Opening up spaces for the poor in the urban form: trends, challenges and their implications for access to urban land

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Introduction

Experience of urban transformation in South Africa has been complicated by factors such as the legacy of apartheid, legislation and settlement planning, private sector investment decisions, social and economic transition, and intergovernmental relationships, government capacity and financial constraints. The ability to modify and improve existing infrastructure, opportunities and facilities is essential for South Africa to stay competitive in a global world. It is also necessary to adapt to the changing needs of the residents of cities. However, when the actions of some groups start to affect the quality of life of other groups including the poor, as well as the quality of the broader urban environment, for example in the case of the development of certain types of gated communities, it starts to raise serious concerns. The post-apartheid urban form is becoming increasingly exclusionary, which raises many questions regarding the impact on the growing number of urban poor and their access to urban land and well-developed public places.

Spatial planning, design and the quality of the built environment are some of the issues receiving attention within urban context in South Africa. Ribeiro and Khosla (s.a.) argue that design of the urban spaces is about managing growth and development through a set of long term plans and regulations that control development. They further argue that urban planning is about constructing urban spaces to create synergy among long term economic needs of people, requirements of housing and basic infrastructure and preservation of natural environment. In the post-apartheid city, the old patterns are reinforced by new patterns of segregation such as gated communities. Tomlinson (2003:86) commenting on the sharp distinctions and inequalities between the wealthy and poor areas in Johannesburg, warns of the divide between the "walled residential communities and secure office parks and malls in the north [which] will stand in sharp contrast to the desperation of the south". Given this context, the purpose of urban planning as discussed by Riberio and Khosla has not been achieved in South Africa. Part of the challenges lies in the fact that:

> *...orthodox urban planning has rarely gone beyond shaping the geographic layout of a city, marking zones and deciding the location of major public utilities and transportation corridors. Instead of nourishing the city social capital, urban plans*

have been driven by numbers, unrelated to the realties of city life, and reflecting the
particular interests of particular groups (Ribeiro and Khosla s.a.).

The aim of the paper is to assess how the nature and design of urban form influences the poor's ability towards achieving more sustainable livelihoods and a sense of place in South Africa. The core argument is that the transformation of the current urban form through various developments such as gated communities, does not integrate the poor. Instead, they are more vulnerable. While it is acknowledged that there a number of elements of the urban form that influence opportunities for the poor, this paper only focuses on the effects of the privatisation of urban spaces on the poor's access to land and opportunities. This paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of the changes in South Africa after 1994. These changes lead to a number of challenges for the poor related to land and housing. The relationship between the poor and access to land and housing is explored in the next section, followed by a short description of the emerging South African city in the 21 century. One of the dominant characteristics of the new emerging city is the increased privatisation of public space through so-called gated communities. These current patterns and trends of privatisation in South Africa are then briefly unpacked, followed by a reference to the international scenario which defines and highlights some of the characteristics and drivers. Interpreting these trends, access the implications of the nature and design of the urban form for the poor. The final section summarises the key dimensions of privatisation for the access to urban land and opportunities, as well as why the poor should have access to land and well-developed spaces and what it means for future interventions, including key actors and actions.

Contextual issues – changes after 1994

South Africa has undergone profound transformation after the transition to democracy. This transformation included political, socio-economic and spatial changes, especially in urban areas. Politically, South African citizens of all races over the age of 18 years were now able to vote and play a role in their own destiny. Economic changes were evident in the rise of a new black elite, taking up many of the high-profile employment opportunities within government and the private sector. However, for the poor masses the transition brought mixed relief. Access to housing subsidies and social welfare grants improved the quality of life of many poor residents, but the demand for housing far exceeded the supply, and many had

to be content with having placed their names on a housing waiting list. Despite these interventions, poverty became even more deeply entrenched in the poorest quarter of South Africans (Butler 2004). Other social changes included increased urbanisation, a decline of formal employment opportunities, high levels of crime and violence, and growing levels of fear of crime (Shaw 2000; Smith 2003; Butler 2004).

The main impact of the 1990s has been the improvement of service infrastructure in poor parts of South African cities, most notably former black and coloured townships (Smith 2003). However, for those left behind, without access to a subsidy house (mostly developed in peripheral locations) or with a need to be closer to the centre, informal settlements became the only option. Thus, one of the most dominant characteristics of the post-apartheid city is the random distribution of numerous informal settlements across the urban landscape. Juxtaposed to these are an increased number of fortified and in some case privatised enclaves, predominantly for the middle and high income groups.

Consequently, in the post-apartheid city, old patterns are reinforced by new patterns of segregation (partly in response to high levels of crime), such as different types of gated/walled communities (Bremner 1999; Lipmann and Harrris 1999; Vrodljak 2002; Czégledy 2003; Harrison 2003). As such, Lemanski (2004:101) points out that "this trend perpetuates the social divisions that were inherent in the apartheid state into the post-apartheid context". It also has implications for the meaning of the privatisation of space.

> *In a city such as Johannesburg, where there is a legacy of division and balkanisation on the basis of race and ethnicity, the sensitivities over apparent privatisation of the public realm is acute. Here, questions around the integrity of the public realm – and of security access restriction more specifically - are enmeshed in debates around social exclusion, racism and elitist practices. Terms such as 'crime prevention, "traffic control" and "maintaining property values" are understandably suspected code words for racism although … the ways in which the tensions are played out are not always predictable* (Harrison and Mabin 2006:7).

The consequences for South African cities as a whole, or for large metropolitan areas, could be ominous: "Those dynamics are producing an increasingly disparate, separate city. The gaps between the townships, the inner city and the suburb are widening. The chances that people of this city will develop a sense of shared space, of shared destiny, grow slimmer by the day" (Bremner 1999:10).

The urban poor and access to land and housing

In the 1990s it was estimated that about 18 million people lived below the poverty line in South Africa (about 40.6% of the population) based on an income of R353 per adult equivalent. Of these 10.4 million lived in ultra poor households. In 1999, a more recent studied estimated that 22 million people (49.6) were still income poor (Streak 2004). There are high levels of poverty, inequality and extreme disparities in income, wealth and opportunity in the country (Binns and Nel 2002; Kirsten et al 2003). Both poverty and inequality has increased since 1993 (Kirsten et al 2003).

The urban poor are the most affected by poverty in the South Africa. Their lives are characterised by lack of means to achieve a decent level of social well-being – this includes access to basic needs such as food, clothing and housing. Furthermore, the poor have no access to economic opportunities due to their lack of education and skills. They are also disempowered arising from lack of opportunity to participate in public and community decision making, lack of access to information that can guide personal decisions. There is a sense of relative poverty arising from the growing gap between the rich and the poor in urban areas that result to apathy, hopelessness, despondency, lack of initiative, dependency, and fatalism as well as aggression, anger, rebellion and anti-social behaviour (Snell 2004).

Referring to the Asian context (which presents similarities to South Africa), Laquain (undated) notes that poverty in the urban areas is linked to factors such as:

- Location of the poor in urban space - concentrations of the urban poor are found in inner city areas where old and dilapidated housing that could be rented quite cheaply is available. The urban poor tend to have inadequate access to urban infrastructure and services.
- Educational level and types of skills - Most urban poor people are caught in a vicious cycle whereby lack of income forces their children to drop out of school

early and are thereby denied the education and vocational skills needed to achieve economic and social mobility.

▪ Level of economic development - At higher levels of economic development, however, the urban poor tend to be found among the elderly, the handicapped and disadvantaged, the seriously ill, and those who rely on social security assistance because they have no support from family and relatives. Policies and programs to provide access to infrastructure and services are influenced by this changing nature of the urban poor.

Although many of the poor in South Africa are increasingly found in inner city areas, large numbers are located on the urban peripheries due to historical patterns of segregation and the cost of land in recent years. Many of these peripheral settlements also tend to have inadequate access to urban infrastructure and services, especially informal settlements, while support facilities and employment opportunities are also lacking in many cases.

The increasing rate of urbanisation in the major cities of South Africa is the major contributor to the problem of accessibility of land. However, on the other side, the functioning of the urban land markets has an immeasurable impact on accessibility of well-located land by the poor. The problem of land accessibility is becoming an obstacle in the delivery of affordable housing. Current housing projects have not been very successful among factors, due to irregular location from employment opportunities (which becomes an extra cost to the poor). Furthermore, the poor have always found themselves alternatives to their needs. For example, the development of informal settlements is the poor's alternative to housing in the urban areas. The same case applies to the accessibility of land where they build their informal housing, there are informal landlords who (illegally) own and rent out pieces of land. This act can also be viewed from the perspective of income generation, considering that there is a high rate of unemployment in the country. The World Bank regards the development of slums as: *the products of failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems, and a fundamental lack of political will* (Slum Prevention, 2001).

Recently, there have been attempts by the banks of South Africa to reach out to the low-income groups, but this has not been efficient. The biggest challenge is

therefore to create inclusive cities and towns; whether one is rich or poor, they must be entitled to healthy urban life. The functioning of the urban land markets is noted for their rigid and inflexible land supply. They are further characterised by lengthy and complicated procedures which cannot be comprehended by the poor, who most of the time have less or no exposure to education. Clearly, the urban land markets in South Africa (and probably elsewhere) cater for the middle and high income groups, and completely excludes the poor.

One of the key objectives of the Department of Housing's New Plan – the Breaking New Ground, is to create human settlements that can be regarded as assets by the beneficiaries, contributing to their quality of life. Among the contributing factors to the asset value of the human settlements, is the location of land and level of infrastructure and services available. The issue of asset building, as argued by Moser (2006), poses a challenge on the physical planning processes which deny the urban poor the opportunity to accumulate asset value in their human settlements. The accumulation of asset is believed to have an impact on the social and psychological impact, regardless of people's income. "Income only maintains consumption, but assets change the way people think and interact with the world" (Sherradin cited in Moser 2006, p14). Moser (2006) further highlights the notion of vulnerability of the poor due to their lack of access to asset building as well as exposure to a context of vulnerability.

An emerging post-apartheid city in South Africa

In spite of many successful interventions, a number of challenges have started to emerge as a result of unintended consequences and side-effects of existing spatial interventions, citizen responses to a host of insecurities and a lack of longer term consideration of certain development types, often resulting in a *laissez-faire* approach towards them from the state. Consequently, the emerging South African city, based on spatial patterns and trends, is based on the following four components (Landman 2006b):

1. A spatial system that organises the urban population according to income groups, based on separated neighbourhood cells comprising either fortified and well-developed enclaves for the upper income groups or under-developed ghettos for the poor. This system generates enormous inefficiencies with respect to land use, public transport, mobility, service delivery and housing.

2. An urban system of governance based on perforated sovereignty and multiple points of influence in the form of strong Home Owners Associations (HOAs) that constitute a new level of local governance in the form of private micro-governments, each with their own additional fiscal and administrative systems.

3. A system of urban service provision that provides land, services, transport and community facilities in a way that severely disadvantages the poor and benefits those that have access to various forms of "privatised" urban space, services and facilities, often still maintained by the local government.

4. A housing delivery system that is severely skewed between low-income housing with little or no secondary market value and middle-to-high-income housing that is predominantly developer-driven. The property prices in the latter group are also significantly influenced by the establishment of different types of gated communities, often to the disadvantage of those outside them. These patterns also perpetuate housing-driven settlement planning.

Together, these four components contribute to a segregated approach to urban design. It encompasses a focus on the private realm through the privatisation of public space. The characteristics of such an approach include a separation of land uses, the physical separation of neighbourhoods, the privatisation of community and recreational facilities, use of gates and fences to define divided space and an incorporation of extreme target-hardening measures. In contrast to the segregated approach is an integrated approach to urban design and spatial planning (Figure 1). Such an approach focuses on and celebrates the public realm through sufficient public and private investment. The
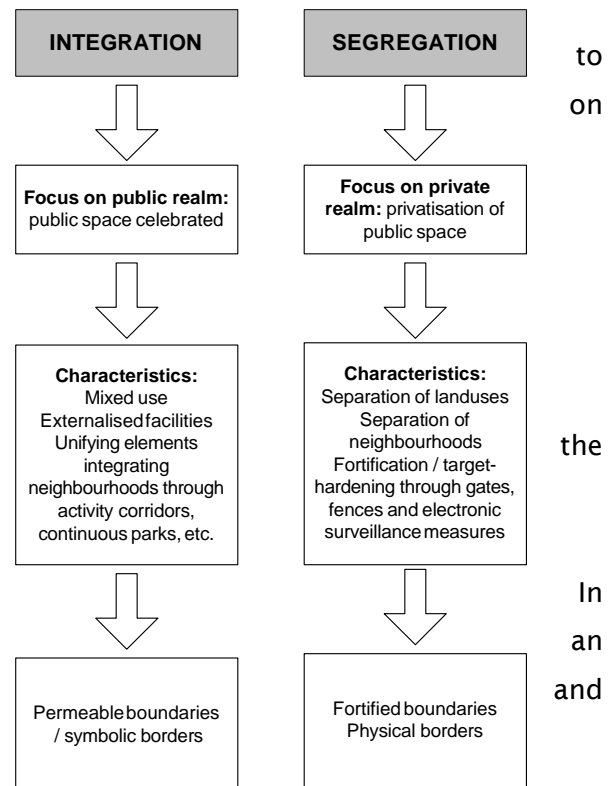

Figure 1: Application and outcome of integration and segregation approaches to urban design (Source: Landman 2006)

characteristics of this approach include, among other things, mixed land use, the externalisation of public facilities and amenities along accessible roads and activity

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corridors and in mixed use nodes, as opposed to centralisation inside residential neighbourhoods, and the integration of different urban areas and smaller neighbourhoods through integrated routes, a well-functioning public transport system and a continuous open space system. The approach does not negate a search for place and a sense of community, but promotes permeable boundaries and symbolic barriers to indicate local "ownership" and transitional space – that is, from public space to semi-public, or from "metropolitan space" (large metropolitan facilities and activity corridors "belonging" to all) to "community" space under the stewardship or guardianship of a particular local community. "Community" space would, therefore, create a sense of place, which ideally would encourage visitors to respect the local community when crossing permeable boundaries or symbolic barriers (Landman 2006). A few contemporary writers have started to advocate urban design and social interventions that would support such an integrated approach (including Sennett 1995, Ellin 2001, Freedman 2002 and Madanipour 2003).

Gated communities encompass the transformation of open space to closed space through physical boundaries. This is a manifestation of a segregated approach to urban design and spatial planning that is evident worldwide. The end result of the multiplication of these measures across the city is the creation of a fortress city and the significant transformation of contemporary cities worldwide and in South Africa.

THE RISE OF 'GATED' COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In essence, gated communities in South Africa refer to physical areas that are fenced or walled off from their surroundings, either prohibiting or controlling access to these areas by means of gates or booms. In many cases the concept can refer to a residential area with restricted access, so that normal public spaces are privatised or their use is restricted. It does not, however, only refer to residential areas, but may also include controlled access areas for work (office parks), commercial (shopping malls) and/or recreational purposes.

"Enclosed neighbourhoods" refer to existing neighbourhoods that have controlled access through gates or booms across existing roads. Many are fenced or walled off as well, with a limited number of controlled entrances/exits and security guards at these points. The roads within these neighbourhoods were previously, or still are, public domain, depending on the model used. There are different approaches

to, or models of, enclosed neighbourhoods in South Africa within different municipalities. These include a public approach, a private approach, a combination of the two, or both. Municipalities may support one of the two, a combination of the two, or have both approaches from which residents can then choose. The implications of these two approaches are very different. If the roads, parks and sidewalks are still owned by the local authority, the local authority is responsible for the maintenance of these areas (public approach). If the areas have, however, been taken over by the residents' association, these areas become private space and the residents are responsible for their maintenance (private approach). Enclosed neighbourhoods also have different implications for accessibility. According to the South African Constitution it is the right of all people to have access and free movement to all public space.[1] The important issue is whether the enclosed area remains under public control or is taken over as "private space" by the residents' or homeowners' association. If the enclosed area stays under public control, all people have the right to enter the public spaces within this area, and provision should be made for them to be able to do so at all times (Landman 2003).

"Security Villages"[2] refer to developments where the entire area has been developed by a private developer. These areas or buildings are physically walled or fenced off and usually have security gates or controlled-access points with or without security guards. The roads in these developments are private and, in most of the cases, a private management body carries out their management and maintenance. Security villages include not only residential areas (such as secure townhouse complexes, high-rise apartment blocks), but also controlled-access villages for business

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[1] Section 21 (1) and (3) of the Constitution of the RSA, 1996 (Act 108 0f 1996) reads as follows:
   (1) "Everyone has the right of freedom of movement..."
   (2) "Every citizen has the right to enter, to remain in and to reside anywhere in the Republic"
This refers to public roads and spaces.

[2] The term "village" can refer to anything from a small collection of houses in a rural area, to a large collection of houses in an urban area. The latter has often been referred to as an "urban village". In the case of security villages, it refers to a variety of developments, ranging from a small collection of buildings (for office use) or houses, to a large collection of houses, etc, inside a protected boundary (a fence or wall) and entrance/s with controlled access.

purposes (office blocks) and mixed-use developments (large security estates). Although many of these are predominantly residential, a growing percentage of other land uses are found within these developments, including commercial (golf shops, post offices or boxes and estates agents) and/or recreational uses (golf courses, squash courts, tennis courts and equestrian routes) (Landman 2003).

The numbers of enclosed neighbourhoods and large security estates within municipalities differ substantially. A recent survey carried out by the CSIR in 2002, indicated the highest numbers of enclosed neighbourhoods in Gauteng. Two of the three metropolitan municipalities had the highest numbers of enclosed neighbourhoods at the time of the response – namely Tshwane with 36, and Johannesburg with 300. There were also two municipalities in the Western Cape with higher numbers: the City of Cape Town metropolitan municipality recorded 25 neighbourhood closures at the time of response, and the Mossel Bay municipality 20. There are also a number of illegal closures in many municipalities (Landman 2003).

The distribution of security estates differs to some extent. Some of the municipalities mentioned above also reported high numbers of security estates, such as the cities of Johannesburg (20), Tshwane (18) and Cape Town (24). However, high numbers were also reported in other municipalities that recorded relatively low numbers of road closures or none at all. High numbers of one type therefore did not necessarily imply the presence of high numbers of other types of gated communities as well. The highest numbers of security estates were recorded in Emfuleni (40) and Madibeng (31) municipalities. Emfuleni is located in the south of Gauteng, including cities such as Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging. Madibeng is located in the south-east of the North West Province on the Gauteng boundary, and includes towns such as Brits and Hartbeespoort Dam. Other municipalities with high numbers of security estates include Plettenberg Bay (21) and Knysna (20) in the Western Cape (Landman 2003).

The national survey (2002) indicated that the Cities of Johannesburg and Tshwane have the highest number of enclosed neighbourhoods in the country and very high numbers of security estates, compared to other larger cities.   The City of Johannesburg indicated that there were 49 legal neighbourhood closures, with a further 37 that had expired since approval. In addition, there were an estimated 188

illegal closures and 265 pending applications (Report on Access Restriction, City of Johannesburg, 2003). The City of Tshwane had 75 formal applications from neighbourhoods to close-off their areas. In addition, 35 more applications have been approved. This demonstrates a large demand and manifestation, which is likely to increase the significance of the impact of these developments.

The different types of gated communities have a number of impacts and implications for South African cities (including socio-spatial, economic and political implications), which in turn gives rise to different interpretations and responses from urban residents and institutions. Gated communities in South Africa are generally not that different to gated communities abroad and there are signs of cross-fertilisation of design ideas and planning trends. However, the impact of gated communities in this country, particularly regarding enclosed neighbourhoods, is likely to be far greater due to their extent in the larger South African cities, their nature (the closing-off of large areas of public space), their impact on spatial fragmentation and segregation in the context of moving towards urban integration, and last but by no means least their link to the apartheid city (symbolic interpretation) (Landman 2005).

This raises number of questions about the poor's ability to accumulate assets and the impact of changes in the urban form and space on this ability. What are the impacts and implications likely to be for future South African cities, especially for the poor in terms of access to land, opportunities and well-developed spaces? The international scenario starts to shed some light on these questions.

International trend – privatisation of public spaces

The term public space is generally accepted to refer to the streets, sidewalks, parks, and plazas that are accessible and open to the all people in a particular urban area. This section highlights various international experiences with regard to the privatisation of urban spaces which then excludes the urban poor. Privatisation of public spaces is now becoming a worldwide phenomenon which is characterised by the spread of privately governed and secured neighbourhoods, often called *gated communities* (Glasze et al 2005). There is a multitude of conceptualisations of urban public space due to the multidisciplinarity of the subject and this has been recognised by several scholars trying to capture a suitable definition (Low 2003; Madanipour 2003). The issue is further complicated in discussions of the

'privatisation' of public space. The value of public space and the endangerments through privatisation is frequently cited debates within the critique of contemporary urbanism. However, 'public space' and 'privatisation' can be very vague analytical categories and it often remains unclear in discussions what is privatised and why it may pose challenges within cities. The studies on the privatisation of public space dichotomise the public and private realm and often focus uni-dimensionally on material changes in space. This risks a more detailed analysis of the complex socio-political changes associated with private neighbourhoods (Glasze et al 2005). This calls for a balanced and multi-facetted enquiry into the privatisation of space and its multidimensional consequences.

Although the term *gated communities* is probably used the most in existing literature, it is evident that there is a whole array of terms being used in different countries and by different authors. While it is accepted that gated communities are a global phenomenon, and many authors and leading international publications address this phenomenon, there is no common agreement on a particular definition or meaning of the terminology. It is accepted that there are different types of gated communities in different countries. Yet the literature does not address the problem of interpretation of the different terms and meanings. It also does not address the issue of which of the diverse terms refer to the same phenomenon, which refer to sub-types and which refer to a different phenomenon. A number of terms are often used, including gated communities (Blakely and Snyder 1997); fortress enclaves (Caldeira 2000) gated suburban spaces (Connell 1999); gated housing estates (Glasze and Alkhayyal 2002) and gated cities (Webster 2001). In addition, some writers emphasise the aspect of privatisation, referring to private housing developments (Glasze et al 2005); private neighbourhoods (McKenzie 2005) and even private cities (Le Groix 2005). In the context of local management and governance, similar developments have also been referred to as common-interest communities. It is beyond the scope of this paper to define each of these in detail. Suffice to say that this is indicative of a diverse terminology and interpretation related to the international debate, dependent on the emphasis and focus of the particular discussions.

Internationally, the trend has been for dominant groups in society to take various measures to privatize public space as means of creating order, control, predictability, comfort, sameness, and security in public spaces in order to promote

recreational, entertainment, and shopping opportunities (Bickford 2000; Crawford 2000; Davis 1992; Katz 2006).

> *Privatization is generally achieved through the transfer of the maintenance, security, or management rights of a space to a private entity like a business association, development corporations or homeowners association. When private interests provide security or make rules for a public space, they can directly or indirectly exclude certain groups or types of people (*Van der Ploeg M. (s.a.).

With specific reference to South Africa, Landman (2006) notes several factors, which are also similar in nature to the factors listed internationally as leading to the growth of security estates or gated communities, including crime, the fear of crime and insecurity, a search for a greater sense of community identity, place and belonging in cities; a search for increased privacy and control, both economic and social; a specific lifestyle; status, prestige and elitism and a growing lack of trust and confidence in the performance of local councils.

Van der Ploeg (s.a.) argues that in their opinion, the middle and upper income groups only consider order, comfort and security as the crucial aspect toward the well functioning of public space. The problem with such viewpoint is that *it seeks to exclude those groups who do not fit with their definition of order, comfort and security.* Viewed from the perspective of a democratic society (of which South Africa is one such), privatisation of space significantly reduces the rights, opportunities and recognition of other social groups, while also denying them benefits of using the public space to meet their needs, desires and lifestyle (Van der Ploeg s.a.).

Why is the spatial exclusion of the poor a problem in South Africa?

Urban transformation through fortification and privatisation of space, services and governance has a number of consequences for the poor that influence the poor's ability to achieve more sustainable livelihoods and access to well-developed places. Sustainable livelihoods are mainly influenced through accessibility constraints to a number of livelihood assets or capital. These have a direct impact on the poor in two ways: access to places of work or friends and access to land or property.

Restricted or prohibited access to gated enclaves

Gated communities (especially where entire neighbourhoods are closed) reduce access to the *physical capital* for those outside the fences, including the poor. This is one of the great benefits of a well-developed system of public spaces within cities. Gated communities, however, contribute to the privatisation of public space, and often the opportunities and facilities contained within. A range of physical elements such as walls, fences, gates and booms restrict/prohibit public access to well developed public or privatised communal spaces such as parks, libraries, schools and recreation space. In addition, reducing the number of entry and exit points into or out of a neighbourhood or estate also has a major impact on traffic and movement patterns. This reduction of physical capital available to the urban system is especially visible where there is a large concentration of enclosed neighbourhoods in a sub-metropolitan area. Vehicles are displaced and forced to make use of only the main arterials, the only available through-routes. This increases traffic congestion and travelling time. Pedestrians and cyclists, including the poor do does not have access to alternative modes of transport, also have to negotiate these busy arterials, since the lower-order roads are closed. This not only increases their vulnerability, but also levels of discomfort and travelling time, especially for the poor who do not have access to motorised transport. In this way, through the privatisation of what lawfully still remains public space, accessibility is reduced or restricted to such an extent that it has a major impact on the daily usage patterns of urban residents in, for example, Johannesburg and Tshwane (Proceedings from the Public Hearings). By closing off a large number of neighbourhoods, the existing urban form and road network are severely affected and transformed. Large areas are now changed into isolated and inaccessible super-blocks, with little resemblance to the original fine-grained urban form (Figure 4).
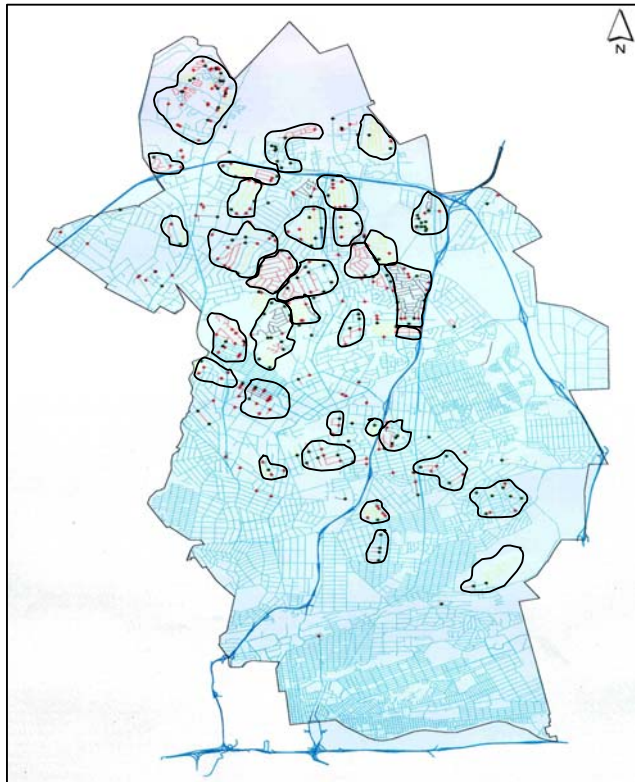
Figure 2: Map of the Eastern Metropolitan Local Council (2000), showing a number of enclosures scattered over the area (Original map by MBS Consulting Engineers, Johannesburg)[3]

The pattern of spatial fragmentation is further exacerbated by the large security estates in the peripheral suburbs of both municipalities studied. Common urban space for recreation is also privatised in security estates, along with facilities and amenities such as walking trails, sports facilities and parks, offering no access to anyone outside the estate, except by invitation from residents. In this regard, it also contributes to a reduced quality of life for those residents negatively affected, and raises concerns about equity within South African cities (Landman 2006, du Plessis and Landman, forthcoming).

Gated communities also have an impact on access to or exclusion from *social capital* in South African cities. One of the main arguments in favour of gated communities is that these improve the levels of social cohesion within the community (as described by Vrodljak 2002; Ballard 2003 and Durrington 2005). These developments, however, exclude those outside from enjoying the benefits presented by these well-developed and maintained environments. They also have an adverse effect on the fabric of society as a whole. Opportunities for social interaction with the broader urban community and a collective sense of citizenship are limited. Barriers start to exclude people at random, including everyone that is not part of "us" and therefore security guards "basically know who they should keep

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[3] The Roads Agency of the City of Johannesburg was still busy compiling a new and updated map of road closures across the municipal area. This had not been completed at the time of submission, as some applications were still pending.

in and who they should keep out … [and] know who looks suspicious" (Landman 2006). Perceptions play a very important role in the fear of crime and contribute to "not in my backyard" (NIMBY") exclusionist and escapist mentalities (Lemanski 2004:108). Such mentalities also often lead to gross generalisation and stereotyping, as is the case in countries such as Brazil (Caldeira 2000). It is, however, not only blacks that are often stereotyped, but also groups of males. In the case of and enclosed neighbourhood in Tshawne there was also an incident where a worker's family could not gain access to visit her. The family was away on holiday, and the phone just rang inside the house. Consequently, her children were turned away at the gate (Landman 2006). In extreme cases, restricted access may also lead to the violation of human rights, especially when potential visitors are denied access based on their appearance. Through a number of case studies it became clear that this is a very sensitive issue and that the right to freedom of access to public roads has in fact been violated in many enclosed neighbourhoods (Landman 2006). The Human Rights Commission in South Africa found that the use of road closures / boom gates has the potential to and does indeed in practice violate a number of rights. They also pointed out that these measures cause social division, dysfunctional cities and lead to further polarisation of the city. The Commission therefore does not support the use of boom gates and gated communities (*Human Rights Commission Report on Road Colures / Boom Gates*, (2005:26).

Gated communities also have an influence on potential access to *financial capital*. The Public Hearings in Johannesburg indicted that people such as job-seekers, and those delivering promotional material or newspapers are also excluded from these areas.

Access to property or land

Property prices in gated communities generally increase more than those outside the walls, while households are able to negotiate lower insurance premiums. The opposite is true outside the gated areas, again raising the issue of an unfair advantage and whether property taxes should be increased inside gated areas to balance out this advantage (Altini and Akindele 2005). At the Public Hearings in Johannesburg, a number of residents also pointed out that road closures and even some security estates with public roads inside gain a financial advantage because the property prices inside these areas generally increase after closures. These

residents feel that this occurs at the expense of those outside who still contribute taxes for all public roads:

> *Many of these closures are not initiated mainly because of crime but because of the fact that they can demand more money for their homes as a result of this misconception that you are now no longer capable of becoming a crime statistic because of the fact that you live in a "laager". Once an additional amount can be raised for these homes many of those initiating these closures can "pack for Perth" with a little more money. In fact many of these people who initiate these closures place their homes on the market as soon as these closures are in place* (Karvelas, Public Hearings Proceedings, City of Johannebsurg, 2002).

The private development of estates also reduces opportunities for cross-subsidisation of facilities (private investment in public spaces) for public use, and therefore restricts the extent to which the poor can benefit from the investment of large corporations or institutions in the development of communal spaces (Landman 2006).

Institutional challenges

In addition to the direct implications for the poor, privatisation of space, services and governance also present a number of institutional challenges discussed below:

Privatised governance

The privatisation of space is also often linked to the partial privatisation of service delivery and the privatisation of local management through the creation of strong HOAs, which resulted in micro-governments. These governments in turn contribute to institutional fragmentation in the city. They also contribute to what Harrison (2003) has called a new institutional space, in which power is diffused from traditional centres (the local authority in this case) into multiple points of influence – the different HOAs. This creates huge tensions between the new levels of governance within the city, namely the local authority and the various HOAs. These tensions are further exacerbated by the fact that the privatisation of space, partial service delivery and governance also presents many problems for urban management and maintenance, related to road maintenance, traffic congestion, environmental impacts, service delivery, crime displacement, property taxes, and social injustice (Landman 2006b). In this way stronger neighbourhood management starts to detrimentally affect efficient metropolitan governance in favour of all urban residents.

Inefficient state intervention

As mentioned earlier, one of the drivers behind increased privatisation in South Africa is ineffective and inefficient public service delivery in urban environments. As a result, private citizens respond by taking over a range of the local functions, such as park maintenance, providing sufficient lighting within neighbourhoods, installing traffic calming measures, and employing people to clean open spaces. The privatisation of space is also often linked to the privatisation of security services. Private security firms are employed to perform a variety of services, depending on the financial resources available, including access control at the gates and vehicular or bicycle patrols through the neighbourhoods. As long as residents perceive the police to be ineffective to respond to crime (Pelser 2001), those who can afford it will respond through private measures, often to the discomfort and exclusion of the poor to well-developed places in closed-off neighbourhoods.

The quality of life of the poor is further influenced by lack of access to well-developed public places in their own neighbourhoods, which also has an impact on their sense of belonging in cities. While there has been a range of positive interventions from government to improve the quality of life of the poor, notable through the provision of more than a million houses in the first ten years of democracy, many of these housing settlements have been critiqued by a number of commentators, highlighting issues such as the quality of the houses (poor construction and materials), the location of new housing developments (on the urban periphery), the lack of or inadequate supporting public facilities (including schools, clinics, police stations, etc), as well as inadequate attention to the negative impact of these housing developments on the bio-physical environment (Napier et. al. 1999; Donaldson and Marais 2002; Marais, Barnes and Schoeman 2002; Du Plessis and Landman 2002). Unfortunately the housing trends of the 1990s have resulted in housing schemes that are "largely mono-functional … low density … [areas where] social facilities and other vibrant urban facilities are notable mainly by their absence. Buildings are isolated events in a sea of space" (Dewar cited in Donaldson and Marais 2002:192). In addition, the type of houses that were provided often did not appropriately respond to the diverse needs of different groups of people, both in terms of lifestyle and access to the secondary market.

Therefore, the quality of the public space system is also linked to social and economic opportunities.

Access to well developed land and quality places

Spatial fragmentation and segregation facilitated through the privatisation of public space in South Africa, therefore, also hinders access to well-developed land and quality places. But why is it necessary for all urban residents, including the poor to have access to well-developed places? In order to address this question one needs to explore the relevance of public space in cities. There are many definitions of public space, highlighting different aspects such as the common ground (Carr et al)[4], sharing through contact with strangers and peaceful coexistence (Walzer)[5], or free access (Tibbals)[6]. In essence, public space can be summarised as "… space that allows all the people to have access to it and the activities within it, which is controlled by a public agency, and which is provided and managed by public interest" (Madanipour 1996:148). Public space is important because it "expresses and also conditions our public life, civic culture, everyday discourse" (Walzer cited in Madanipour 1996:146). Tibbals points out that the public realm is "the most important part of our towns and cities. It is where the greatest amount of human contact and interaction takes place" (in Madanipour 1996:146). It is therefore important that the development of urban public space, as part of a larger public sphere, addresses the tensions inherent in the contemporary transformation of the urban public realm and contributes to the emergence of an urbanism which promotes social integration and tolerance (Madanipour 1999:879).

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

[5] For Walzer (1986), "Public space is space we share with strangers, people who aren't our relatives, friends, or work associates. It is space for politics, religion, commerce, sport; space for peaceful coexistence and impersonal encounter" (cited in Madanipour 1996a:146).

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

According to Dewar and Uytenbogaardt (1991), one of the great benefits of cities is the economic, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and facilities which can be generated through the physical agglomeration of many people. However, it is of little use offering or generating opportunities if access to these is restricted to a very limited number of people. In positively performing environments it is possible for poorer inhabitants to gain access to opportunities and facilities which are generated through the resources of the more wealthy through integration (Dewar and Uytenbogaardt 1991).

Conclusions and way forward

This paper has shown that the nature and design of the urban form in South Africa influences the poor's inability to achieve more sustainable livelihoods and access to well-developed places. Through increased privatisation of public spaces in urban environments, sustainable livelihoods are influenced by constraints to access a number of livelihood assets, including physical, social and financial capital. The quality of life of the poor is further influenced through a lack of access to well-developed public places, which also has an impact on their sense of belonging in cities.

In summary, there are three key dimensions of privatisation for the access to urban land and opportunities in South African cities which are all linked to the widening gaps between the rich and the poor and the increased levels of inequality in the country.

- **Physical gap**: Due to their nature, gated communities restrict or prohibit access to the physical spaces inside their boundaries through gates, booms, fences and/or walls. While changing the physical space may not cause huge problems if the area is small (for example part of an urban block), the problems escalate when gated enclaves comprise entire neighbourhoods. In this way, neighbourhoods are physically separated from each other, contributing to patterns of spatial fragmentation and social exclusion. A lack of access also raises many concerns about who is suffering form these actions, including pedestrians and cyclists, and about the integrity of the city as a whole. It also negates integration between elements of the spatial structure. Changing the physical space also changes the social space. Not only are certain groups or people excluded from enjoying the benefits presented by well-developed public

spaces or common spaces, but public interaction between different groups are also limited – a prerequisite for social cohesion and tolerance. As a result, there are a lack of opportunities for social contact and interaction on a broader city scale, due to different groups operating in separated enclaves and leading separate lives. This contributes to social fragmentation within these cities and reduces equity, as it becomes a question of whose needs are promoted and whose are adversely affected. It also limits the integration of different groups and often income groups as access to neighbourhoods are strictly controlled.

▦ **Institutional gap**: Spatial and social fragmentation also contributes to institutional fragmentation. Strong neighbourhood management through HOAs can either ignore or challenge the metropolitan system. In the first case, the simply "ignore" metropolitan governance and implement an additional fiscal and administrative system within their neighbourhoods without stirring too much, which leads to the privatisation of local governance. This also often creates to a lack of participation in local affairs and a loss of citizenship, which affects the efficiency of metropolitan governance. In the second case, the powerful HOA can start to challenge the local authorities and demand certain levels of service delivery in their neighbourhoods, influencing the distribution of scarce resources in cities, which in turn has huge implications for access to sustainable livelihood assets by the poor.

▦ **Market gap:** Fortification and privatisation also contribute to increased property prices inside these developments, often to the determent of those outside. In this way these developments contribute to the creation of a larger gap between affordable housing and those inside many types of gated communities that can only be afforded by high-middle income and high income groups in the city.

The emerging institutional structure therefore do not address the imbalances of the past, but rather exacerbates them in some cases. It is evident that larger gated neighbourhoods have a significant impact on the spatial form and function of South African cities and negate the aims of integration that are contained in the current planning and development policy documents. A concerted effort is therefore required from all relevant actors to find ways to manage the issue in the short term and to provide suitable alternatives in the medium and long term. Therefore, in spite of gated communities being a difficult and controversial issue, the research

has shown that it would be unwise for the different spheres of government merely to sit back and accept the status quo. A number of actions from different spheres of government are called for. Although it is generally accepted that gated communities are a direct response to high crime rates, government should not adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude. While it is acknowledged that it is not an easy issue to deal with and often extremely contentious, intervention from at least local and often provincial government is required to give strong guidance. This is especially so in areas with a high demand for gated communities, such as the municipalities of Johannesburg and Tshwane. Key actions which should be taken to change the current status quo in order to open up access to urban land and places, including planning and design for safer cities, the implementation of an integrated approach to urban design and Integrated and efficient city governance. These actions are summarised in the following table.

Key focus areas	Key actions	Key stakeholders
Safer design and cities	⊞ Encourage the implementation of alternative approaches to safer design of settlements ⊞ Promote the development of safe and accessible public spaces ⊞ Urban regeneration of declining urban spaces	⊞ National, provincial and local government ⊞ Local communities and HOAs ⊞ Private developers ⊞ Police
Inclusive design and housing	⊞ Mixed land use and housing types ⊞ Externalisation of public facilities and amenities along accessible roads and activity corridors and in mixed use nodes ⊞ Integration of different urban areas and smaller neighbourhoods through integrated routes, a well-functioning public transport system and a continuous open space system	⊞ Local Government ⊞ Urban planners, designers and architects
Integrated and efficient management	⊞ Appropriate regulation and land use control ⊞ Consideration of longer impacts of different development types and housing typologies in the city, taking into consideration unintended consequences and side–effects as well	⊞ Local government ⊞ Local communities and HOAs

An integrated approach to safer urban design will contribute to the implementation of a more integrative urbanism, which in turn will be a more relevant urban design to promote greater access to land for all urban residents. In terms of urban governance, some aspects related to community involvement within gated

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communities could provide valuable lessons in ways of managing neighbourhoods, local service delivery and how to incorporate greater community participation. If this could be extended beyond the neighbourhood boundaries, it may also offer an opportunity towards more inclusive governance. In this way, some of the positive outcomes may be re-channelled to promote more safer and inclusive cities. The challenge is therefore to find ways to transcend the walls towards greater integration, participation and democracy.

The paper has shown that the poor is often excluded from access to urban land and well-developed spaces and therefore access to land and well-developed spaces should be considered more as a right than a privilege. However, if it means that in order to facilitate the implementation of a system of well-developed spaces that the city has to work within the current market approach to land, so be it. More importantly, it does call for greater state intervention in enabling the markets to work for the poor and ensure greater access to land and well-developed places in the city. Given this, the city should have series of well-developed public places open to all law abiding citizens, whether they are poor or not. The debate around the access to urban land should therefore not only refer to access to private land and therefore property rights for the poor, but should also be extending to promote access to public (state owned) land for the use (for trade, recreation, play, congregation etc.) of all urban residents, including the poor. This paper therefore adopts a broader interpretation of access to land, that also includes well-developed public spaces. Such spaces would include all three components of the identity of places: accessible and open to use for all, landscaped with appropriate public furniture and vegetation and allowing for pleasant sensory experience and psychological access. Through access to well-developed places in the city would offer all urban residents the opportunity to develop an increased sense of belonging.

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