

## Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation

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In the last few decades, the proliferation of fortified enclaves has created a new model of spatial segregation and transformed the quality of public life in many cities around the world. Fortified enclaves are privatized, enclosed, and monitored spaces for residence, consumption, leisure, and work. The fear of violence is one of their main justifications. They appeal to those who are abandoning the traditional public sphere of the streets to the poor, the “marginal,” and the homeless. In cities fragmented by fortified enclaves, it is difficult to maintain the principles of openness and free circulation which have been among the most significant organizing values of modern cities. As a consequence, the character of public space and of citizens’ participation in public life changes.

In order to sustain these arguments, this article analyzes the case of São Paulo, Brazil, and uses Los Angeles as a comparison. São Paulo is the largest metropolitan region (it has more than sixteen million inhabitants) of a society with one of the most inequitable distributions of wealth in the world.<sup>1</sup> In São Paulo, social inequality is obvious. As a consequence, processes of spatial segregation are also

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1. In Brazil in 1989, the proportion of income in the hands of the poorest 50% of the population was only 10.4%. At the same time, the richest 1% had 17.3% of the income. Data is from the National Research by Domicile Sample (PNAD) undertaken by the Census Bureau. The distribution of wealth has become more inequitable since the early 1980s (Lopes 1993; Rocha 1991).

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particularly visible, expressed without disguise or subtlety. Sometimes, to look at an exaggerated form of a process is a way of throwing light onto some of its characteristics which might otherwise go unnoticed. It is like looking at a caricature. In fact, with its high walls and fences, armed guards, technologies of surveillance, and contrasts of ostentatious wealth and extreme poverty, contemporary São Paulo reveals with clarity a new pattern of segregation which is widespread in cities throughout the world, although generally in less severe and explicit forms.

In what follows, I start by describing the changes in São Paulo's pattern of spatial segregation which have occurred in the last fifteen years. I show, then, how the fortified enclaves became status symbols and instruments of social separation and suggest their similarities with other enclaves around the world. I examine Los Angeles as an example to illustrate both the type of architectural design and urban planning which the enclaves use and evaluate the effects of this design. Finally, I discuss how the new public space and the social interactions generated by the new pattern of urban segregation may relate to experiences of citizenship and democracy.

### **Building Up Walls: São Paulo's Recent Transformations**

The forms producing segregation in city space are historically variable. From the 1940s to the 1980s, a division between center and periphery organized the space of São Paulo, where great distances separated different social groups; the middle and upper classes lived in central and well-equipped neighborhoods and the poor lived in the precarious hinterland.<sup>2</sup> In the last fifteen years, however, a combination of processes, some of them similar to those affecting other cities, deeply transformed the pattern of distribution of social groups and activities throughout the city. São Paulo continues to be a highly segregated city, but the way in which inequalities are inscribed into urban space has changed considerably. In the 1990s, the physical distances separating rich and poor have decreased at the same time that the mechanisms to keep them apart have become more obvious and more complex.

The urban changes which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s in São Paulo, and the new pattern of spatial segregation they generated, cannot be separated from four different processes which became intertwined during this period. First, the 1980s and early 1990s were years of economic recession, with very high rates

2. For an analysis of the various patterns of urban segregation in São Paulo from the late nineteenth century to the present, see Caldeira (n.d.a and n.d.b).

of inflation and increasing poverty. The 1980s are known in Brazil and in Latin America as the “lost decade.” Contrary to the “miracle” years of the 1970s, economic growth was very low, the gross national product dropped 5.5% during the 1980s, unemployment rose, and inflation went up dramatically. For several years after the mid-1980s, inflation was higher than 1,000% a year, and successive economic plans to deal with it failed.<sup>3</sup> After a decade of inflation, unemployment, and recession, poverty has grown to alarming dimensions. Recent research shows that the effects of the economic crisis were especially severe for the poor population and aggravated the already iniquitous distribution of wealth in Brazil (Rocha 1991; Lopes 1993).<sup>4</sup>

This process of impoverishment has had serious consequences for the position of the poor in urban space. The periphery of the city became unaffordable for the poorest. Since the 1940s, the working classes had been building their own houses in the periphery of the city in a process called “autoconstruction” (see Caldeira 1984; Holston 1991). In this process, they bought cheap lots in distant areas of the city without any infrastructure and services, and frequently involving some illegality, and spent decades building their dream houses and improving their neighborhoods. In this way, they both constructed their homes and expanded the city. However, their generally successful efforts to improve the quality of life in the periphery through the organization of social movements—which I discuss below—occurred at a moment when the economic crisis denied upcoming generations of workers the same possibility of becoming homeowners, even in precarious and distant areas of town. Consequently, the poorest population had to move either to *favelas* and *cortiços* in the central areas of town, or to distant municipalities in the metropolitan region.<sup>5</sup> According to a recent study by the office of São Paulo’s Secretary of Housing, residents in *favelas* represented 1.1% of the city’s population in 1973, 2.2% in 1980, 8.8% in 1987, and 19.4% in 1993—that is, 1,902,000 people in 1993 (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, 15 October 1994, C-1).

3. As I write, in June of 1995, inflation has been low at around 2.5% a month for one year, as a consequence of the *Plano Real*, the most successful plan so far to fight inflation. This plan was elaborated by ex-Minister of Treasury Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was elected president of Brazil on the basis of the success of this plan.

4. Although the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo has one of the best situations in Brazil, the Gini coefficient increased from 0.516 in 1981 to 0.566 in 1989 (Rocha 1991:38). The Gini coefficient varies from zero to one. It would be zero if all people had the same income, and one if one person concentrated the whole national income. For Brazil, the Gini coefficient was 0.580 in 1985 and 0.627 in 1989 (Rocha 1991:38).

5. A *favela* is a set of shacks built on seized land. A *cortiço* is a type of tenement housing.

Second, these changes during the 1980s accompanied the consolidation of a democratic government in Brazil after twenty-one years of military rule. On the one hand, elections were held peacefully, regularly, and fairly, and political parties organized freely. On the other hand, trade unions and all types of social movements emerged onto the political scene, bringing the working classes and dominated groups to the center of politics and transforming the relationship between politicians and citizens. This is not a small achievement in a country with a tradition of high social inequality, elitism, and authoritarianism. This process of democratic consolidation has had many consequences and limits (see Caldeira and Holston 1995). It is important to note the consequences of this process in terms of the urban environment. Since the mid-1970s, social movements organized by homeowners associations in the periphery have pressured local administrations both to improve the infrastructure and services in their neighborhoods and to legalize their land. Combined with changes in political groups in office brought about by free elections, this pressure transformed the priorities of local administration, making the periphery the site of much investment in the urban infrastructure. Moreover, during two decades of land disputes, social movements forced municipal governments to offer various amnesties to illegal developers, which resulted in the regularization of lots and their insertion into the formal land market. However, these new achievements also diminished the supply of irregular and cheap lots on the market. Since legal developments and lots in areas with a better infrastructure are obviously more expensive than illegal lots in underdeveloped areas, it is not difficult to understand that the neighborhoods which achieved these improvements came to be out of the reach of the already impoverished population, who were therefore pushed into *favelas* and *cortiços*.

Third, during the 1980s, São Paulo's economic activities started to be restructured. Following the same pattern of many metropolises around the world, São Paulo is under a process of expansion of tertiary activities or tertiarization. In the last decade, the city lost its position as the largest industrial pole of the country to other areas of the state and to the Metropolitan Region as a whole, becoming basically a center of finance, commerce, and the coordination of productive activities and specialized services—in a pattern similar to what is happening in the so-called global cities (Sassen 1991). This process has various consequences for the urban environment. The oldest industrial areas of the city are going through combined processes of deterioration and gentrification. In some of them, especially in districts in the inner part of town where various sectors of the middle classes live, abandoned houses and factories were transformed into *cortiços*. Concomitantly, both the opening of new avenues and of a subway line in the

eastern zone generated urban renewal and the construction of new apartment buildings for the middle classes, some of which conform to the model of closed condominiums discussed below. The most recent process, however, concerns the displacement of services and commerce from the inner city to districts on the periphery, especially to the western and southern zones of the metropolitan region. The new tertiary jobs are located in recently built, enormous office and service centers which have multiplied in the last fifteen years. At the same time, spaces of commerce are changing as immense shopping malls are created in isolated areas of the old periphery, and as some old shopping areas are abandoned to homeless people and street vendors.

Finally, the fourth process of change relates most directly to the new pattern of urban residential segregation because it supplies the justifying rhetoric: the increase in violent crime and fear. Crime has been increasing since the mid-1980s but, more importantly, there has been a qualitative change in the pattern of crime. Violent crime in the 1990s represents about 30% of all crime, compared to 20% in the early 1980s. Murder rates in the 1990s are higher than 35 per 100,000 people in São Paulo.<sup>6</sup> However, the most serious element in the increase of violence in São Paulo is police violence. In the early 1990s, São Paulo's military police killed more than 1,000 suspects per year, a number which has no comparison in any other city in the world.<sup>7</sup> The increase in violence, insecurity, and fear comes with a series of transformations, as citizens adopt new strategies of protection. These strategies are changing the city's landscape, patterns of residence and circulation, everyday trajectories, habits, and gestures related to the use of streets and of public transportation. In sum, the fear of crime is contributing to changes in all types of public interactions.

As a result, São Paulo is today a city of walls. Physical barriers have been constructed everywhere—around houses, apartment buildings, parks, squares, office complexes, and schools. Apartment buildings and houses which used to be connected to the street by gardens are now everywhere separated by high

6. Violent crime has been growing in various metropolises around the world. This is especially clear in the United States, where the number of violent crimes per capita grew by 355% between 1960 and 1990, according to FBI reports. In 1990, rates of murder per 100,000 population in several American cities were higher than or comparable to those of São Paulo. The highest rate was 77.8 in Washington, D.C. It was 36.0 in Miami, 30.6 in New York City, and 28.2 in Los Angeles (*Los Angeles Times*, 25 March 1992: A-14).

7. In 1992, São Paulo's military police killed 1,470 civilians, including 111 prisoners killed inside the city's main prison. In that year, Los Angeles police killed 25 civilians, and the New York police killed 24 civilians. For a complete analysis of the pattern of police violence and of the increase in violence and crime in São Paulo, see Caldeira (n.d.a).

fences and walls, and guarded by electronic devices and armed security men. The new additions frequently look odd because they were improvised in spaces conceived without them, spaces designed to be open. However, these barriers are now fully integrated into new projects for individual houses, apartment buildings, shopping areas, and work spaces. A new aesthetics of security shapes all types of constructions and imposes its new logic of surveillance and distance as a means for displaying status, and is changing the character of public life and public interactions.

Among the diverse elements changing the city, the new enclaves for residence, work, and consumption of the middle and upper classes are provoking the deepest transformations. Although they have different uses and many specializations (some for residence, others for work, leisure, or consumption; some more restricted, others more open), all types of fortified enclaves share some basic characteristics. They are private property for collective use; they are physically isolated, either by walls or empty spaces or other design devices; they are turned inwards and not to the street; and they are controlled by armed guards and security systems which enforce rules of inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, these enclaves are very flexible arrangements. Due to their size, the new technologies of communication, the new organization of work, and security systems, they possess all that is needed within a private and autonomous space and can be situated almost anywhere, independent of the surroundings. In fact, most of them have been placed in the old periphery and have as their neighbors either *favelas* or concentrations of autoconstructed houses. Finally, the enclaves tend to be socially homogeneous environments, mostly for the middle and upper classes.

Fortified enclaves represent a new alternative for the urban life of these middle and upper classes. As such, they are codified as something conferring high status. The construction of status symbols is a process which elaborates social distance and creates means for the assertion of social difference and inequality. In the next section, I examine real estate advertisements as one way of analyzing this process for the case of São Paulo's enclaves. After that, I analyze the characteristics of the enclaves that make them an urban form which creates segregation and reproduces social inequality while transforming the character of public life.

### **Advertising Segregated Enclaves for the Rich**

Real estate advertisements tell us about the lifestyles of the middle and upper classes and reveal the elements which constitute current patterns of social differentiation. The ads not only reveal a new code of social distinction, but also

explicitly treat separation, isolation, and protection as a matter of status. The following interpretation is based on the analysis of real estate advertisements for closed condominiums published in the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* between 1975 and 1995. I analyze the advertisements in order to try to discover what is capturing the imagination and desires of São Paulo's middle and upper classes and to highlight some of the main images they are using in order to construct their place in society. I am particularly interested in uncovering how, in the last twenty years, the advertisements elaborated the myth of what they call "a new concept of residence" on the basis of the articulation of images of security, isolation, homogeneity, facilities, and services.<sup>8</sup> I argue that the image which confers the highest status and is most seductive is that of an enclosed and isolated community, a secure environment in which one can use various facilities and services and live only among equals. The advertisements present the image of islands to which one can return every day, in order to escape from the city and its deteriorated environment and to encounter an exclusive world of pleasure among peers. The image of the enclaves, therefore, is opposed to the image of the city as a deteriorated world pervaded by not only pollution and noise but more importantly confusion and mixture, that is, social heterogeneity.

Closed condominiums are supposed to be separate worlds. Their advertisements propose a "total way of life" which would represent an alternative to the quality of life offered by the city and its deteriorated public space. The ads suggest the possibility of constructing a world clearly distinguishable from the surrounding city: a life of total calm and security. Condominiums are distant, but they are supposed to be as independent and complete as possible to compensate for it; thus the emphasis on the common facilities they are supposed to have which transform them into sophisticated clubs. In these ads, the facilities promised inside of closed condominiums seem to be unlimited—from drugstores to tanning rooms, from bars and saunas to ballet rooms, from swimming pools to libraries.

In addition to common facilities, São Paulo's closed condominiums offer a wide range of services. The following are some of the services (excluding security) mentioned in the advertisements: psychologists and gymnastic teachers to manage children's recreation, classes of all sorts for all ages, organized sports, libraries, gardening, pet care, physicians, message centers, frozen food preparation, housekeeping administration, cooks, cleaning personnel, drivers, car washing, transportation, and servants to do the grocery shopping. If the list does not meet your dreams, do not worry, for "everything you might demand" can be made

8. Expressions in quotation marks are taken from the advertisements.

available. The expansion of domestic service is not a feature of Brazil alone. As Sassen (1991, chapters 1 and 8) shows for the case of global cities, high-income gentrification requires an increase in low-wage jobs; yuppies and poor migrant workers depend on each other. In São Paulo, however, the intensive use of domestic labor is a continuation of an old pattern, although in recent years some relationships of labor have been altered, and this work has become more professional.

The multiplication of new services creates problems, including the spatial allocation of service areas. The solutions for this problem vary, but one of the most emblematic concerns the circulation areas. Despite many recent changes, the separation between two entrances—in buildings and in each individual apartment—and two elevators, one labeled “social” and the other “service”—seems to be untouchable; different classes are not supposed to mix or interact in the public areas of the buildings.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes, the insistence on this distinction seems ridiculous, because the two elevators or doors are often placed side-by-side, instead of being in distinct areas. As space shrinks, and the side-by-side solution spreads, the apartments which have totally separate areas of circulation advertise this fact with the phrase, “social hall independent from service hall.” The idea is old: class separation as a form of distinction.

Another problem faced by the new developments is the control of a large number of servants. As the number of workers for each condominium increases, as many domestic jobs change their character, and as “creative services” proliferate for middle and upper classes who cannot do without them, so also the mechanisms of control diversify. The “creative administrations” of the new enclaves in many cases take care of labor management, and are in a position to impose strict forms of control which would create impossible daily relationships if adopted in the more personal interaction between domestic servants and the families who employ them. This more “professional” control is, therefore, a new service and is advertised as such. The basic method of control is direct and involves empowering some workers to control others. In various condominiums, both employees of the condominium and maids and cleaning workers of individual apartments (even those who live there) are required to show their identification tags to go in and out of the condominium. Often they and their personal belongings are searched when they leave work. Moreover, this control usually involves men exercising power over women.

9. See Holston 1989 for an analysis of this system of spatial separation in Brasília.



The middle and upper classes are creating their dream of independence and freedom—both from the city and its mixture of classes, and from everyday domestic tasks—on the basis of services from working-class people. They give guns to badly paid working-class guards to control their own movement in and out of their condominiums. They ask their badly paid “office-boys” to solve all their bureaucratic problems, from paying their bills and standing in all types of lines to transporting incredible sums of money. They also ask their badly paid maids—who often live in the *favelas* on the other side of the condominium’s wall—to wash and iron their clothes, make their beds, buy and prepare their food, and frequently care for their children all day long. In a context of increased fear of crime in which the poor are often associated with criminality, the upper classes fear contact and contamination, but they continue to depend on their servants. They can only be anxious about creating the most effective way of controlling these servants, with whom they have such ambiguous relationships of dependency and avoidance, intimacy and distrust.

Another feature of closed condominiums is isolation and distance from the city, a fact which is presented as offering the possibility of a better lifestyle. The latter is expressed, for example, by the location of the development in “nature” (green areas, parks, lakes), and in the use of phrases inspired by ecological discourses. However, it is clear in the advertisements that isolation means separation from those considered to be socially inferior, and that the key factor to assure this is security. This means fences and walls surrounding the condominium, guards on duty twenty-four hours a day controlling the entrances, and an array of facilities and services to ensure security—guardhouses with bathrooms and telephones, double doors in the garage, and armed guards patrolling the internal streets. “Total security” is crucial to “the new concept of residence.” Security and control are the conditions for keeping the others out, for assuring not only isolation but also “happiness,” “harmony,” and even “freedom.” In sum, to relate security exclusively to crime is to fail to recognize all the meanings it is acquiring in various types of environments. The new systems of security not only provide protection from crime, but also create segregated spaces in which the practice of exclusion is carefully and rigorously exercised.

The elaboration of an aesthetics of security and the creation of segregation on the basis of building enclaves is a widespread process, although not necessarily occurring elsewhere in the same obvious ways as in São Paulo. Fortified enclaves are not unique to São Paulo. In October 1993, a large advertising campaign in São Paulo elaborated on the similarities with enclaves in U.S. cities. It was a campaign to sell the idea of an “edge city” (an expression used in English) as a

way of increasing the appeal and price of specific enclaves. One of the main characters of this campaign was Joel Garreau, the U.S. journalist and author of the book, *Edge City—Life on the New Frontier*. His photograph appeared in full page ads in national magazines and newspapers, he came to São Paulo to talk to a select group of realtors, and he was one of the main participants in a thirty-minute television program advertising some enclaves. Garreau was helping market three huge real estate developments—Alphaville, Aldeia de Serra, and Tamboré—which combined closed condominiums, shopping centers, and office complexes as if they were a piece of the first world dropped into the metropolitan region of São Paulo.

The Paulista “edge city” was not created from scratch in 1993. The Western zone in which these developments are located is the part of the metropolitan region most affected by transformations in the last two decades. Until the 1970s this area was a typical poor periphery of the metropolitan region. Since then, real estate developers who benefited from the low price of land and facilities offered by local administrations have invested heavily in this area. Over fifteen years, they built large areas of walled residences adjacent to office complexes, service centers, and shopping malls. The area had among the highest rates of population growth in the metropolitan region during 1980–90, a period when the growth rate in the city of São Paulo declined sharply. Because the new residents are largely from the upper social groups, this area today has a concentration of high-income inhabitants, who, before the 1980s, would have lived in central neighborhoods (Metro 1989). In other words, this area clearly represents the new trend of movement of wealthy residents as well as services and commerce to the periphery of the city and to enclosed areas. The 1993 campaign used many images already old in real estate advertisements of closed condominiums, but gave to them a touch of novelty by baptizing its product as “edge city.” Its aim was to launch new projects in the area and for this they used Garreau’s expertise on suburban development.

The television program, broadcast in São Paulo on Saturday, 16 October 1993, illustrates very well the connections with the first world model as well as the local peculiarities. The program combined scenes from U.S. edge cities (Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland) and the three developments being advertised in São Paulo. In this program, Garreau—speaking in English with Portuguese subtitles—described edge cities as the predominant form of contemporary urban growth and used Los Angeles and its multicentered form as an example. The program had interesting differences in the way it presented Brazilian as opposed to U.S. edge cities. Residents from enclaves in both countries were interviewed

in front of swimming pools, lakes, and in green areas, emphasizing both the luxurious and the anti-urban character of the developments. However, if the U.S. edge cities have external walls and controls in their entrance gates, they are not shown, and their security personnel is not visibly present either. In the Paulista case, on the contrary, they are crucial and emphasized. At one point, the program shows a scene shot from a helicopter: the private security personnel of a condominium intercept a “suspect car” (a popular vehicle, a Volkswagen bus) outside the walls of the condominiums; they physically search the occupants, who are forced to put their arms up against the car. Although this action is completely illegal for a private security service to perform on a public street, this together with scenes of visitors submitting identification documents at the entrance gates, reassures the rich residents (and spectators) that “suspect” (poor) people will be kept away. Another revealing scene is an interview in English with a resident of a U.S. edge city. He cites as one of his reasons for moving there the fact that he wanted to live in a racially integrated community. This observation is censored in the Portuguese subtitles which say instead that his community has “many interesting people.” In São Paulo, the image of a racially integrated community would certainly devalue the whole development. For the Paulista elites, first world models are good insofar as they may be adapted to include outright control (especially of the poor) and the eradication of racial and social difference.

To use first world elements in order to sell all types of commodities is a very common practice in third world countries. However, contrasting the different situations may be especially revealing. In this case, the need to censor a reference to racial integration indicates that the Paulista system of social inequality and distance is indeed obvious and that race is one of its most sensitive points.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the parallel between the Brazilian and the American examples suggests that although the degree of segregation may vary in different contexts, it is present in similar forms in both cases. It is worth then investigating the characteristics of this form and its effects on the organization of public life.

### **Attacking Modern Public Space**

The new residential enclaves of the upper classes, associated with shopping malls, isolated office complexes, and other privately controlled environments represent

10. Although many people like to think of Brazilian society as a “racial democracy,” any reading of available social indicators shows pervasive discrimination against the Black population. For example, a recent study by Lopes (1993) on poverty shows that 68% of the urban households below the indigent

a new form of organizing social differences and creating segregation in São Paulo and in many other cities around the world. The characteristics of the Paulista enclaves which make their segregationist intentions viable may be summarized in four points. First, they use two instruments in order to create explicit separation: on the one hand, physical dividers such as fences and walls; on the other, large empty spaces creating distance and discouraging pedestrian circulation. Second, as if walls and distances were not enough, separation is guaranteed by private security systems: control and surveillance are conditions for internal social homogeneity and isolation. Third, the enclaves are private universes turned inwards with designs and organization making no gestures towards the street. Fourth, the enclaves aim at being independent worlds which proscribe an exterior life, evaluated in negative terms. The enclaves are not subordinate either to public streets or to surrounding buildings and institutions. In other words, the relationship they establish with the rest of the city and its public life is one of avoidance: they turn their backs on them. Therefore, public streets become spaces for elite's circulation by car and for poor people's circulation by foot or public transportation. To walk on the public street is becoming a sign of class in many cities, an activity that the elite is abandoning. No longer using streets as spaces of sociability, the elite now want to prevent street life from entering their enclaves.

Private enclaves and the segregation they generate deny many of the basic elements which constituted the modern experience of public life: primacy of streets and their openness; free circulation of crowds and vehicles; impersonal and anonymous encounters of the pedestrian; unprogrammed public enjoyment and congregation in streets and squares; and the presence of people from different social backgrounds strolling and gazing at those passing by, looking at store windows, shopping, and sitting in cafes, joining political demonstrations or using spaces especially designed for the entertainment of the masses (promenades, parks, stadiums, exhibitions).<sup>11</sup> The new developments in cities such as São Paulo create enclosures which contradict both the prototype of modern urban remodeling, that of Baron Haussmann, and basic elements of the modern conception of public life. Haussmann's state-promoted transformations of Paris were strongly criticized and opposed, but no one denied that the new boulevards were readily

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line have a Black or Mulatto person as its head while Black or Mulatto households represent only 41% of the total urban households.

11. Analyses of various dimensions of the modern experience of urban life are found in: Benjamin 1969; Berman 1982; Clark 1984; Harvey 1985; Holston 1989; Rabinow 1989; Schorske 1961; Sennett 1974; Vidler 1978.

appropriated by huge numbers of people eager to enjoy both the street's public life, protected by anonymity, and the consumption possibilities which came with it. The *flâneur* described by Baudelaire and the consumer of the new department stores each became symbols of the modern appropriation of urban public space, as Paris became the prototype of the modern city.

At the core of the conception of urban public life embedded in modern Paris are notions that city space is open to be used and enjoyed by anyone, and that the consumption society it houses may become accessible to all. Of course, this has never been entirely the case, neither in Paris nor anywhere else, for modern cities have always remained marked by social inequalities and spatial segregation, and are appropriated in quite different ways by diverse social groups, depending on their social position and power. In spite of these inequalities, however, modern western cities have always maintained various signs of openness related especially to circulation and consumption, which contributed to sustaining the positive value attached to the idea of an open public space accessible to all.

These modern urban experiences were coupled with a political life in which similar values were fostered. The modern city has been the stage for all types of public demonstrations. In fact, the promise of incorporation into modern society included not only the city and consumption but also the polity. Images of the modern city are in many ways analogous to those of the modern liberal-democratic polity, consolidated on the basis of the fiction of a social contract among equal and free people, and which has shaped the modern political sphere. This fiction is quite radical – like that of the open city – and helped to destroy the hierarchical social order of feudal statuses preceding it. But, clearly, it was only with severe struggles that the definitions of those who could be considered “free and equal” have been expanded. As with the open city, the polity incorporating all equal citizens has never occurred, but its founding ideals and its promise of continuous incorporation have retained their power for at least two centuries, shaping people's experience of citizenship and city life and legitimating the actions of various excluded groups in their claims for incorporation.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, the images of openness, freedom, and possibilities of incorporation which constituted modernity have never been completely fulfilled, but have never completely lost their referential role either. In cities such as São Paulo and Los

12. A powerful image of progressive incorporation is offered in the classic essay by T. H. Marshall (1965 [1949]) on the development of citizenship. For recent critiques of Marshall's optimistic and evolutionary view, see Hirschman 1991 and Turner 1992; Turner 1992 also criticizes the universality of Marshall's model.

Angeles, however, various aspects of public experience are now contradicting those images. One challenge to basic concepts sustaining these fictions comes from some minority groups. They question the liberal principle of universalism, arguing that the social contract has always been constituted on the basis of the exclusion of some, and that the rights of minority groups can only be addressed if approached from the perspective of difference rather than that of commonality.<sup>13</sup> This is what we might call a positive attack on modern liberal ideals: its aim is still to expand rights, freedom, and equality, and it searches for models which may achieve these goals in a more effective way. However, the transformations going on at the level of the urban environment represent an attack of a different kind. They reject the principles of openness and equality, and take inequality and separation as their values. While minority groups criticize the limitations of liberal fictions in terms of the creation of equality and justice, recent urban transformations materially build a space with opposite values. And this new type of urban form shapes public life and everyday interactions of millions of people around the world. In what follows I discuss in more detail the instruments used by enclaves to produce segregation.

### **Modernist Instruments, Segregated Spaces**

In order to achieve their goals of isolating, distancing, and selecting, the fortified enclaves use some instruments of design which are, in fact, instruments of modernist city planning and architectural design. Various effects of modernist city planning are similar to those of the new enclaves, suggesting that we should look at their similarities more carefully. One strikingly similar effect of both modernist city planning and the fortified enclaves is their attack on streets as a type and concept of public space. In Brazil, the construction of modernist Brasília in the late 1950s crystallized an international modernism and its transformation of public space and relayed it to the rest of the country (see Holston 1989). In modernist Brasília as in new parts of São Paulo and Los Angeles, pedestrians and anonymous interactions in public life which marked modern Paris tend to be eliminated. However, if the results tend to be the same, the original projects of modernism and current enclosures are radically different. It is worth, then, investigating how such different projects ended up producing similar effects.

13. See, for example, the feminist critique of the social contract (Pateman 1988) and of the legal understanding of equality as sameness (Eisenstein 1988).

Modernist architecture and city planning were elaborated on the basis of a criticism of industrial cities and societies and intended to transform them through the radical remodeling of space. Their utopia was clear: the erasure of social difference and creation of equality in the rational city of the future mastered by the *avant-garde* architect. Modernist attacks on the streets were central to its criticism of capitalism and its project of subversion. They perceived the corridor street as a conduit of disease and as an impediment to progress, because it would fail to accommodate the needs of the new machine age. Moreover, modernist architecture attacks the street because “it constitutes an architectural organization of the public and private domains of social life that modernism seeks to overturn” (Holston 1989:103). In capitalist cities, the organization of the public and private domains is best expressed in the corridor street and its related system of public spaces including sidewalks and squares: a solid mass of contiguous private buildings frames and contains the void of public streets. Modernist planning and architecture inverted these solid-void/figure-ground relationships which have been the basis for the physical structure of Western cities since the fifth century B.C. In the modernist city, “streets appear as continuous voids and buildings as sculptural figures” (p. 125). By subverting the old code of urban order, modernist planning aims at and succeeds in erasing the representational distinction between public and private. When all buildings—banks, offices, apartments—are sculptural, and all spaces are nonfigural, “the old architectural convention for discriminating between the public and the private is effectively invalidated” (p. 136).

Modernist city planning aspired to transform the city into a single homogeneous state-sponsored public domain, to eliminate differences in order to create a universal rationalist city divided into functional sectors such as residential, employment, recreational, transportation, administrative, and civic. Brasília is the most complete embodiment of both the new type of city and public life created by modernist city planning. This new type of city space, however, turned out to be the opposite of the planner’s intentions. Brasília is today Brazil’s most segregated city, not its most egalitarian. Ironically, the instruments of modernist planning, with little adaptation, become perfect instruments to produce inequality, not to erase difference. Streets only for vehicular traffic, the absence of sidewalks, enclosure and internalization of shopping areas, and spatial voids isolating sculptural buildings and rich residential areas are great instruments for generating and maintaining social separations. These modernist creations radically transform public life not only in cities such as Brasília, but in other contexts and with different intentions. In the new fortified enclaves they are used not to destroy private spaces and produce a total unified public, but to destroy public spaces. Their objective is

to enlarge specific private domains so that they will fulfill public functions, but in a segregated way.

Contemporary fortified enclaves use basically modernist instruments of planning with some notable adaptations. First, the surrounding walls: unlike in modernist planning, such as for Brasília, where the residential areas were to have no fences or walls but only to be delimited by expressways, in São Paulo the walls are necessary to demarcate the private universes. However, this demarcation of private property is not supposed to create the same type of (nonmodernist) public space that characterizes the industrial city. Because the private universes are kept apart by voids (as in modernist design), they no longer generate street corridors. Moreover, pedestrian circulation is discouraged and shopping areas are kept away from the streets, again as in modernist design. The second adaptation occurs in the materials and forms of individual buildings. Here there are two possibilities. On the one hand, buildings may completely ignore the exterior walls, treating façades as their backs. On the other, plain modernist façades may be eliminated in favor of ornament, irregularity, and ostentatious materials which display the individuality and status of their owners. These buildings reject the glass and transparency of modernism and their disclosure of private life. In other words, internalization, privacy, and individuality are enhanced. Finally, sophisticated technologies of security assure the exclusivity of the already isolated buildings.

Analyzing what is used from modernist architecture and city planning and what is transformed in the new urban form generated by the private enclaves, one arrives at a clear conclusion: the devices which have been maintained are those that destroy modern public space and social life (socially dead streets transformed into highways, sculptural buildings separated by voids and disregarding street alignments, enclaves turned inside); the devices transformed or abandoned are those intended to create equality, transparency, and a new public sphere (glass façades, uniformity of design, absence of material delimitations such as walls and fences). Instead of creating a space in which the distinctions between public and private disappear—making all space public as the modernists intended—the enclaves use modernist conventions to create spaces in which the private quality is enhanced beyond any doubt and in which the public, a shapeless void treated as residual, is deemed irrelevant. This was exactly the fate of modernist architecture and its “all public space” in Brasília, a perversion of initial premises and intentions. The situation is just the opposite with the closed condominiums and other fortified enclaves of the 1980s and 1990s. Their aim is to segregate and to change the character of public life by bringing to private spaces constructed



as socially homogeneous environments those activities which had been previously enacted in public spaces.

Today, in cities such as São Paulo we find neither gestures toward openness and freedom of circulation regardless of differences, nor a technocratic universalism aiming at erasing differences. Rather, we find a city space whose old modern urban design has been fragmented by the insertion of independent and well-delineated private enclaves (of modernist design) which pay no attention to an external overall ordination and which are totally focused on their own internal organization. The fortified fragments are no longer meant to be subordinated to a total order kept together by ideologies of openness, commonality, or promises of incorporation. Heterogeneity is to be taken more seriously: fragments express radical inequalities, not simple differences. Stripped of the elements which in fact erased differences such as uniform and transparent façades, modernist architectural conventions used by the enclaves are helping to insure that different social worlds meet as infrequently as possible in city space, i.e., that they belong to different spaces.

In sum, in a city of walls and enclaves such as São Paulo, public space undergoes a deep transformation. Felt as more dangerous, fractured by the new voids and enclaves, broken in its old alignments, privatized with chains closing streets, armed guards, guard dogs, guardhouses, walled parks, public space in São Paulo is increasingly abandoned to those who do not have a chance of living, working, and shopping in the new private, internalized, and fortified enclaves. As the spaces for the rich are enclosed and turned inside, the outside space is left for those who cannot afford to go in. A comparison with Los Angeles shows that this new type of segregation is not São Paulo's exclusive creation and suggests some of its consequences for the transformation of the public sphere.

### **São Paulo, Los Angeles**

Compared to São Paulo, Los Angeles has a more fragmented and disperse urban structure.<sup>14</sup> São Paulo still has a vivid downtown area and some central neighborhoods concentrating commerce and office activities which are shaped on the model of the corridor street and which, in spite of all transformations, are still crowded

14. It is not my intention to give a detailed account of Los Angeles's recent pattern of urbanization. I will only point out some of its characteristics which, by comparison with São Paulo's process, allow me to raise questions about new forms of social segregation which seem to be quite generalized. For analyses of Los Angeles, see Banham 1971, Davis 1990, Soja 1989 and 1992.

during the day. Contemporary Los Angeles is “polynucleated and decentralized” (Soja 1989:208). And its renovated downtown, one of the city’s economic and financial centers, does not have much street life: people’s activities are contained in the corporate buildings and their under- and overpass connections to shopping, restaurants, and hotels.<sup>15</sup> São Paulo’s process of urban fragmentation by the construction of enclaves is more recent than Los Angeles’s, but it has already changed the peripheral zones and the distribution of wealth and economic functions in ways similar to that of the metropolitan region of Los Angeles. According to Soja (1989), the latter is a multicentered region marked by a “peripheral urbanization,” which is created by the expansion of high-technological, post-fordist industrialization, and marked by the presence of high-income residential developments, huge regional shopping centers, programmed environments for leisure (theme parks, Disneyland), links to major universities and the Department of Defense, and various enclaves of cheap labor, mostly immigrants. Although São Paulo lacks the high-technology industries found in Los Angeles, its tertiarization and distribution of services and commerce are starting to be organized according to the Los Angeles pattern.

Although we may say that São Paulo expresses Los Angeles’s process of economic transformation and urban dispersion in a less explicit form, it is more explicit and exaggerated in the creation of separation and in the use of security procedures. Where rich neighborhoods such as Morumbi use high walls, iron fences, and armed guards, the West Side of Los Angeles uses mostly electronic alarms and small signs announcing “Armed Response.” While São Paulo’s elites clearly appropriate public spaces—closing public streets with chains and all sorts of physical obstacles, installing private armed guards to control circulation—Los Angeles elites still show more respect for public streets. However, walled communities appropriating public streets are already appearing in Los Angeles and one can wonder if its more discrete pattern of separation and of surveillance is not in part associated with the fact that the poor are far from the West Side, while in Morumbi they live beside the enclaves. Another reason must surely be the fact that the Los Angeles Police Department—although considered one of the most biased and violent of the United States—still appears very effective and nonviolent if compared to São Paulo’s police (see Caldeira n.d.a., chapter 4). São Paulo’s upper classes explicitly rely on the services of an army of domestic servants and do not feel ashamed to transform the utilization of these services

15. See Davis 1991 and Soja 1989 on the importance of downtown Los Angeles in the structuring of the region.

into status symbols, which in turn are incorporated in newspaper advertisements for enclaves. In West Los Angeles, although the domestic dependence on the services of immigrant maids, nannies, and gardeners seems to be increasing, the status associated with employing them has not yet become a matter for advertisement. In São Paulo, where the local government has been efficient in approving policies to help segregation, upper-class residents have not yet started any important social movement for this purpose. But in Los Angeles residents of expensive neighborhoods have been organizing powerful homeowner associations to lobby for zoning regulations which would maintain the isolation their neighborhoods now enjoy (Davis 1990, chapter 3).

Despite the many differences between the two cases, it is also clear that in both Los Angeles and São Paulo conventions of modernist city planning and technologies of security are being used to create new forms of urban space and social segregation. In both cities, the elites are retreating to privatized environments which they increasingly control and are abandoning earlier types of urban space to the poor and their internal antagonisms. As might be expected given these common characteristics, in both cities we find debates involving planners and architects in which the new enclaves are frequently criticized, but also defended and theorized. In São Paulo, where modernism has been the dominant dogma in schools of architecture up to the present, the defense of walled constructions is recent and timid, using as arguments only practical reasons such as increasing rates of crime and of homelessness. Architects tend to talk about walls and security devices as an unavoidable evil. They talk to the press, but I could not find either academic articles or books on the subject. In Los Angeles, however, the debate has already generated an important literature and both the criticism and the praise of “defensible architecture” are already quite elaborated.

One person voicing the defense of the architectural style found in the new enclaves is Charles Jencks. He analyzes recent trends in Los Angeles architecture in relation to a diagnosis of the city’s social configuration. In his view, Los Angeles’s main problem is its heterogeneity, which inevitably generates chronic ethnic strife and explains episodes such as the 1992 uprising (1993:88). Since he considers this heterogeneity as constitutive of L.A.’s reality, and since his diagnosis of the economic situation is pessimistic, his expectation is that ethnic tension increases, that the environment becomes more defensive, and that people resort to more diverse and nastier measures of protection. Jencks sees the adoption of security devices as inevitable and as a matter of realism. Moreover, he discusses how this necessity is being transformed into art by styles which metamorphose hard-edged materials needed for security into “ambiguous signs of inventive

beauty and ‘keep out’” (1993:89), and which design façades with their backs to the street, camouflaging the contents of the houses. For him, the response to ethnic strife is “defensible architecture and riot realism” (1993:89). The “realism” lies in architects looking at “the dark side of division, conflict, and decay, and represent[ing] some unwelcome truths” (1993:91). Among the latter is the fact that heterogeneity and strife are here to stay, that the promises of the melting pot can no longer be fulfilled. In this context, boundaries would have to be both clearer and more defended.

Architecturally it [Los Angeles] will have to learn the lessons of Gehry’s aesthetic and en-formality: how to turn unpleasant necessities such as chain-link fence into amusing and ambiguous signs of welcome/keep out, beauty/defensive space. . . . Defensible architecture, however regrettable as a social tactic, also protects the rights of individuals and threatened groups. (Jencks 1993:93)

Jencks targets ethnic heterogeneity as the reason for Los Angeles’s social conflicts and sees separation as a solution. He is not bothered by the fact that the intervention of architects and planners in L.A.’s urban environment reinforces social inequality and spatial segregation. He also does not interrogate the consequences of these creations for public space and political relationships. In fact, his admiration of the backside-to-the-street solution indicates a lack of concern with the maintenance of public streets as spaces which embed the values of openness and conviviality of the heterogeneous masses.

But Los Angeles’s defensible architecture also has its critics, and the most famous of them is Mike Davis, whose analysis I find illuminating, especially for thinking about the transformations in the public sphere. For Davis (1990, 1991, 1993), social inequality and spatial segregation are central characteristics of Los Angeles, and his expression, “Fortress L. A.,” refers to the type of space being presently created in the city.

Welcome to post-liberal Los Angeles, where the defense of luxury lifestyles is translated into a proliferation of new repressions in space and movement, undergirded by the ubiquitous “armed response.” This obsession with physical security systems, and, collaterally, with the architectural policing of social boundaries, has become a zeitgeist of urban restructuring, a master narrative in the emerging built environment of the 1990s. We live in “fortress cities” brutally divided between “fortified cells” of affluent society and “places of terror” where the police battle the criminalized poor. (Davis 1990:223–24)

For Davis, the increasingly segregated and privatized Los Angeles is the result of a clear master plan of post-liberal (i.e., Reagan–Bush Republican) elites, a theme he reiterates in his analysis of the 1992 riots (Davis 1993). To talk of contemporary Los Angeles is for him to talk of a new “class war at the level of the built environment” and to demonstrate that “urban form is indeed following a repressive function in the political furrows of the Reagan-Bush era. Los Angeles, in its prefigurative mode, offers an especially disquieting catalogue of the emergent liaisons between architecture and the American police state” (Davis 1990: 228).

Davis’s writing is marked by an indignation fully supported by his wealth of evidence concerning Los Angeles. Nevertheless, sometimes he tends to collapse complex social processes into a simplified scenario of warfare which his own rich description defies. Despite this tendency to look at social reality as the direct product of elite intentions, Davis elaborates a remarkable critique of social and spatial segregation, and associates the emerging urban configuration with the crucial themes of social inequality and political options. For him, not only is there nothing inevitable about “fortress architecture,” but also it has deep consequences for the way in which the public space and public interactions are shaped.

My analysis of São Paulo’s enclaves coincides with Davis’s analysis of Los Angeles as far as the issue of the public space is concerned. It is clear in both cases that the public order created by private enclaves of the “defensible” style has inequalities, isolation, and fragmentation as starting points. In this context, the fiction of the overall social contract and the ideals of universal rights and equality which legitimated the modern conception of public space vanish. We should ask, then, if there is already another political fiction organizing inequalities and differences at the societal level, and how to best conceive this new configuration as the old modern model loses its explanatory value. If social differences are brought to the center of the scene instead of being put aside by universalistic claims, then what kind of model for the public realm can we maintain? What kind of polity will correspond to the new fragmented public sphere? Is democracy still possible in this new public sphere?

### **Public Sphere: Inequalities and Boundaries**

People attach meanings to the spaces where they live in flexible and varying ways and the factors influencing these readings and uses are endless.<sup>16</sup> However, cities are also material spaces with relative stability and rigidity that shape and

16. On this theme, see de Certeau 1984, part 3.

bound people's lives and determine the types of encounters possible in public space. When walls are built up, they form the stage for public life regardless of the meanings people attach to them and regardless of the multiple "tactics" of resistance people use to appropriate urban space.

In this essay, I have been arguing that in cities where fortified enclaves produce spatial segregation, social inequalities become quite explicit. I have also been arguing that in these cities, residents' everyday interactions with people from other social groups diminish substantially, and public encounters primarily occur inside of protected and relatively homogeneous groups. In the materiality of segregated spaces, in people's everyday trajectories, in their uses of public transportation, in their appropriations of streets and parks, and in their constructions of walls and defensive façades, social boundaries are rigidly constructed. Their crossing is under surveillance. When boundaries are crossed in this type of city, there is aggression, fear, and a feeling of unprotectedness; in a word, there is suspicion and danger. Residents from all social groups have a sense of exclusion and restriction. For some, the feeling of exclusion is obvious as they are denied access to various areas and are restricted to others. Affluent people who inhabit exclusive enclaves also feel restricted; their feelings of fear keep them away from regions and people that their mental maps of the city identify as dangerous.

Contemporary urban segregation is complementary to the issue of urban violence. On the one hand, the fear of crime is used to legitimate increasing measures of security and surveillance. On the other, the proliferation of everyday talk about crime becomes the context in which residents generate stereotypes as they label different social groups as dangerous and therefore as people to be feared and avoided. Everyday discussions about crime create rigid symbolic differences between social groups as they tend to align them either with good or with evil. In this sense, they contribute to a construction of inflexible separations in a way analogous to city walls. Both enforce unyielding boundaries. In sum, one of the consequences of living in cities segregated by enclaves is that while heterogeneous contacts diminish, social differences are more rigidly perceived and proximity with people from different groups considered as dangerous, thus emphasizing inequality and distance.

Nevertheless, the urban environment is not the only basis of people's experiences of social differences. In fact, there are other arenas in which differences tend to be experienced in almost opposite ways, offering an important counterpoint to the experience of the urban environment. This is the case of the perceptions of social difference forged through the intensification of communication networks and mass media (international news, documentaries about all types of lives and

experiences), through mass movements of populations, through tourism, or through the consumption of ethnic products (food, clothes, films, music). In these contexts, boundaries between different social universes become more permeable and are constantly crossed as people have access to worlds which are not originally their own.

Thus, the perception and experience of social differences in contemporary cities may occur in quite distinct ways. Some tame social differences, allowing their appropriation by various types of consumers. Other experiences, such as those of emerging urban environments, characterized by fear and violence, magnify social differences and maintain distance and separateness. If the first type of experience may blur boundaries, the second type explicitly elaborates them. Both types of experience constitute the contemporary public sphere but their consequences for public and political life are radically distinct. On the one hand, the softening of boundaries may still be related to the ideals of equality of the liberal-democratic polity and may serve as the basis of claims of incorporation. The tamed differences produced to be consumed do not threaten universalist ideals, and in their peculiar way put people into contact. On the other hand, the new urban morphologies of fear give new forms to inequality, keep groups apart, and inscribe a new sociability which runs against the ideals of the modern public and its democratic freedoms. When some people are denied access to certain areas and when different groups are not supposed to interact in public space, references to a universal principle of equality and freedom for social life are no longer possible, even as fiction. The consequences of the new separateness and restriction for public life are serious: contrary to what Jencks thinks (1993), defensible architecture and planning may only promote conflict instead of preventing it by making clear the extension of social inequalities and the lack of commonalities.

Among the conditions necessary for democracy is that people acknowledge those from different social groups as cocitizens, i.e., as people having similar rights. If this is true, it is clear that contemporary cities which are segregated by fortified enclaves are not environments which generate conditions conducive to democracy. Rather, they foster inequality and the sense that different groups belong to separate universes and have irreconcilable claims. Cities of walls do not strengthen citizenship but rather contribute to its corrosion. Moreover, this effect does not depend either on the type of political regime or on the intentions of those in power, since the architecture of the enclaves entails by itself a certain social logic.

Discussions about cities such as Los Angeles, London, or Paris, that is, cities populated by people from the most diverse cultural origins, commonly invoke the theme of the limits of modern citizenship based on affiliation to a nation-state. One might rethink the parameters of citizenship in those cities and suggest that the criterion for participation in political life could be local residence rather than national citizenship. Moreover, it would be possible to argue that this local participation is increasingly necessary to make those cities liveable and to improve the quality of life of the impoverished population, increasingly consisting of immigrants. The contrast between this alternative political vision and the reality of fortified cities allows for at least two conclusions, one pessimistic and one more optimistic.

The pessimistic would say that the direction of new segregation and the extension of social separation already achieved would make impossible the engagement of a variety of social groups in a political life in which common goals and solutions would have to be negotiated. In this view, citizenship in cities of walls is meaningless. The optimistic interpretation, however, would consider that the change in the criteria for admission to political life, and the consequent change in status of a considerable part of the population would generate a wider engagement in the search for solutions to common problems and would potentially bridge some distances. There are many reasons to be suspicious of such optimism; studies of homeowner associations in Los Angeles remind us how local democracy may be used as an instrument of segregation (Davis 1990, chapter 3). However, the boom of social movements in São Paulo after the mid-1970s suggests a cautious optimism. Where excluded residents discover that they have rights to the city, they manage to transform their neighborhoods and to improve the quality of their lives. That fortified enclaves in part counteracted this process should not make us abandon this qualified optimism. The walls were not able to totally obstruct the exercise of citizenship, and poor residents continue to expand their rights.

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