Beyond the conceivable?
Pondering a city without walls in South Africa

M. M. Marks[1] & C. Overall[2]
[1]*Urban Futures Centre, Durban University of Technology, South Africa*
[2]*Safer Cities Department, eThekwini Municipality, South Africa*

Abstract

In the late apartheid period South African suburbs began to change dramatically in the way they looked and in the way in which they were designed. Essentially, housing was designed with the aim of keeping 'intruders' out. This meant a turn toward increasingly high walls, electrified fences and laser beams. Alongside these 'investments' and design innovations came a massive growth of the private security industry. A new mentality emerged which focused on the fortification of home and office space. This mentality, at least initially, was strongly supported and bolstered by the private security industry who had a real vested interest in this rush to monitor space and to harden security. Yet, whether or not high walls and electrified fences do in fact reduce experiences of crime victimisation for individual home owners and residents is up for debate. And the private security industry as well as the public police are now suggesting that walls might not provide the security that home owners believe they do. This research is aimed at interrogating whether walls, electric fences, beams and so on really do reduce fear of crime and victimisation, from the perspective of those who do the policing, i.e. the public and private. The aim here is to discover whether policing actors view walls as a help or a hindrance to policing and security governance. The 'praxis' goal of this research is, through public engagement, to shift paradigms about walls and security.
Keywords: suburbs, design, walls, security, policing, South Africa, fear of crime.

1   Introduction

Foreigners entering the suburbs of South Africa's major cities, post-apartheid, are often struck by the high walls and the wide range of security devices inside and outside of houses that characterise these suburban spaces. Likewise, when South

Africans visit cities abroad they are struck, and relieved, to be in spaces that are free of high walls, electric fencing and burglar bars. Most South Africans returning from 'unwalled' cities comment on how they felt a sense of freedom, of security, and of community in these foreign places. On returning home, however, high walls and other hard-targeting 'crime prevention' devices are viewed by these same people as non-negotiable in creating a sense of safety in a country that many view as plagued by crime [1–4]. According to Lemanski [5], public concern with crime grew exponentially from 1994. In 1994, public opinion polls indicated a very low level concern with crime. By 1997, this concern had increased from 6% to 58%. While crime statistics do indicate a dramatic increase in crime post 1994, the increase in fear of crime is not proportionate to the actual increase in crime rates [6].

We are presented here with a strange dissonance: South Africans long for open living spaces yet they feel compelled to fortify their own homes. This dissonance that takes place in thinking about home and abroad is further compounded by the fact that most suburban South Africans who are middle-aged or older grew up in suburbs that were not walled. Private security companies did not patrol the neighbourhoods of their youth, and alarms and other security devices were very uncommon. Yet walls have become an intrinsic, almost natural, part of suburban life [7]. Singh, in her book, *Policing and Crime Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa* [3] vividly describes how the suburbs became walled spaces as a means not only to prevent criminals from entering properties, but also to 'punish' them. This was done by attaching sharp pieces of glass and metal to the top walls so that those who attempt to get over the walls are seriously harmed. For Singh [3] and Vahed [8], this push for walls was, at least in the post-apartheid years, promoted by those engaged in policing activities, most notably the private security companies.

Whether or not high walls and electrified fences do in fact reduce crime victimisation and targeting is up for debate. As this paper hopes to demonstrate, high walls and fortification may have the opposite effect to the rationale for constructing them. Even the private security industry – once very certain that walls and the technological devices that could be attached to them would be excellent deterrents and barriers – seem to now be suggesting that high walls create insecurity and restricts policing. A marginal new discourse is emerging that suggests that it is visibility that counts in crime prevention, as well as social connectivity. The public police also seem to be uncertain about the value that fortification adds to making private spaces safer. Yet fortification in the suburbs that most visibly surfaced in the transition period, continues unabated. Houses without walls are viewed as vulnerable, although evidence (and direct experience) may indicate the contrary. South African suburb dwellers seem to be hardwired into the habit of building walls, and there appears to be little space to deliberate the possibility of 'breaking down walls'.

In this paper we interrogate the commonly held (and arguably common-sensical) view that walls, electric fences, spikes, and CCTV cameras reduce victimisation. We also examine the possibility of walls creating added security problems, by creating barriers to those expected to provide 'security' services and by impeding natural surveillance. We conducted this research primarily through

the lens of those who are responsible for policing, both the public and private police. The aim of this paper is not simply to lay bare some of the commonly held myths about how to create safer private spaces. We hope this paper will also serve as a catalyst for new deliberations, debates and even innovations in secure (free standing) housing design.

2   Doing the research

Both the researchers have been involved in policing research and practice for many years. Chris Overall is currently based in the Safer Cities Department of the Durban Municipality. Prior to this he worked as a police officer both for the Durban Metropolitan Police and the South African Police Service (SAPS). Monique Marks is a criminologist who has conducted extensive research on the governance of security and on police organisational culture. Both authors were interested in piercing beyond the common-sensical view that high walls prevent and deter crime. To do this, and to engage in a process of paradigm shift amongst suburb dwellers, they decided to explore how those who police the suburbs (both private and public security providers) feel about the walls.

We decided to select two quite different suburbs as a means of comparison. The first suburb, Umbilo, is a working-lower middle class suburb. While there are some houses in Umbilo with high walls, this is not predominantly the case. Most houses have low fences or walls and there are even houses with no boundary fences at all. Umbilo has long been seen as a 'bad area' and is referred to by many who live in Durban as 'Scumbilo'. The second suburb we identified is Westville, an affluent suburb marked by high walls and significant investment in securitisation. In both of these suburbs we identified the local police station and the private security company that has most 'buy-in' from residents. In embarking on this research we forged a partnership with the SAPS in both the Umbilo and Westville police stations and with the private security companies that are most present in these suburbs i.e. Blue Security (Umbilo) and ADT Security (Westville).

The research was conducted through a series of interviews with key actors in each of these organisations. More informal group discussions were held with members of the private security companies. Interviews were also held with the crime prevention, community liaison, and crime analysis heads in each of the police station. In addition, we joined SAPS members and both private security companies in patrols, wearing bullet proof vests and having signed indemnity. Being part of these patrols (night and day) allowed us to see which houses were being targeted while we were on patrol and to chat to the relevant officers about their perspectives on house design and security. During these patrols both police and private security officers would point out houses that they felt were vulnerable to crime, especially violent crime, as well as which houses were easier or more difficult to police. While we were permitted to be in the patrol vehicles of Blue Security, ADT company policy prohibited us from doing this. As a result when researching the doing of private policing in Westville, we followed the ADT vehicle with the consent of the cluster manager. Conversations were held with

patrol officers before, during and after the shifts. The ride-alongs, interviews and informal conversations were conducted between February and June 2014.

The minute we explained the purpose of this research to individuals at the policing agencies we have mentioned, great excitement was generated. A genuine interest was expressed in the doing of the research and in the dissemination of the results. The private security companies, in particular, immediately committed to being partners in this research and action enterprise. This response far exceeded any that we had anticipated. The 'freshness' of the research and the 'imagining forward' component of this research project were viewed as much needed. Blue Security, in particular, was keen to think through what new technologies and practices could be devised if walls were to be pulled down. This was contrary to what we had been expected.

Public and private police representatives were equally keen to have their 'clients' thinking differently about how to secure themselves and their property. Company directors and station commissioners alike acted as facilitators, rather than as gate keepers, and officers on patrol were eager to have company 'on the job' and to share their expert, bottom-up knowledge.

3   The tenuous link between walls and home security

Walls as a means of 'defence' for the wealthy has a history that dates back to middle-ages where 'inhabitants in cities were protected from outside danger by walls' [9:2]. But there have been many points in history since then when walls have been 'broken down' and cities have become places of interaction and gathering. Whether or not high walls as structures 'design out' crime, particular in the contemporary era, is up for debate. Yet, despite the lack of evidence about the effectiveness of walls in crime prevention and fear reduction, in the past fifty years or so wealthy suburb dwellers in a number of cities across the world seem to have 'bought into' the idea that walls act as a barrier to crime and insecurity, and as an effective means of keeping 'unfamiliars' out [9, 10]. Caldeira, thus describes Sao Paulo as 'a city of walls' [23, p. 87]. And, Mike Davis graphically portrays the fortified wealthy suburbs of Los Angeles in recent decades:

> *The city bristles with malice. The carefully manicured lawns of the Westside sprout ominous little signs threatening "ARMED RESPONSE!" Wealthier neighbourhoods in the canyons and hillsides cower behind walls guarded by gun-toting private police and state-of-the-art electronic surveillance systems…Welcome to post-liberal Los Angeles where the defence of luxury has given birth to an arsenal of security systems and an obsession with policing the social boundaries through architecture [12, p. 154].*

Walls in the wealthy suburbs of Los Angeles were, by the 1990s, getting higher, and those behind the walls had the added 'protection' of private security intervention [12]. The logic behind this technology appears to be that target-hardening through building high, solid walls makes (private) property physically harder to break into, and may also raise the actual and perceived risk of detection

by neighbours or police due to the increased noise created and expanded time spent attempting to 'break in'. This 'landscape' of suburban walls and private security patrols is legitimated by a discourse of fear of crime and violence [11]. And, the effectiveness of walls in keeping 'strangers' out was buttressed by the surveillance capacity and techniques of those in the business of policing.

Who the 'stranger' is, is contextually determined, but almost always with a race, ethnic and/or class bias [13]. In many instances, the swing towards high walls as defence emerges in periods of major transition, both political and economic [12]. Residential apartheid, created by prejudice and socioeconomic inequality, is reinforced by design formulas, policing (private and public) technologies [11], and media hype about urban crime [14]. For Davis, this quest for exclusion has created a 'dystopia vision' [12, p. 155] where obsessions with safety obscures any other possible imaginings.

In the South African case, this dystopia has led to a 'reality' far from the imaginary of a non-racial, desegregated and publicly engaged society. The architecture of South African suburban life provides, as Bickford puts it, 'a hostile environment for the development of democratic imagination and participation' [15, p. 356]. Bickford's view echoes the view of urban ethnographers and scholars who are part of the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CEPTED) movement, both within South Africa and internationally.

Jane Jacobs [16] is viewed as the architect of CEPTED thinking. It was Jacobs who first made reference to keeping 'eyes on the street', a concept later developed as 'natural surveillance. CEPTED scholars maintain that walls – concrete and social – serve to increase fear and even possibilities of victimisation. For them, crime can be reduced or prevented through environmental design that allows for natural surveillance, natural access control and natural territorial reinforcement [17]. The underlying principal of crime prevention for CPTED scholars is that the higher the chances of being seen, the less likely the chances of being victimised [18].

World renowned (and South African born) criminologist Stanley Cohen [19], guided to some extent by the CEPTED scholars, writes that urban environments can be designed to reduce opportunities for crime or fear of crime, without resorting to the building of fortresses. For Cohen, low social integration invokes heightened fear of crime and insecurity. Creating islands of isolation and imposed order can have the exact opposite effect to what is intended by fortification. A number of studies have demonstrated that people who feel isolated generally feel more fearful and 'out of control' (see [20]) within the very (sub) urban spaces that they have tried to contain and command. Sennett [21] provides an interesting explanation for this. According to him, urban spaces are by definition somewhat chaotic and diverse. As a result, he argues, as soon as we try to artificially control these spaces, our inability to do so reminds us of our vulnerability and incompetence. Put slightly differently, walls create a pacification of everyday life, leading to feelings of defencelessness and uncertainty [9]. The physical walls created to 'defend' have the unintended consequence of leaving residents defenceless, with low level engagement with those around them and minimal natural surveillance. Vilalta [22] in his study of Mexico City notes that once

criminals enter a closed estate or building, the opportunity for 'doing crime' is increased. Vilalta also notes that home security systems such as walls, reinforced windows and burglar bars are 'expensive and inefficient', and have little impact on residence fear of crime.

In direct contrast to what is taking place in South Africa, America and Brazil, policy makers and planners in places like Denmark have made the conscious choice to make city spaces, including suburbs, as open and as mixed as possible. Urban design in these arguably more forward thinking places is premised on the idea that one needs to plan spaces so that ordinary people mix with the stranger and the outcast so that ordinary behaviour acts to 'drown the not-so ordinary behaviour' [9, p. 35]. How different this is to the South African case where, post-apartheid, an 'architecture of fear' [5, p. 101] has captured the suburban urban landscape, justified as a defensible response to crime and insecurity. And, perhaps expectedly, according to Lemanski [5], surveys indicate that despite 'excessive fortification' particular amongst the more affluent, fear of crime has increased. Isolation has led to increasing fear of the other, which in turn has led to further fortification and a deepening of fear.

Similarly, in both Brazil and the USA, in heavily walled suburban spaces there exist seemingly unbreakable cycles of isolation, disassociation and mistrust [13, 23]. In this environment, vulnerability is augmented, while resilience is trampled upon. Attempts to purify private spaces of fear and uncertainty is not only impossible, it is a project with perilous consequences for those on either side of the wall/gate [15].

In the next, empirical section of the paper we demonstrate how fortified homes create a host of quandaries for those responsible for policing them.

4   The practitioner view of fortification and security mobilisation

There is an assumption in some of the literature on the fortification of suburbs that the police and private security industry have directly contributed to this state of affairs. While there may be some truth in this, there are two important points we would like to make. Firstly, there has been very little, if any, attempt by urban scholars or even criminologists to understand suburban design from the perspective of policing actors. This we believe to be very odd given how central they could, and maybe should be, in the designing in of safety into suburban life. Secondly, as is the case of any social grouping, the views of those responsible for policing change as a result of daily experience. It is important to map these changes in mentality and in technology amongst powerful social actors such as those engaged in policing activities.

For the most part we were pleasantly surprised by our engagement with the public and private policing actors we met in the course of this research. What surprised us most was how aligned their thinking was to scholars who promote more humane, open and congenial city space. Added to this, advances in policing technology, particularly from the private security industry, have the potential to create secure spaces that are in sharp contrast to the fortressing of cities. Below

we have tried to capture some key themes that have emerged from our research, thus far.

4.1 The myth of securitisation

The idea of the 'myth of securitisation' was raised by Sergeant Stephen Clark, Community Liaison Head of SAPS Westville. For him, the hype around security in South Africa and the rush to buy more and more security devices has created a mythical belief that the more you engage with securitisation technologies, the safer you are. For him, creating security is fairly simple. The idea that private security companies, together with those who design fortress like structures can make one's home secure is mythical and therefore creates vulnerability.

Brian Jackson from Blue Security similarly spoke of a 'false sense of security' that South Africans create through fortressing their homes and adding unnecessary layers of defensive materials. Interestingly, Jackson believes that this 'foolish mindset' is probably partly due to the ideas that were once promoted by the security industry itself. However, the public's understanding has not shifted in line with new thinking and security technologies that promote more visible and open spaces. In addition, representatives from both the SAPS and the private security companies spoke about how complacent and negligent home owners are in regard to their own governance of security because they believe themselves to be 'covered' by the services provided by those who 'do' policing and by a variety of technological innovations. In truth, time is of the essence when a home is broken into. Private and public security officers are well aware that their intervention becomes fairly immaterial if they are not able to get to the scene, and into the home, within a few minutes. High walls present a problem in regard to time responsiveness.

Security technology (such as beams, passives, and even electric fencing), if not properly used or activated is rendered useless. And, as we will see below, high walls, viewed as hard defence against 'invasion', often have the opposite effect to the rationale for constructing them. Indeed, the majority of houses that we were shown to have been the target of more serious crimes were the ones with high walls and solid gates. Having said this it is important to note that crime victimisation is dependent on a number of variables, in including home occupancy, lighting, and burglar bars, and the extent of social integration and cohesion within a neighbourhood. The exact location of a house, for example near an open space or a river or a derelict building, is also important to consider.

From what we could gather through our conversations and our ride-alongs, and the scant official data we could gather from the police, the relatively unwalled suburb of Umbilo is viewed as far safer than is the more heavily walled suburb of Westville. Where crime does occur in Umbilo, it is generally petty and opportunistic. Westville has a far greater incidence of organised and serious crimes. While 'crime moves' this current reality stands in sharp contradiction to the generally held view that the working class, more chaotic and diverse suburb of Umbilo is hard hit by crime.

4.2 The importance of social integration, neighbourliness and natural surveillance

While (somewhat obviously) private security representatives did talk about the importance of security technology such as beams, passives and even CCTV in optimising home security, they placed considerable emphasis on natural surveillance and neighbourliness. For Martin Kriel, ADT Managing Director of the East Coast Region, the most important way to create personal and communal security is to 'know your neighbours', and to build a sense of local community. Local people, he asserted, need to take control of their own security. Nothing, not even technology, can replace the value of people looking after one another and intervening immediately if a security threat arises. However, he did make the point very clearly that citizen groupings need to be regulated to avoid over-zealous responses. Much in line with Kriel's thinking, Lieutenant Colonel Correa from SAPS Umbilo told, during a ride along in the Umbilo area, said the following:

> The first thing I did when I moved into my house in Glenwood is broke down the existing wall. I simply put up a transparent fence. The second thing I did is go around getting to know my neighbours. I am a policeman, and I know what counts. Visibility, a good network of neighbours, and natural surveillance. Nothing can replace the importance of people in your neighbourhood. Of course I have a dog and burglar bars, but what is most important is knowing the people around me, being friendly, and looking out for each other.

Correa actually took us to see his house which indeed has nothing more than a palisade fence as a boundary. He chatted to people on the street as we were standing by his house, demonstrating his sense of connectedness to the people in his immediate suburban space.

For Sunil Ramdayal, Blue Security Senior Technical Advisor, South Africans are overly concerned with the desire for privacy, almost at all costs. This, he believes, is unfortunate, because, he maintains, if we are serious about safety, we would know that this comes from being deeply involved in one another's lives.

4.3 Walls as a policing problem

Across both private security companies and the two SAPS station officers, solid high walls were viewed as an obstacle to policing. Walls prevent patrolling officers from knowing what is going on inside a property, thus detracting from the value of patrols as a form of crime prevention and quick response. Walls were also seen as providing 'criminals' with a defence as they can conduct their activities without being viewed from the street. In addition, according to private security respondents, once an 'intruder' has entered a property, the fact that there is a huge wall behind them creates a sense of entrapment for those in the home or in the yard. The result is a delayed response to an alert.

According to Chris Naidoo, ADT Area Manager for Armed Response in the Westville Area:

Walls create a real problem for private police patrol officers since we are not allowed to jump over walls if ADT is alerted by a private client. Walls are also a problem because they prevent you from seeing what is happening outside your property when you are leaving it and even when you are inside your own property at home. Hijackers could be waiting outside for you without you knowing. The other problem is that high walls attract attention from the point of view that they signal residents are protecting something valuable inside. I would say in general that high, solid walls are not only a problem, they are a waste of time and puts the homeowner at risk. High walls restrict access to property for the reaction officer and in the case of being called out patrol officers can only do a perimeter check. This is frustrating for the patrol officer as he cannot access the property and he is supposed to give assistance. This is not only the case for when we are called out for a supposed invasion, but also, for example, if a client has a heart attack and collapses and cannot open the gate, and then he dies.

On our patrol ride-along with Blue Security Patrol Manger, Lieutenant Syd, we were shown a number of heavily walled houses that had been targeted for more serious crimes, such as car hijacking or robbery. When clients do not arrange access arrangements with private security companies, patrol officers are often left immobilised in front of the wall, either out of fear or because company policy does not allow them to 'jump walls'. According to Lieutenant Syd from Blue Security, the houses that are most targeted, particularly by more organised criminals, are those with high walls. This perspective was reinforced by Sunil Ramdayal, the Technical Manager of ADT Security who stated that 'serious criminals will always look for ways to be hidden from sight. High walls provide this and my sense is that it is behind high walls that more serious crimes take place'. Unfortunately, we were unable to 'verify' the observations of Syd and Ramdayal through official police statistics or incident reports, since the release of such information is prohibited by top police management.

On the 12th of June 2014, we were at the Westville Police Station when a report was given of an armed robbery of house in Westville. A family had been held up by gun point. In the midst of what was taking place in the police station I managed to chat briefly to the Acting Station Commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel Tommy Stewart, about this event. I asked him if the house was by any chance walled. He replied that it was and that the high walled houses is what gives the police the 'biggest headache'. While, according to him, these are not the only houses to be targeted, they are targeted as much or event more than houses with open fencing, low walls or no walls. However, the added the added problem presented by walled houses is that police can neither see what is going on during patrols nor gain access when an incident is reported. This police view resonates with a survey conducted in the late 1990s of more than 30 station commissioners in the wider Johannesburg area. All 30 believed that walls make the fight against crime more difficult [24].

4.4 Walls as a threat to occupational health and safety

Little, if any thought, is given to the health and occupational safety risks that fortified houses create for those who do policing. Indeed, neither of the authors had given any thought to this prior to this research. Yet walls and other forms of solid boundaries create real problems for patrol officers. Not only is jumping a high wall physically dangerous in itself, there is also the reality that patrol officers are caught unaware by home intruders who are hiding behind walls. Patrol officers from the private security companies are often the first respondents to invasion alerts and are therefore easy targets, particularly when they enter an impermeable and concealed space. Walls create a huge sense of anxiety and fear in the minds of those responsible for policing. And, according to Lieutenant Syd from Blue Security, a number of his patrol officers have been killed having being caught unaware by serious offenders hiding behind walls. Blue patrollers and SAPS officers have also broken limbs jumping over walls, as they are keen to gain access despite high walls and locked gates.

Home owners and buyers of private security (especially armed response and patrol services) are generally not aware that the larger and more established private security companies forbid their patrol officers from jumping over walls, precisely because this is a health and safety risk. Martin Kriel, ADT Managing Director, informed us that ADT South Africa is bound to a policy, strictly enforced by their American Shareholder, Tyco, which prohibits its patrol officers from jumping over walls because of the danger this poses to their patrol officers. Kriel spoke of how walls have led the company to having to 'invest' considerable amounts of money into ways of gaining access into impenetrable properties. This, he believes is a complete waste of resources, particularly because, according to him, new technologies have made walls somewhat defunct.

4.5 An image of the 'ideal' home

Policing actors are well aware that signifiers of wealth on their own generate risk. While they do not talk of inequality as a problem, they are certainly aware of the fact that homes that are opulent and fortress-like suggest that there is valuable 'stuff' to be taken. Wealth, by inference, creates vulnerability. Interestingly, the top management of public and private police organisations we interviewed all opted to live in 'regular', middle-income areas. These areas, they believe, are less targeted than the wealthier areas and there is a greater sense of community. Martin Kriel, for example, chooses to live Queensburgh, considered to be a low-middle income area, rather than a high end suburb which he could well afford. Lieutenant Colonel Correa from Umbilo SAPS has similarly opted to live in lower Glenwood. This suburb is characterised by average-sized houses in very close proximity to each other and an active, integrated and diverse community. Both Kriel and Corea were adamant that they would not live in a more affluent area such as Westville or Durban North, much more affluent areas.

We asked our respondents from SAPS and the private security companies to describe what they would see as an 'ideal safe home'. We were intrigued by some of the unexpected and remarkably sensible design principles they spoke of. Aside

from one officer from ADT, all respondents were clear that walls are undesirable. Fences or barriers were seen as necessary, but mostly to keep pets and children within bounds. In their views, these boundaries (such as palisade fencing) should allow people to see in and for those inside their homes to see out onto the street (which is a continuation of their homes). There should be a limited number of access point to a home so that it is easy to determine where 'an intruder' could enter, should this occur. Walls, formed of shrubs and bushes rather than concrete, should also be eliminated as they also limit visibility. Compact, simple, single story houses were viewed as desirable as they are easier to police and make 'hiding' more difficult. Houses should also be either at street level, or above street level, but never below. Good lighting was also viewed as essential for viewing what is happening inside and around your home. Lighting is also viewed as a deterrent to criminals who do not want to be viewed.

Brian Jackson, one of the Regional Managers at Blue Security, said the following when he was asked to consider what an ideal house would look like in his view:

> Walls look terrible. I was in the building industry for many years. You can never make walls look nice. At the end of the day it is only there to keep people out, and why do we want to do that? That doesn't seem to make sense because we don't live in an island. I broke down the wall around my father's home and I felt immediate freedom. Crime will still be there, it always will, but you will feel you are part of the community. Freedom is the most important thing in life. Having a city without walls would make our city look so much more beautiful and it would create much more linkages between people. It would mean that your relationship with people becomes friendlier and open, which has to be a good thing. I'd like to see no high walls. I would love to walk through my town. I think that would be beautiful. We need to have openness. There need to be active public spaces with children on the road. At ten at night women should be walking on the streets without worrying about a risk element because they can see that there are other people out and about. The community needs to own their space. But people are too scared. We need to get some people to take the risk. Let's go back to being simple. What does it prove to have a huge house and a huge yard and never feel really at home?

In hearing the various responses from our respondents we were alerted to the importance of the policing voice in developing home design principals. As Steve Wimborne, Head of Special Projects at Blue Security states: 'Those of us in the business of policing and security know more about how design can be used to build in safety than most architects and builders'. Embedded in the practitioner and expert knowledge of policing agents is a wealth of urban planning sensibility which we believe is far too seldom tapped-into.

It is worth noting that although the majority of SAPS officers and private police respondents that we interacted with in the process of this research project are unlikely to have studied, or even heard of CPTED. Despite this, they intuitively

spoke the language of CPTED, although admittedly with a heightened sense of emphasis on technological innovations and the use of burglar bars, in defending private property. Overwhelming, though, there was a sensibility that natural surveillance and visibility are key to crime prevention in the suburbs. The fortification of the suburbs was viewed as a policing nightmare and a criminal's paradise.

5   Imagining forward

At the beginning of this paper we indicated that this research was premised on an action oriented approach. The outcome of this research is not merely to publish the results in academic journals. Rather, the research aims to form the basis of fresh deliberations about home safety and design possibilities. In August 2014, a process of public discussions and debates will begin with a wide ranging audience. This will be hosted by the Urban Futures Centre at the Durban University of Technology. The ideas and philosophies of all the key partners in this research process will be presented for open debate. The aim of these forums is to create a space for deliberations about walls and design in regard to enhancing safety and reducing crime targeting. Representatives from all the private and public policing agencies that were part of this research process will be included in these forums. This is important not only because we are committed to a participatory action research approach, but also because we believe that they are key 'shapers' of safety governance technologies and mentalities, and thus, by implication, of (sub) urban design.

During the public forums, photographs will be used to portray houses with varying degrees of security 'built-in'. Prior to these public discussions, an architect will be contracted to develop drawings of what an ideal safe house would look like, as described by the various private and public police members who engaged in this research process. The aim of these public forums is two-fold: to shift paradigms on home security hardening and to encourage non-traditional considerations when designing in safety.

There is also a modelling component to this project. Here the idea is to get 'buy-in' from the Architecture and Safer Cities Departments of the eThekwini Municipality to test out new design principles. This will begin with the identification of a suburban space that is heavily walled and simultaneously subject to high levels of crime victimisation. The Municipality will offer to 'break down walls' in a small section of such a neighbourhood and replace them with more transparent boundary structures. Should this 'experiment' reduce crime victimisation and fear of crime, the project will be rolled out to other places, ideally with the private security companies as experimental partners. Should fear and crime victimisation increase, the Municipality will be obliged to fit the bill for rebuilding the walls that were broken down. The suburbs then become a laboratory for increasing safety in urban settings.

How successful this imagining forward process will be is up for grabs. The fortification of homes will endure so long as the dominant discourse links safety to walls and forceful security mobilisation. 'Home' is after all, more than just a

space. It is 'a preferred space in that it provides 'a fixed point of reference around which the individual may personally structure his or her spatial reality' [25]. Fundamental to what 'home' represents is both security and identity. A home, according to Porteous [25], is meant to be a haven and a refuge from the 'outside world', as well as a place to be free to express your individuality. And, according to Porteous, 'the security of the home allows personal identity to flower' [25, p. 384]. The notion of 'home' is fundamentally emotional and personal. So too is fear of crime. The possibility of imagining Durban as a suburb without walls is in many ways dependent on whether new and existing discourse by policing 'experts' are heard and then integrated into design and living principles. It is also dependent on whether the various social actors concerned (including the eThekwini Municipality) are willing to take risks to optimise home security.

References

[1]   Altbeker, A., *A Country at War with Itself: South Africa's Crisis of Crime*, Jonathan Ball, Cape Town, 2007.
[2]   Leggett, T., The facts behind the figures: crime statistics 2002/3, *South African Crime Quarterly,* 6, pp. 1-5, 2003.
[3]   Singh, A., *Policing and Crime Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Ashgate, Burlington, 2008.
[4]   Samara, T., State security in transition: The war on crime in post-apartheid South Africa, *Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 9(2), pp. 277-312, 2010.
[5]   Lemanski, C., A new apartheid? The special implications of crime in Cape Town, South Africa, *Environment and Urbanisation,* 16(2), pp. 101-111, 2004.
[6]   Gordon, D., Crime in the New South Africa, *The Nation*, 267(15), pp. 17-21, 1988.
[7]   Steinberg, J., *Thin Blue: The Unwritten Rules of Policing South Africa*, Jonathan Ball, Cape Town, 2008.
[8]   Vahed, Y., Fear of crime, social cohesion and home security systems in post-apartheid South Africa: A case study of Ward 33, Durban, Master of Social Science in Community Development, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013.
[9]   Midtveit, E., Crime prevention and exclusion: From walls to opera music, *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Crime and Crime Prevention,* 6, pp. 23-38, 2005.
[10] Merry, S., Mending walls and building fences: Constructing the private neighbourhood, *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 33, pp. 71-90, 1993.
[11] Low, S., Urban Fear: Building Fortress America. City and Society. *Annual Review*. 52-72, 1997.
[12] Davis, M., *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, Verso, Los Angeles, 1990.
[13] Fainstein, S., *The City Builders: Property Development in London and New York, 1998–2000,* University Press of Texas, Lawrence, 2001.

[14] Flusty, S., Building Paranoia, *Architecture of Fear*, ed. N. Ellin, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, New York, pp. 47-60, 1997.

[15] Bickford, S., Constructing inequality: City spaces and the architecture of citizenship, *Political Theory* 28(3), pp. 355-376, 2000.

[16] Jacobs, J., *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, The Modern Library, New York, 1969.

[17] Wenzel, R., CPTED: Interpreting contemporary security practices in the era of homeland security, Master of Arts in Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Arlington, 2007.

[18] Gardner, R, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, *Security Management Magazine*, April edition, 1995.

[19] Cohen, S., *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment and Classification*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985.

[20] Box, S., Hale, C. & Andrews, G., Explaining fear of crime, *British Journal of Criminology,* 28, pp. 340-356, 1988.

[21] Sennett, R., *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*, Farber and Farber, London, 1996.

[22] Vilalta, C., Fear of crime and home security systems, *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal*, 13, pp. 4-14, 2012.

[23] Caldeira, T (1996b) Crime and individual rights: reframing the question of violence in Latin America, *Constructing Democracy, Human Rights, Citizenship and Society in Latin America*, ed. E. Jelin & E. Hershberg, E (eds).*,* Westview Press, Colorado, 1996b.

[24] Rauch, J., Crime and crime prevention in greater Johannesburg: The views of police station commissioners, Centre for the Study of Violence, Johannesburg, 1998.

[25] Porteous, J., Home: The territorial core, *Geographical Review*, 66(4), pp. 383-390, 1976.