup>39</sup> Among the women, they were more explicit about which strangers frightened them. However, of the many silences encountered, sexual assault was never mentioned although the fear of rape was almost palpable:

People you don't recognise – not actually strangers but threatening strangers – one that's standing sizing you up or watching.

Men. Black men. But even some of their black ladies. Some of them can be very arrogant. They've got far more strength than we've got, you know, if they decided to take you.

When it was pointed out that the woman in question had black neighbours she said:

Yes but the type of black people that we get here are well educated, well groomed people. They are not the sorts of people that you will be afraid of. They dress well and drive nice cars and everything.

Thus for the predominantly white women living in this affluent townhouse complex, class replaced race as the badge of inclusive membership. It allowed them to erect physical and symbolic ‘walls’ to reduce interaction and mixing in shared public space, while an architecture of fear legitimised a deepening segregation based not an apartheid of race but on new articulations of social difference.

### ***Exclusion and the Anomie of Insiders***

Retreat into bounded spaces, such as the townhouse complexes described here, is seen by some as encouraging community, especially among minorities.<sup>40</sup> However, in neither case was there much evidence of a sense of deep community resulting from proximate living. People found the uniformity and rule-bound environment stifling, although this was less the case in the north where its more affluent residents were afforded more privacy. Here discussants agreed that although they were not close friends with their neighbours, they felt

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<sup>37</sup> N. Amin & S. Graham, ‘Cities of Connection and Disconnection’ in D. Massey and M. Pryke (eds) *Unsettling Cities: Movement/Settlement*, London: Routledge, 1999, p.17.

<sup>38</sup> D. Judd, ‘Urban Violence and Enclave Politics: Crime as Text, Race as Subtext’ in S. Dunn (ed.), *Managing Divided Cities*, Staffordshire: Ryburn Publishing, 1994, p.161.

<sup>39</sup> Caldeira (1996), p.201.

<sup>40</sup> P. Marcuse, ‘Not Chaos but Walls: Postmodernism and the Partitioned City’ in S. Watson and K. Gibson (eds) *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, pp. 243-253; E. Blakely & M. Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Brookings Institution Press, 1997.

good about being part of the complex. They enjoyed access to the communal facilities and the occasional get together organised by the Residents' Association, such as the Christmas party and the annual *braaivleis*<sup>41</sup> as this reinforced a sense of community without being oppressive. However, in the less affluent complex to the west, which exhibited less privacy and individual household space, there was much less enthusiasm for neighbours. As one of the women put it: "It's more that you know a few people and the rest just stare into your place when they walk past". Among the men, some reported occasional mixing such as playing darts or watching rugby together but interactions were described as those between acquaintances rather than friends. As one of the residents put it: "When Leon moved in...I said 'I'm so and so' and I got a bottle of whisky and said 'come and have a drink' We had a drink and since then we've been chatting. Everytime I see him it's 'howzit'."

One clear consequence of fear of crime and generalised moral panic is that people spend more time at home. This was less cause for remark in the case of women, for whom it was probably less remarkable. But men discussed how their lives had changed. Not classifying going to work as going out, they talked about how their evenings had changed and how they were "in bed by nine at night". As one of the male discussants in the western suburb complex explained:

People are scared, so they are not going out...They go to work and they come home. And now with computers you can get things through the internet, so you don't really have to leave your house. You feel safe there and you can build your nest. This is when a complex comes into its own because it is a safe haven. You feel safe there and why in the world would you want to go out? You can even phone 'Mr Delivery'.<sup>42</sup> Why would people want to go out? People are not lazy, they are comfortable. If you don't believe it just look at the cars. They don't want to go out because if you do, you might get hijacked.

Another elaborated by telling of a friend of his who sold vacuum cleaners door-to-door. In order to catch people in his appointments were made for the evening and he often found himself urged to stay for food or a drink as "people are so hungry for relationships that you can spend five hours there – they don't want to just watch TV". That this was more of an issue for people in the less well off western complex suggests that there may also have been family and financial constraints to an active social life. Nevertheless, enclave living has clearly served to foster what in South Africa is termed a *laager* mentality, referring to the defensible space created by the circular pattern in which the *voortrekkers* arranged their ox-wagons in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when poised for conflict with the African populations they encountered. Commenting on fortress Johannesburg one male informant mused that:

I think it's taken away the community...People used to go to parks, drive-ins, drive in the streets. They don't get out as much...But at the same time I'd rather stay here without that community and stay alive.

For all the sense of being beleaguered the vast majority of informants were committed to staying in South Africa, and for most of them, Johannesburg. Among the more affluent the impression was given of a sense of capability and a commensurate willingness and desire to

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<sup>41</sup> South African word for 'barbecue', which originates from the Afrikaans – literally meaning 'roasted meat' – but in general use.

<sup>42</sup> A service in South Africa that has various branches across the city which pick up and deliver pre-ordered meals from a range of take-away restaurants in a particular area.

make a difference. As one of the men assured us, “We will be the last ones to leave and put the lights out!” or as one of the women put it, “Our lives are here – our work, our family, our children – and there is no guarantee that it would be better elsewhere”.

It could not be argued by any stretch of the imagination that the two gated communities studied were politically engaged in any way. For example, no one knew the name of their councillor although in the north they knew it was a “woman from the DP”.<sup>43</sup> Even when frustrated with the inefficiencies of the Metropolitan Council, there was a reluctance to engage and a belief that one way or another services would be provided. Indeed, many of the services these residents enjoyed were in any case privately paid for. Among the lower-middle class discussants, by contrast, there was a feeling of increasing financial pressure, fewer and diminishing options and a notion that they had been forgotten by local politicians. One of the western complex residents put it this way:

In my opinion they don't make the effort to come to us, to come to this complex...we don't have those guys coming to us and saying “Look here, I'm your Democratic Party or your ANC” or whatever. Nobody comes here and says “Look, lets get together”.

Nonetheless, fear of crime and the various social antipathies for which it stands, has given rise to an aversion to public spaces and engagement with the city. Thus the wistful resentment and sense of anomie echoed by this statement should not distract us from the fact that the residential urban form chosen by this informant and his neighbours, is working against the creation of a diverse and integrated city and is perpetuating apartheid-like socio-spatial segregation.

### **Counting us in or Counting us Out?: Soweto's 'Gated Communities'**

It is commonly assumed that gated communities are a feature only of affluent populations and that poorer communities protect themselves through other means such as vigilantism. Here I take issue with this view by demonstrating how isiZulu-speaking rural migrant workers have utilised their socio-spatial identity to secure defensible spaces in the city. Hostels have housed unskilled African migrant workers in Johannesburg since before World War One but they were entrenched under apartheid, coming to symbolise the worst exigencies of racial Fordism. Although they have been transformed demographically and indeed physically since the twilight years of apartheid and the transition to democracy in South Africa, migrant hostels remain much as they ever were, separately demarcated and controlled social arenas. They were built to house a temporary and captive male labour force and remain caught in the legacy of their design, described by Robinson as follows:

Certainly in the planning of single-sex hostels, matters of control were explicitly considered. High surrounding walls were usually required and doors were restricted to the inward-facing walls. Only one entrance was allowed, in order that residents and visitors could more easily be supervised.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The opposition Democratic Party.

<sup>44</sup> J. Robinson, ‘Power, Space and the City: Historical Reflections on Apartheid and Post-apartheid Urban Orders’, in D. Smith (ed.) *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa*, London: Routledge, 1992, p.296.

Thus hostels remain highly institutionalised places even today and as Crush and James have argued, although they no longer serve the same purpose, the bounded nature of hostel accommodation continues to serve to “exclude outsiders and insulate insiders”.<sup>45</sup> As such they stand in contradistinction to the values of freedom of movement in a democratic society, particularly one keen to put behind it the migrant labour system, being as it is such an infamous legacy of segregation and apartheid.

At the height of the apartheid period, the government wished to racially segregate the inner city and sought to relocate hostels from within ‘white’ Johannesburg out to the townships.<sup>46</sup> The government hoped that hostels for migrants would become an increasingly important component of housing in African townships and it did to an extent, although only 11 hostels were ultimately constructed in Johannesburg itself,<sup>47</sup> nine of which were located in Soweto.<sup>48</sup> According to the Soweto Household Survey, they provide 24,000 beds and house 40,901 residents. No longer comprising single-sex accommodation (apart from one hostel which is for women only) today 23 percent of hostel household members are women.<sup>49</sup>

Although many people living in hostels are long-time residents of Johannesburg, most are migrants from other parts of South Africa, notably the Province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), home to the majority isiZulu-speaking population of South Africa and to the largely rural support base of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi’s Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Towards the end of the apartheid era a ferocious struggle for power ensued between the ANC and the IFP. Before the 1990s ethnic mobilisation by the IFP had been largely confined to rural KZN. From the early 1990s the Party turned its attention to the cities. In its attempts to enhance its national and urban power base, the IFP used Zulu-speaking migrant workers in the hostels to ferment conflict, sometimes with state backing.<sup>50</sup> The hostel dwellers shared a language, culture and a shared sense of alienation, which presented an ideal opportunity for rapid mobilisation. That Inkatha increasingly articulated the political position of Johannesburg’s hostel dwellers, served to fuel the violence that erupted between hostel dwellers and township residents during the 1980s and 1990s. The period claimed a total of 9,325 deaths and of these, 4,756 took place in present day Gauteng and 1,106 in Greater Soweto. Of the latter, the Human Rights Commission linked 483 deaths or 44 per cent to the hostels.<sup>51</sup>

According to the 1993 Goldstone Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, the bloody conflict between township residents and hostel dwellers led many “to view the hostels as a key problem within the much larger context of

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<sup>45</sup> J. Crush & W. James, *Crossing Boundaries*, Pretoria: Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa, 1995, p.xi.

<sup>46</sup> S. Parnell & G. Pirie, ‘Johannesburg’, in A. Lemon (ed.) *Homes Apart*, London: Paul Chapman, 1991, pp.129-145.

<sup>47</sup> Both the municipality and private companies in Johannesburg used these single-sex institutions to accommodate male migrant workers from all over South Africa and beyond.

<sup>48</sup> G. Pirie & M. de Silva, ‘Hostels for African Migrants in Greater Johannesburg’, *GeoJournal*, 12:2 (1986), pp. 173-182.

<sup>49</sup> Morris *et al* (1999).

<sup>50</sup> CASE, *Towards the Formulation of Policy for Hostel Redevelopment*, Report for the Gauteng Department of Housing, Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry, 2001; D. Everatt, ‘Yet another transition? Urbanisation, Class Formation and the End of the National Liberation Struggle in South Africa’, Comparative Urban Studies Occasional Paper Series No. 24, Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, 1999.

<sup>51</sup> B. Xeketwane, *The Relationship Between Hostels and the Political Violence on the Reef from July 1990 to December 1993: A Case Study of Merafe and Meadowlands Hostels in Soweto*, Unpublished Masters Thesis, Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1995, p.17.

protracted violence in South Africa”.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the civic organisations, which had constituted the backbone of ANC support in Johannesburg during the anti-apartheid struggle, had made it clear that they saw the upgrading of the hostels to family accommodation as a priority. From the time of Nelson Mandela’s release from gaol in 1990, the former Nationalist government tried to demonstrate a break with apartheid by attacking its worst symbols, including single-sex hostels. The provincial administration at the time, the Transvaal Provincial Administration, agreed in principle to the abolition of Johannesburg’s hostels and the idea of selling them off to private buyers for conversion into family flats.<sup>53</sup> However, except in a few cases, this did not come about.

A crucial reason for this was that the migrant workers themselves were vociferously opposed to what they saw as plans to displace them from the urban areas and most importantly, from what constituted affordable accommodation within the city. After all, the coming of democracy had not put an end to poverty. State funded research conducted during the phase of political transition suggested that for reasons of affordability, there were clear imperatives to retain aspects of the single-sex hostel system.<sup>54</sup> Ultimately it was this position that prevailed, reinforced by the fact that hostel-townships relations had been so acutely politicised during the 1980s and 1990s. It was felt that untimely change to the hostel system would potentially threaten a peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa and the important but fragile rapprochement between the ANC and IFP, considered crucial to its success. Thus it was that a compromise position on the hostels was reached. The policy adopted was to opt for short-term emergency upgrading, putting on hold any longer-term development strategy.<sup>55</sup>

The hostel complex where our research was undertaken had not been converted into family accommodation and instead single rooms had been constructed with communal ablutions, although today many rooms are in fact used for multiple occupancy. It was developed in accordance with broader development strategies at the time, notably the IDP process, in a spirit of commitment to participatory decision-making. Decisions about hostel upgrading involved representatives both of the hostel dwellers and the other residents of the Soweto ward of which it formed a part. During the initial phase of upgrading there was a Local Negotiating Group that included representatives from the hostel the local civic organisation and the Council. Often fiercely contested the resulting conversions reflect the preferences and victory of the *indunas* or customary leaders in the hostel, those men with status and connections to traditional authorities in the rural areas who controlled most of the decision-making processes within the hostel complex. Nevertheless, despite extensive upgrading, the hostels researched were still profoundly affected by the character of their original design, the legacy of their historic social and economic function and the memory of their involvement in a recent violent past.

### ***Hostels - on the Outside Looking In***

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<sup>52</sup> J. Oliver, ‘Preface’ in A. Minnaar (ed.) *Communities in Isolation: Perspectives on Hostels in South Africa*, Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1993, p.1.

<sup>53</sup> C. Coovadia, ‘The Role of the Civic Movement’, in Swilling *et al.* (1991).

<sup>54</sup> A. Minnaar (ed.), *Communities in Isolation: Perspectives on Hostels in South Africa*, Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1993.

<sup>55</sup> The development of the hostels was first put in the hands of the ANC-led National Housing Forum (NHF) and then the Independent Development Trust (IDT), in conjunction with provincial and local government housing departments.

Ironically, the first point of exclusion for hostel dwellers is a statistical one. For our study, according to the 1996 Census, the population of the part of Soweto in which the hostel is situated, stands at around 18,000, but this figure excludes the largely migrant hostel population, which is estimated to stand at around 7,000. Rather, they were identified by the census in relation to their rural homes, a fact that was not necessarily to their detriment as is demonstrated below. Although many rural-urban migrants are long time residents of Johannesburg and although many hostel dwellers are urban born, it was clear that hostel residents for a long time had been excluded from the social life of their immediate neighbourhood. Although this is beginning to change. As one woman hostel resident described it, “I feared going to church – I used to fear but I used to go – I just prayed to be safe there and back. But now everybody is free. Now everyone is free to go as he pleases.”

As a result of the involvement of many hostel dwellers in earlier episodes of political violence, all hostel dwellers are still regarded with suspicion by many Sowetans. An example was provided by a hostel resident who claimed that when anyone from the hostel went for treatment at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, which serves Soweto, they gave the administration a false address. If they declared themselves to be from the hostel she said they would not be attended. While other township residents who were also involved, notably the youth, have been able to move on from the abuses and excesses of the political clashes of the 1980s and early 1990s between the ANC and IFP, it has been more difficult for hostel dwellers. This is not only because of their ethnic identity, who they are, but also because they live in a place associated with violence and crime, where they are. The hostels are stigmatised zones, associated with social pathologies and violence and are not integrated into the wider community, although prejudices and fears are abating. This is illustrated by the following comments from one of the Council’s Community Liaison Officers working with representatives of both the hostel and the community:

People thought that they were troublemakers, but when you come closer to it, then you see it is not true. At some stages, during the times of violence – I am also from the township – the youngsters, they became aggressive against them, the people from the hostel. They swore at them and provoked them, but we the representatives said “Look Gentlemen, these are kids, they don’t know what they are doing. There is something behind them. They are being pushed and influenced by somebody else.” The migrants are very polite people.

This view was endorsed by one of the political leaders within the hostel who said: “At first the people in the community used to look down on the people who were staying in the hostel, saying they were vermin, but now things are changing. There is cooperation between us.”

Whatever rapprochement has occurred between hostel dwellers and other township residents, a cultural and attitudinal divide remains, which will take a long time to overcome. This can be discerned from the following comments made in relation to the hostel dwellers by the local ANC councillor:

The majority of people here come from KwaZulu-Natal and they have their own type of life that they lead which is separate from the general community here in the township.... They come from a structured society back home where there are structures in place, They’ve got a king and their *Indunas* and here the same kind of system in operating except that here there is no king. They’ve got leadership here. The first two meetings that I had prior to this Saturday they had sent the juniors – the [Inkatha] Youth Brigade. Like they sent me their Youth Brigade!

But on Saturday they came – right up to the top – the real *Induna*. Although they are not that problematic ... there is still that element of not trusting each other – we view them with suspicion and the same thing happens with them – they perceive us differently. Now it is my duty to try and bring the ordinary people in the township and the hostel together and say “Look, you are one ward. You cannot remain this way because it creates a division within the ward itself and it makes it difficult for development”.

That the councillor has cause for optimism can only be understood by exploring some of the shifting social dynamics within the hostel itself, notably those between the older and younger male residents.

### ***Hostels - on the Inside Looking Out***

Social exclusion can result not only from others doing the excluding but also from groups choosing to exclude themselves from broader social participation. Self exclusion can be exercised not only in response to prejudice and stigma but also in order to preserve or protect existing resources, or to access potential new resources. Both issues applied in the case of the hostels studied here. Under apartheid the *indunas* successfully used their Zulu identity to ensure continued contact with and access to resources in the rural areas of KZN, while retaining at the same time, a foothold in the urban areas through their control over the single-sex migrant hostels. Social linkages such as kinship, clan and friendship networks reached across to the rural areas, small towns and cities of KZN from which many residents or their families originated. Within the hostel compound, people living within a particular hostel building invariably hailed from the same area and many maintained links with ‘homeboys’ or ‘homegirls’ living in other hostels in Gauteng.

When the whole process of hostel upgrading was mooted, the older male hostel representatives, the *Indunas*, opposed it. As the ward councillor put it “There was a problem with the hostel people there because the inmates [*sic*] said ‘No! We want to remain as we are. Just leave us alone, we are fine as we are!’” However, once they saw the upgrading process in other hostels, the leadership became keen to participate, and developed a well-rehearsed position in opposition to full-scale conversion to family units on grounds of affordability. By so doing they managed to retain access to cheap urban accommodation, without having to forfeit new state transfers such as the housing subsidy, which they receive at their rural homes. However, it needs also to be said that even the younger men and women without connections in the countryside, emphasised as positive, the low rents or ‘staying for free’ in hostels. Additional advantages of hostel life, emanating from focus group discussions included:

A lot of us come for work to stay in the hostel and we go back home.

We have our own homes back home.

We just feel comfortable and used to the place.

I am used to living at the hostel, I use this place as home now.

It is a place to go at the end of the day.

We like it, the fact that there is convenient transport.

Now there is security this is your place and you belong here and you can have your family come and visit you.



However, there was not a wholly positive vote for the hostels, with some residents saying they lived there only because they could not afford to live anywhere else. Negative press came particularly from the women. Upon being asked what they liked about living in the hostel, a focus group discussion among women finally concurred, “Nothing!” The list of what upset them was long, but at the top of it was the fact that the upgrading of the hostels had not involved or accommodated women in any way. They found access to ablution facilities difficult and said the men prevented them from using the toilets and showers so that they had to “go to the *veld* near to the railway station”. Moreover, the women complained that the hostels were violent, frightening places. Women feared rape and were constantly anxious on behalf of their children because of the high level of child abuse, particularly on the part of unemployed men who hung around the hostels in the afternoons when mothers were working.

Other hierarchies in the hostel related to length of residence. Upon asking informants and discussants how people came to be in the hostel, the answer was invariably because they already knew someone there. Those with the most status and privilege within the hostel complex were those who had been there longest. They occupied the best rooms in the upgraded hostels. The most recent arrivals and those who were least well off or connected, occupied the older buildings that had not yet been converted. These were without piped water, sewerage and electricity connections. Despite extremely reasonable charges, even for upgraded rooms, the vast majority of residents did not pay rent, with the hostel manager estimating those paying as no more than five per cent. For some residents there were real issues of affordability, addressed either through non-payment or various forms of sub-letting. For example people shared their rooms, getting sub-tenants to pay their rent and sometimes actually surviving on rents. Thus while the Council enjoyed only a five per cent payment rate, an informal private rental market was operating within the hostels, over which there was very little Council control.

Services in the hostel were poorly maintained, with things in a state of disrepair or functioning on the basis of Heath Robinson style repairs undertaken by hostel dwellers themselves. Although it was clear that there were obvious differences in the standards pertaining in the hostels compared to the surrounding townships, culpability did not lie exclusively with the service providers. For example, although hostel residents justifiably complained of power cuts, water shortages and blocked sewers, the maintenance crews reported difficulties in working in the hostels. The *Indunas* tried to control everyone that entered the hostel and this extended to a reluctance to allow service workers into the hostel compound. For example, the official in charge of water supply and sanitation reported that:

Inside [the hostel] they did not want to accept our people in to do the maintenance – it was a cultural thing or something – I am not sure. Then we brought a contractor in and he first needed to meet the *Induna* and talk to him and after that it was fine ... it seems to be sorted out now the contract is someone who lives in the area.

However, even those crews acceptable to the *Indunas* were afraid to go into the hostel to execute repairs. The same official said in this regard:

The major problem that we are struggling with at this stage is just the crime issue. They get hi-jacked, their stuff gets vandalised – it’s a big problem. It is at a stage where people do not want to go in there anymore – especially at night. We do not go in at all at night – they are very reluctant to go in.

Electricians too were afraid of going into the hostel and as a result repairs were rarely undertaken, even with regard to the overhead mast lights, which are essential for providing some counter to the lack of public safety in the hostel. Even the ambulance service refused to go beyond the hostel gates because the drivers and paramedics were afraid. One of the male residents said that the failure of ambulances to enter the hostel compound was problematic particularly when people had been stabbed or shot, which was often. The women emphasised the problems when women went into labour during the night and could not get to hospital.

Confirming that it was not only women who were vulnerable and fearful, when asked what they disliked most about hostel living young men mentioned the following:

It's the crime that happens, killing each other, mugging of cell phones.

It is thugs – especially the ones who carry guns.

There are a lot of them – you can't just point them out.

Gunmen.

They kill.

They take our money and you won't say a thing – you just keep quiet.

They kill, so you see him killing and you won't say a thing because even if you go to the police they have been paid too, to keep quiet.

It's the rape and being tortured by policemen when they have nothing to do.

It's the random shooting at night.

If you tried to take them out of the hostel you would not even make it to the exit gate.

A major source of fear was a gang that either comprised police officers themselves or was masquerading as police officers. They entered the hostel at night on the pretext of a tip off and stole property, especially cell phones and caused panic and mayhem. The police were generally seen to be corrupt and often violent, colluding with the gangs operating from and within the hostels. Of all the relations between hostel residents and outsiders, those with the police were at the lowest ebb, with no evidence of trust at all.

Although it is difficult to say whether levels of crime and violence are necessarily higher in the hostels than elsewhere, they are certainly more highly concentrated. It was also clear that within a bounded socio-spatial environment, a majority of hostel residents were being held to ransom by a minority of powerful anti-social elements, both within and without the compound, while at the same time being branded as violent criminals themselves by people outside the hostel. It seems too that the hostels have served to foster and reward parallel and clientalist informal institutions that lie outside the rule of law and that will prove difficult to dislodge. In this, the role of the hostel *Indunas* in limiting engagement with the outside world and the Council cannot be discounted. Curiously, those hostels were a lot less porous than the middle-class fortress enclaves of Johannesburg. This stemmed from the fact that their more affluent residents seemed unable to do without the manual labour supplied by Johannesburg's working poor. The irony of the situation was captured by a townhouse resident who complained that strangers found their way into what was supposed to be a secure complex, while readily admitting to picking up and bringing home "guys looking for piece jobs"

whenever he needed his car washing. The hostel *Indunas* by contrast allowed in no strangers at all, not even to provide municipal services. Instead residents were self-servicing, relying on informal solutions or none at all.

When the various focus groups were asked who were the ‘big guys’ in their community, the *Indunas* invariably came up and they clearly acted as gatekeepers in all sorts of ways. The *Indunas* also tended to keep themselves apart from local governance issues and processes although they did participate fully in local electoral politics, largely behind the IFP. However, they have increasingly been drawn into local governance processes. The *Induna* Committee comprised representatives from the various hostel buildings and was the most conservative and inward looking committee in the hostel. It comprised older residents who were elected by virtue of their rural status and links in KZN. Ostensibly concerned with social issues such as the resolution of domestic disputes and hostel conflicts, their power appeared fairly pervasive. There was also a Hostel Residents’ Committee that was formed in 1991, which included younger political leaders as well. This committee was formed specifically to relate to the Council and was the official interface between hostel residents and municipal officials. Third there was the local IFP branch that overlapped in terms of membership, influence and connections, both with the *Induna* Committee and the Hostel Committee, as well as with Inkatha supporters elsewhere. This political network also included branches of the Inkatha Youth Brigade and Inkatha Women’s Brigade.

Both the *Induna* Committee and Hostel Committee were male-dominated, as were all the decision-making bodies and women were not represented in any serious way. In terms of local governance processes and decisions, therefore, the views, perceptions and priorities of hostel dwellers were overwhelmingly biased towards those of the male residents. During the initial phases of hostel upgrading there was in addition a Local Negotiating Group that was formed as part of the IDP process. During negotiations the Council tried to include in this structure and its processes a broader range of hostel residents, including women, with limited success. The ward councillor explained it this way:

Change is always difficult. Some of them actually resist it. They just don’t like that life and the way we live in Jo’burg. They feel it is not right, like here you talk about women’s rights and stuff like that, but back home it’s not an issue, it’s not negotiable. A woman knows her place and a man knows his place. It’s a cultural and moral issue and some of them still resist it and still believe it’s unheard of.

Interestingly, women who represented a significant proportion of hostel residents, appeared to be among those most willing and able to build links with the broader township community of which the hostel was a part. However, they were excluded from important social networks and decision-making arenas within the hostel and between the hostel and other organisations.

Nevertheless, the male hostel leadership was not homogeneous and there were observable differences of approach between the older, more rural *Indunas* and the younger political leaders. The latter had come to see challenging the older *Indunas* as justifiable particularly because they appeared ineffective against the criminals and gangs who made their lives a misery within the hostel complex. Moreover, there were also many hostel dwellers who did not have connections and resources in rural areas and were increasingly committed to living their lives in Soweto and engaging more fully with surrounding Sowetan communities. Thus the older leadership was beginning to face challenges from younger political leaders who saw

benefit for themselves and their generation, in greater cooperation with township residents and the Metropolitan Council.

The hostels are a sad reminder and a pernicious symbol of the apartheid era. Over the years they have served to devalue and oppress people in ways that are not compatible with South Africa's democratic constitution. Although politically inconceivable in the short term, given the delicate peace between the ANC and IFP, there is something to be said for a future transformation of the hostels beyond current recognition to expunge the stigma and exclusion associated with them. There are also equity issues associated with the Council continuing to heavily subsidise the housing costs of urban hostel dwellers. This has allowed some hostel dwellers, who may well be income poor in the urban areas, to become asset rich in the rural areas. This is as a result of their being able to take advantage of two post-apartheid transfers, effectively benefiting from the housing subsidy in the countryside and access to cheap or free accommodation in the city. This is in a context of more generalised and widespread need in Johannesburg itself. In making this argument I am not suggesting that hostel dwellers are wealthy or that they have untold choices. Indeed the implications for policy suggest hard choices – for example conversion to family accommodation or greater fostering of a private rental market – and these options would not be universally popular. Nevertheless, there is a necessary process of social healing that needs to occur, which looks set to be undermined by the continuation of the hostels in their current physical form.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have shown in several different contexts, how people have chosen to live in closed compounds and to exclude themselves from wider city life. Our analysis of these communities contradicts the dichotomised thinking that suggests that the affluent barricade themselves in fortress enclaves while poorer citizens roam the streets but at the expense of being criminalised by society and pursued by the police. A more complex and nuanced picture is presented that suggests that irrespective of different dimensions of social difference, many of Johannesburg's residents fear crime and particularly violent crime. This in turn does impact on how and where they use public space and at what cost, the focus of much of the northern or western literature on the subject of fortress cities.<sup>56</sup> However, I argue that it impacts as well on how people create and use private space and at what cost.

In the case of the self-excluded middle and lower middle class residents of the suburban fortress enclaves, many experienced problems associated with the break-up of old communities, the forming of new ones and the isolationism imposed by segregation. While they put themselves through this voluntarily, it should not be forgotten that under apartheid many black people experienced similar upheavals, as a result of forced removals and pernicious influx control laws in the cities, and they did so in far less comfort and security. The position of the hostel residents is more ambiguous. The migrant labour system of which they were a part was not slavery, although the choice to come to the city to look for work was often no choice at all. Nevertheless, they made virtue of necessity. While for many younger and poorer hostel dwellers, pursuing livelihoods across the rural-urban divide may still be a matter of necessity rather than choice, for more senior residents the hostels have served them

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<sup>56</sup> Blakely & Snyder (1997); Davis (1990); Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998; N. Fyfe, 'Introduction: Reading the Street' in N. Fyfe (ed.) *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 1-10; Marcuse (1994).

well. They have provided them not only with affordable urban accommodation but livelihood opportunities, sometimes dubious, based on private fiefdoms over which they exercise informal but uncompromising control.

In the case of both townhouse residents and hostel dwellers, social identity played a crucial role in reinforcing socio-spatial separation but in quite different ways. For the hostels, it was their own shared ethnic identity, overlaid and intertwined in complex ways with a violent political history and stigma based on hostel living itself, that both served to exclude residents from broader Soweto life, *and* to reinforce their claim on affordable space in the city. And this they did without having to relinquish citizenship rights and the transfer of state assets in the countryside. In other words, it was not Zulu ethnicity alone that was the source of their social exclusion, after there are many Zulus in Soweto and a majority of Sowetans speak isiZulu. Rather it resulted from a combination of 'who they were' and 'where they were' and for the more powerful among the hostel dwellers, allowed them to collude in this socially constructed identity and exclusion to their own end.

Among the predominantly white but racially mixed residents of the affluent townhouse complex, there was more of a collusion to abandon race-based identity and to emphasise their shared class position. They are seen as rich and privileged by those on the outside and see themselves as having joined the ranks of the international, post-Fordist middle class, which everywhere is cocooning itself within remarkably similar closed compounds across the world. While class and status underpinned 'insider identity', the identity of unknown outsiders was more opaque, more amorphous, but fear of crime and strangers clearly often stood in for race-based fear and stereotyping. The residents of the cluster-home complex to the west, were much closer to Soweto, both physically and structurally. While undoubtedly privileged by comparison to the African working class of Soweto, in the new post-Fordist Johannesburg the predominantly white residents of this failing fortress are nevertheless part of the sunset rather than the sunrise economy and are profoundly alienated from the local polity and society. If they opt like many hostel dwellers, to evoke race/ethnicity and take recourse in identity-based politics, they may well carve out for themselves a relatively secure, if very lonely place in the South African sun. If they are prepared to put their heads above the parapet and are encouraged by the Council to do so, they may yet engage with the wider urban community of which they are apart, and become part of a new non-racial Johannesburg. However, for this group of residents as with the others studied here, the geography of fear, when combined with exclusionary mindsets and the socio-spatial legacy of apartheid, mitigates against this. As Saff (2001) has argued, racially divided apartheid cities have been replaced on cities organised upon the basis of insider/outsider exclusions. In this context the biggest challenge facing governance in Johannesburg is the fact that responsibility for spatial exclusion more and more rests in the hands of private citizens rather than the state. This stands as a real constraint in the way of Council efforts to involve a majority of its citizens in addressing social exclusion in the city, both their own and that of others.

In this paper I have described elites who choose to live behind security fences in select communities, and the socially excluded and disadvantaged who cluster together behind protective boundaries, whether real walls of concrete or imagined borders of danger and fear, and have explored the reasons for their choices. These individual and collective motivations, however, are not made in isolation. It could be argued that the more people behind the walls are protected from crime and violence, the more those outside become vulnerable. Moreover, gated communities by looking inwards, opt out of civic structures and obligations. Gated communities are not going to disappear from Johannesburg's landscape in a hurry but their

proliferation could be potentially anti-democratic. A key challenge for the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council is to counter 'fortress Johannesburg' by wooing a broad range of citizens into using public spaces together and into engaging in public action. A precondition for this is the improvement of city security and public safety.

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### **Crisis States Programme collaborators**

#### ***In India:***

Asia Development Research Institute (Patna, Bihar)  
NEIDS, North-East Hill University (Shillong)

#### ***In South Africa:***

Wits Institute of Social & Economic Research (WISER)  
Sociology of Work Workshop (SWOP)  
Department of Sociology  
(University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg)

#### ***In Colombia:***

IEPRI, Universidad Nacional de Colombia  
Universidad de los Andes  
Universidad del Rosario

### **Research Objectives**

- We will assess how constellations of power at local, national and global levels drive processes of institutional change, collapse and reconstruction and in doing so will challenge simplistic paradigms about the beneficial effects of economic and political liberalisation.
- We will examine the effects of international interventions promoting democratic reform, human rights and market competition on the 'conflict management capacity' and production and distributional systems of existing polities.
- We will analyse how communities have responded to crisis, and the incentives and moral frameworks that have led either toward violent or non-violent outcomes.
- We will examine what kinds of formal and informal institutional arrangements poor communities have constructed to deal with economic survival and local order.



**Director: Dr James Putzel**  
**Administrator: Wendy Foulds**  
**Editorial Assistant: Jonathan Curry-Machado**

Development Research Centre,  
Development Studies Institute (DESTIN),  
LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7849 4631 Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6844  
e-mail: [csp@lse.ac.uk](mailto:csp@lse.ac.uk)

