Gated communities and the erosion of public space. An analysis of contemporary urban misanthropy.

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GATED COMMUNITIES AND THE EROSION OF PUBLIC SPACE. AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN MISANTHROPY

Fabrizio Aimar*

Abstract

The paper analyses the social, psychological, political and economic causes of gated communities in order to understand the driving forces behind their rise both in the Western world and Italy. The implications for the design, planning and management of public space at the neighbourhood and city level are discussed, highlighting erosion, clustering and pressures for the privatisation of goods and services. European and Anglo-Saxon case studies are presented, along with security tools and protocols to regulate these walled communities. Finally, exit strategies are proposed to avoid caesuras in urban clusters that affect, inter alia, neighbourhood viability and collective security in case of emergencies.

1. Introduction

Privatopia, Golden Ghetto and Walled Communities. And *barrios privados* (or *cerrados*), *urbanizanciones privadas* and alphaville. But also *condominios fechados* (or exclusive), *quartier fermé* and *résidence fermée*. Different ways of identifying an enclave, a modern urban concretion given by the "welding of a foreign morphological element into a new lexical unit" (Devoto-Oli, 1990, p.436). Its members come together on the basis of an ideology of fear or hope, the product of which is social segregation and the consequent loss of enjoyment of public space. If the public space can be usually defined as a "space to which people normally have unrestricted access and right of way" (Sendi and Goličnik Marušić, 2012), the latter is transformed into a controlled commercial environment, while the transitional spaces are relegated to the status of leftovers.

The reduction of public spaces "to 'defensible' enclaves with selective access" (Bauman, 2000, p.94), the segregation rather than negotiation of community life, and the criminalisation of any difference stand out as relevant elements of the current urban evolutionary process. In this respect, "the 1960s and early 1970s were, according to Zukin, 'a turning point in the institutionalisation of urban fear'" (ibid.). Voters and elites ... could have chosen to endorse government policies to "eliminate poverty, manage ethnic competition" (Bauman, 2000, p.94) (in the US since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but unfortunately still noted in the Kerner Report of 1968), and "integrate everyone into common public institutions". Instead, they chose to buy protection, fueling the growth of the private security industry" (ibid.). (ibid.), downgrading violence from a state problem to a community problem, as depicted in the film 'The Zone' by Plà (2007). In this regard, Zukin noted how "the mixing of strangers in public

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spaces and fears of violent crime have inspired the growth of private police forces, gated communities, and a movement to design public space for maximum surveillance... If one way of dealing with the material inequalities of urban life has been to aestheticize diversity, another way has been to aestheticize fear" (1995, p.2). To this day, ethnic, religious and socio-economic statuses discrimination continue to contribute to residential segregation in contemporary society. They physically mark the urban fabric through the creation of communities using methods such as clustering, "physical spatial boundaries and internal transitional spaces" (Artero, 2017, pp.69-70), and the imposition of distances. This was highlighted in Cable's (2013) study of the racial dot map, a map of US cities from the 2010 census, as well as by Kramer (2017), where physical markers of neighbourhood boundaries (e.g. major roads, rivers and railroads, among others) are associated with persistent racial boundaries. In particular, 8 Mile Road in Detroit, Michigan, was embodied as a demarcation line between the white and African American components, while in Birmingham, Alabama, it was the topography that localised the white ethnicity that had historically settled "on the mountain" (Cable, 2013). And so, in today's humus made of insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability in the quality of physical and neighbourhood life, the blame for this decline is laid at the door of migratory flows, crime and terrorism, accepting the answers given by individualising escapes. The latter set themselves the task of "daily reshaping and renegotiating the network of mutual entanglements" of a social nature (Bauman, 2000, p. 31), slowly unhinging the notion of the citizen, who is placed in a state of captivity. As is well known, the term captivity comes from the Latin *captivitas*, a derivation of *captivus*, meaning "captive" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

The city, rethought in this way, is reconfigured as an amorphous set of islands in which the common holding of its connectivity, composed of an increasingly contrasting social topography, is at stake (Secchi, 2013). This is due to the oversimplification of the social complexity within, in which the emphasised difference between the identity-seeking components instead determines their philosophical opposite, namely otherness. It is the successful typological formula of controlled, market-driven and plagiarised urbanisation in a kind of neo-feudal parody.

Based on the above, this study moves from considering social segregation in public and semi-public spaces, where the attributes of public and private spaces seem to be blurred, to examining it in relation to gated communities. It aims to analyse these global phenomena and the causes of their genesis, such as the socio-cultural, political and economic context by presenting international cases, in order to offer possible exit strategies.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Public space and sociality

"In some places, rural and urban alike, the privatization of certain spaces has restricted people's access to places of particular beauty. In others, 'ecological' neighbourhoods have been created which are closed to outsiders to ensure an artificial tranquillity." (Pope Francis, 2015, para 45). These solutions seem close to the prophetic words of Frampton: "In a society hypnotised by consumerism, balanced eco-ontological conditions can perhaps only be achieved by the strategy of creating discontinuous enclaves, that is, bounded fragments in which a certain cultural and ecological symbiosis can prevail despite the chaos of the surroundings" (1992, p.343). Such

"'safer' areas of cities" (Pope Francis, 2015, para. 45) can be equated with spatial caesuras, which they represent as bastions of the ephemeral concepts of beauty and harmony with nature. Among the possible references to 'urban archipelagos', it seems possible to include the Vertical Forest by Stefano Boeri Architetti in Milan, Italy (2014). These proposals increasingly wink at environmental ethics, with the subtle aim of creating a new exclusivity. Thus, the concept of an ecological niche is marketed by creating a place that is sold as untouched by a polluted urban environment, hiding these strategies behind deceptive greenwashing.

Bounded by tangible or intangible borders, these "do not simply frame an environment or territory" (Pilia, 2015) but rather "establish a dual status of existence concerning this border: whoever is 'inside' benefits from the advantages that the border brings, in contrast to those who are outside, condemned to small- or large-scale nomadism" (ibid.). In this way, the wall becomes part of a spatial concept from a specific geographical perspective (Lambert, 2015; Paasi, 2022). Bauman reinforces this view by highlighting the drama of refugees who do not have "their place in the common world" (Bauman in Guerrera, 2015) and consequently "their only place becomes a 'non-place'" (ibid.). This emerging spatial urban issue thus highlights the link between the right to accessibility and social inequalities in the context of political, socio-economic (Secchi, 2013) and also climatic changes. An approach that asserts a practical relativism, which seems to be a convincing exit strategy in the face of an unconditional surrender of choice. This view is supported by Frampton himself, who states: "Against this, the urban enclave now asserts itself as a viable alternative strategy, given the recent bankruptcy of planning as a projective practice" (1992, p.343).

Assuming, then, that the nature of the discipline of architecture is inherently violent "because of the way it dissects space" (Lambert, 2015, p.7), it can be said that only two urban strategies have been used "to cope with the otherness of others ... one was the anthropoemic strategy, the other was the anthropophagic strategy" (Bauman, 2000, p.101). Anticipated by Simmel, the former consists of rejecting and expelling the other, "prohibiting physical contact, dialogue, social intercourse" of a patrimonial, convivial or sentimental nature (Bauman, 2000, p.101). Today, updated and refined forms of such spatial separation and selective access, including visual ones, are evident. "La Défense in Paris (among the numerous varieties of 'interdictory spaces' ...) is an architectural rendition of the 'emic' strategy", responding to the "task of coping with the likelihood of encountering strangers, that constitutive feature of urban life", but the management of which requires and implies "'power-assisted' measures" (ibid.). Physical contiguity and the sharing of space are thus stripped of their aggregative threat in a kind of "paternalistic and gentrifying synopsis" (Aimar and Pilia, 2017). This is one of the psychic responses to metropolitan social life, no longer understood as utopian-communal (Simmel, 1903). It masks other feelings such as aversion, alienation, distrust and repulsion, which can lead to abandonment or suddenly turn into hatred and conflict (ibid.). "Some of these signs are also symptomatic of a real social decline, of the silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social cohesion." (Pope Francis, 2015, n. 46). Among these "social dimensions of global change" (ibid.), the Pope made explicit reference to "exclusion ... social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression" and a more ambiguous "loss of identity" (ibid.). In such an urban conundrum, not only does the physical notion of public space, articulated through its physical types such as parks, squares, streets and sidewalks

(Miller, 2007), seem lost, but also the mental one through the meeting place. Sennett also spoke of "dead public space" (1977, p.12), where "the erasure of alive public space contains an even more perverse idea - that of making space contingent upon motion" (ibid., p.14). Essentially, the above seems to refer to the notion of nomadism (Pilia, 2015) as a result of the capitalist process of revising the notion of public space as a common good.

2.2 "Who plans the planning?"

As a contribution to the catalogue of the Swiss Pavilion at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice (2014), the British artist Gillick offered this critical reflection, which underlines the relevance of the dilemma. Analysing the forms these actions take, it seems that reality is not too far removed from the scenarios envisaged by Orwell in '1984' (1949) and Huxley in 'The New World' (1932). "The heavily guarded enclaves bear a remarkable resemblance to the ethnic ghettos of the poor" (Bauman, 2000, p.180) but differ from them in their willingness and free choice to aggregate. Today, it is a minority that claims a free will of self-determination, where selection at the entrance of settlers becomes a privilege based on purchasing power. And this transforms security into a prerogative increasingly linked to purchasing power. "This construction technique can only produce 'communities' as fragile and ephemeral" (ibid., p.37), real social divisions that embody "shared concerns, shared fears or shared hatreds" (ibid.). They thus become a kind of "gilded cage" coveted by individuals seeking places to share and banish their fears. The handing over of power to private individuals reinforces the fragmentation of jurisdictions and such confusion in turn stimulates the creation of closed communities, which "play an important role in depoliticising class relations (Harvey, 1989)" (Duncan and Duncan, 2001, p.387). On this basis, it is possible to state how "among the elite, ... aesthetic dispositions are markers of identity" (Boersema, 2011, p.4), the mediated use of space and, at the same time, "aesthetics are thus not only used to soften the public face of the security apparatus" (ibid., p.14). Given the above, is it so provocative to say that the future will belong to "archipelagos of islands scattered along the axes of communication" (Patigny in Bauman, 2000, p.180) and to "cut-off and fenced-off, truly exterritorial residential areas" (ibid.)? Will it be something more than a warning of the future "archipel carceral" of Foucault (1975)?

2.3 An economic analysis of the phenomenon

Born in the late 19th century, the rise of these urban enclosures seems to be a consequence of the uneven social distribution of income (Hernandez Palacio, 2012). Based on the inversion of the syllogism between social justice and its redistribution mechanisms (Rosanvallon, 2011), they thus identify and polarise extremes of need and wealth.

This socio-economic correlation was theorised by the statistician Gini, who was able to measure inequality of distribution by calculating the coefficient of the same name. This coefficient lies between 0 and 1, with 1 representing extreme inequality. The countries most affected are South Africa and Namibia (0.63 and 0.591), followed by Suriname, Zambia and the Central African Republic (The World Bank, 2022a). On the other hand, most European countries have medium-low Gini coefficients, ranging from 0.403 to 0.232, with greater homogeneity in the Scandinavian peninsula but with

a negative peak in Bulgaria. In Italy, 16.2% of households were at risk of poverty in 2020, gross of the income available from the government's anti-Covid-19 measures, the unemployment fund and the citizenship income (ISTAT, 2021b). The average value of the Gini index of 0.352 in 2019 (The World Bank, 2022a) was higher than the OECD's 0.33 in 2020 (OECD, 2022). Moreover, a gap in gross income between the South and the Centre-North was confirmed (0.339 vs. 0.312), with an increasing inequality coefficient in the South (ISTAT, 2021b). On the other hand, it is interesting to note that in the United States, the birthplace of this gated phenomenon, it stands at 0.415 in 2019, confirming greater income inequality in the US population than in Italy (The World Bank, 2022b). Specifically, these inequalities emerged at the end of the period of heavy capitalism, which promoted a neoliberal economic reconfiguration in heterogeneous groups in terms of the census, ethnicity and family structure. Such ensembles, seeking the desired autonomy in their urban sphere, have claimed a more specialised and fragmented space, creating a direct link between neoliberalism and aestheticization (Lipovetsky and Servoy, 2017). The affirmation of these urban clusters is therefore based on perceived similarities in lifestyle, reinforced by similar consumption patterns rather than shared activities (Kohn, 2004).

3. Results

From the above, it is clear that the community is indeed non-inclusive and that the notion of 'identity' is increasingly giving way to a form of civic militancy, with the risks associated with reactionary and nationalist political and discursive outlooks. This spills over into public spatial planning and, thus, into politics, where mediation and involvement techniques are replaced by disengagement and routine management.

3.1 National and EU political views

Some European political parties use a self-referential and identity-driven use of the personal pronoun 'we' to extol the desire to defend the community. In 2008, an Italian election slogan offered an axiom between what happened to Native Americans during the conquest of the West and what happened to native citizens at the time, in these words: "They suffered from immigration. Now they live in reservations. Think about it". This established a link between tolerance and the risk of marginalisation in territorial enclaves, in recourse to verbal violence or its evocation "as a means of drawing boundaries when they are absent, porous or blurred" (Bauman, 2000, p.195). Unhappiness was given a form "to reforge the equally vague longing for happiness" (ibid., p.66). Such an assertion, however, is significant enough to identify immigration and fear of diversity as the triggering causes of the aforementioned Not in My Back Yard allergic reactions, within which space capital returns to the fore. It takes the form of a contemporary reworking of "moral panics" (ibid., p. 39), an artificial process whose purpose is to arouse concern and social indignation through the artful exaggeration of a problem. The rhetorical aim is to propose "(neo)communitarian closures and criticisms of the democratic institutions themselves" (Antonelli and Rossi, 2014, p.XII) as solutions that result in the passive anti-politics of the masses. It is symptomatic that, in analysing the same social 'problem', the President of the Italian National Social Security Institute instead adopts parallel but opposite positions to the previous populist ones. He explains how Italy, which will have 59.6 million people in 2020 (Eurostat, 2022), would actually "need a high number of immigrant workers to

maintain a balanced ratio between those who are pensioners and those who are working" (Caritas, 2019, p.24). With the current balance between births and deaths, the population would fall to 54.1 million in 2050, and the working-age population would fall from 68.3% in 2021 to 53.3% in 2050 (ISTAT, 2021a). These projections would therefore require the integration of new citizens in a necessary process of utilitarian integration. Such a policy of openness and citizenship, however, clashes with the ambivalent growth of exclusion towards the diverse, with the birth of different gated entities, as noted in the documentary "Live safely in Europe" by Danesch (2007). It highlighted the European behaviour of participatory militarism, likening physical spaces to those of a fortress. They are increasingly protected by physical barriers such as walls, barbed wire, razor wire and video surveillance systems, as in the cases of Calais, Ceuta, Melilla, Padua, and the Hungarian-Serbian and Bulgarian-Turkish borders, among others. Another example is the temporary reintroduction of border controls within the Schengen area (European Commission, 2021, 2022) "in a context different from COVID-19" (ibid., 2022), in which countries such as Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Spain and Sweden have already participated. In other words, a contradictory biopolitical system that claims the right to decide on the administrative existence of others (Marcuse, 2008, p.93), relegating them to a limbo of marginality and suspension. The real risk is to trigger processes of de-democratisation (Tilly, 2007) since freedoms are not crystallised values but are in a state of constant redefinition and refinement.

3.2 European and Italian cases of gated communities

These defensive phenomena are characterised by a marked interscalarity, in the sense that from the national level, where walls exist between states (as in the case of Mexico and the US), similar dynamics are now being reproduced down to the level of the urban neighbourhood. As introduced, gated communities are a snobbish refuge for the upper class (Papa et al., 2013) in Latin American (e.g. Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina), Asian (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Pakistan and China), and African (e.g. South Africa) countries. In Europe, the trend is also noticeable and growing in countries such as Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy. In the latter, it is also a response to past terrorist attacks and latent discrimination against Muslim immigrant populations. Even in the new member states of Eastern Europe, such as Poland, and in the emerging countries, such as Albania, such phenomena are emerging as a viable option to forget the communist past (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

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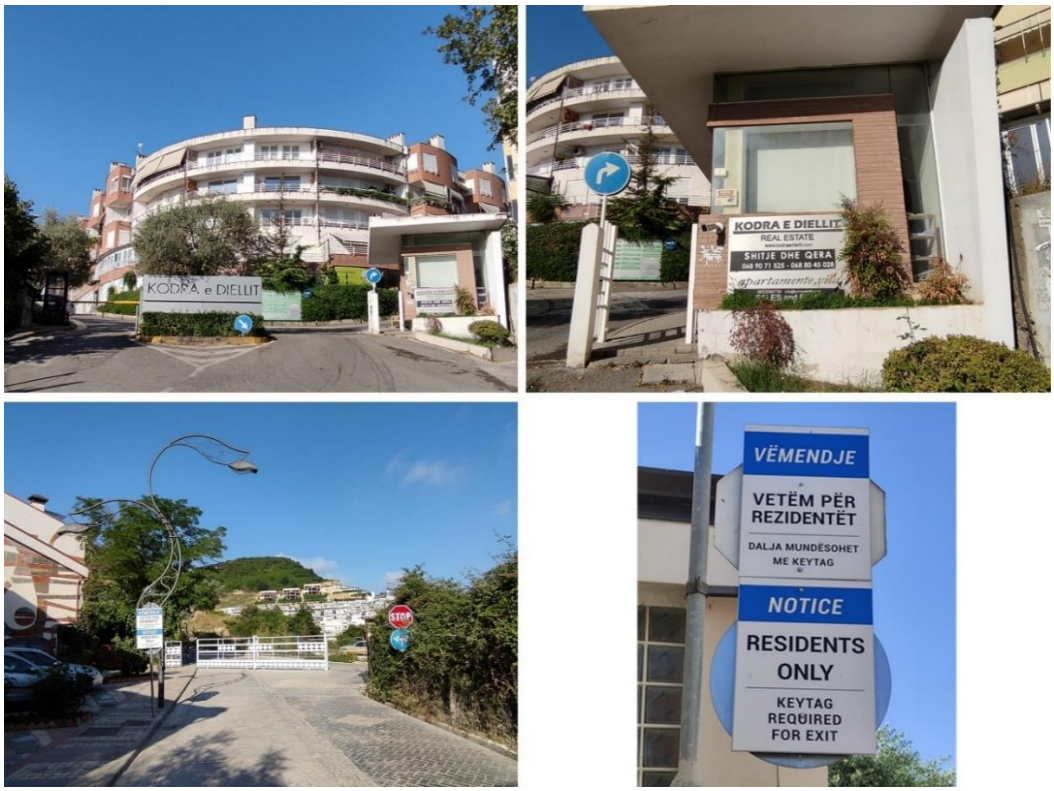

Figure 1: Kodra e Diellit 1, a gated community in Tirana, Albania. Source: Own elaboration.

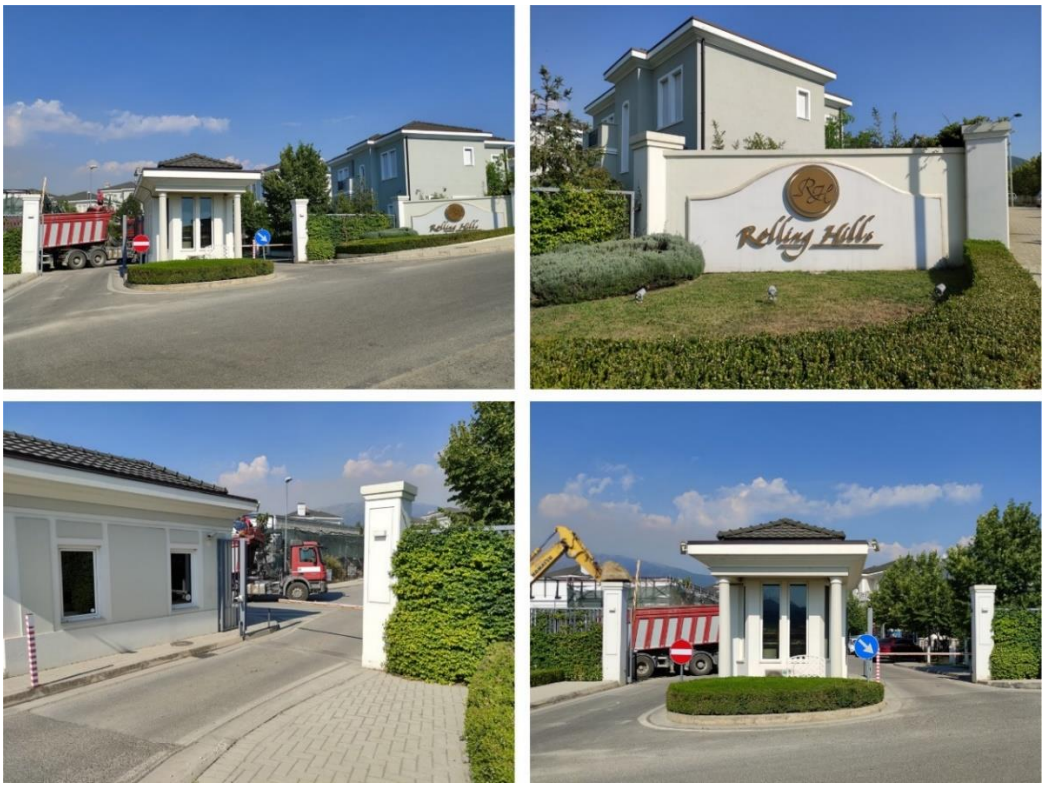

Figure 2: Rolling Hills, a gated community in Tirana, Albania. Source: Own elaboration.

Italy is not exempt from this phenomenon, although it is less affected than other countries. However, the JamesEdition website offers, for instance, "Luxury Gated Community Homes for Sale in Tuscany, Italy" (2022). Other examples include Olgiata in Rome, Villaggio Rovido in Buccinasco and the Monte Gentile and Roccamare resorts in Ariccia and Castiglione della Pescaia respectively. They also include Cascina Vione in Basiglio, in the province of Milan. The latter, renovated in 2011, has a surface area of 100,000 square metres and can accommodate more than 250 people. There are about 130 apartments, ranging in size from 60 to 600 square metres and costing between €3,300 and €4,200 per square metre. This housing model is the result of pilot initiatives launched in the 1970s in neighbourhoods such as Milano 2.
The case of Asti is different, where the occurrence of some criminal cases has led to different responses. These include the introduction of a register of private cameras (in addition to the 64 public cameras already in use and others in the pipeline) (Marchesini, 2015), the condominium camera project "Apriamo gli occhi sulla città" (Città di Asti, 2017), and the creation of Neighbourhood Safety Committees (ibid.). The latter aim to "rebuild the cooperation and social control that once existed in all small communities" (Natale, 2015) through security-type initiatives and the use of software capable of identifying suspicious behaviour and alerting public security forces. One influence on these options seems to be the induced sense of insecurity felt by the population due to the exacerbation of such incidents by the media. In fact, crime statistics reported by law enforcement agencies to the Italian judicial authorities confirm that the number of crimes has decreased from 2,771,490 in 2006 to 2,301,912 in 2019 (ISTAT, 2022). In spite of this, Italy has a large private armed security force to support the public ones. Composed of around 50,000 private security guards (Corradini, 2021), it is the fourth largest security force in the country, numerically ahead of the prison police.

3.3 Anglo-Saxon cases of gated communities

Coming back to the US, such housing communities take their cue from an anomalous re-imagining of the low-density English garden city, the result of residential decentralisation by the white upper class and then by the middle class. This settlement pattern has been consolidated by urban sprawl into today's diffuse polycentric city. However, the first such gated communities were designed and built in the 1960s and 1970s, first as holiday resorts and then as retirement homes (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). They originated mainly in the Sun Belt, in states such as California, Florida and Texas. In order to prevent the combination of housing and segregation from degenerating into something akin to dormitory neighbourhoods, the inclusion of services to meet the material, aesthetic and spiritual needs was proposed. These walled models, encouraged by the economic policies of deindustrialisation in the 1970s and accelerated by Reaganism in the 1980s, produced an economic restructuring mix of conservatism and populism. They led to significant socio-political changes because of the unequal development caused by the relocation of capital and the rewriting of social equality. The aim was to shape individual behaviour at the expense of a relational system (Sennett, 1977). It follows that, from its inception, the argument of collective justice has been a peculiar "declination of individualism rather than a consequence" of social confrontation and debate (Antonelli, 2014, p.7).
In the US, surveys show that such communities continue to grow. In 2001, more than 7 million households lived there (Mohn, 2012), while in 2015 the number had risen to

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almost 11 million (USCB, 2015), of which more than 2.2 million were in California (e.g. the cases of Bel Air and the West - East Gates) (ibid.). The legal framework for regulating these defended spaces is provided by the Common Interest Development (CID) programme. It is a zoning district in residential neighbourhoods organised around criteria such as "privacy, protection and prestige" (Blakely and Snyder, 1997, p.4). A CID "is a real estate development where property owners share a common set of financial obligations, property and easement rights established in codes, covenants and regulations" (CID Management, 2018). These include rules on customs, including bans on drying clothes outdoors and even on keeping pets of any kind or size. Similarly, other strict regulations relating to the ordinary and extraordinary maintenance of the property, with clauses requiring, for example, that the property be painted every seven years and windows cleaned every four weeks (Adams Stirling, 2022). Roads, restaurants, gardens and sports facilities such as golf courses, swimming pools and spas are built in these areas (Kaass Law, 2021). Residents voluntarily tax themselves to provide road maintenance and private security (Adams Stirling, 2022), effectively replacing the state administration in managing the public good. Now, in addition to upper-middle-class whites, like the first residents of Tuxedo Park in Orange County, New York, in the 19th century, there are also African Americans and Latinos. And it is around the ambiguous role assigned to the middle class that the variable dynamics of these enclaves play out, capable of defining their structure and evolution (Secchi, 2013). "The politics of distinction operate precisely on the middle class" (ibid., p. 38), with dual practices. They are either inclusive, concerning the more influential and wealthy social strata that already constitute them, or exclusive, broader than the former, driving this class into "progressive poverty" (ibid.) through forced aggregation with the poorer classes (Figure 3).

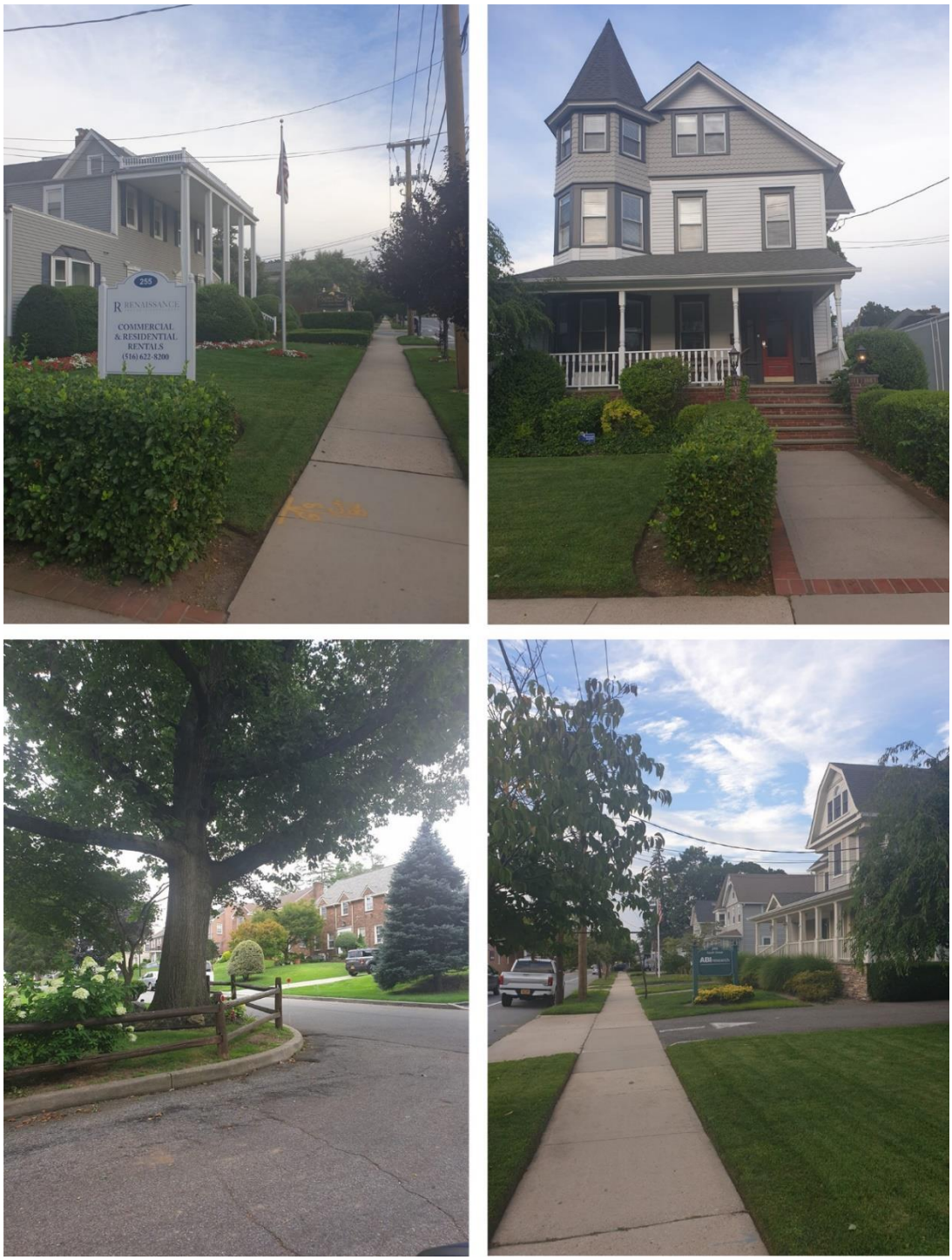

Figure 3: Gated residential areas in Nassau County, Long Island, New York, US. Source and courtesy: Alessandro Melis.

The erosion of both public space and the threshold concept at the expense of public space, but for private use, is a hybridisation that is worrying because of the mutagenic form it is taking, as also noted by Ergun and Kulkul (2018). The Anglo-Saxon countries, including Great Britain, continue to be the workshops for these urban processes. The latter is the originator of, among other things, the ambiguous Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPSs) (Garrett, 2015a) and directives such as Public Space

Protection Orders (PSPOs) (Garrett, 2015b). In the first case, these are spaces intended for public use, such as squares, gardens and parks, but which are, in fact, privately owned. As a result, people can be prevented from accessing or even passing through such areas through the exercise of surface rights legally acquired from third parties (Garrett, 2015a). A prohibition aimed at removing all undesirables from the ideal of social life, including the homeless. Reinforcing these policies are the aforementioned PSPOs, which aim to legally restrict certain behaviours in urban spaces, mainly public ones (Garrett, 2015b). As such, PSPOs can be targeted at specific groups or activities, which, through criminological prediction, can affect the social sphere and its freedoms. In a way, these trends are epigones of the protocols of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, shaped by Crowe (1991) and Secured by Design (2004). The latter supports social control through physical security, surveillance, movement control, management and maintenance, and defensible space (Design For Security, 2022). Indeed, increasing the sense of private ownership is a subtle technique to encourage owners to confront intruders and report them to the police, making it easier to identify strangers. Moreover, the methods used, such as the shape of buildings or the calibrated use of signs, barriers, paving and lighting, are useful in expressing ownership and the relative gradients of public space. One should therefore question the deterministic fragmentation of public space, including multifunctional green space, and the legitimacy of these restrictions. Are they all justified or justifiable?

4. Potential exit strategies

Both spiritual and lay approaches seem to be helpful in addressing this issue. Religious faith calls for the subordination of private property to "the first principle of the whole ethical and social order, namely the principle of the common use of goods" (Pope John Paul II, 1981, n. 19). The Christian tradition and, by extension, the centuries-old experience of European society, emphasises "the social purpose of all forms of private property" (Pope Francis, 2015, para 93) and a kind of moral obligation on the part of the state to intervene to limit and even out the inequalities created by the market.
Instead, from a secular perspective, it is crucial to avoid any erosion of the spiritual value of the public space because of the degenerative effects that this mixed and blurred model between the public and the private can have. In this context, The Guardian newspaper launched a crowdsourcing campaign in 2012 to identify POPS in the UK. It condemned the privatisation of public space because of urban redevelopment, as happened in the London cases of Canary Wharf, Granary Square and Kings Cross (Vasagar, 2012). As a possible response, it was therefore suggested to "systematically map(ping) out and use(ing) these public spaces to raise awareness about what we have – before we lose it" (Garrett, 2015a). A confirmation of this working hypothesis was provided by Senator Piano's G124 working group on Italian suburbs, where the fractioning of open space "according to the 'civic-courtyard' binomial ... caused courtyards to become enclosed spaces' (G124, 2015) in the Giambellino district of Milan. Piano offers social solutions, such as togetherness and sharing, as indispensable foundations for the establishment of a conscious, virtuous path of regeneration. The latter were also confirmed by the European project INNES: INtimate NEighbourhood Strengthening (2015). This programme aims to reduce real or perceived insecurity among citizens through meetings that promote and restore social cohesion and strengthen neighbourhood ties. A mending of separations that aims

to recover the meaning of things from their connectedness (Ermentini et al., 2015) and to ensure a fair level of privacy and security in civic life. At the same time, there is a need to establish a critical awareness of language through contextual analysis in order to discuss the social and political purposes of everyday life. It is, therefore, necessary to plan planning and land-use policies that are different from the urban zoning applied to date to limit or prevent these urban phenomena. Effectively, the integration of existing administrative regulations into local traffic practices should be supported by making binding agreements for specific road permeability. In gated environments, one could identify and agree with individual communities on a network of streets where mandatory public access is required (Wu et al., 2021). Health and fire emergencies may be a good bargaining tool to regulate their closure by providing a temporary moratorium on private roads, even under public easements. On the other hand, when analysing the medium- to long-term perspectives, which anticipate a possible scenario of continuous erosion of public space, the reduction of interstitial spaces is the already established outcome to be considered. Based on future settlement trends driven by urban strategies that predict massive densification of the built environment, the question arises as to how to act in order to at least limit this seemingly irreversible trend. The answer may lie in the application of complementary strategies, ranging from increasing the performance of road infrastructure and transit/stopping spaces, as well to their spatial and functional stratification (Leardini, 2015).

5. Conclusions

The paper shows how the wall "becomes both a symbol and a sign of the different social conditions and unequal realities of urban life" (Aimar and Pilia, 2017). By elaborating this theory, it gives shape to the "globalisation of fear" (Lavanco, 2007), an emotion attributed to the upper and middle classes towards a new urban underclass, mostly made up of migrants fleeing their countries of origin. This social class suffers the most from economic and sometimes cultural precariousness, lacking a representative political voice and subsisting on occasional work that is sometimes replaced by degrading criminal episodes. In our society, migrants, therefore, become "walking dystopias" (Bauman in IWM, 2015). Equated with "wasted lives" (Bauman, 2003), they seem superfluous compared to a necessary social integration, often too modest and confused to generate inclusion. As a result, they are subjected to an accusatory and justicialist system for the abominable content of their figure, guilty of bringing insecurity to existence that does not adorn the hope of the community. The latter is based on living conditions and welfare that are quickly reconfigured by the fluctuating geopolitical scenarios and eroded by the impotence of negotiations that lower civil expectations and labour rights. However, the building of walls and the consequent isolation in "soundproof rooms" instead of bridges (Guerrera, 2015) has been branded by Bauman as an announced failure, whose only result is the aggravation of existing social cleavages.

What consequences will the social design of these places have for the future? Meanwhile, gated communities seem to produce behavioural problems in the individuals who inhabit them, especially children (Lang and Danielsen, 1997). They give rise to moral minimalism as a substitute for community spirit (Low, 2003), opening up a necessary search for alternatives to new walls. On the other hand, they embody comforting responses to the insecurity generated by capitalism, changing socio-economic conditions, increasing globalisation and climate change. However,

they can only be useful in obscuring the disturbing backdrop of the growing numbers of disenfranchised people streaming towards the gates, both national and continental. In this regard, as many as 200,000 irregular migrants will enter the European Union in 2021, "the highest number since 2017" (Frontex, 2022), once again raising social questions that require urgent answers. Consequently, it is necessary to rethink the identity factor underlying such cases, moving from a static to a dynamic figuration. The motivational and dynamic approach to inter-ethnic relations, eliminating prejudices, can be a way forward during children's primary school years, so that social gaps do not crystallise at later ages. In this way, a process of rethinking perspectives moves from subordinating them to moral panic phenomena to recognising the prejudices of which one is a potential protagonist. The avoidable risk is the categorisation of people based on ethnocentric choices in a system that can profoundly limit the specific richness of each person and the plural nature of identity (Sen, 2006). It is, therefore, necessary to reaffirm the fullness of the human being and promote a cultural struggle in favour of the universalism of difference and against silence.

Concerning the aforementioned economic uncertainty, these walled developments take the form of a new refuge against the fluctuations of the property market, ensuring stability and a high future resale value. As evidenced by the US market, apartments in such communities acquire a surplus value of around $30,000 (Hellegaard, 2016) compared to ordinary apartments in the domestic market. These apparent positives, coupled with the outsourcing of some services provided by private companies, have convinced politicians to accept them widely because of the short-term benefits. In contrast, the mentioned study shows how the long term reveals several management perplexities (ibid.). Various facility management companies offer to help "save money, reduce risk and improve function" (Intraworks, n.d.) in the provision of the housing services to which they have voluntarily committed themselves in the deed of incorporation. In this regard, it is relevant to recall that in the case of Tirana, the capital of Albania, the monthly rent for a house in a well-known urban gated community is 5 to 13 times the minimum monthly wage. These advantages have a significant impact on the standard running costs of a house in an ungated context and lead to its revision towards high-density solutions (condominiums). Furthermore, in terms of security and crime within these urban clusters, between June 2001 and June 2005, the number of crimes committed within the gated community of Orange County, Florida, was very similar to the number of crimes committed outside the community (Kassab, 2005). In fact, of the more than 1,400 homes in the compound, there were an equal number of burglaries and car thefts but fewer acts of vandalism and petty theft. This highlights that "security in gated communities is more a matter of perception than reality" (Fletcher, 2013).

This last assumption makes it possible to think about the concept of the smart city and the possible conjugation between capital and the programmatic will underlying this image. If the smart city uses technology to improve connectivity and thus implement efficiency, achieving these standards certainly requires the investment of large amounts of capital, both public and private. The incontrovertibility of this statement is therefore at odds with the limited availability of economic resources in countries where social inequalities persist, which would make housing choices linked to improving the living conditions of the poorer sections of the population a priority. Moreover, such cities require highly educated and creative skills, the so-called knowledge workers (Florida, 2002), which, while driving growth and dynamism, also lead to gentrification

and the exclusion of classes that are no longer able to sustain the economic gains of the new K-workers. If these projections were to be adopted, the main problem would be the risk of widening these cleavages and widening the social divide. It would therefore lead to the creation of "... gated communities for an elite, skilled, upper-middle class population" (Ratnam, 2015), which would find the demand for technical efficiency the discriminating principle for its induced constitution. Mehrotra evaluates these smart solutions negatively, calling them "architectural expressions of autocracies, not democracies" (ibid.), in which the same institutional bodies exempt themselves in advance from the obligation to account for any impact on the local governance system.

Therefore, the next step is the necessary construction of a new narrative of a social and psychological atmosphere ordered in nodes and relationships, as opposed to the lure of enclaves and segregation. The aim is to revive and recreate an archipelago of human relationships that can be physically translated into public space in a kind of urban embrace. We should therefore try to design a community trajectory along which these changes can become possible and happen.

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