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The Effects of Walls in the Suburbs of Johannesburg

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Johannesburg, 2008

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted to the degree of Master of Architecture to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other university.

_____
(Signature of candidate)

____ day of _____ year _____

Declaration

Gated communities use walls and fences to enclose spaces and divide suburbs. However, walls exist in many forms and are most commonly found surrounding free-standing houses. The walls of gated communities have been debated in isolation, ignoring the current wall conditions of free-standing houses in Johannesburg's suburbs. This study compares the visual, spatial and functional effects of the walls of gated communities and the walls of free-standing houses to reveal how they affect our experiences of suburbs and our perceptions of people.

Three suburbs/ case studies in Johannesburg were chosen for their very different wall conditions. The physical attributes of the wall were documented and interviews were conducted to understand the perceptions of the wall on both sides; from the outside and from within the walls. The boundary wall masks the house from view and can prevent passive surveillance but it can also act as a sign and express the individual. The two types of walls are found to be no different from one another, physically and very few negative perceptions of walls were revealed.

Abstract

I would like to thank my supervisor, Randall Bird, for his guidance throughout this year, but also enabling me to learn from myself.
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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

> "In the suburbs, walls, booms and security personnel are transforming streets, parks, offices, shops, suburbs and entertainment areas into security enclaves with controlled access points." (Bremner 1998: 58)

The elements of fortification and gated communities have received much negative criticism in recent years. Some say gated communities exclude outsiders; segregate and fragment the city; and protect the privileges of a few (Low 2001). These homogenous (Landman 2000) enclaves have turned their backs on the city. The gated communities face inwards while the public space outside is neglected (Blakely and Snyder 1999 and Flusty 1997).

The enclosing, blank walls and elaborate entrance gates are said to embody these notions of separation and exclusion. Gated communities are also defined by these elements – being the areas enclosed within the wall or fence and where access is controlled through gates or booms (Landman 2003 and Lemanski 2006). The wall is no longer just a physical barrier but a representation of an exclusionary practice.

The international debate on gated communities has focused on the wall because the walls of gated communities are the only physical walls in suburbs. Emphasizing this, Setha Low states that "[c]ities in North America are not defined by walls and barbed wire" (2003: 112). However, the landscape of Johannesburg's suburbs is littered with walls. My research focuses on the wall as a physical element, common to both gated communities and suburban houses.

While there is extensive literature on gated communities, few authors compare gated communities with traditional suburbia. Teresa Caldeira begins to do this, as she describes both closed condominiums in Sao Paulo and walled houses:

> "In many cases the facades are now hidden: to approach a neighbour means to go through locked doors and intercoms, even in the poorest areas of town." (Caldeira 2000: 290)

Karina Landman points out that gated communities are a continuation of suburbia stating that "[g]ates enhance and reinforce the suburban nature of the suburbs" (Landman 2000: 4). Therefore it seems pertinent to compare and contrast the conditions of both the walls of gated communities and the walls of houses.

"The walls are making visible the systems of exclusion that are already there, now

constructed in concrete" (Low 2001: 55). The wall is said to have negative effects for the city and social interaction. The segregation, fragmentation and exclusion caused by the wall, destroy the surrounding public space (Davis 1992) and reduce the opportunities for meaningful interaction. The residents of gated communities have isolated themselves from the concerns of the city (Blakely and Snyder 1997). This has lead to the breakdown of social networks within the city. The consequences of the walls of gated communities appear to be grave.

But walls and gated communities do not only have negative effects. Walls can provide a sense of safety and protection, and they carry meaning and identity for those residents. Gated communities also provide safety and security, and some types of gated communities provide many more benefits. Gated communities have provided a successful model for densification, enticing people away from their suburban dream of detached houses on large plots. Luxury facilities such as swimming pools and tennis courts, once a necessity for every home, are now shared by many, providing a more sustainable lifestyle. More people are able to live closer to their places of work, thereby reducing the expansion and sprawl on the city's edges.

There are also other external factors causing changes in the patterns of social interaction. Many activities that once occurred in the public realm are now conducted from home through the internet or home entertainment system (Ellin 1997). People find community connections through their place of work, or worship, or school, (Garreau 1992) while some families choose to be focused inwardly reducing their interactions with others (Cross 1997).

Walls, therefore, are not the only cause of social breakdown and, in fact, may simply be a representation of this breakdown. As Georg Simmel describes:

> " 'the boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially.' " (Simmel 1997: 143 quoted in Borden 2000: 21)

This idea points to a much larger and older debate, namely the impact of the built environment on people and their social, cultural, political, and economic interactions. If walls are a manifestation of the way people feel towards one another, then eliminating walls will not change those feelings. But if walls are indeed preventing meaningful social interaction, then their removal would prove to be a solution to the problem.

> "The extent of an environment's responsiveness depends on the degree – possibly negligible – to which it helps or hinders its users in achieving their own objectives. Potentially, at least, this helping or hindering process

> operates at any or all of the levels at which users and their environments interact. As perception psychologists point out, it is useful to distinguish three such levels: those of physical form, use and meaning." (Bentley 1981: 137-138)

In light of this it is important to understand the visual and functional effects of walls and how they affect the perceptions of people.

The importance of looking at walls in suburbs and at gated communities is best illustrated by the fact that they are not going to go away any time soon. In suburbs, the pervasive sense of insecurity (Flusty 1997) means that, the house without a wall, will soon feel vulnerable and will be 'forced' to erect one. Within gated communities, most residents "say that they would always choose a gated community again, even if safety was not the basis of their initial decision" (Low 2001: 52), proliferating the need for gated communities further.

This dissertation has four main chapters. Chapter Two outlines the history of suburbs, walls and gated communities in Johannesburg. It also considers the origins and the development of the meaning of walls and houses. Finally, Chapter Two addresses some of the issues that have been raised in current literature and directs the reader to where these have been raised in my own research.

Chapter Three introduces the case studies and investigates the visual effect of walls. This chapter gives a general view of the suburbs and of the overall visual effect of the wall. The visual effects are illustrated through a series of diagrams which consider six aspects or elements of the wall. The six main physical characteristics are: the house number; the wall material; the material of the vehicle entrance gate; the pedestrian gate; the height of the wall; and electric fencing. The visibility or transparency diagrams of the wall, ultimately, give a picture of the visual impact of the wall. The finding of this chapter is that walls mask the house facade from view.

Chapter Four examines some of the elements of the wall in much greater detail. The opportunities for expression are considered through three planes of choice and five categories. Three categories fall under the second plane of choice: wall material, gate designs and pre-cast wall designs. Two categories fall under the third plane of choice: wall colour and the house number. Ornamentation and decoration are looked at closely because this chapter addresses how the wall has taken on meaning, and often the meaning that was formerly conveyed through the house facade. The chapter concludes with specific examples of unusual wall conditions from all three case studies.

In Chapter Five, the perceptions and interpretations of people are discussed. The

first section categorises people into two main categories and compares the views expressed in each case study. The two categories are those people on the inside of walls, residents of gated communities and houses, and those on the outside, pedestrians and passers-by. The second section raises five major issues and compares feelings and perceptions on both sides of the wall. These issues are safety and crime; visual impact; identity and meaning; neighbour relations; and perceptions. This chapter reveals that walls do not have the dire consequences for social interactions that some have proposed and that that the wall is, generally, not negatively perceived.

1.2 Terminology

"All walls are boundaries, but not all boundaries are walls." (Marcuse 1997: 101)
The term wall, used in this study, refers to a physical barrier that marks the boundary or territory of a house or city. There are other means for creating barriers or boundaries in the city, but my research is dealing primarily with the physical forms.
The wall is as old as human settlement itself and has had many functions over the centuries. In the earliest of settlements the wall protected both humans and livestock against attack from carnivorous animals (Mumford 1961: 22). The wall has defended towns and cities, protected noblemen in castles and created the sacred boundaries of temples and churches (Ibid). With the rapid growth and expansion of cities the prominent, enclosing wall fell away but after several centuries the wall has re-emerged in new, smaller forms.

The wall now defines the boundaries of gated communities and individual, detached houses in the suburbs. The wall, as used here, divides public and private space. It can be a fence, a hedge or masonry wall, all varying in height. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term wall to refer to the physical boundary which encompasses all the different types of wall materials. When referring specifically to a wall constructed of bricks, I use the term masonry wall. The functions of the wall also differ widely but they all have in common the task of delineating the private from the public sphere, a mark of ownership.

A gated community is defined by the presence of a gate and a surrounding wall or fence. This draws on the simple definition given by Karina Landman (2003: 6). A gated community can be an office park, a shopping centre, or a residential neighbourhood. My research focuses solely on residential developments. The term 'community' is used loosely here, often referring to the formation of a voluntary home-owner's association. Other terms used are enclosed neighbourhoods and security villages (Landman 2000), fortified enclaves and closed condominiums (Caldeira 2000).

There are two main types of gated communities, those that form part of new developments and those neighbourhoods that are retro-fitted to be secured. The retro-fitted neighbourhoods are termed boomed or enclosed neighbourhoods; and there are estimated to be anywhere from 360 (van der Wetering 2000) to 500 (Lemanski 2004) of these types of gated communities in the Johannesburg region.

There are many more types of gated communities that are in the first category of new developments. There are retirement villages; residential estates; cluster houses; and townhouse complexes or security villages. Residential estates are usually much larger in area and have many connecting roads. They resemble suburbs closely, including, in many cases, walls between houses. They may or may not be focussed on a recreational facility ranging from golf courses to stables and paddocks for horses. Security villages or townhouse complexes differ from residential estates, in that they are usually smaller in area; of a higher density than the traditional suburb; and do not have an extensive internal road network.

Cluster houses are defined by the ownership structure: the subdivided plots and the house are owned separately while the communal spaces are owned collectively. These differ from sectional title developments where individuals own their units but not the land. The different types of gated communities that exist in the city utilise both types of ownership structure.

This study focuses on gated communities that fall under the new development type. There has been some discussion on retro-fitted neighbourhoods (Ballard 2005; Bremner 1998; Landman 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004; Lemanski 2004; Van de Wetering 2002) and the implications of this type. These gated communities provide additional security for those residents in the same way that other gated community types do but their benefits end there. The concept of securing once public roads is problematic for both the rights of people and for the infrastructure of the city. In addition, they provide no increase in densification or a sharing of facilities that redeem other gated community types. For these reasons, my research focuses on the new development type of gated communities.

1.3 Methodology

The case studies explore and describe the conditions of walls in the suburbs of Johannesburg, including the function of the wall; its visual characteristics; and its meanings and perceptions. The first case study is the suburb of Witpoortjie, on the western border of Johannesburg. Here, low walls are conspicuously interwoven with higher walls and electric fencing; however gated communities are still a foreign

concept to the suburb.

The second area of study, Montgomery Park, is an average suburb, situated North West of the city. This area has a few gated communities but mostly consists of houses. I look at one large townhouse complex in particular. This gated community is of a higher density than the single-family houses around it. The final area of study is Douglasdale, an affluent suburb to the North of the city centre. This area has both broad types of gated communities and generally high levels of security. There are boomed neighbourhoods and many different security villages. I look at both gated communities and detached suburban houses.

By comparing all three case studies, I illustrate the differences in the visual and spatial characteristics as well as the functional aspects of the walls. I then looked at how these aspects influence people's perceptions of suburban spaces, and of their relationship with the wall and other people around it. I used three research tactics in order to reveal these elements; interviewing; observation; and visual documentation.

The suburbs selected for the case study were observed on a non-participant basis. The spatial conditions of the walls and the social activities were photographed and noted without seeking active involvement.

The visual documentation took the form of photographs and drawings illustrating the physical and spatial nature of the walls. I documented all the physical aspects of the wall and took photographs of each boundary wall. Most aspects are straightforward but other elements required some judgement or evaluation on my part. The height of each wall could not be physically measured and so I relied on my own height (1.6m) and other physical clues to indicate the height. Most vehicle entrance gates and pre-cast walls are a standard height and I used these elements to judge what the height of each wall was.

I evaluated the visibility or transparency of each boundary wall, by how much of the house and yards were visible from the street. This is obviously based on my own perspective, and while my height is about average for women, the average man undoubtedly could see more, most notably over the top of walls.

The qualitative interviewing looked at the perspectives of residents and non-residents (domestic-workers, postmen), the passers-by and the users of the remaining public space. The interviews took the form of open-ended questionnaires conducted in and around the houses of the neighbourhood. As part of the qualitative research process I recorded my own experiences during the research. The interview questions and the interview transcripts form Appendices 2A and 2B at the end of

this dissertation.
For those viewpoints from the outside of the boundary wall, I interviewed pedestrians walking in the streets of the case study areas. For impressions from behind the wall, I interviewed the residents of houses and of gated communities. There were some problems and limitations with the interviews of both groups of people.

Interviewing people on the street was a relatively simple process. Most pedestrians were comfortable with me approaching them and greeting them and only a few expressed a wish not to take part in the study. I spoke to respondents briefly before conducting the interviews, to understand their grasp of English, as I did not make use of a translator.

There were only two small limitations with interviewing pedestrians. While respondents understood that the interview was being conducted for research purposes, most did not see any wider relevance in the questions and issues raised. Respondents reacted to some questions with the sense that they were elementary and simple questions and that the research had no bearing for their everyday lives. This may be because of lower education levels, generally, or different socio-economic backgrounds or because they are unaware of the debate around walls and road closures. Pedestrians, therefore, answered the questions at face value and offered very little insight of their own into the issues raised. In contrast, many residents of Douglasdale responded to my requests for interviews because they were aware and interested in the debate surrounding walls and gated communities and were able to give additional insight.

The second limitation has to do with the way people on the street may have perceived me. The fact that I am a white, middle-class female, may have led some pedestrians to associate me with those people who live behind the walls, because the majority of suburban residents are white and middle-class. Of course, this is a process of generalisation, but it may have affected the way in which some pedestrians responded to questions, especially the questions concerning their feelings towards those people living behind the walls.

Residents of suburbia are extremely wary and suspicious of outsiders, any outsiders. This is discussed in Chapter Five but this made it very difficult to approach residents to request interviews. In Witpoortjie, with low walls and fences, I was able to approach people I saw in their yards but this yielded only a few interviews. Those with high walls and doorbell intercoms could reject me without setting eyes on me. This made it next to impossible to request interviews in Douglasdale and Montgomery Park because high walls and doorbell intercoms abound.

In Douglasdale, I developed a method of issuing letters to residents, especially to

those residents of gated communities where gaining access was severely restricted by security procedures. However, even this method was not without difficulties, as I discovered that very few houses in Douglasdale have post boxes! But it did eventually yield results, and because residents were interviewed over the phone, they were more comfortable and at ease. Surprisingly, when I applied this method to the other two case studies, I did not receive a single response.

The most successful approach was had in Calais, the townhouse complex in Montgomery Park. After being granted permission by the body corporate, a security guard accompanied me as I approached people in the complex. The guard made people feel at ease and all the people I approached were willing to be interviewed.

The interview questions were carefully constructed (See Appendix 2A). The interview questions for pedestrians were kept short and to a minimum to enable an interview to be briefly conducted on the street. The questions were simple and straightforward, with the majority of questions (the last four) relating directly to the boundary wall.

The structure of the interview questions for residents of houses and for gated community residents were very similar. The first question, for both, established their connection to the house or gated community. Again, most of the questions addressed the boundary wall directly. Question twelve used language that was deliberately loaded with connotation as the notion of superiority is often associated with walls and gated communities. The issue of safety was only referred to in the second last question, so as not to draw attention to the issues of security and crime unnecessarily. However, these issues were raised before this question was asked in nearly all the interviews.



Chapter Two

"It was a challenge to everything that I had been taught: that what this world needed was More Planning: that cars were inherently Evil and our attachment to them Inexplicable; that suburbia was morally wrong – primarily a product of White Flight; and that if Americans perversely continued to live the way they have for generation after generation, it couldn't be because they liked it, it must be because They Had No Choice."

(Garreau 1992: xxi)

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first looks at the history of walls, suburbs and gated communities, with particular focus on the South African context, to give context to this study. The second section focuses on the meanings of the wall as well as the meanings of the house, in order to place the wall in its context. The third section looks at the functions of the wall and how the wall functions to give additional meaning to the house and gated community. This chapter outlines the historical and literary context for the case study research and introduces the issues that the research addresses in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

2.1 The History of Walls, Suburbia and Gated Communities

2.1.1 The History of Suburbs

The history of walls and suburbs is entwined. Almost as long as there have been walls there have been suburbs existing outside of those walls. Middle Eastern towns show suburban conditions in existence from 3000 BC (Kostof 1992). When the plague struck in the thirteenth century, suburbs became a method of escape and of health reform (Mumford 1961). The suburb, therefore, is not a new method of dealing with the problems inherent to the city.

The discovery of gold in 1886, which led to the settlement that would become the city of Johannesburg, coincided with the rapid growth of industrial cities and their associated problems. Clive Chipkin describes this in his book Johannesburg Style: Architecture and Society 1880s – 1960s: “Johannesburg was the progeny of the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution” (1993: 5). The problems with dense city living were, at this stage, well established and well known. This influenced the growth and development of the city.

Johannesburg expanded rapidly and was the largest city in the country within the first decade of its existence (Tomlinson, Beauregard, Bremner & Mangcu 2003). This was fuelled by aggressive land speculation in the development of suburbs. Suburbs were extremely popular because people wanted to escape the dust and noise, and the densely populated mining camp. Private developers laid out suburb after suburb, starting with Doornfontein in 1891 (Figure 2.1). Very little, in the way of community facilities or security, was provided for in these new suburbs (van der Waal 1987), but by the early 1900s, even working-class families had moved out of town and generally the only residences to be found in the city centre were those of single male boarding houses (Chipkin 2003). Suburbs have long been the prime location for residents of Johannesburg.

Although, the topography of Johannesburg allowed for expansion in all directions (van der Waal 1987), the development of the city followed a specific pattern. The



Figure 2.1 - A view of Doornfontein in 1903, one of the first suburbs in Johannesburg. (Van der Waal 1987: 105)

main railway line serviced the gold reef, which ran east to west through the city. Gold was to be found, ever deeper, to the south of the railway tracks and thus, was where the mining activity was concentrated. The working-classes settled along the railway line, to the east and west, where they were close to work. Those that could afford it, settled north of the railway (Chipkin 1993), to escape the dust and the noise of the mines. To this day, the affluent have continued to settle further and further north.

The formal application of town planning principles only began in Johannesburg from 1909 (van der Waal 1987) but, in most cases, developers used a grid layout for their new suburbs (Winkler 1995). This became law with the building regulations of 1903: “In this way the authorities imposed the grid plan on all land subdivisions after 1903” (van der Waal 1987: 102). These regulations were part of the changes brought about by the Milner Administration appointed by the British government to oversee its colony. The administration brought with them concepts in city development, popular in Victorian England, namely the Garden City Movement.

The Garden City Movement was an urban design plan for small towns championed by Ebenezer Howard just before the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 2.2). Each town plan consisted of “a tightly organized urban centre for 32 000 inhabitants, surrounded by a perpetual green belt of farms and parks” (Barrett & Phillips 1987: 93-94). The concept was intended to combine the benefits of town living and country living without the disadvantages of either (Howard 1985).

The Garden City Movement and the return to ‘natural’ landscapes had enormous influence on the development of the city and would shape the suburbs for decades to come. Detached homes with large gardens and the planting of rows of trees were important elements to achieve a closer connection with nature (van der Waal 1987). The trees, in wealthier areas, were used to delineate the boundaries between public and private spaces (Winkler 1995). It became a social convention to place the house in the middle of the stand, emphasizing the garden and the luxury of space (van der Waal 1987). This, too, became entrenched in the building regulations of 1903: the minimum distance from the street line, for the placement of the house, was 7,55m (van der Waal 1987).

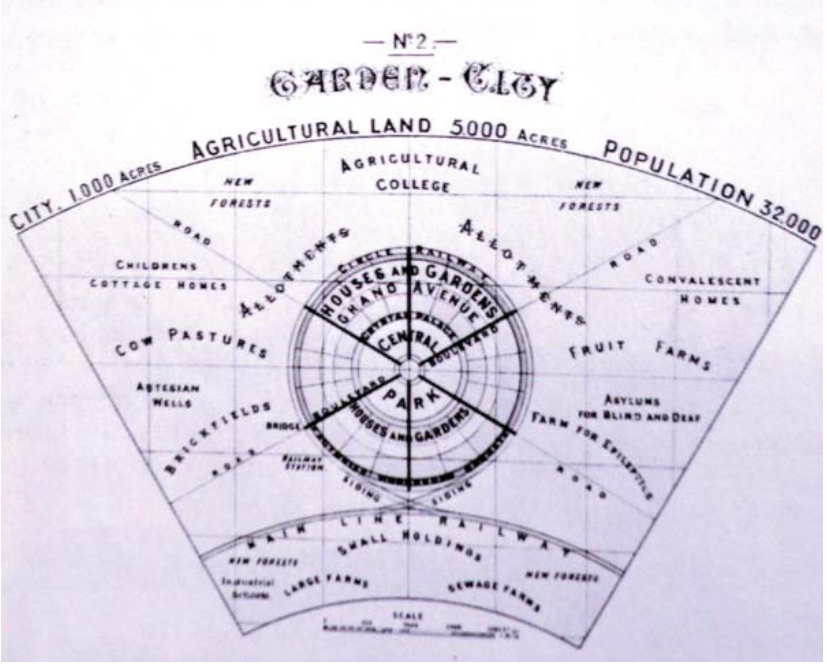


Figure 2.2 - A conceptual town layout according to the principles of the Garden City Movement showing the incorporation of urban and rural activities. (Barrett & Phillips 1987: 92)

Suburbs became spaces where privacy was sought and social contact was limited. The need for isolation and independence is attributed to the strong presence of British culture (van der Waal 1987). The houses, setback from the street, meant that the street spaces had very little definition (van der Waal 1987), although, houses were designed to face the street. Streets were regarded as no more than thoroughfares for vehicles.

> "Thus, social contact in public spaces was taboo from 1900 to 1920. In fact, this trend was continued after 1920 and to this day suburbs all over South Africa are considered collections of detached homes." (van der Waal 1987: 144-145)

Parks, as part of the emphasis placed on nature, were considered an important element of the city. This importance was illustrated by the separation of parks, from the surrounding city, by hedges or fences and restricting access through a limited number of entrances (van der Waal 1987). This may have been the beginning, in Johannesburg, of the association between exclusivity, and fences and the restriction of space. The emphasis placed on parks, had other negative consequences, and was at the expense of public squares.

> "It is also noteworthy that the community's social awareness was confined to parks while squares were completely ignored. This could be taken to mean that priority was given to recreational needs rather than the social experience of the neighbourhood" (van der Waal 1987: 216).

All of these early developments in Johannesburg have shaped the suburbs as they are today. The traditional Johannesburg suburb values the individual and independence, while shunning public spaces and the social contact associated with these spaces. The streets are reserved for vehicles only. Traditionally, suburbs in Johannesburg have not encouraged social interaction and community associations, even in areas which were formerly homogenous by law. This explains the attitude towards streets and public spaces with regards to gated communities. But in South Africa, the urban pattern promoted by Apartheid, has also added to the sense of isolation found in the suburbs.

Up until 1923, segregation in South African cities followed the 'location strategy' of white colonial settlements (Robinson 2003). Different races were accommodated in different quarters that were still within a reasonable proximity to the city. The Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 ruled that urban areas were the domain of whites only, although, prior to this act, removals and relocations had occurred under the regulations of the Health Committee. The isolation and segregation of suburbs according to race was a misappropriation of the neighbourhood concept of the Garden City Movement (Winkler 1995). Finally, segregation was entrenched by the Apartheid government with the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Figure 2.3).

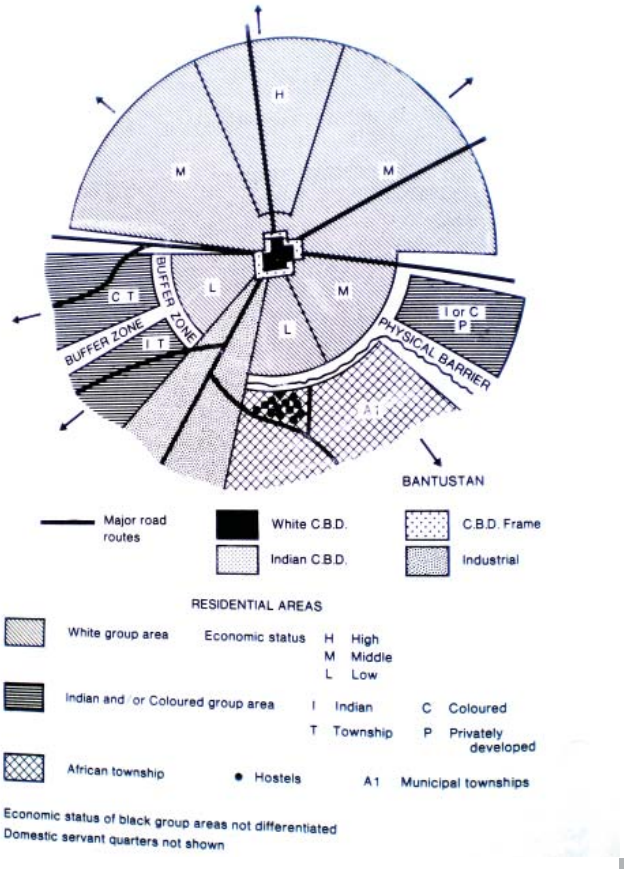


Figure 2.3 - A diagram illustrating the segregation of races in the apartheid city. Note how similar the diagram is to figure 2.2 showing the town plan of the Garden City Movement. (Lemon 1991: 12)

2.1.2 The History of Walls

The existence of walls can be traced back to the earliest of settlements including early villages, Roman cities and medieval towns (Landman 2000; Marcuse 2002; Mumford 1961; Rudofsky 1964). Spiro Kostof explains how often the concept for wall and city were united:

> "The traditional Chinese words for 'city' and 'wall' are identical; the character ch'eng expresses both of them. The English word 'town' comes from a Teutonic word that means hedge or enclosure. The Old Dutch version, tuin, means fence; the Old High German zun means rampart." (1992: 11)

In the very early days of Johannesburg, small houses used barbed wire to demarcate their gardens and in some cases, used reed fences if privacy was needed (van der Waal 1987). The first truly suburban walls in the city, belonged to the houses of the Randlords, built in Parktown and Westcliff, the exclusive neighbourhoods of the early city. The houses were built along the ridges, where hard rock was just below the surface, providing plenty of material to build the stone walls (Johannesburg City Council 1982). Masonry pillars indicated the entrances for pedestrians and vehicles but also helped to assert the presence of the residents on the street milieu (van der Waal 1987). These walls were a feature of status and privacy, rather than a measure of security.

Walls were also strategic elements in the planning of single-sex hostels for black mineworkers.

> "High surrounding walls were usually required and doors were restricted to the inward-facing walls. Only one entrance was allowed" (Robinson 2003).

The shift in the use of walls, from elements of identity and status to tools for security, is difficult to establish. Precast concrete walls may be the physical representation of this shift. Precast walls are concrete panels that slide into slim concrete columns. The walls started to appear in 1948 (Gary 2008), coinciding with the post war suburban boom. They are usually of two standard heights, 0.9m and 1.8m, and it is this latter height that suggests the use of the wall as an element of security. The walls are easy and fast to erect, and are also a relatively inexpensive walling option. This has made them extremely popular, to this day, and they appear in every suburb in the province.

2.1.3 The History of Gated Communities

Gated communities have also existed in some forms alongside walls and suburbs.

> "In Hellenistic Antioch, for example, there were two separate quarters each with its own wall – one for the Greek settlers, the other for the native Syrians

forcibly transferred from their villages to the new city." (Kostof 1992: 104)

The first gated community in Johannesburg was established early on in the development of Johannesburg. Parktown was a private, exclusive suburb, sufficiently far enough from the town centre to require a horse and carriage. It was developed in 1892 and was enclosed with a fence, the gate of which was "closed once a year to assert the company's proprietary rights." (Johannesburg City Council 1982: 10)

Gated communities may have started as exclusive neighbourhoods for the very wealthy, but have disseminated down through the socio-economic ranks, so that today forms of gated communities can be found across all levels of income. Gated communities in all forms are seen to be a solution to the fear of crime which is felt across all socio-economic groups. This dissemination, though, is far more recent in Johannesburg's history. The development of cluster houses began in the late 1980s, while the gated communities characterized by sectional title development began from 1992 (Frew 2008). At first, these developments were built close to the city centre in Craighall and Parktown, but as demand grew, the developments grew larger in size and moved further out north of the city, where more land was available (Ibid).

The rise of gated communities in Johannesburg during the 1980s may be directly related to the political turmoil the country was experiencing at the time. A state of emergency had been declared and violent crime in the townships was highly publicized. As a result, fear was at an all time high and while many chose to emigrate, others chose to fortify themselves.

2.2 Meaning in Architecture

According to Norberg-Schulz (1969), architecture makes concrete the ideas and values of mankind. Concepts and meanings are expressed in the built form. Because of the public nature of architecture these meanings are expressed in the public realm and, therefore, are free to be interpreted in many different ways. This non-verbal communication (Rapoport 1982) can be likened to the interpretation of a person's body language during a speech, to give greater meaning to their words. However, in the built environment this non-verbal communication is predominantly the only form of exchange.

In Chapter Four, my research details the interpretation of walls in suburban environments and how these walls relate to the suburban house. It is the expansive environments of suburbs, not imbued with the meanings of professionals, which are most important (Rapoport 1982). A wall may mean one thing to the owner who

constructed it and another thing to the pedestrian passing by outside. This ambiguity, the difference between the interior and the exterior of the wall (Ando 1978), may be a form of miscommunication. The wall, as an element of the suburban house, may be preventing us from reading the house as a building, or in turn, may be presenting a new façade of the house for interpretation.

2.2.1 The meaning of the wall

The meaning of the wall shifts with time; with context; and with intention. The concrete wall of Berlin represented separation, segregation and political ideologies while the black granite of the Vietnam War Memorial represents the deaths and memories of the soldiers listed there and is a place of reflection, both literally and metaphorically. In Roman times, city walls were blessed and seen as sacred and untouchable (Rykwert 1976). It is easy, then, to see how the walled house becomes a 'sanctuary' from the hazards of the city.

From the literature, it is not always clear what the boundary walls of detached houses represent, but it would appear that the walls of gated communities have very clear meanings. The reason for this may be that, while gated communities have proliferated in many countries across the globe, walling of detached houses is still uncommon, occurring in places like Brazil (Caldeira 1999) and South Africa.

Walls, for the most part, are ambivalent:

> "Barbed wire protects, but it imprisons; stockades protect the invader, but confine as well; stucco walls and wrought iron fences provide a sense of identity, but may increase feelings of insecurity, reveal vulnerability, as well." (Marcuse 1995: 249-250)

This ambivalence stems from the wall's intended function as well as to its meaning within the context, which shifts with the social understanding of their use (Marcuse 1997). The wall divides: inside from outside; and kitchen from bedroom. The wall also supports the roof and forms a screen for privacy. David Leatherbarrow explains how Leone Battista Alberti, an architect of the middle ages, divided the wall into three parts according to its function:

> "… the bottom part or foundation below the level of the ground platform, the middle part that rises above the ground and encloses or subdivides the settings enclosed within the interior, and the upper parts formed as cornices and supports for the roof." (Leatherbarrow 1993: 164-165)

Alberti illustrates the relationship between the function of the wall and its height. This concept is significant when looking at walls in suburbs and I will be touching on this idea in Chapter Four.

Where “enclosed space signifies the cozy security of the womb, privacy, darkness, biologic life” (Tuan 1974: 28), walls as the main elements of enclosure, can be assumed to take on these meanings. Walls are thus, associated with safety and with maternal warmth. This is particularly significant when considering walls in relation to homes, where the home, as will be discussed later, also has connotations of the womb and security.

These meanings of the wall have to do with the function of the wall to enclose, to provide privacy and as a support to the roof of the home. The meanings of the walls of gated communities have more to do with the wall as an element to protect and divide.

> “In such bunker-style communities, the walls, moats, guarded gates, and security cameras convey an impression of a fortress and of a menacing presence beyond the walls.” (Judd 1995: 161)

The perceptions of the boundary walls of houses and the walls of gated communities differ because of the way in which meaning is conveyed through exterior walls. In Chapter Four, I illustrate how the communal boundary wall of a gated community cannot convey the sense of individual expression in the way that houses can. This makes gated communities difficult to interpret from the outside and, therefore, difficult to understand.

In Parkview (a middle-upper class suburb north of Johannesburg’s city centre) residents objected to the building of a wall, surrounding a gated community development, along the local golf course. Their two main reasons given were: the fact that the wall blocked views of the green lawns of the golf course; and the other reason was because of the ‘exclusive atmosphere’ the wall would generate (van Rooyen 2004). The irony of this scenario lies in the fact that many of the residences overlooking the golf course have high walls too. This story serves to underline the difference in the way in which walls of gated communities are viewed when compared with the walls of suburban houses. Many people just do not see any correlation between their own walls and those of gated communities.

Richard Sennett explains how gated communities may take on new meanings in our current times:

> “And if neighbourhoods, cities or nations become defensive refuges against a hostile world, they may provide symbols of self-worth and belonging through practices of exclusion and intolerance.” (Sennett 1997: 62)

Sennett illustrates how the wall generates two different experiences. For those living on the inside of the wall, the wall provides a sense of belonging and for those on the outside the wall symbolises exclusion. Every wall has two sides and in Chapter Five, I explore the perception of people experiencing the wall from different sides.

2.2.2 The meaning of the house

In the 1920s, when renting was touted as 'anti-family' (Vale 2005), the suburban home came to be the focus of the family. "The single-family home served to keep children off the streets by making their home and yard the centre of interest" (Ibid: 279). In West African culture, this has always been the case. For the Batammaliba, "[t]he house *is* the family; the same word is employed for each" (Blier 1994: 140) [emphasis my own].

> "Anthropological literature suggests that walls around the places where one or more families dwelt were first used for purposes of social identification, each household having a similar definition." (Marcuse 1997: 103)

In Western culture, the detached house is the choice of home for the nuclear family (Van Kempen 2002). And, subsequently, has become a symbol of the home. Therefore "[i]t is the meaning rather than the reality of the detached house that is important" (Rapoport 1982: 134). In the 1930s, the semi-detached house in England was a response to the search for "an imagery that spoke of home, of stability and of individualism" (Oliver 1981: 157). Even the derived, simple drawing of a house is a powerful symbol that communicates easily.

The house also represents the first act of construction, where the first human was enclosed by walls and a roof (Bloomer and Moore 1977). The first building was not a museum or an office, but a home. These early homes were imbued with religious and spiritual significance which can still be seen in some settlements today. The Batammaliba tribe believes that the house "serves as a religious sanctuary" (Blier 1994: 80). Meanwhile, the use of the word *domus* indicates a celestial significance for the home because *domus* is both the word for house and for the dome of heaven (Bloomer and Moore 1977).

The concept of sanctuary is extended further, beyond a religious significance. The home represents safety from danger (Marc 1997), a refuge and a cocoon (Marcus 1995). The house is also "a replica of our own mother's womb" (Marc 1997: 14) and in some instances the home becomes the woman (Oliver 1981: 161), so strong is this imagery. Certainly, the suburban house has been, traditionally, the domain of the woman and the housewife (Hayden 2002 and Vale 2005) and women have long been associated with the physical structures that protect and nurture (Mumford 1961).

As an element of escape, the house enables us to "be at one with ourselves" (Marc 1997: 14), a space for us to be. "Heidegger points out that the German words for 'building', 'dwelling' and 'being' have common roots" (Norberg-Schulz 1974: 431). The house as a sanctuary, a refuge and a place of safety may explain why

suburban residents also place emphasis on elements of security. These elements may embody these notions of safety and escapism. Features of security maintain the meaning of sanctuary.

The house gains meaning through the visible signs of its occupation. Through making changes, personalizing spaces and elements, owners establish their identity through the house and thus, it acquires meaning (Rapoport 1977). In fact, we are becoming more and more aware of the house as a tool for communication and display (Marcus 1995). Through placing emphasis and giving significance to certain elements, ideals and values are expressed. This is investigated at length in Chapter Four.

The entrance is one common element where significance is often expressed. “The doorway of a house, for example, contains a world of information about the people who live inside” (Lawlor 1994). The importance is usually expressed through a stepping up to the front door (Bloomer and Moore 1977) but the doorway is also the threshold between the inner sanctuary and the outside world.

> “The entryway, therefore becomes an extraordinarily sensitive region of the house boundary, a landmark which must respect and reinforce the feelings and identity of both the inside and outside communities.” (Bloomer and Moore 1977: 46)

Perhaps the strongest association with the house, and most universal (Blier 1994), is that of anthropomorphism. The house is “the first tangible boundary beyond the body” (Bloomer and Moore 1977: 77) and it is no coincidence that the root for the words face and façade is the same (Lawlor 1994). A hipped roof gives the ‘head’ of the house a more graceful shape and the curve of the front door suggests the ‘mouth’ or ‘nose’ (Oliver 1981). The house façade expresses and communicates with the outside world just as its human counterpart does (Bloomer and Moore 1977).

The anthropomorphic qualities of the house may begin to explain why the suburban wall can be disturbing. A wall obscures the view of the house, like the way a mask would hide a face, and makes it difficult to read the façade. In some cases, where the wall completely obscures the house from view, the wall may become a new façade, a replacement representation of those within the walls. In Chapter Three, I examine how the physical presence of the wall obscures the view of the house, therefore, impeding visual communication and in Chapter Four, I explore how the wall, through personalization and expression, becomes a sign in itself.

David Dewar and Roelof Uytenbogaardt emphasize the wall as a communication device and use the term interface to describe the wall. The wall as interface can

facilitate good relations between neighbours.

> "Again, the role of interface in this situation is to define clearly areas of responsibility and it is the clarity of definition which is significant in this regard. This clarity of structure is socially significant for lack of it can lead to conflict between neighbours – good fences make good neighbours." (Dewar and Uytenbogaardt 1985: 13)

How the wall functions as an interface can improve the way that the wall is perceived.

> "It is that people can only be sociable only when they have some protection from each other; without barriers, boundaries, without the mutual distance which is the essence of impersonality, people are destructive." (Sennett 1976: 301)

Walls help to define the borders of community and allow for feelings of identification and ownership (Blakely and Snyder 1999 and Garreau 1992).

The boundary wall may function to give privacy, keep animals within the yard or to provide security but it is a symbol of the frontier between the outside world and the inner space and is ultimately expressive of territoriality (Rapoport 1969). This interpretation differs greatly form the view of the walls of gated communities as fortresses and enclaves of exclusion, despite the shared suburban conditions.

The meaning of the wall is intimately connected with the meaning of the house. The built environment communicates through meaning and in Chapter Four I compare the fluency of communication of the walls of houses and the walls of gated communities.

2.3 The Function of the Wall

2.3.1 Status and Exclusion

In 1920s America, home-ownership began to be expressed as morally superior for any family (Vale 2005). The seeds of these ideas only really began to grow, though, after the Depression and the Second World War, when wealth gave people freedom to own their own homes and demand larger living spaces (Ellin 1997).

> "The suburb historically was an exclusionary enclave peopled by the upper and middle classes searching for an ideal 'new town' or 'green oasis' that reinforced race and class separation." (Low 2003: 19)

The suburbs had begun as available only to those who could afford it and, though it was now affordable to many more, the suburban home still bore the mark of success. The trend for homeownership has continued since the 1920s, seemingly

placing more and more emphasis on the home. An Australian study conducted in 1981 found that the pride of owning a home was the most important factor in choosing a home, followed closely by the neighbourhood and the layout of the house (Cross 1997). The proximity of the home to friends, relatives and jobs were secondary or tertiary factors (Ibid). The house becomes a symbol of status.

> "Blakely and Snyder (1998) argue that gated enclaves are descendants of decades of suburban design and public land-use policy. They claim that gates are firmly within the suburban tradition of street patterns and zoning designed to reduce the access of non-residents and increase homogeneity. Gates enhance and reinforce the suburban nature of the suburbs." (Landman 2000: 4)

In this sense, the walls and gates of gated communities expand the interpretation and meaning of the suburban boundary wall. The wall has gone from a symbol of territory, to a symbol of exclusivity; from a right of personal security to inflicting on the rights of others. Teresa Caldeira describes the exclusive attributes of gated communities:

> "Fortified enclaves confer status. The construction of status symbols is a process that elaborates social differences and creates means for the assertion of social distance and inequality." (Caldeira 2000: 258)

Even though gated communities can now be found across all income groups, they continue to symbolize notions of exclusivity, wealth and segregation.

Gated communities, in Johannesburg, began as a method for developers to make more money on the free market (much in the same way that Levittown was begun in the 1950s). But the developments also enabled more people to buy their own homes by bringing costs down and sharing amenities (Frew 2008). In this way, gated communities reflect the strong desire for home ownership: "[i]n many ways, buying a home in a gated residential community is a microcosm of the contemporary American dream" (Low 2003: 26). However, through this process, the original meanings of the suburban wall have been lost in the new manifestation of the wall in the gated community.

The exclusive and segregated nature of gated communities, symbolized in the wall, is problematic because of the physical and spatial barriers they build between individuals (Flusty 1997) and the affect of these may prove to be detrimental to the future (Landman 2000). The wall, in this case, is the symbol of negative implications but it is difficult to understand the direct implications, these developments have, for levels of social interaction, especially considering that the nature of social interactions in the city has also changed, which I shall discuss briefly further on. Charlotte Lemanski finds that it is not always the case that walls of gated

communities prevent social interaction and so, I agree with her when she states that we should examine such statements closely (2006).

The perception of exclusivity is heightened by the private nature of the suburban house. The house is seen as the private sanctuary of the individuals or families who reside there, as discussed earlier. Inevitably, the streets and entire suburbs take on these meanings. Privacy and social distance are emphasized (Baumgartner 1988; Blakely and Snyder 1997 and Hayden 2002). In Chapter Five, I demonstrate through interviews with people on the outside of walls, that the concept of exclusivity is not readily associated with walls and gated communities despite the repeated references made by critics.

Homogeneity and segregation

Suburbs are characterized by low density, low rise sprawl facilitated by the construction of highways and major roads. While North Americans relied on exclusionary zoning laws to enforce homogeneity (Kostof 1992), the instigators of Apartheid capitalised on these characteristics to create homogenous suburbs:

> "The city was built through separate and internalised neighbourhoods for different groups, separated by buffer-strips in the form of green open space, rapid transit routes or light industry." (Landman 2003: 4)

Non-white townships were separated from the city, and from whites, by large distances. The Group Areas Act, which enforced the homogenous suburbs, was lifted in 1991. However, at this time, Johannesburg was one of the more racially integrated cities in South Africa, due to the penetration of blacks, from the mid 1970s, into 'white' areas (Parnell & Pirie 1991). The average price difference between the residential properties of segregated suburbs has caused integration to be slow since the abolishment of the act (Beavon 1992). Integration is occurring more rapidly in middle and upper class neighbourhoods and only small numbers of gated communities and suburbs function to exclude others (Jürgens; Gnad & Bähr 2003).

Herbert Gans, through his extensive research in Levittown, during the 1960s, questions the assumption that suburbs are homogenous, suggesting that nothing is ever truly homogenous (Gans 1967). He also questioned the manner in which tolerance should be achieved stating:

> "[b]ut it is not at all certain that mere visual exposure… encourages learning of pluralism and tolerance. Children pick up many of their attitudes from parents and peers and these are not necessarily pluralistic." (Ibid: 169-170).

2.3.2 Reactions to Fear

The fear of others

The flight to the suburbs and the subsequent fortressing within the suburbs is blamed on the dangers, real and perceived, of the city. These dangers include the fear of others and the fear of crime, to be discussed further on.

> "Fear has never been absent from the human experience, and town building has always contended with the need for protection from danger." (Ellin 1997: 13)

Cities bring many hazards and strangers together and humans can exist in their lowest form in cities (Tickell 1997). The perception of danger is heightened through a lack of familiarity and a fear of the unknown (Low 2001). The problem is, simply, the sheer numbers of people that congregate in the city. As Nan Ellin explains of the period at the height of the rapid growth of cities:

> "the vast cultural diversity [of cities], …. contributed greatly to a sense of insecurity for people of all ethnicities given the concentrated panoply of languages and customs. Insecurity was thus an integral component of industrial capitalism." (Ellin 1997: 20)

These insecurities manifested in tight social and political controls that regulated behaviour and enabled people to feel safer within the highly populated cities. Higher numbers of people can lead directly to greater conflict (Landman 2004), and when people have difficulty dealing with this, they withdraw (Kaplan et al 2004). They withdraw to the suburbs, behind high walls and gated communities. This is seen through the fact that:

> "The places where gated communities are most popular are also places with the greatest influx of newcomers, with no roots of family or memory of the area." (Landman 2000: 5)

Through the democratization process, "we have seen more acceptance of 'alternative' lifestyles and an incorporation of previously excluded groups" (Harris 2007: 37). The result is that the previous strict social controls have been lifted, but, as yet, there are no new widely accepted, cultural standards (Flusty 1997), leaving people with those old feelings of insecurity. The need for segregation is still apparent, even though, it is no longer socially acceptable. The fear of others has been generated by these social changes and Caldeira maintains that, therefore, gated communities are a reaction to democracy (2000).

The search for a sense of community is seen as a remedy against the impersonality of the city (Sennett 1977) and this contributes to the growing popularity of gated

communities.

> "Gated communities are, then, not a search for community in and of itself, but rather an investment in a certain kind of constructed community as a defense against a chaotic and unpredictable postcolonial context." (Ballard 2005:3)

Thus, the fear of others, the fear of chaos, has generated a continued need for segregation and control, as well as an increased need for a sense of identity and belonging in community to combat the dangers associated with the city.

The fear of crime

The fear of crime is used as a socially acceptable reason for the building of walls, which, in some instances, masks the more unacceptable 'fear of others' but as Caldeira points out "[v]iolence and fear are entangled with processes of social change in contemporary cities" (2000: 1). The threat of violence and crime are felt more acutely in times of social change. This country is still dealing with the aftermath of Apartheid and the social changes its abolishment has brought. And, therefore, it could be said South Africans are more sensitive to the incidences of crime.

Suburbs are no longer the carefree, safe spaces they were intended to be, even for those who reside within them, and for those passing through:

> "Thinking about gating from the point of view of child protection forces us to reconsider why urban and suburban neighbourhoods are no longer seen as safe enough for children to play in freely." (Low, 2003: 110)

> "Suburbs where women seek work during the day were labelled as unsafe, because they are deserted during the day. The women thought that if something should happen to them, they would not be helped by anyone, because the houses are walled off and there are very few people on the streets." (Palmary, Rauch & Simpson 2003: 109)

The fear of falling victim to crime is, in most circumstances, independent of the crime reality. Crime rates vary enormously from one area to the next (Davie 2006). However, the latter scenario, described above, illustrates the emphasis placed on surveillance. It shows a direct correlation between the presence of walls and the fear of crime. Both Jane Jacobs (1962) and Oscar Newman (1972) placed great importance on the role of surveillance: in activating public spaces; and preventing crime. In Chapter Three, I focus on the visibility or level of transparency of the boundary wall in order to address the question of surveillance as a security measure. But, importantly, in Chapter Five I explore how this notion of visibility makes people feel.

The feelings of powerlessness associated with the fear of crime have resulted in the search for greater control and security (Lemanski 2004). Worldwide, gated communities are the most common form of forting up and target-hardening (Blakely and Snyder 1999 and Landman 2004). But the prevalence of walling, in general, is not limited to Johannesburg and South Africa. Caldeira describes the situation in Sao Paulo:

> "Finally, the increase in violent crime and fear since the mid-80s provoked the rapid walling of the city, as residents from all social classes sought to protect their living and working spaces." (Caldeira 2000: 232)

The fear of crime has far-reaching social consequences and the constructed walls can have further negative implications on perceptions. The withdrawal to live behind high walls, resulting from the fear of crime, not only increases the risk of crime occurring (Jeffery 1977), but also increases the suspicion between neighbours (Caldeira 2000) and the feelings of insecurity. Living in a fortress-like environment may also increase the feelings of fear (Landman 2004 and Low 2001), by being a constant reminder of danger.

It has been suggested that high levels of security aid in the prevention of crime (Davie 2006) but it is unclear whether gated communities are effective in reducing crime (Landman 2004). Given though, that insurance companies offer as much as a 25% discount for clients residing in a 'security village,' there must be some reduction in risk and certainly, this would serve as an additional incentive for choosing to live in a gated community.

The question of the effectiveness of walls and gated communities as crime fighting tools is too large to be answered by my study. Fear is a powerful and mostly irrational emotion. Therefore, the importance of walls may not lie in the fact of their absolute effectiveness, but on how they alleviate the *fear* and provide comfort. In fact, a common understanding of fear may be influencing how the wall is perceived. This is elaborated upon in Chapter Five.

2.3.3 Dividing Public Space

The destruction of public space

Critics have blamed walls, gated communities and the general securing of the city for the destruction of public spaces (Caldeira 2000 and Davis 1992). This is based on the idea that walls and gated communities inhibit the visual and social interaction between the occupants of the house and society in the public street. However, there may be many factors involved in the state of interplay between private and public spaces. One of these factors is the change in lifestyle:

> "Activities that once occurred in the pubic realm have been usurped by more private realms as leisure activities, entertainment, information centers, and consumer services are increasingly accessible from home via the television or computer…The contemporary built environment contains increasingly less meaningful public space, and existing public space is increasingly controlled by various forms of surveillance and increasingly invested with private meanings." (Ellin 1997: 36)

This follows on from the concept of the house as the focus of the nuclear family but it can also be debated that little public space existed in the suburbs to begin with, both abroad (Baumgartner 1988 and Low 2003) and in Johannesburg (Czeglédy 2003). In South Africa, public life was regulated under apartheid and "[t]here was little room for active participation in the public sphere except through a culture of opposition." (Herwitz 1998: 412) Jane Jacobs argues that the lack of public life causes residents to withdraw (1962).

The consequences of crime and the fear of crime have lead further to the privatization of public space (Bremner 1998). Enclosed neighbourhoods are the prime example of the privatization of public space. While, paradoxically, Richard Sennett argues, that this destruction of public space has placed further emphasis on the search for community (1977).

The right to public space

The definition of public and private elements with regards to gated communities, remains somewhat unclear, but can be considered to be a redefinition of both (Landman 2002: 4).

> "Open space, security and other goods provided *via* proprietary communities should not be thought of as private goods. They are privately supplied, but are still public goods in the technical sense of being jointly consumed." (Webster 2001: 162-163) [emphasis in original]

Gated communities are, therefore, public to those who reside within and in the case of expansive residential and recreational estates, this is a considerably large 'public'. But in relation to the city, these spaces and facilities remain unavailable. The debate of the right to freedom of movement applies to these large estates, where the internal network of 'public spaces' are restricted, but is most relevant when looking at enclosed neighbourhoods.

> "According to the South African Constitution it is the right of all people to have access to and free movement within all public space." (Landman 2004: 4)

Where previously public roads have been closed or privatized and access is often illegally restricted (Cox 2004 and Kalideen 2006), there appears to be a

clear violation of this right. But the constitution also includes the right to be free from all violence (van der Wetering 2000). Subsequently, the right to freedom of movement and the right to security, then becomes the domain of those who can afford it, rather than a democratic right (Landman 2004). At this stage, it is the role of the government to level these imbalances and to improve the level of safety experienced by all citizens. After all, freedom of movement becomes meaningless if the spaces are not safe to use (Jacobs 1962).

2.3.4 Changes in the Social Climate

A highly mobile, individual society

Society, in general, has shifted focus from the larger community to that of the individual and nuclear family.

> "Numerous studies confirm this trend toward family-and-home-based weekends. Couples and children minimized their social obligations outside the family." (Cross 1997: 122)

In Johannesburg, the house includes all forms of leisure and recreation that serve to keep the family within, independent of outside facilities (Czeglédy 2003). The house incorporates more functions and allows the family to be entertained at home. The home becomes an ever self-sufficient unit, independent of the city. This may well contribute to the concept of the wall as a symbol of exclusion and wealth.

The freedom of the individual is epitomized in the freedom represented by the motorcar – the ultimate in private transportation. "The most important aspect of the automobile is that it shifted the balance of power from centralised modes of organization toward the individual" (Garreau 1992: 107). The preference for this insular lifestyle means that people are reluctant to engage beyond their own 'safe' borders. The walls in suburbs and of gated communities may, therefore, have very little influence in this changed social context.

On the one hand, the importance of being in control as an individual is essential (Jeffery 1977), but on the other, too much individual freedom can impact negatively on the collective good (Dewar and Uytenbogaardt 1985). The suburban wall may begin as an act of an individual. But for fear of appearing an 'easy target' in comparison, neighbours will respond quickly by also erecting a wall. And so, the building of walls becomes an infectious disease and soon it is difficult to distinguish the individual actions from the collective belief in walls. This process is extremely difficult to reverse. It is difficult to determine when the rights of individuals become the infringements of the rights of people as a whole. It is easier to see the infringement of rights of all people when it comes to gated communities because we can no longer see the individuals involved and, therefore their individual rights.

While residents of suburbs place a high value on privacy, and often the boundary wall is a tool for achieving this, many residents of gated communities give up a degree of personal freedom to live within the rules of a security village, in order to obtain a level of security (Davis 1992). “The gates represent a compromise, even a defense, between the way things are and the way they would like them to be.” (Low 2003: 224)

The importance placed on the individual is reflected in the resultant lack of faith in government and institutional bodies. Security becomes a priority. People feel they can no longer rely on others to provide for them:

> “Safety, like all other aspects of human life in a relentlessly individualized and privatized world, must be a ‘do-it-yourself’ job.” (Ballard 2005:13)

High walls, electric fencing and employing private security firms, are all evidence of this attitude. Gated communities are illustrative of people pooling their resources in order to achieve high levels of security. People of gated communities make use of a small collective in order to control aspects of their lives.

The car is symbolic of the highly mobile nature of society today. This effects not only daily activities but has permeated into longer term aspects of life. “Homeowners in America move on average every four years, in Britain every six” (Sudjic 1992: 285). This mobility translates into people investing more time on relationships that are not based on their immediate physical environment. Therefore, the role of the physical environment, with regards to levels of social interaction, can be said to be minimal. In light of this, walls are dividers of space and are only dividing people spatially, not socially.

Changes in social patterns

As stated earlier, there have been changes in the way people form community connections. People, for various reasons, no longer identify with their neighbours. “Peer groups – community – are defined by job, avocation, church, or some other institution, far more than by location” (Garreau 1992: 279).

Traditionally suburbs have been blamed for the breakdown in social interactions as illustrated here: “Socially, suburbia is the place where society falls apart into atomized individualist nuclear families, isolated from each other and from community co-operation” (Hartley 1997: 184-185). However, studies in the 1960s, showed none of these negative elements at work in new suburbs in California (Cross 1997). In fact, suburbs, generally, have enhanced the community focus (Etzioni 1995).

> “The key question, in the construction of cities and communities within cities, is what is the relationship of the people within them is to one another and to

those outside. Walls reflect those relationships." (Marcuse 1997: 113)

Community within gated communities

Choosing to reside in a gated community may provide solutions to some of the issues cited above: namely, an increase in 'public life' found in the public facilities; a reduction in crime levels and the fear of crime; and finding a sense of community. The provision of communal facilities (often absent in the surrounding suburbs) allows for social interaction to take place (Landman 2003) and in some cases the amenities do become gathering spaces for housewives (Housing in South Africa 1997).

> "For those living inside these barriers, there is a new sense of security and communality. They can leave their gates open, children can play in the streets and move freely between each other's homes again, and crime levels fall." (Bremner 1998: 58)

Some studies have shown that gated communities have evolved 'a culture of nonparticipation' that is 'rooted in the very structure of the common-interest development'. (McKenzie 1994: 25)

Representation of social conditions

Ultimately, the ambivalent nature of walls extends right through to whether they are the result or cause of social relations (Borden 2000: 21). Setha Low argues that walls are only making visible, the exclusionary tendencies that already exist in society (2001), while others argue that physical and spatial elements have direct consequences for the way society functions (Massey 1999).

Peter Marcuse maintains that walls do not explain explicitly the nature of social relations on either side (Marcuse 1997). "We cannot, simply on the evidence of gating, condemn either the insider or outsider to indifferent or hostile barbarism" (Amin 2000: 84).

In looking at how walls and gated communities function, I have highlighted some of the major issues that many critics have expressed. The issues of homogeneity and segregation have not been explored in the case studies because ultimately nothing is truly homogenous. Walls may or may not be a reflection of changes in social patterns, but as this concept may be a whole other study in itself, I have not explored these issues in the case studies. Instead, I have focussed on the perceptions of people, their feelings of exclusion or superiority and their feelings of fear.

Conclusion

Walls, suburbs and gated communities are not new phenomena. The history of suburbs in Johannesburg showed that social contact was deliberately limited but at the same time suburbs can enhance a community focus. Gated communities, as an extension of the essence of suburbia, can be seen to improve the sense of communality or, alternatively, be interpreted as private and exclusive. In Chapter Five, I review the notions of privacy and exclusivity, because this chapter has shown that the house and, therefore, suburbia are considered to be highly private spaces.

In the history of walls in Johannesburg, the boundary began as an expression of status and privacy but the wall also has other meanings. The wall is strongly associated with safety and this may be the reason why walls and gated communities have increased, following an increase in fear. In most cases, the fear of crime is not related to the actual level of crime. The wall as an impediment to passive surveillance is examined in Chapter Three and Five, while feelings of fear are dealt with in Chapter Five.

Walls and houses convey meaning and thereby communicate to outsiders. The boundary wall may, in some instances, be a visual barrier preventing that communication. In Chapter Three the wall is discussed as a visual barrier, and in Chapter Four, the discussions focus on the meaning of the wall.

The fortification elements of gated communities suggest a ‘menacing’ presence beyond. This may have to do with the interpretation of these elements but also may have to do with the fact that gated communities have an element of the unknown about them due to the lack of individual expression in the boundary wall. These concepts are dealt with in Chapter Four.

This chapter has outlined the historical and literary context of the research conducted in the case studies, which will form the content of the next three chapters.



The Wall as a Mask
Chapter Three

“Suburbs deserve scrutiny. To wander purposefully in suburbs, to observe firsthand the complex artifact of space and structure, is to glimpse the rich diversity of a built form too often ignored or insulted by partisans of city or country.”

(Stilgoe 1988: 1)

Walls are the three-dimensional manifestation of lines, they are linear elements, but in moving from a two-dimensional form to a three-dimensional form they can become suburban sculptures. Walls make bulging deviations around ancient trees. Sometimes a wall reveals the full beauty of a house and garden for all to admire, and other times only small gaps or purpose-made windows reveal the secret garden beyond.

This chapter is divided into two main parts and examines the visual impact of the wall, both on the street and the house. It puts together a general view of each case study area and of the wall. The first part introduces three case study sites, describing each area and placing it within the context of Johannesburg. The second part explores the physical characteristics of the boundary walls in each case study site, making use of explanatory graph diagrams.

3.1 Case Study Sites

3.1.1 Descriptions

Witpoortjie

Witpoortjie is a suburb on the outer boundary of Johannesburg but is by no means on the urban edge. It lies approximately 22km North West of the central business district of Johannesburg (Figure 3.1). Two main roads, Main Reef Road and Ontdekkers Road, connect the suburb to this city centre. These main roads are dominated by commercial and retail activities. Westgate shopping centre, a major retail facility, is only a few kilometres east, along Ontdekkers Road. An industrial area lies to the west of the suburb, but in the near vicinity Witpoortjie is surrounded by mostly suburban houses (Figure 3.2).

There are several schools, including nursery, primary and high schools, in the area. The suburb is well serviced by public transport, including buses and minibus taxis (Moodley 2008). Witpoortjie also has good recreational facilities in the form of tennis and basketball courts and a public swimming pool. There are several churches of various Christian denominations in the neighbourhood. Along one of the busier roads, General Pienaar Avenue, there is a small strip of commercial and retail activity including two petrol stations, a large grocery store and other smaller businesses such as a home industry shop, a dog parlour and a fast food outlet.

The street pattern is regular and orthogonal, forming a grid pattern. Busy boulevards with wide central islands run form north to south, while the perpendicular streets still maintain wide pavements, giving the suburb a spacious feel. The blocks run long and narrow between the boulevards. The plots are regular and rectangular

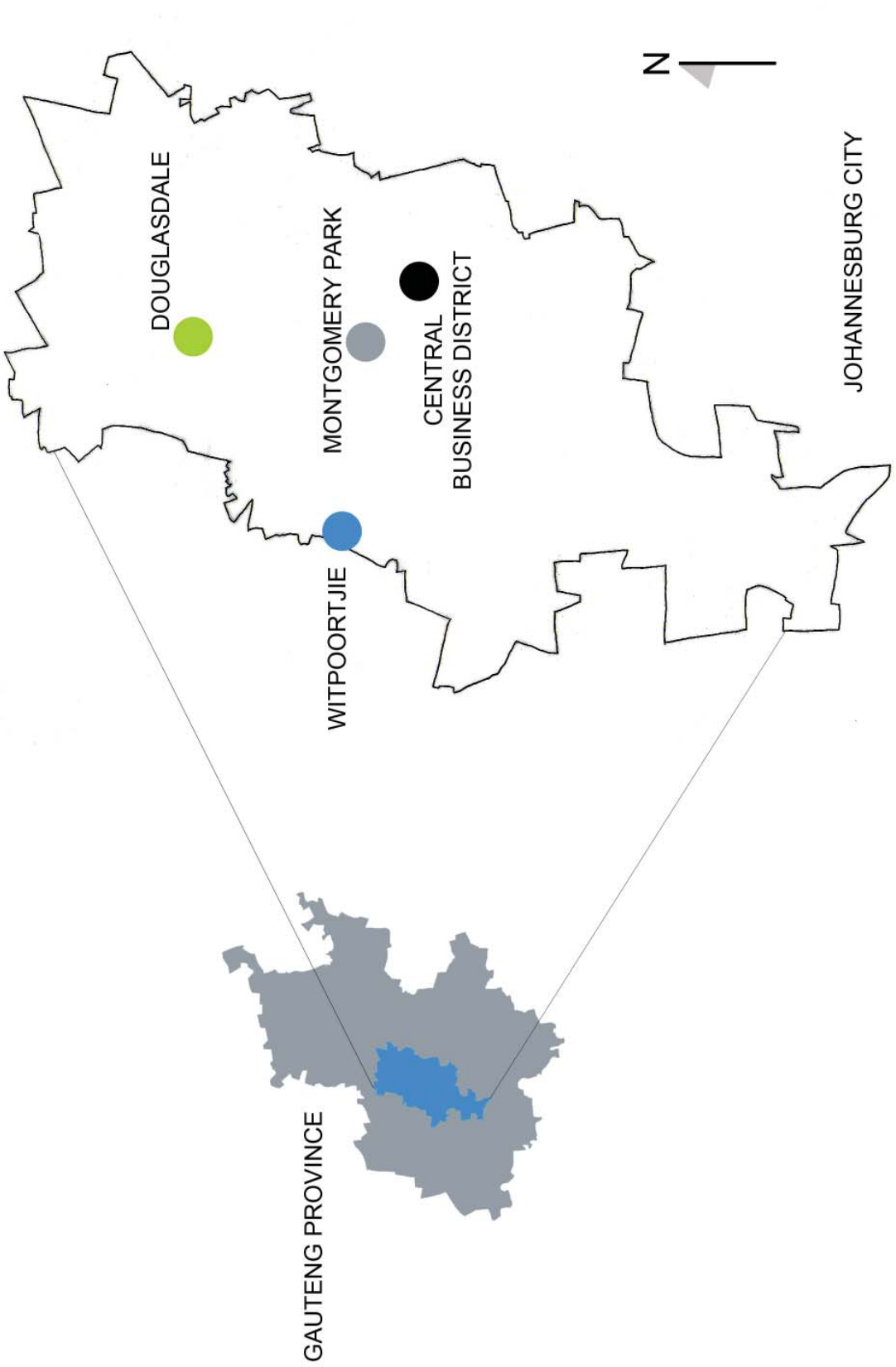


Figure 3.1 - Map of Johannesburg

A map of Johannesburg showing the three case study sites in relation to the central business district.

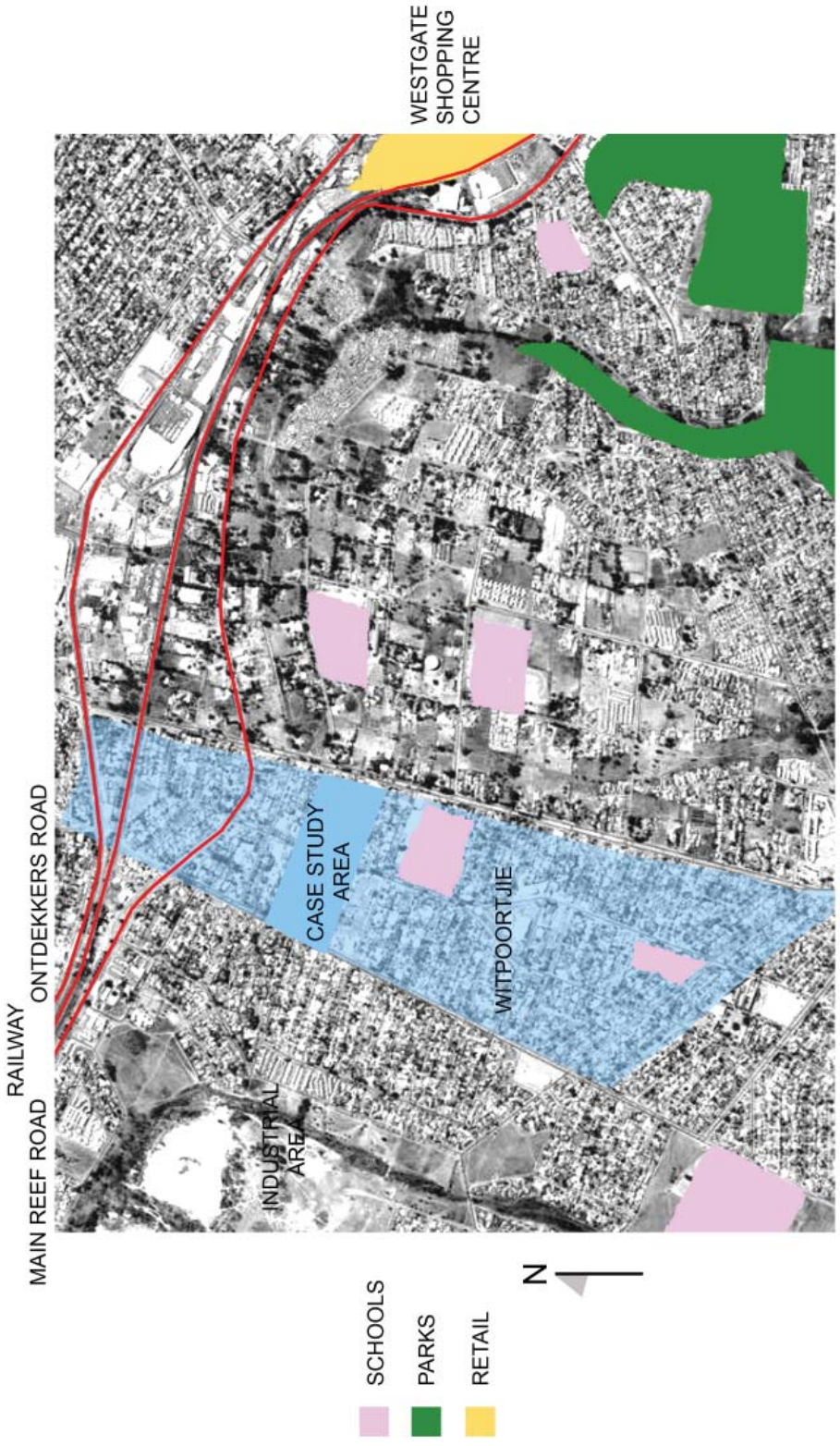


Figure 3.2 - Map of Witpoortjie showing the local context

A map of the suburb of Witpoortjie showing the extent of the case study site. Note the large number of schools in close proximity.

and are, on average, 1000m^2 in area. There are a few small townhouse complexes and apartment blocks of three to four storeys but the dominant housing type in the area is the single detached house (Figure 3.3). Nearby, to the east, are some agricultural smallholdings with stables and paddocks for horses, maintaining a strong rural connection.

According to the census of 2001, Witpoortjie has a total population of 9955 people, 49% of which are male and 51% are female. 892 (9%) of which are scholars or students i.e. school children. There are 2221 houses, 234 flats and 36 townhouses or cluster houses in the suburb. The breakdown of the population by race is: 72% white; 24% black; 1.5% coloured; and 1.5% Indian. (City of Johannesburg 2001)

Montgomery Park

Montgomery Park is a suburb 8km to the north west of Johannesburg's city centre (Figure 3.1). It is situated on the western side of the main arterial route, Beyers Naudé Drive. The suburb has no retail or commercial activities within its borders – grocery stores and other convenience shops are located in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The suburb consists, entirely, of residential housing. The southern border of the area is dominated by the expansive West Park cemetery. The area has access to large open parks - the northern border is formed by a public park and to the east is a large city park with a recreational dam and the city's botanical gardens. The neighbourhood is situated on the hillside rising above the small valley (Figure 3.4).

There are no schools or churches in the suburb itself but they can be found in close proximity in the surrounding areas. Because Montgomery Park is adjacent to the main arterial road, there is good access to public transport. Further along this road, to the north is Cresta shopping centre. While the area has mostly detached houses (Figure 3.5), there are a few gated communities of various types. There are a number of retirement villages of differing sizes and a couple of townhouse complexes, also varying in size.

A regular grid pattern follows the topography and orders the form of the streets, but in some places this has been broken by more 'suburban' street characteristics. Some streets curve or arch in places and there are a number of cul-de-sacs. These are part of the original layout of the suburb and are not due to the formal or informal enclosure of streets. Vehicle and pedestrian traffic is very quiet. The two roads that run perpendicular to Beyers Naudé Drive (West Park Way and John Adamson Drive) are fairly busy and this is reflected in the greater widths and wide pavements. The streets in between, however, only see the occasional car. Pedestrian traffic is likewise only occasional with mostly nannies or domestic workers and the odd dog



Figure 3.3 - Witpoortjie site photographs

These photographs give a sense of the area. There are quite a few churches and sporting facilities in the area and kids can be found playing on the wide pavements.

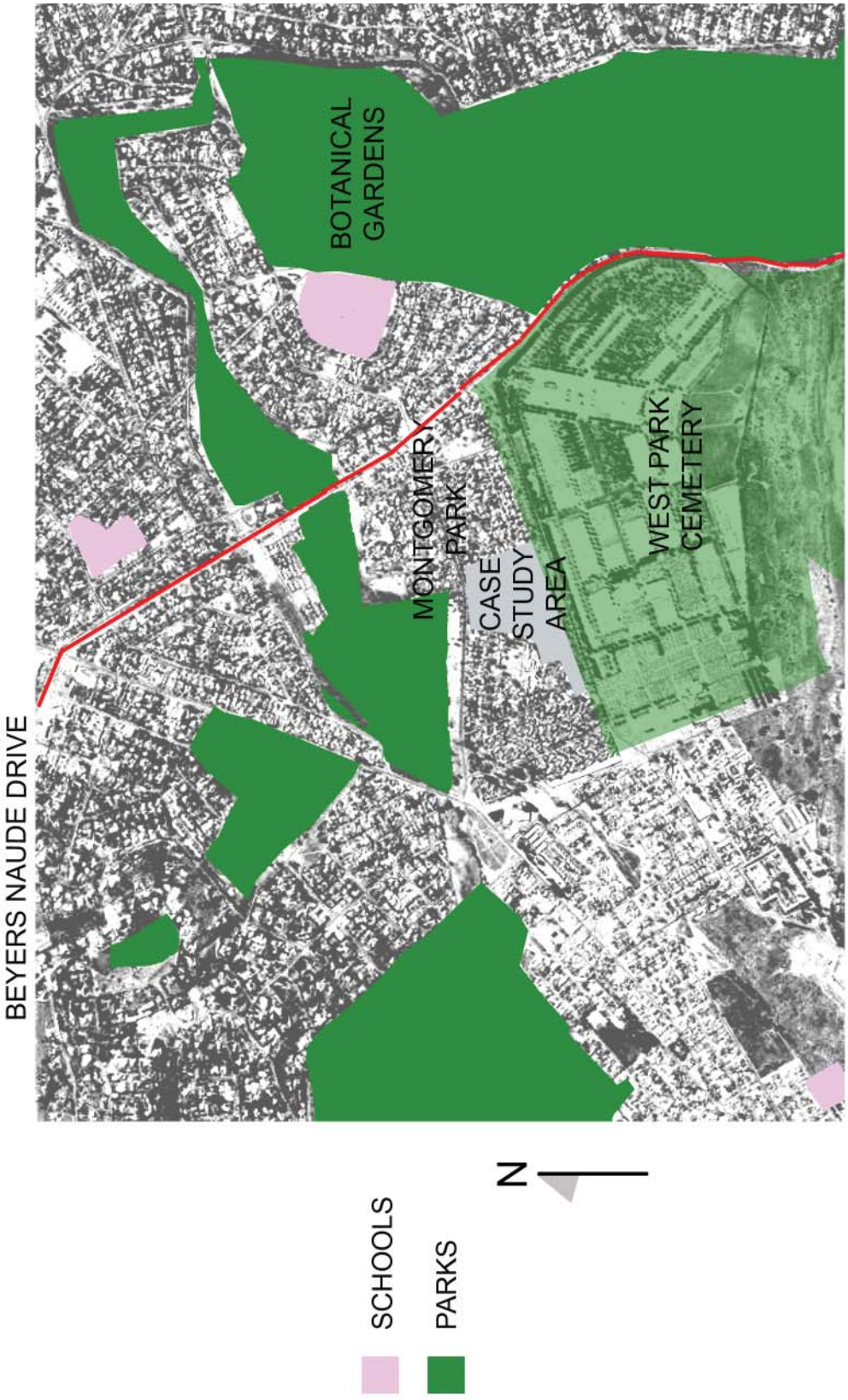


Figure 3.4 - Map of Montgomery Park showing the local context

A map of Montgomery Park showing the case study site in grey. Large parks and a cemetery form boundaries for this suburb and there are very few amenities nearby.



Figure 3.5 - Montgomery Park site photographs

Views in and around the case study site also showing the presence of the gated community in the suburb.

walker or cyclist.

The streets are of average width and the stand sizes, though they may vary in shape, are about 800m^2 in size. This is an average, middle-class suburb. Montgomery Park has a total population of 1843 people, of which 44% are male and 56% are female. The breakdown of the population by race is: 81% white; 12.5% black; 2% coloured; and 5.5% Indian. 119 (6%) of these people are scholars or students i.e. school children. There are 525 houses, 27 flats and 81 townhouses or cluster houses in the suburb (City of Johannesburg 2001).

Calais is a townhouse complex, roughly in the centre of Montgomery Park (Figure 3.6). It takes up almost an entire block and contains about 200 residential units of varying size. The buildings are all two to three storeys in height to maintain a sense of domestic scale. Different architectural styles, such as Tudor, Tuscan and Provencal are depicted through decorative concrete elements fixed to the facades and various shades of pink break up the mass of the buildings. The units are placed next to or on top of each other and as a result the complex achieves a higher density than the surrounding neighbourhood. The only internal walls secure the two swimming pools and screen the various washing line courtyards.

Douglasdale

Douglasdale is situated to the far north, 19km away from the central business district (Figure 3.1). The area previously consisted of small farms and agricultural smallholdings and this is still in evidence in some places, most notably the continued existence of Douglasdale dairy farm. The boom in residential development began in the late 1980s (Herman 2008). The suburb is easily accessed via the M1 highway, the ring highway around the city, and William Nicol Drive, which connects Douglasdale to the Sandton CBD to the south (Figure 3.7).

There are a number of commercial and retail strips in the area. In addition, there are numerous large shopping centres as well as a casino with shopping and entertainment in the vicinity. There are two shopping centres of medium size, along Douglas Drive, across the road from the case study site. Douglasdale police station is situated in the suburb and the main public recreational facility is Norscot Koppies, a natural reserve. The suburb also has its own residents' association.
There are few schools in the immediate area. Churches or places of worship are also conspicuous in their absence. The large residences sprawl between the main roads and commercial strips (Figure 3.8).

The street pattern is difficult to read from the ground and is complicated by the abundance of gated communities. Many of the streets coming off the main roads



Figure 3.6 - Montgomery Park - Calais townhouse complex

Photographs showing internal and external views of Calais gated community.

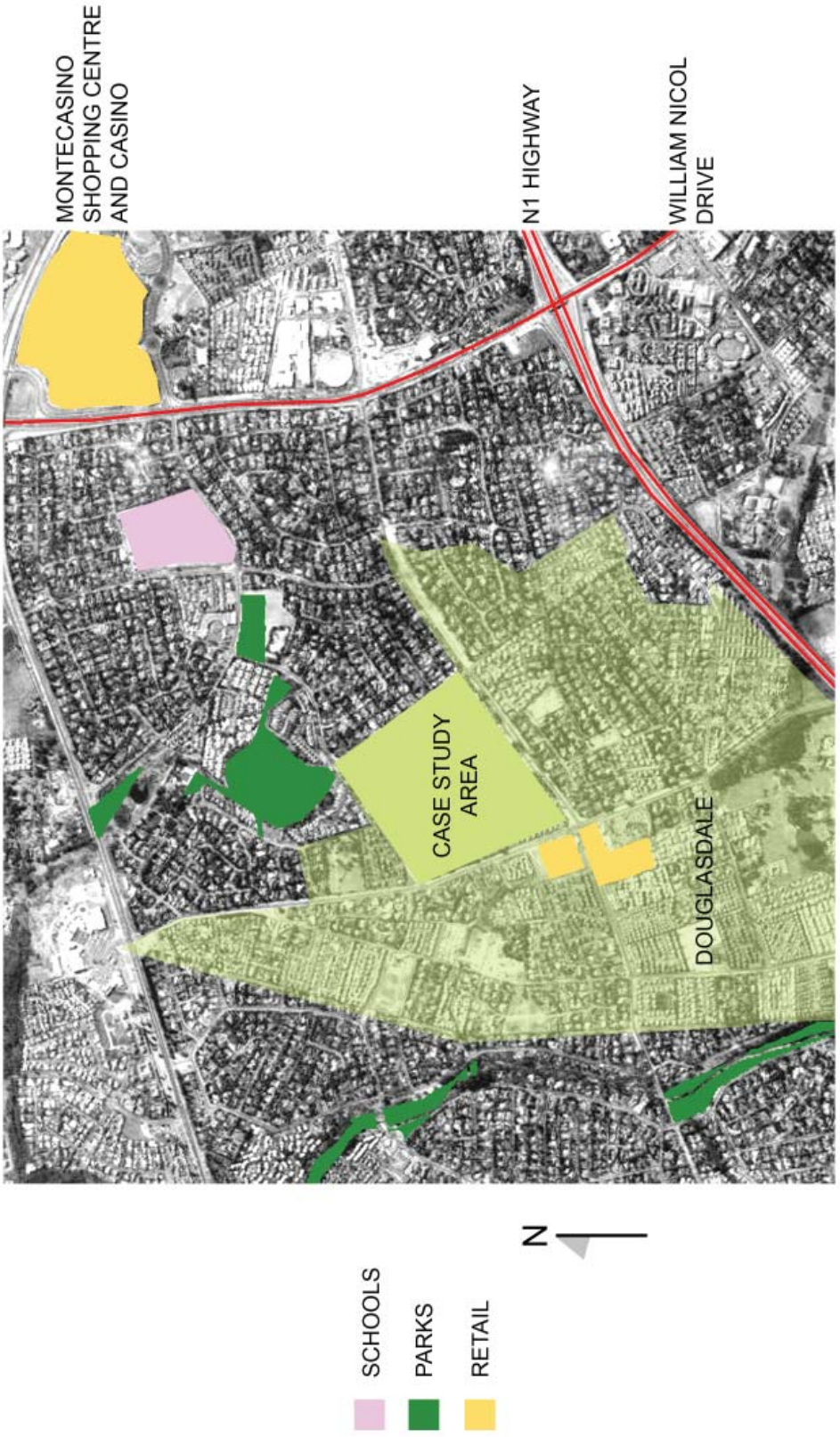


Figure 3.7 - Map of Douglasdale showing the local context

A contextual map of Douglasdale highlighting the extents of the case study site. Retail facilities are more predominant than recreational or educational amenities.

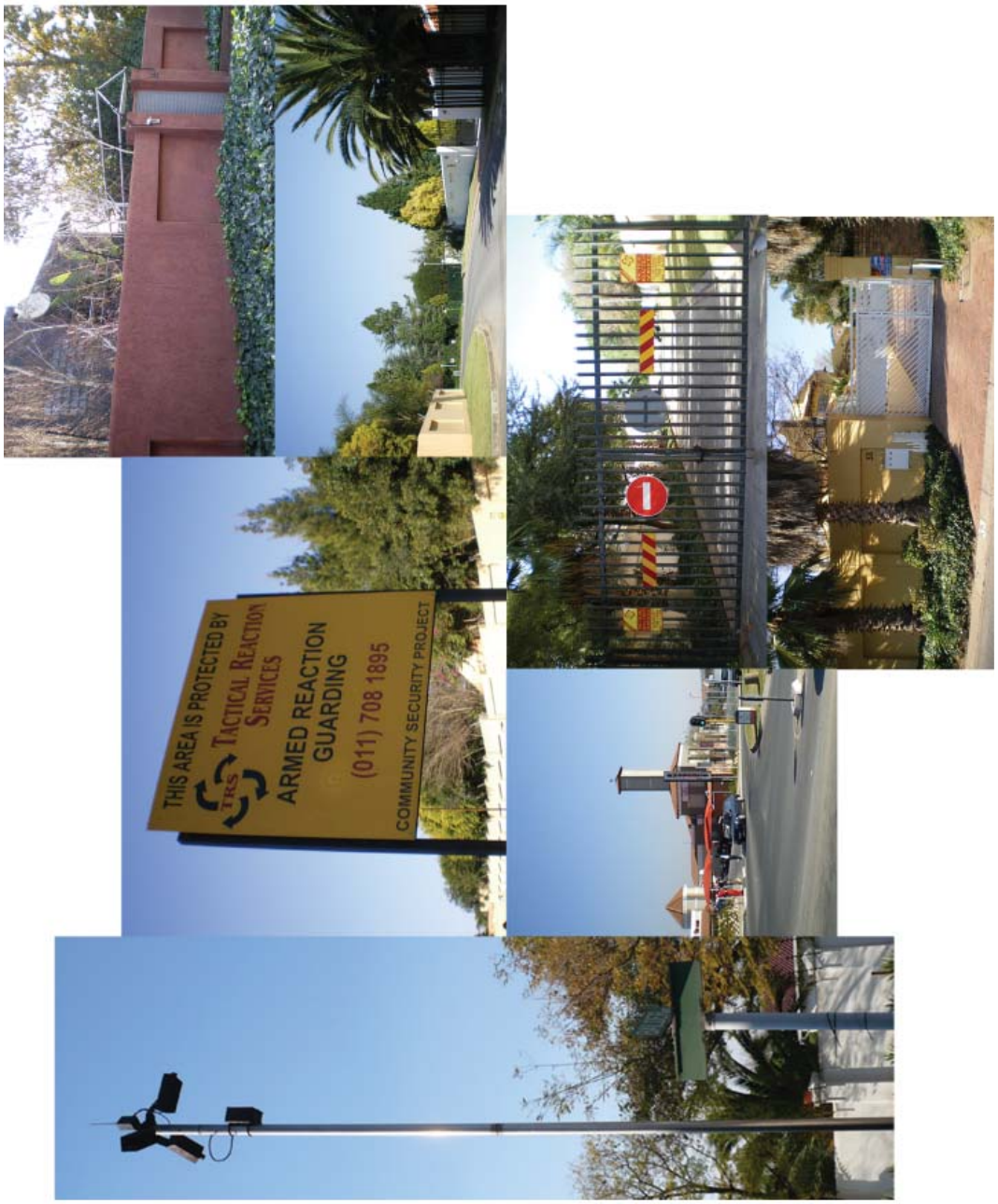


Figure 3.8 - Douglasdale site photographs

These photographs of Douglasdale show the strong presence of security elements, although most of them are more for display than for practical purposes.

have booms or gates and those few that do not, are often cul-de-sacs or dead ends generated by more gates. The main roads create very large, orthogonal blocks. These blocks are then carved into by snaking roads and more cul-de-sacs. The result is that these 'superblocks' have very few thoroughfares and are difficult to navigate.

The plot sizes vary enormously but are, for the most, part generous. The smallholdings, that do exist, create islands of open space amongst the denser housing of the gated communities. The 'internal' roads of the 'superblocks' are of average width but the pavements alongside the busier roads are wide, dusty, and inhospitable.

According to the census of 2001, Douglasdale has a total population of 4271 people, 46% of which are male and 54% are female. 257 (6%) of these people are scholars or students i.e. school children. There are 732 houses, 18 flats and 854 townhouses or cluster houses in the suburb. The breakdown of the population by race is: 72% white; 22% black; 2% coloured; and 4% Indian (City of Johannesburg 2001).

Gated communities in Douglasdale

Falcon Lane is an enclosed neighbourhood. A cul-de-sac of fourteen houses has been gated where the lane meets Balder Road. The houses do not differ in any significant way to the surrounding houses that are not enclosed. Falcon Lane is quiet in terms of pedestrian traffic, but no less quiet than Douglasdale in general.
Hanover Square is a townhouse complex consisting of eighteen houses. There are no communal facilities and each house is surrounded by a low wall to provide privacy. There is very little difference between the eight townhouse complexes in the case study site (Figure 3.9). They may vary in size and consequently the larger complexes may have communal facilities, but, otherwise, they all contain freestanding houses separately walled within the larger boundary wall.

Comparison

The case study site of Witpoortjie has the most facilities and is well serviced. There are also a high number of schools in the immediate vicinity, resulting in a high level of pedestrian activity centred around the commercial strip. Montgomery Park has the fewest amenities and this reflected in the low level of pedestrian activity. Many retail facilities are within a short distance of the Douglasdale case study site but the grid pattern is so awkward as to render these facilities within an inconvenient walking distance. As a result the level of pedestrian activity is low in Douglasdale as well.



Figure 3.9 - Douglasdale gated communities

The many gated communities of Douglasdale with their secured, guarded and coded entrance ways.

The walls in the case study sites may be influenced by the levels of activity in the streets, i.e., some fences may be relying on passive surveillance, while masonry walls may be creating privacy from the busy street. The number of facilities in an area may also point to the sense of community experienced by residents and, therefore, shape attitudes towards walls between neighbours.

Witpoortjie, with its high level of pedestrian activity, may be relying on the benefit of passive surveillance as an additional element of security. It may also explain, as is revealed later in this chapter, why some walls are still very low. Another explanation may have to do with a community atmosphere, generated by the many community amenities. Friendly neighbour relations may be keeping walls low.

3.1.2 Choice of Sites

Witpoortjie

The suburb of Witpoortjie was chosen primarily because many of the boundary walls are still very low, or in some instances, non-existent. The street pattern is orthogonal and differs hugely from the cul-de-sacs of Douglasdale (Figure 3.10). Instead, Witpoortjie has a clear hierarchical road system. Another reason for choosing this site is that there are very few gated communities in the area. There are only a few small townhouse complexes and more common, are small apartment blocks.

I chose to document two adjacent, parallel streets in Witpoortjie: Ham Street and Haynes Street. I documented the houses along the length of two blocks to give a cross section of the suburb. The houses run from the main busy boulevard (Corlett Avenue), through the commercial strip along General Pienaar Avenue, and ending at the quieter boulevard of Trezona Avenue.

Montgomery Park

Montgomery Park was chosen for its representation of the average, the ‘normal’ condition. The houses and streets are average and the suburb has no defining character or flavour (Figure 3.11). The suburb has a few gated communities but as yet, is not dominated by these developments. This area is the closest of the three case study sites to the central business district but is still very much suburban.

My choice of houses in this suburb was determined by the location of the townhouse complex. The townhouse complex, the largest in the area, occupies an entire block. The scale, though, is not out of place in the context but the number of units allows for a sense of community to exist. This was why I chose to look at this particular

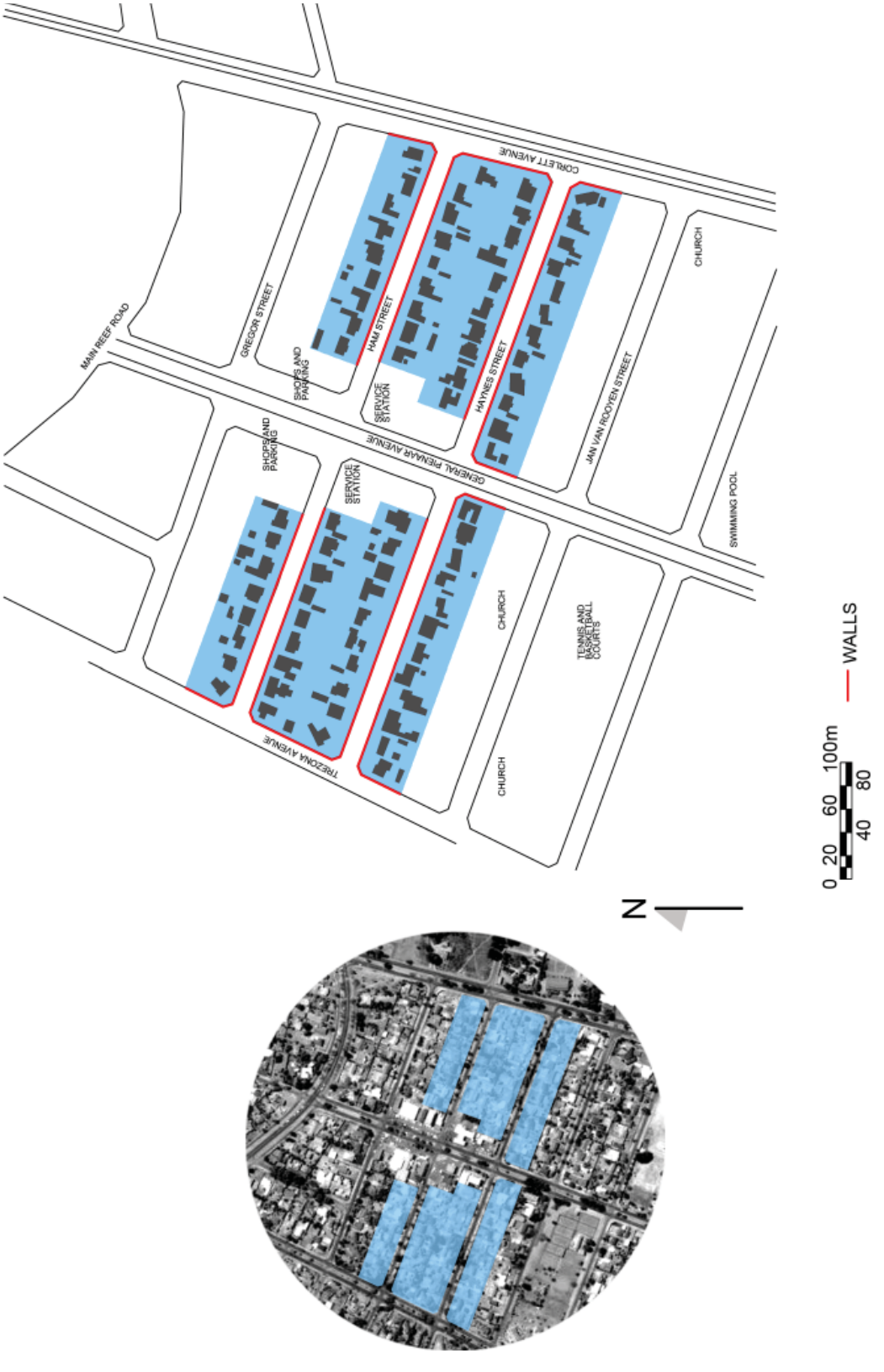


Figure 3.10 - Detailed map of Witpoortjie

A detailed diagram of the case study site showing the houses and walls that were documented.

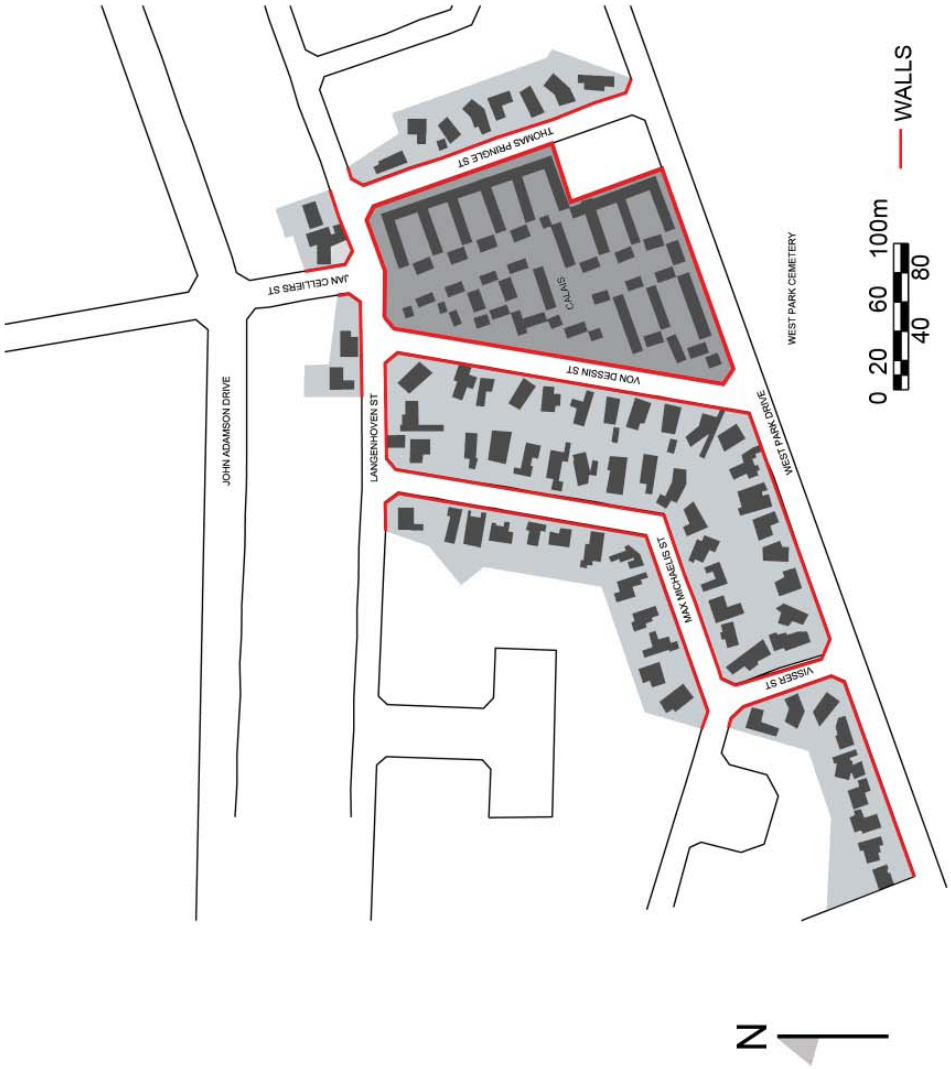




Figure 3.11 - Detailed map of Montgomery Park

A map of Montgomery Park case study site illustrating the houses documented in light grey and the gated commuity shown in dark grey.

gated community. I then chose houses in the suburb for their location in relation to this gated community, looking at houses in the same street as the development and houses further away. The walls of these houses in various locations can be compared with one another and with the walls of the gated community.

Douglasdale

The area of Douglasdale was chosen because of the proliferation of gated communities. Houses and various different types of gated communities exist side by side. Walls become continuous elements. The suburb is also more affluent and could be considered exclusive. The street pattern has winding streets and very few thoroughfares (Figure 3.12).
The 'superblock' I chose to work with, has many types of gated communities in existence as well as the presence of several detached houses outside of these developments. There are two enclosed neighbourhoods. One of these has permanently restricted access to the internal roads where only residents can enter; and the other enclosure is a cul-de-sac that is only secured at night, allowing unrestricted access during the day. There are eight gated communities in the block of the residential estate or townhouse complex type. I surveyed all the houses in the block as well as several of the gated communities.

The three case study sites were chosen in relation to one another because of their differences (Figure 3.13). All three differ in their street patterns, the type and height of the walls, and the number and type of gated communities in the suburb. They are all situated north of the city centre in previously 'whites only' areas. Walls abound in Johannesburg, houses in townships are walled, offices and office parks are walled, and even retail and recreational facilities such as parks are walled or fenced. There are many more subtle variations of the wall that are not represented in these case studies but I feel that these three sites provide a good foundation for looking at walls in suburbs, especially for comparison between the walls of houses and the walls of gated communities.

3.1.3 Observations

Witpoortjie

Nearly every household has a dog, from the very small to the very large. This may be an additional security measure, in the form of watchdogs, but this may also indicate that the suburb is family orientated and the generous plot sizes allow for pets. Other security measures observed were the presence of a couple of patrol cars from private security firms.



Figure 3.12 - Detailed map of Douglasdale

The gated communities of the case study site are shown in dark green while houses are a light green. The walls that were visible from public roads were documented.

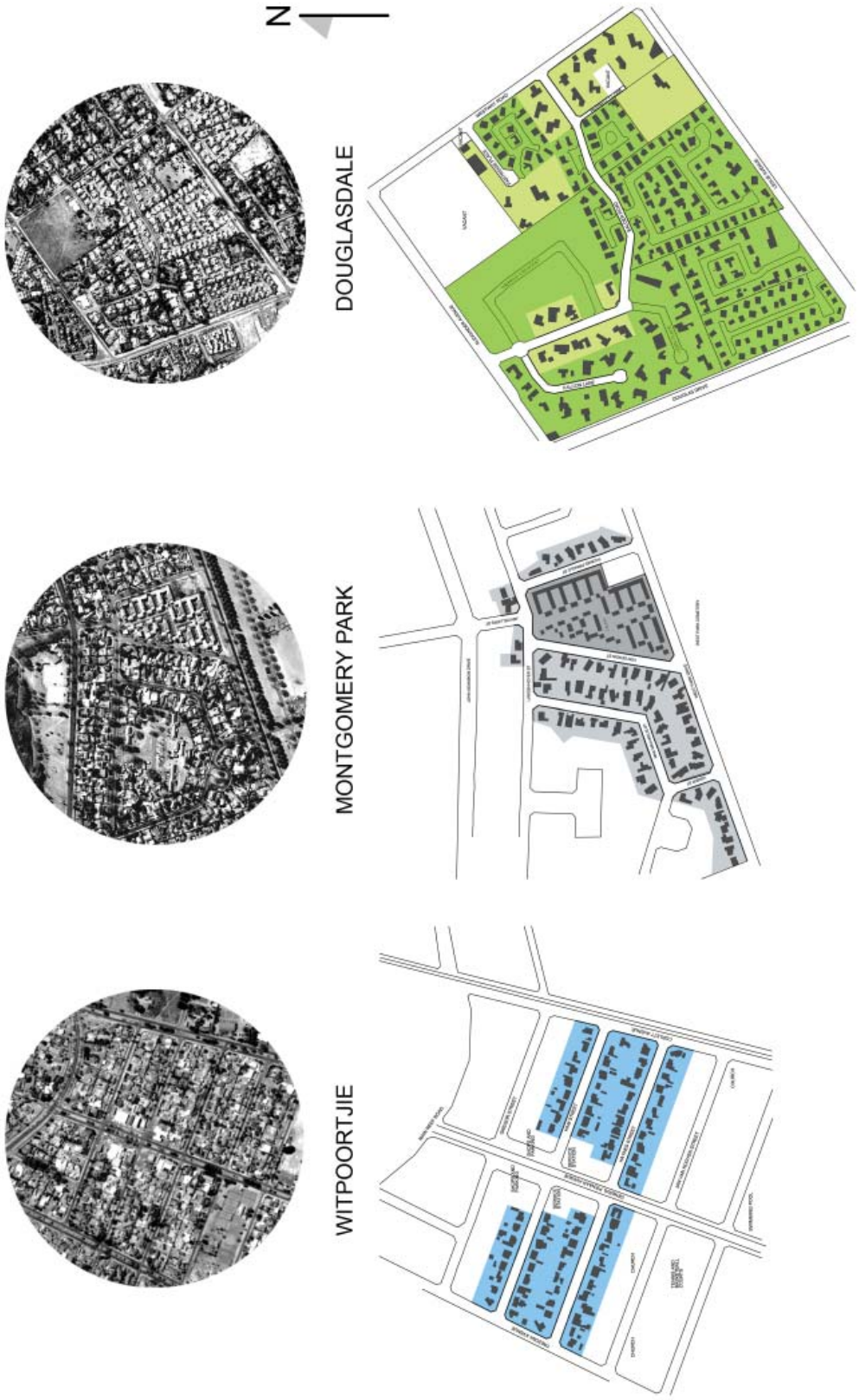


Figure 3.13 - Detailed maps of all case study sites

This diagram shows all three case study sites for comparison. The size and density of each area varies. Witpoortjie has the highest number of houses in the smallest area while Douglasdale illustrates the reverse.

Personal Observation

In Chapter Two, I looked at the concept of suburbia being an extension of the private home. Suburbs in Johannesburg were designed to limit social interaction and I certainly experienced this private disposition while conducting my research. The sense of being an intruder in these suburban areas pervades through all three case study sites. I constantly felt that I did not belong and that I was invading these residents' privacy. Quite a few residents expressed curiosity in what I was doing but this was observed from a far. Only three people actually came up to me and asked me what I was up to. More often people peered at me from across the street or from behind net curtains.

Mary Baumgartner's research into American suburbia revealed similar behavioural patterns. Residents of suburbia try to avoid confrontation as much as possible even if it is in their own interests to solve the problem. "They would rather suffer their problems than confront the offenders openly" (Baumgartner 1988: 81). It would appear that residents of suburbia, both here and in the U.S.A., share the same anti-social behavioural patterns.

In terms of vehicular traffic, the boulevards General Pienaar and Corlett Avenue are quite busy but Haynes and Ham streets are quieter, though cars still pass regularly every few minutes. The commercial strip, where the shops are located, is the main focus of pedestrian activity. Most pedestrians are either coming or going from these shops. In the afternoon, I observed a number of children walking in the streets and even a small group of girls playing alongside the road.

Montgomery Park

There is evidence of quite a few home businesses in the suburb. I observed a few school children walking or cycling upon their return from school but did not see, or hear, school children playing, either in the streets or yards. I was surprised to observe that a few of the boundary walls are quite low in height and therefore not elements of security. I was surprised because I am quite familiar with the suburb but only in driving through. From the car, the features of the suburb have become blurred into a general view.

Douglasdale

The 'internal' streets of the large residential block have little in the way of vehicular

or pedestrian traffic. Most of the vehicular traffic was residents arriving or leaving their homes, even during off peak periods. There were also several vehicles of a delivery or maintenance type active in the area. While there were no children playing in the streets, I did see a few playing in their front yards. In the one enclosed neighbourhood, there were two home businesses, presumably the reason for the gate of the enclosure being open during the day, but these generated no visible activity.

When travelling by car, the images of suburbs are combined into a general view or average image. It is not possible to see subtle differences and changes, and sometimes, the reality is blurred. In this chapter I examine the wall in general terms, combining all the visual information and forming a series diagrams and averages. This is designed to give an overview to a site in the same way that a drive through the suburb would. When travelling at a slower pace, on foot or bicycle, walls reveal more variety and differences. A number of unusual wall conditions were observed in all three case studies and these will be investigated in a more detailed way in Chapter Four.

3.2 Diagrams

Six main physical characteristics were considered when documenting the boundary walls: the house number; the wall material; the material of the vehicle entrance gate; the pedestrian gate; the height of the wall; and electric fencing. These characteristics served to outline how the wall was functioning; the relationship between the wall and the house; the level of visibility the wall afforded; and indications of personalisation. The physical characteristics have been compiled into graph-like diagrams which will be explained. The data collected from each area will also form part of this exploration and each area will be compared with one another. (See Appendix 1 for complete data figures.)

3.2.1 Graph Diagram

These diagrams have been designed to represent the actual conditions in each neighbourhood and thereby provide a more accurate feel for what the average is. An average for each case study would reveal very little of what is actually occurring in the case study site. For example, an average for Witpoortjie shows that the boundary wall consists of a fence. What this does not illustrate is that nearly every second house has a masonry wall. The diagrams are designed to depict every wall condition accurately while also revealing the common condition.

Each suburb is represented by a circle, divided into wedges (Figure 3.14). Each wedge represents a unit: a house or gated community. Smaller, concentric circles

Figure 3.14 - Detailed explanation of graph diagram

This diagram explains how the graph diagram represents each individual house in the case study but also how it can be read to give an overall 'average' for the site.

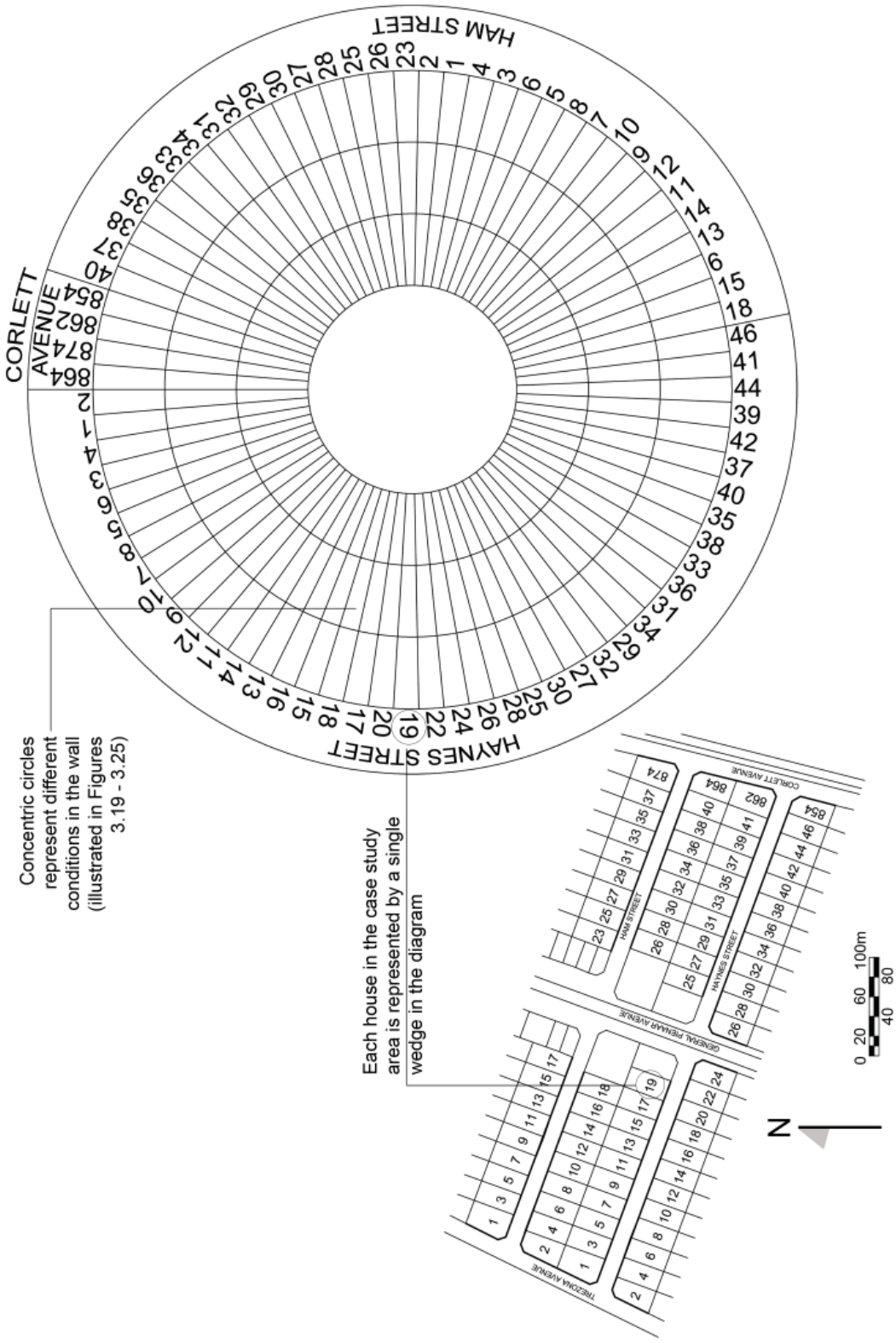


Figure 3.15 - Witpoortjie graph diagram

This diagram shows each house in plan and how it is represented in the diagram.

within the larger circle represent subcategories; the wedges are coloured up to that circle to indicate that particular physical characteristic. The concentric circles are graded so that the inner circle represents the sub-category with the least visual impact or the most agreeable sub-category while the outer circle represents the variation with the most visual impact or least desirable variation. The more complete circle or the circle which is most clearly defined represents the most common condition.

The circle for Witpoortjie has been divided into 78 wedges representing 78 houses (Figure 3.15). The diagram for Montgomery Park has been divided into 69 wedges, 68 houses and 1 gated community (Figure 3.16). Douglasdale has been divided into three separate circles. These have been differentiated in order to compare the houses of all three case study sites, as well as to compare the houses of Douglasdale with the gated communities in the suburb (Figures 3.17 & 3.18). One circle represents the 27 houses in the case study site; the second represents the 14 houses of Falcon Lane, the enclosed neighbourhood; and the third represents the 8 townhouse complexes in the area. Because the number of houses represented in each neighbourhood circle is different, the diagrams cannot be compared on a strictly quantitative basis. Instead, the diagrams are designed to give a sense of what is occurring in the neighbourhood and to allow for a rough visual comparison.

House Number

The house number category considered three variations: a number on the driveway; a number displayed on the wall or gate; and a number on the exterior wall of the house (Figure 3.19). I looked at the house number for two reasons. The first was the fact that the number of the house is usually the first identifying and unique feature of the house. For visitors, it is the feature that easily separates the house from its neighbours'. The second reason was that the placement of the number gives some idea of the level of privacy sought; the role of the boundary wall; and possibly, the method of arrival of most visitors. For example, a number on the driveway suggests that the majority of visitors will be arriving by car and limits interaction to the outermost extremity of the domain of the house. In contrast, a number displayed on the wall of the house itself invites the visitor to approach the house and also suggests that the wall is not a significant visual barrier with regards to viewing the house itself.

The diagram of Witpoortjie illustrates that the majority of houses have numbers on the house itself while a few houses have the number on the wall or gate. Quite a few houses (seven) have no numbers at all while only one house displays the house number on the driveway alone. Montgomery Park illustrates a high level

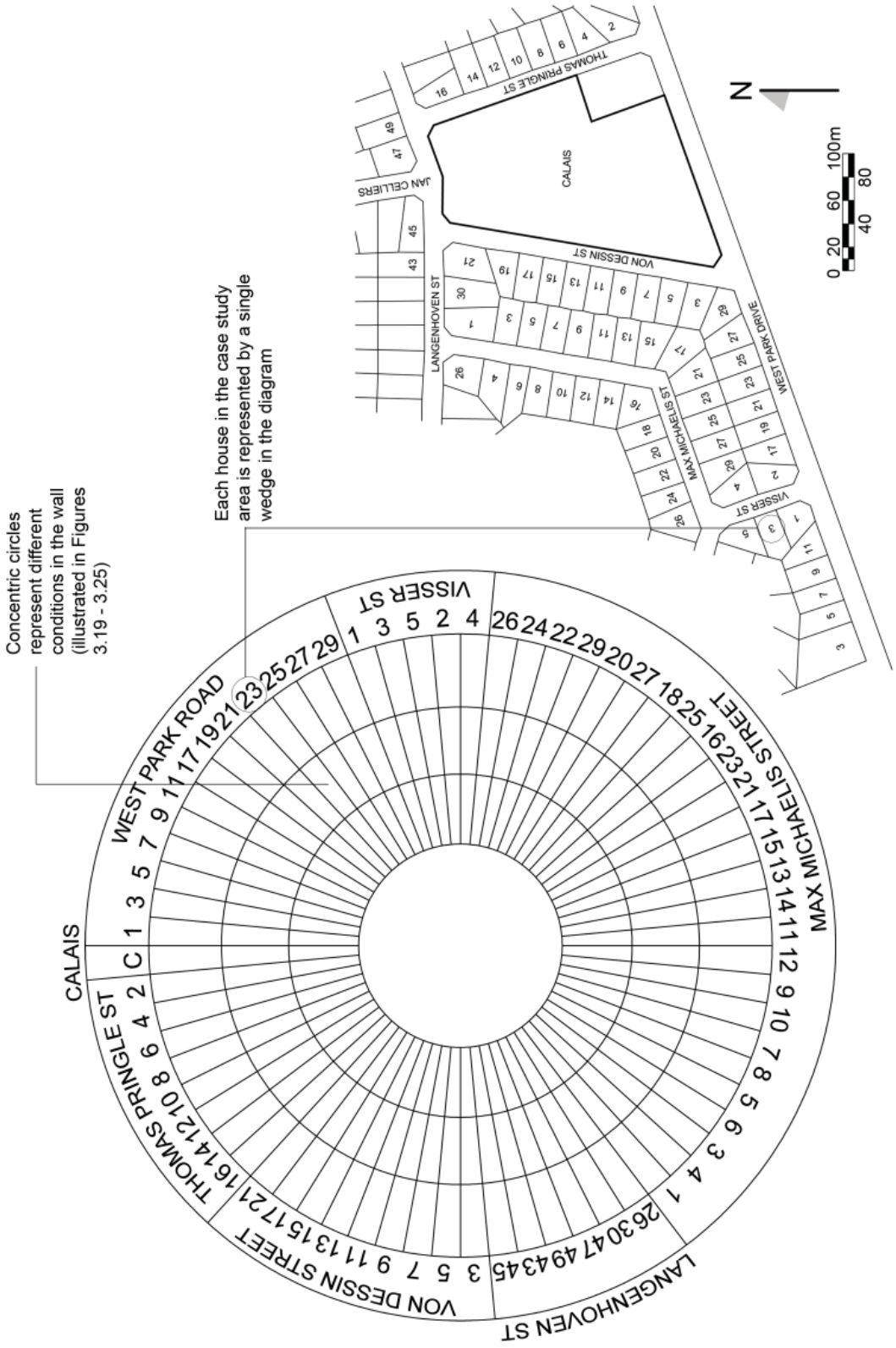


Figure 3.16 - Montgomery Park graph diagram

Each house in the case study site is represented in the graph diagram.

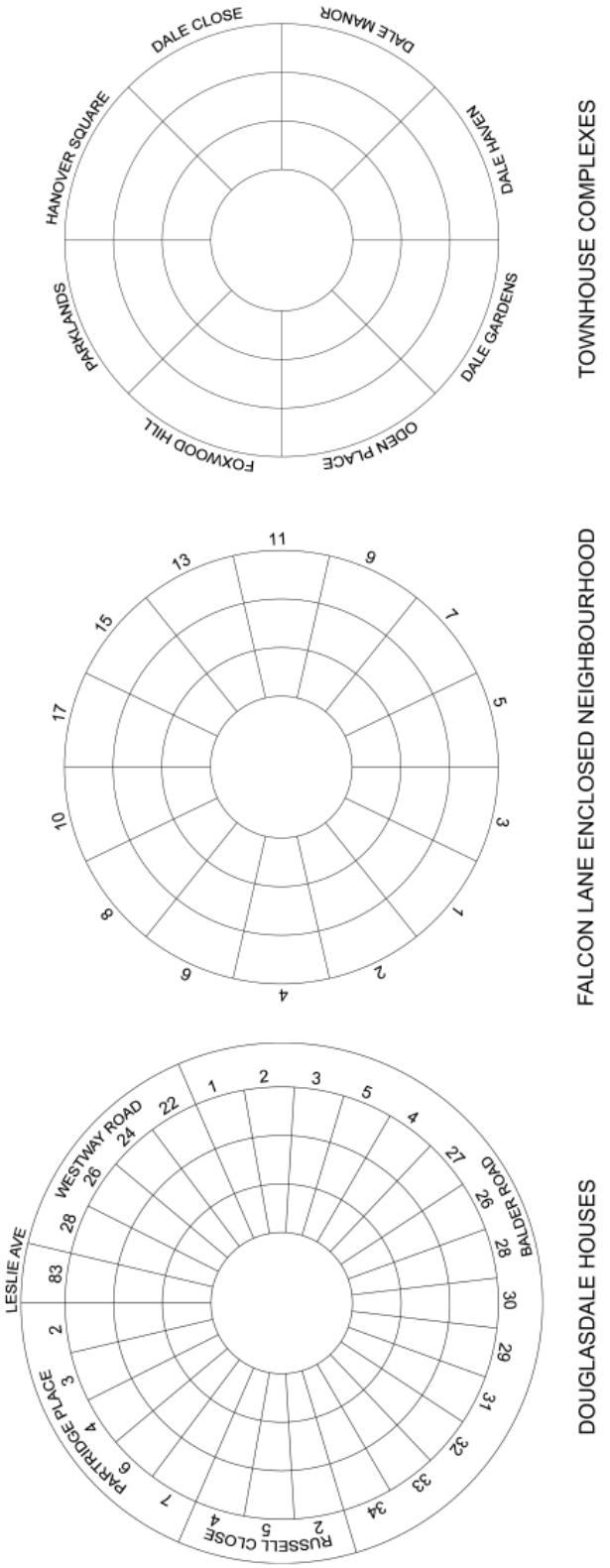


Figure 3.17 - Douglasdale graph diagrams

These diagrams represent the three different house types in Douglasdale. The first illustrates the 27 houses in the site, the second shows the enclosed neighbourhood of Falcon Lane and the third illustrates the eight townhouse complexes.



Figure 3.18 - Douglasdale map

This map shows the houses and gated communities, represented in the graph diagrams (Figure 3.17), in the context of the case study site.

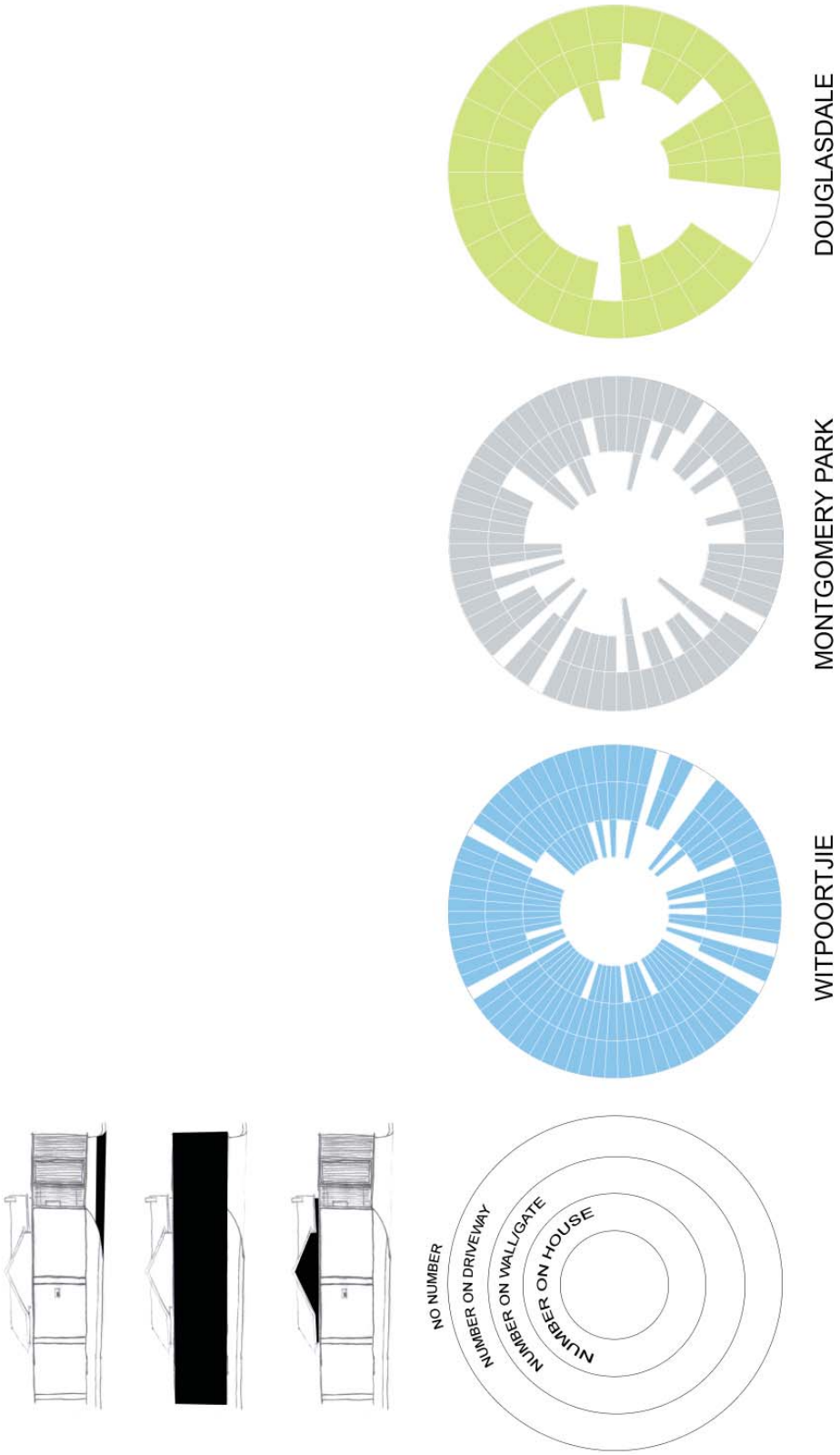


Figure 3.19 - House number

This diagram shows the placement of house numbers. Montgomery Park shows the most variety and Douglasdale the most uniformity with most house numbers being displayed on the wall or gate in both Montgomery Park and Douglasdale.

of variation but the majority of houses have the house number on the wall or gate. Equal numbers display the number on the house or driveway, and only four houses have no number at all. The diagram representing Douglasdale indicates a preference for the number to be displayed on the wall or gate, with only a few deviations from this 'norm'. Only two houses have no number at all. Chapter Four looks at the meaning of the house number in greater detail.

In Witpoortjie, the preference for the display of the house number on the house indicates that the wall is generally not a significant visual barrier in viewing the house. Despite the fact that the houses are set back from the street edge, the numbers and houses can be read clearly. The house facade is still the means for communicating identity and has not been transferred to the wall or fence. The placement of the number on the house also suggests an invitation to step closer to the house, rather than limiting the communication to the outside boundary.

In comparison, Montgomery Park shows much less uniformity in the application of house numbers. It is clear that individual preference is the main driver behind the display of the house number. It represents the freedom of the individual as well as reluctance to prescribe to a neighbourhood standard. In Douglasdale, there is much less variety, suggesting that there is a standard or 'norm', although, this standard differs from the standard of Witpoortjie. Douglasdale shows a preference for limiting the communication of the house number to the wall or gate, but this is to be expected in a more affluent suburb dominated by the presence of gated communities.

Prior to the construction of a substantial boundary wall, the facade of the house functioned to identify or differentiate itself from its neighbours'. This could be done in any number of ways, but the house number is the most defining feature of this process. If the house and the display of the house number on the facade can no longer be seen because of the visual barrier of the wall, the house number must be displayed on the wall, gate or driveway in order to be visible. In Douglasdale and Montgomery Park more masonry walls are hiding the house from view because more house numbers are displayed on the wall than on the house itself.

Wall Material

The category of the wall material has three variations: fence; hedge; and masonry wall (Figure 3.20). The type of wall material is an indicator of how much privacy is sought and how visible the house and the yard are from the street. A fence allows for the most visibility and slight variations may include fencing above a low wall or between masonry pillars. A high masonry wall affords the least visibility of the three variations, but a hedge may also be a significant visual barrier. In some cases, a

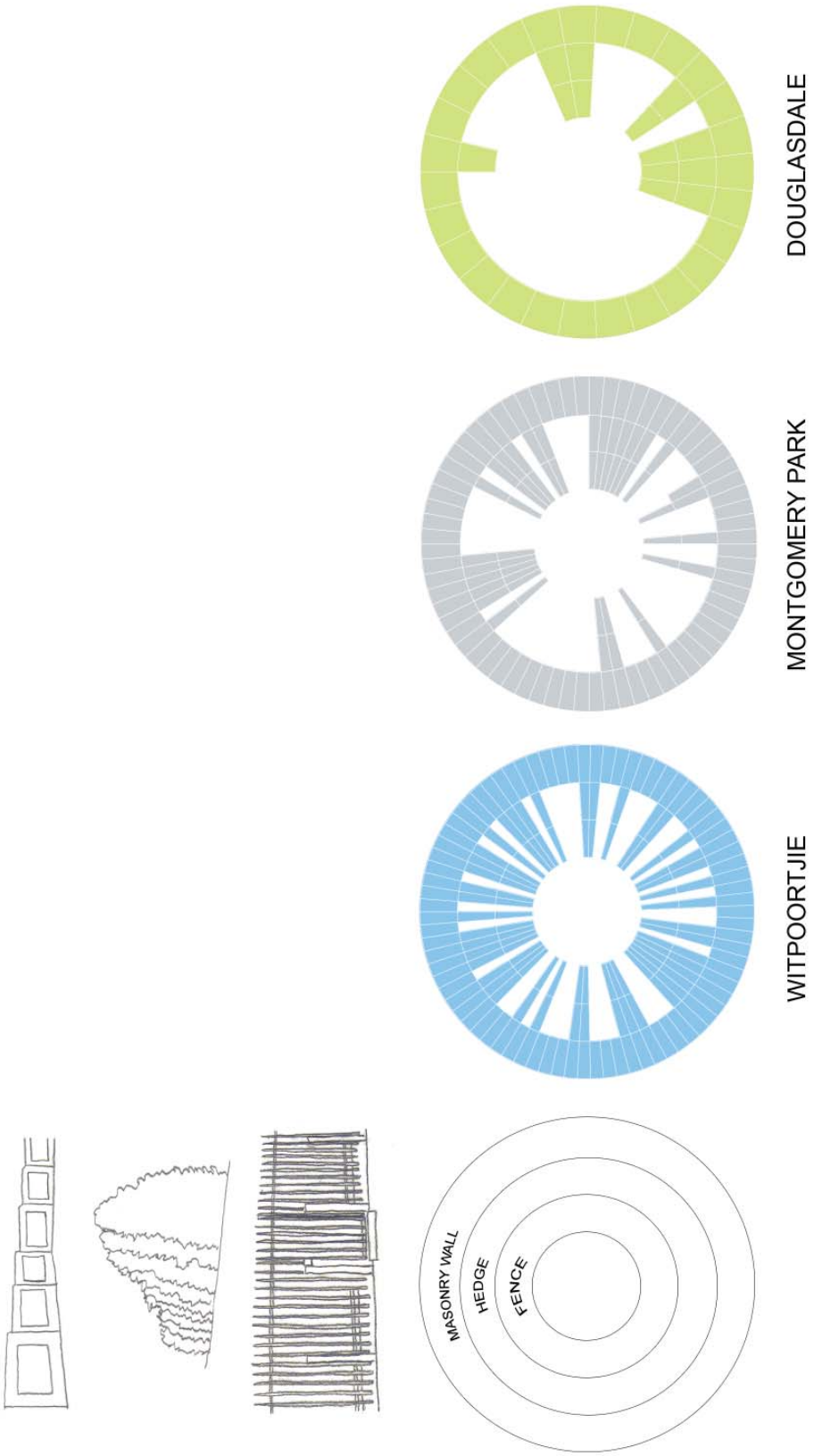


Figure 3.20 - Wall material

This diagram shows the main wall material.Witpoortjie alternates between masonry walls and fences while Douglasdale is dominated by masonry walls.

hedge may allow for some transparency into the yard but in other cases, the hedge may be considerably higher than a wall, and therefore, be quite imposing.

In Witpoortjie, the diagram shows that the houses alternate between masonry walls and fences. Walls and fences are found with equal measure. This is also true of Montgomery Park but instead of alternating, the conditions appear to be grouped into clusters of houses or sections of the street. In Douglasdale, the preference for masonry walls dominates the area. Witpoortjie, with the most fences, has streets with the least number of visual barriers. In fact, the masonry walls in Witpoortjie are often quite low, and therefore, present even less of a visual barrier. In contrast, Douglasdale is almost completely walled and offers streets with many visual barriers. The ability for passive surveillance to take place is compromised in both Montgomery Park and Douglasdale. The opportunities for casual interactions between residents, neighbours and pedestrians are also reduced.

Wall Height

Height is an important factor, which, when considered with wall material, gives a strong indication of the level of visibility the wall affords. The height of the wall is indicative of its function as well as further enhancing or inhibiting visibility. A low masonry wall or fence may only function as identification of territory; or to keep pets within the yard. This condition creates a high level of visibility, enabling pedestrians to see the house and the front yard. A high wall may be functioning more as a measure for security and can also reduce the visibility of the house from the street.

The Johannesburg City Council Building By-Laws stipulate that a wall greater than 1,8m in height requires planning permission (City of Johannesburg 1974). The sub-categories for the wall height were guided in part by these building by-laws for a number of reasons. It serves to reason that the majority of residents will build walls to this height, achieving the maximum without needing plans and approval. Secondly, many of the standard, pre-manufactured products (automated vehicle entrance gates, palisade fencing and pre-cast walling) will also be of this height for the same reason. The height of 1,8m also has human proportions, allowing a person of average height a degree of visibility, especially from across the road, while anything above this severely compromises visibility. So, therefore, the three sub-categories for the height diagram are: walls greater than 1,8m, walls equal to 1,8m and walls lower than 1,8m (Figure 3.21).

In Witpoortjie, by far the majority of houses fluctuate between a boundary wall that is 1.8m in height and a boundary wall that is lower than that. Only two houses have walls greater than 1.8m in height. In Montgomery Park, the majority of boundary

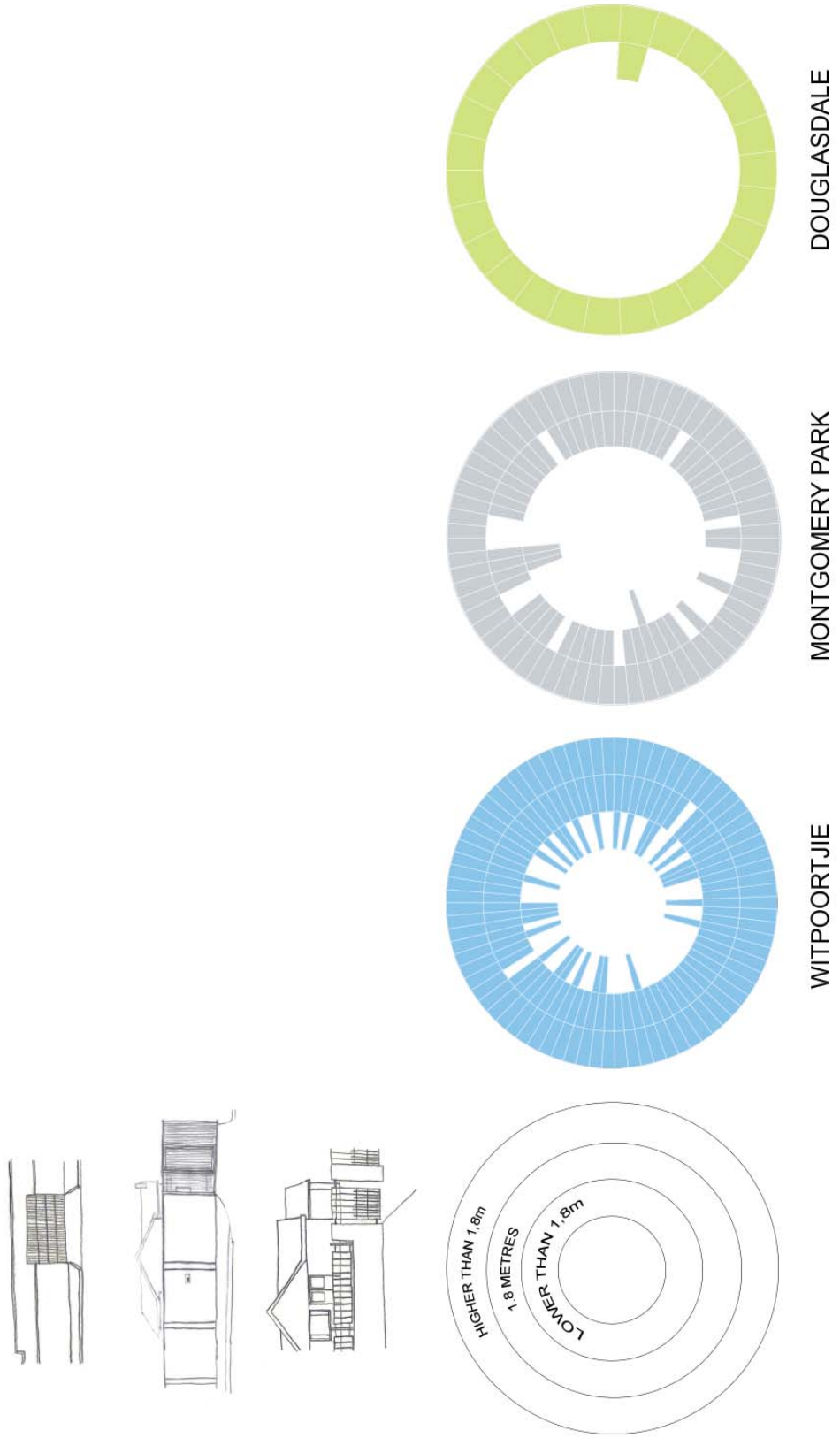


Figure 3.21 - Wall height

This diagram shows the wall height. Douglasdale and Witpoortjie contrast strongly with Douglasdale showing all but one wall greater than 1,8m in height and Witpoortjie illustrating the majority of walls equal to or lower than 1,8m.

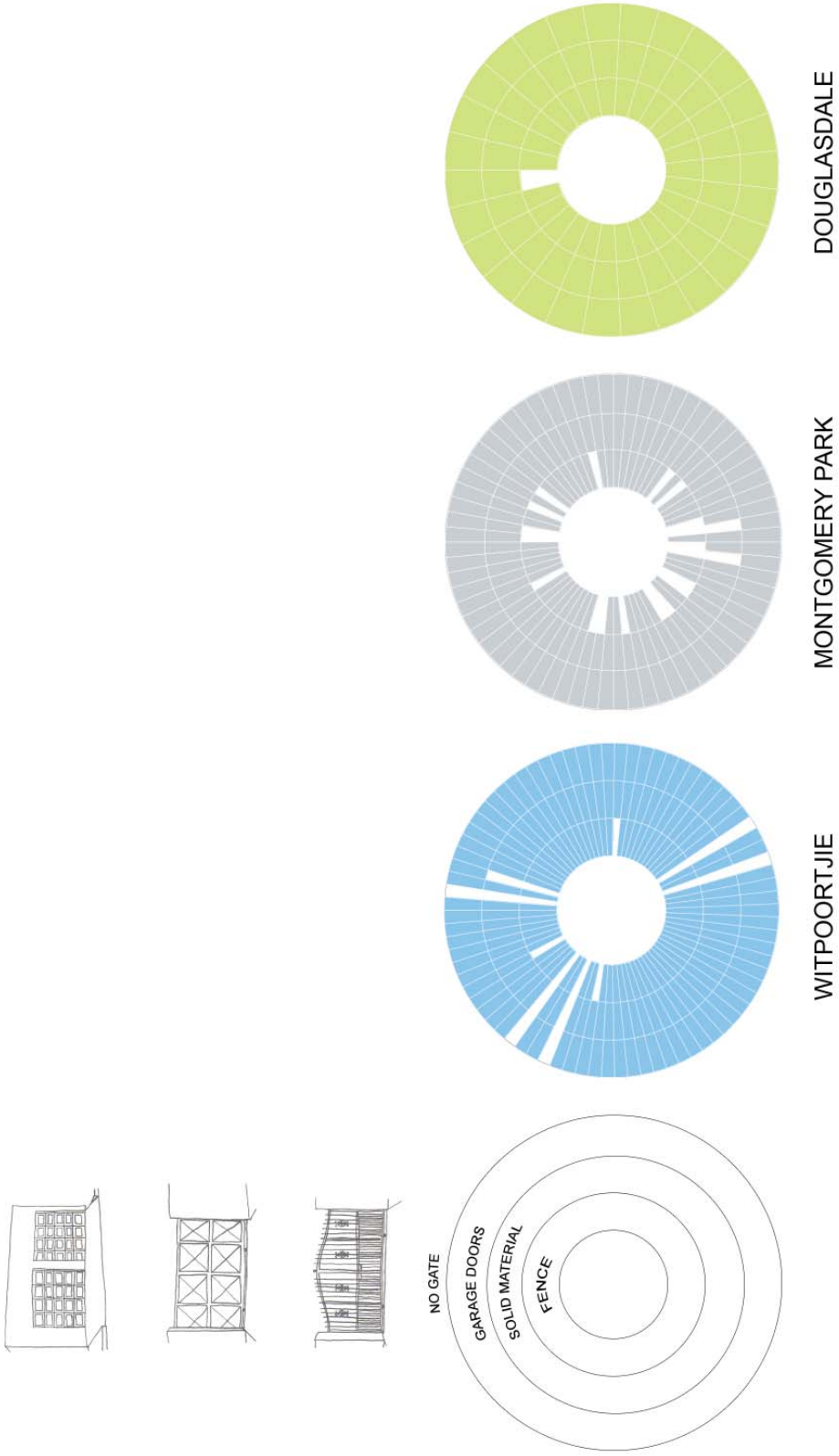


Figure 3.22 - Gate material

This diagram shows the material for the vehicle entrance gate. All three diagams show a preference for a fencing material. In addition, Witpoortjie shows five houses with no gate at all.

walls are equal to 1.8m in height, while there are quite a few that are greater than 1.8m. All but one of the houses in Douglasdale, have walls greater than 1.8m in height. In this way, it is clear that Witpoortjie has the lowest walls on average and Douglasdale has the highest walls. The height of the walls is the most distinctive feature, giving each case study site a different feel.

Gate Material

The category for the entrance gate for cars is divided into three types: a fence material; a solid material; and garage doors (Figure 3.22). In the first two types, the material used indicates the level of visibility afforded, and in the situation where a house has a high masonry wall, the entrance gate may be the only transparent element of the boundary. In the third type, garage doors indicate that the wall's function incorporates the garage and in a sense has been 'thickened' to accommodate this function.

The most common choice of gate material is a fencing material, clearly shown in all three suburbs. In the majority of instances, the gate is pre-manufactured, one of the reasons for the uniformity in the preference for a fence material. Another reason is that for added security, the gate is often motorised, opening and closing with a remote, necessitating a light weight gate that can be attached to the motor.

Gates are also likely to be the most cost-effective solution, cheaper than solid gates or garage doors. Garage doors that open out onto the street are seen to be more vulnerable to car hijackings and, in addition, building by-laws have limited the number of garages that extend to the boundary line.

Witpoortjie illustrates few deviations from a gate material of fencing and uniquely illustrates five houses with no gates at all. Montgomery Park show a few houses with gates made from a solid material, usually a form of metal panelling, and a couple of houses with garage doors incorporated in to the wall. Douglasdale shows only one house with a vehicle entrance gate of a solid material. In Montgomery Park and especially Douglasdale, where the houses have masonry walls, the vehicle or pedestrian gate may provide the only level of visibility of the house and yard.

Walls that include garage doors begin to take on the appearance of a second facade to the house. With the various openings and the visibility of the house almost non-existent, the wall takes on some of the anthropomorphic qualities normally associated with the house. Again, the wall is replacing the house as the primary means of communication.



Figure 3.23 - Pedestrian gate

This diagram illustrates the presence of the pedestrian entrance gate. All three diagams enormous variety highlighting no particular standard for pedestrian gates.

Pedestrian Gate

There are three variations for the category of pedestrian gate: walls that have a separate entrance specifically for pedestrians; a pedestrian gate that is included in the vehicle entrance gate; and finally, where there is no separate provision for foot traffic (Figure 3.23). The provision for pedestrians may be indicative of the type of transport commonly used by visitors. In the case of a separate pedestrian gate, the wall may take on a more formal, ceremonial role, where the gate is followed by a formal path that leads to the front door of the house.

Just over half the houses in Witpoortjie do not provide any form of pedestrian gate, although, many houses provide a gate within the vehicle entrance gate or even a separate gate. Montgomery Park shows less uniformity, with no clear preference for any sub-category. Douglasdale also illustrates a high level of variations, in contrast with previous diagrams, but on average, still prefers the provision of a pedestrian gate within the vehicle entrance gate.

The presence of a pedestrian gate may indicate the reception of more visitors on foot, to be expected in an area with higher levels of pedestrian activity and more emphasis on community. However, in this respect, Witpoortjie should have more pedestrian gates because of the proximity to good public transport and the greater sense of community within the area. But this is not the case. A pedestrian gate may, therefore, be more an indicator of a more formal ceremonial approach to the front door. Ultimately, though, it may simply be an indicator of economics: the provision of a pedestrian gate only an unnecessary additional expense.

Electric Fencing

The final category of electric fencing simply divides the houses into two: those who have electric fencing and those who do not (Figure 3.24). The presence of electric fencing may indicate a greater need for security but is also seen to be an indicator of affluence because it is generally a more expensive solution to security. Therefore, it can indicate an exclusive air as well as adding to the fortress-like elements.

It could be argued that the visual effect of an electric fence is minimal when compared with a wall or even a fence but electric fencing can also provide noise pollution. Many an electric fence, after a fierce Highveld thunderstorm, can be heard tick tick ticking, as the electricity sparks across an obstruction. The electric fencing as a symbol of wealth and exclusivity, may also outweigh its visual properties.

The majority of houses in Witpoortjie do not have electric fencing on top of the

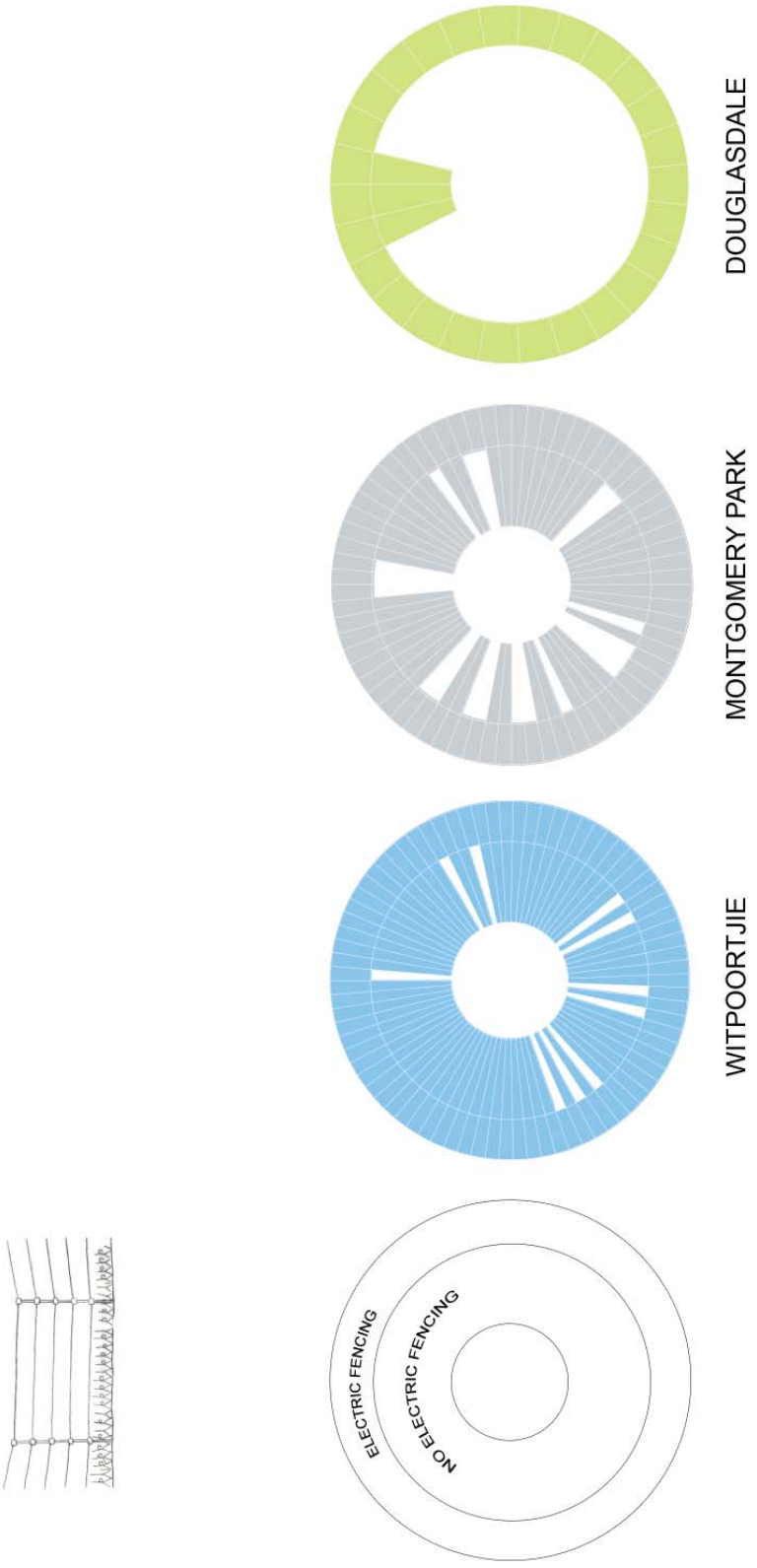


Figure 3.24 - Electric fencing

This diagram shows the presence of electric fencing on top of walls. Few houses in Witpoortjie have electric fencing, a few more have in Montgomery Park and finally, nearly all Douglasdale houses have electric fencing.

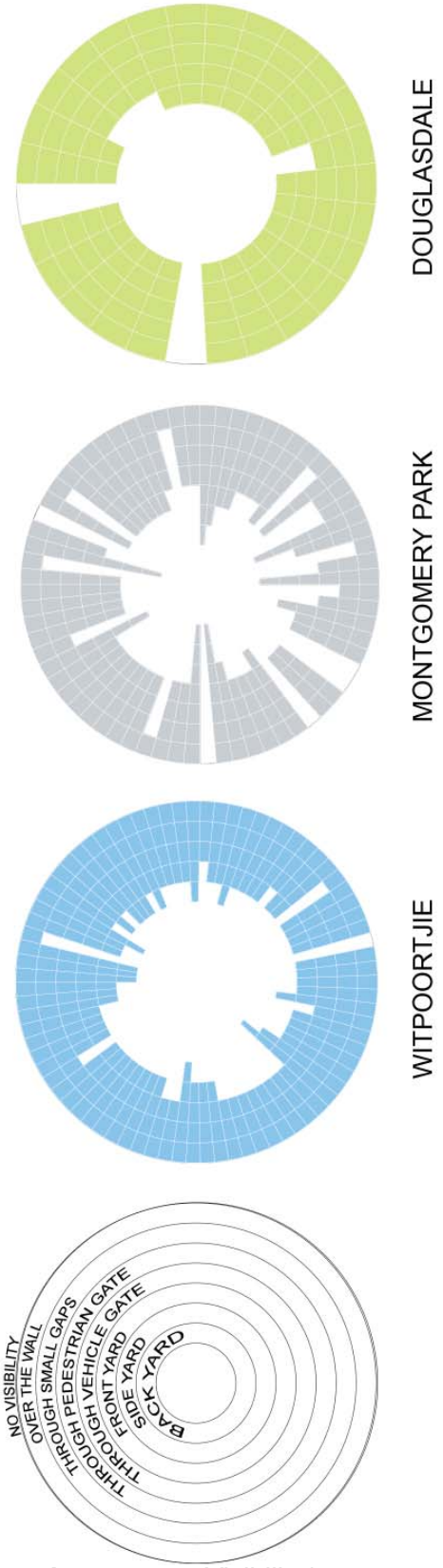


Figure 3.25 - Visibility/ transparency

This diagram is a combination of the six physical characteristics, illustrated previously, to show the level of visibility each wall affords. Again, Montgomery Park shows variety while, surprisingly, Douglasdale offers a fair level of visibility too.

boundary walls, while in Montgomery Park, there are more houses with electric fencing, but the majority of houses do not have electric fencing. Douglasdale is again more uniform, with nearly all of the houses having electric fencing. This expected because of the affluence of the area.

The Visibility/ Transparency of the Wall

These final diagrams combine all six physical characteristics together and are an evaluation of the level of visibility of the house and yard from the street (Figure 3.25). This is based on the idea that people need to 'read' and understand the 'expressions' of the house. These images look at how visible the house is in order for it to be understood. At the same time, it is also an evaluation of how much surveillance is possible, from the house looking onto the street. There are eight levels of visibility: no visibility; being able to see over the wall; being able to see through small gaps; a transparent pedestrian gate; a transparent vehicle entrance; the front yard is visible; the side yard is visible; and, finally, the back yard is visible.

The diagram for Douglasdale is the most surprising because, despite the high walls and masonry walls, there is still a high degree of visibility of the houses from the street. Montgomery Park has the most variation between houses and surprisingly, Witpoortjie, despite its low walls and fences, shows a varied level of visibility as well.

3.2.2 Average Conditions

Witpoortjie

The average house in Witpoortjie displays the house number on the house itself and the boundary wall is a fence, 1.8m in height (Figure 3.26). The vehicle entrance gate is also a fence material and there is no provision for a pedestrian gate. Very few houses have electric fencing. This translates into a high level of visibility when walking down the street and combined with the wide pavements, gives the whole area a sense of openness and space.

Montgomery Park

The average house in Montgomery Park has the house number displayed on the boundary wall or gate (Figure 3.26). The boundary wall is of masonry construction, 1.8m in height, and with a vehicle entrance gate of fencing material. More houses than not have made provision for pedestrians in the form of a pedestrian gate within the gate for vehicles, or with a separate pedestrian entrance. Visibility in the

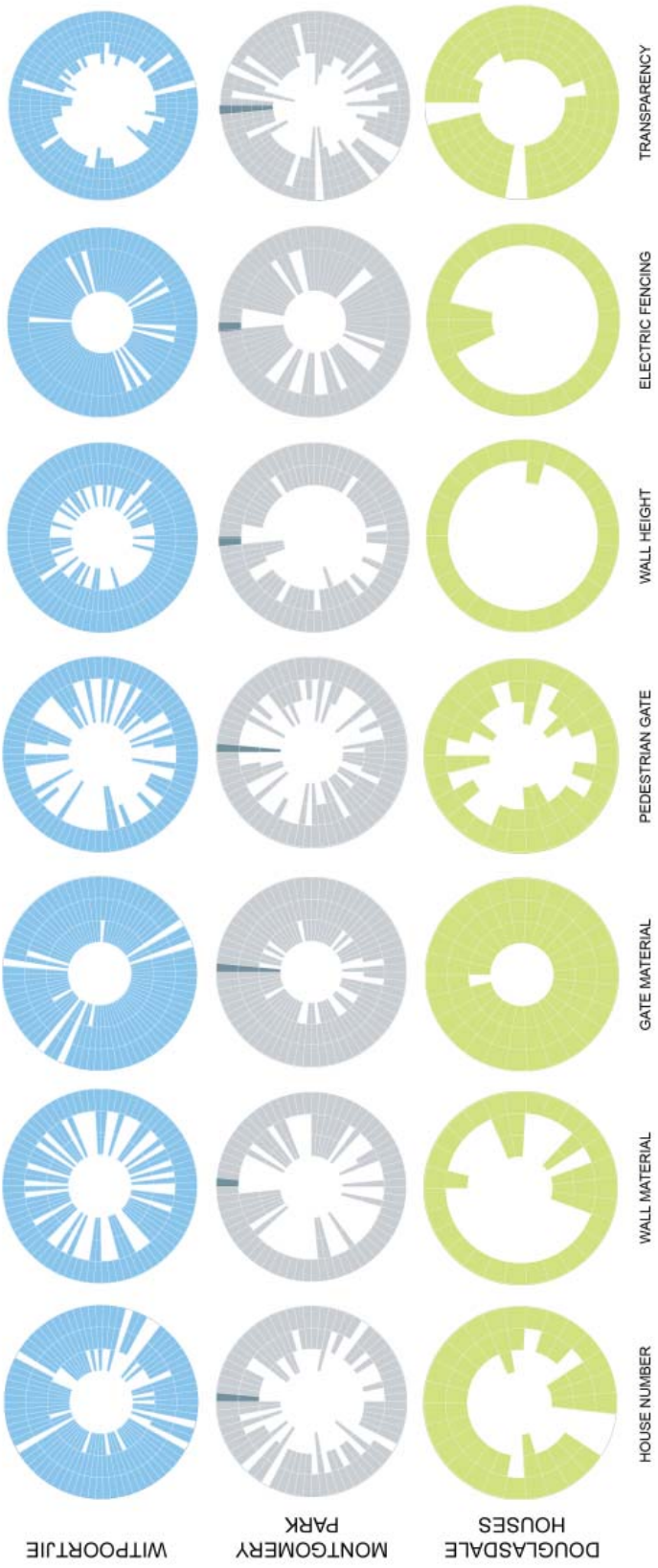


Figure 3.26 - All case study houses

This diagram compares all the conditions for the houses in each case study site.

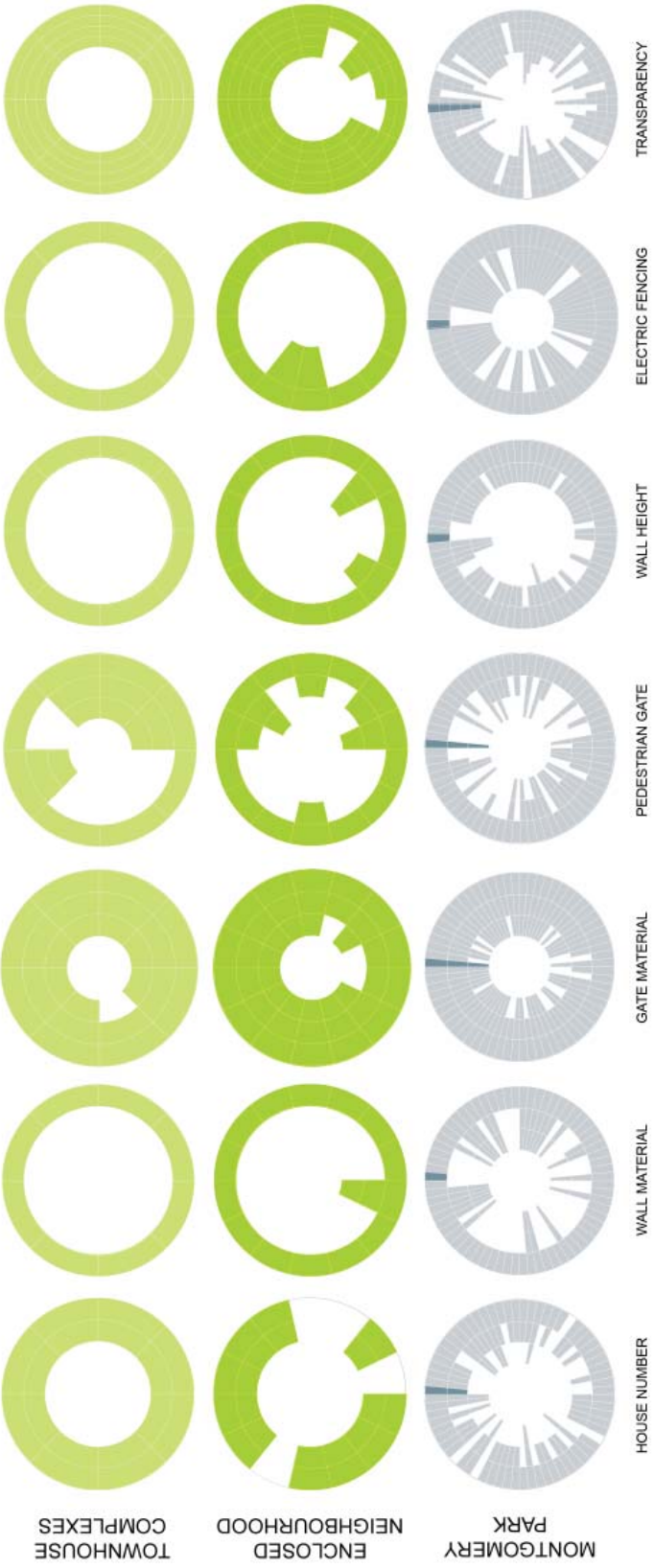


Figure 3.27 -Gated communities

These diagrams illustrate the similarities between the wall conditions of the gated communities in both Montgomery Park and Douglasdale.

street is impaired by the masonry walls but this is broken frequently by the highly transparent entrance gates.

The boundary wall of the townhouse complex, Calais, is two metres in height and is topped with electric fencing (Figure 3.27). The length of wall that contains the entrance has decorative vegetation and is well tended. The other three lengths are still maintained but are not as decorative. The entrance is emphasized with two double storey buildings on either side which form a 'bridge' over the double entrance gates. The guard room is situated on the left hand side and is adjacent to the pedestrian entrance. On the surface, the boundary wall of the complex conforms to the average wall conditions in the suburb. However, the double storey entrance is imposing and does impact on the streetscape.

Douglasdale

On average, the house numbers of the properties are placed on the boundary wall or gate (Figure 3.26). The boundary wall is at least 2m high and is a masonry wall. The majority of houses use fence material for the vehicle entrance gates. The house has a pedestrian gate, either a separate entrance or a smaller gate within the vehicle gate. This vehicle entrance provides most of the visibility, through to the front yard. In addition to the high walls, the average house has electric fencing.

The gate that encloses Falcon Lane is unobtrusive and not covered in loud signs dictating the rules of entry. On the right hand side is a doorbell interface that allows for contact to the individual houses. The walls of the individual houses reflect the average conditions of the case study site almost exactly (Figure 3.27). The house numbers are displayed on the wall or gate, if at all. The wall material is of masonry construction, while the gate material is most commonly fencing. The average with regards to the pedestrian gate is to provide nothing.

The entrance to the complex of Hanover Square is off a quiet cul-de-sac and has an imposing entrance gate, about five metres in height, with a guard room between the two entrance gates. The boundary wall surrounding the complex is less imposing but is about two and a half metres in height with electric fencing and offers very little visibility into the complex. The other townhouse complexes in this area follow this pattern very closely (Figure 3.27).

In fact, the walls of gated communities only differ marginally with the walls of the nearby houses (Figure 3.28). The walls of gated communities have no greater visual impact on the neighbourhood, than the walls of the detached houses in Douglasdale. Because the walls in Douglasdale conform more and are therefore very similar in appearance, the tendency to create a 'tunnel' affect is greater. The



Figure 3.28 -All diagrams

All the diagrams for each area are compiled here for comparative purposes. Overall Douglasdale appears to be much more uniform and standard than the other case study sites.

high level of variation in Witpoortjie and Montgomery Park reduce this 'tunnel' feeling even though the walls in Montgomery Park are still relatively high.

3.2.3 The Visual Width of the Street

The level of visibility of each house, effectively, widens the experience of the street. A street, lined with high walls, reduces the space to that of a tunnel. A street where houses and yards are visible, in varying degrees, makes for a more pleasant walking experience, and while not actually widening the space of the street, increases the width of visual space and leads to an increase in perceived space. In fact, the increased sense of space is experienced from both sides with the house yard also feeling bigger with a larger degree of visibility. The diagram, therefore, is an abstract representation of this widening process. Each boundary wall is rated according the level of visibility it affords from the street, this is given a specific dimension, that is not accurate, but that is added to the existing width of the street. In this way, the street is given a new visual width.

In Witpoortjie (Figure 3.29), the visual width of the streets is very wide and contrasts starkly with the narrow street spaces of Douglasdale (Figure 3.30). Montgomery Park (Figure 3.31) shows more variation but the streets are overall still narrower than those of Witpoortjie. These diagrams illustrate the visual impact of walls on the public street spaces. Witpoortjie is the only case study that could effectively allow for crime prevention though passive surveillance. However, pedestrians reveal in Chapter Five, that this increased visibility does not necessarily make them feel safer.

Conclusion

The case study sites were chosen because of their differences. Witpoortjie has the most community facilities in the area and, therefore, most likely to have more community associations and good neighbourliness. Witpoortjie also has some of the lowest walls and was selected for this reason. Douglasdale has far fewer community facilities and the highest walls along with a proliferation of gated communities. Montgomery Park fits somewhere in between with regards to walls and gated communities, but is the least well-serviced suburb with the least number of community facilities in the vicinity.

The diagrams representing the boundary walls' visual data were designed to accurately show each wall while also giving an overall view of each case study. These diagrams illustrate the visual impact the wall has on both the street and the house. Masonry walls were common in Montgomery Park and Douglasdale and this had two consequences. In the wall material category, a masonry wall compromises

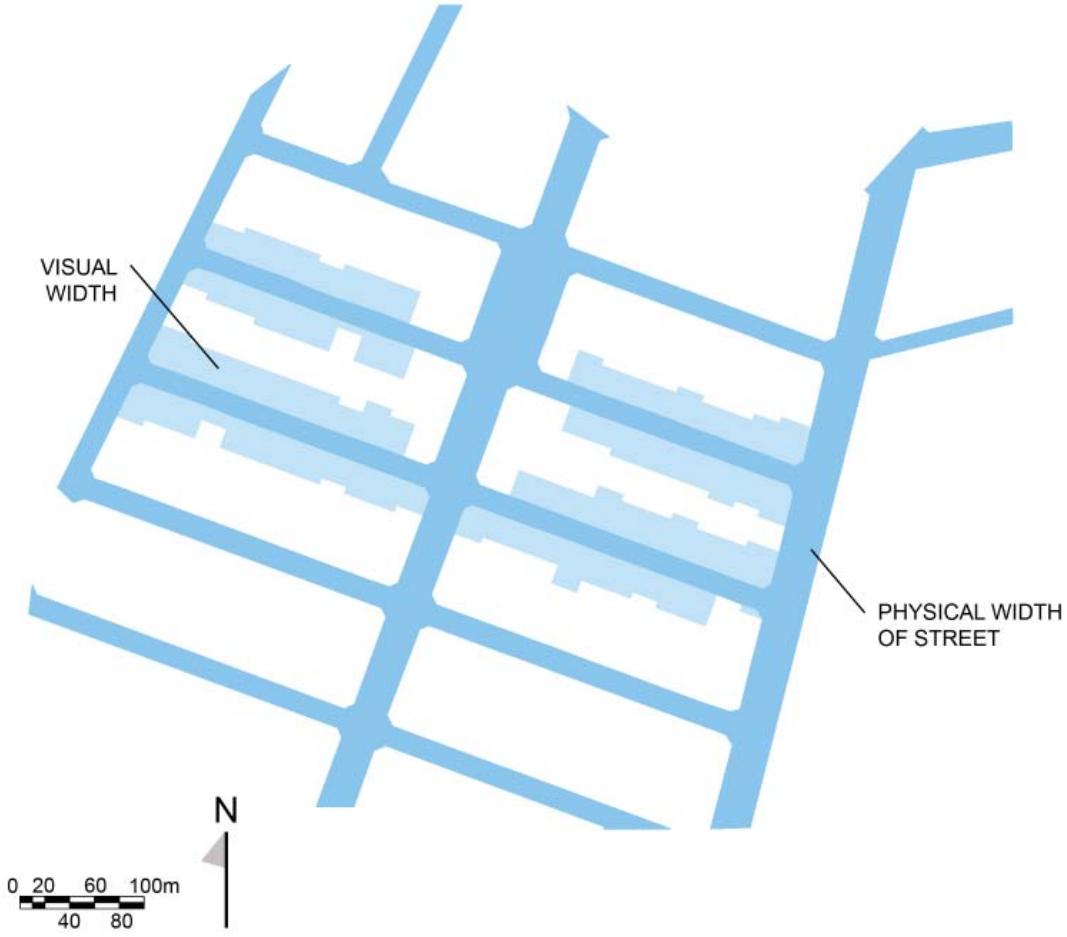


Figure 3.29 -Witpoortjie visual width diagram

This diagram illustrates the visual width of streets in Witpoortjie and it illustrates how the increased visibility has increased the visual width of the street fairly substantially.



Figure 3.30 - Montgomery Park visual width diagram

This diagram illustrates the visual width of streets in Montgomery Park and it illustrates how the visual width varies with each house.

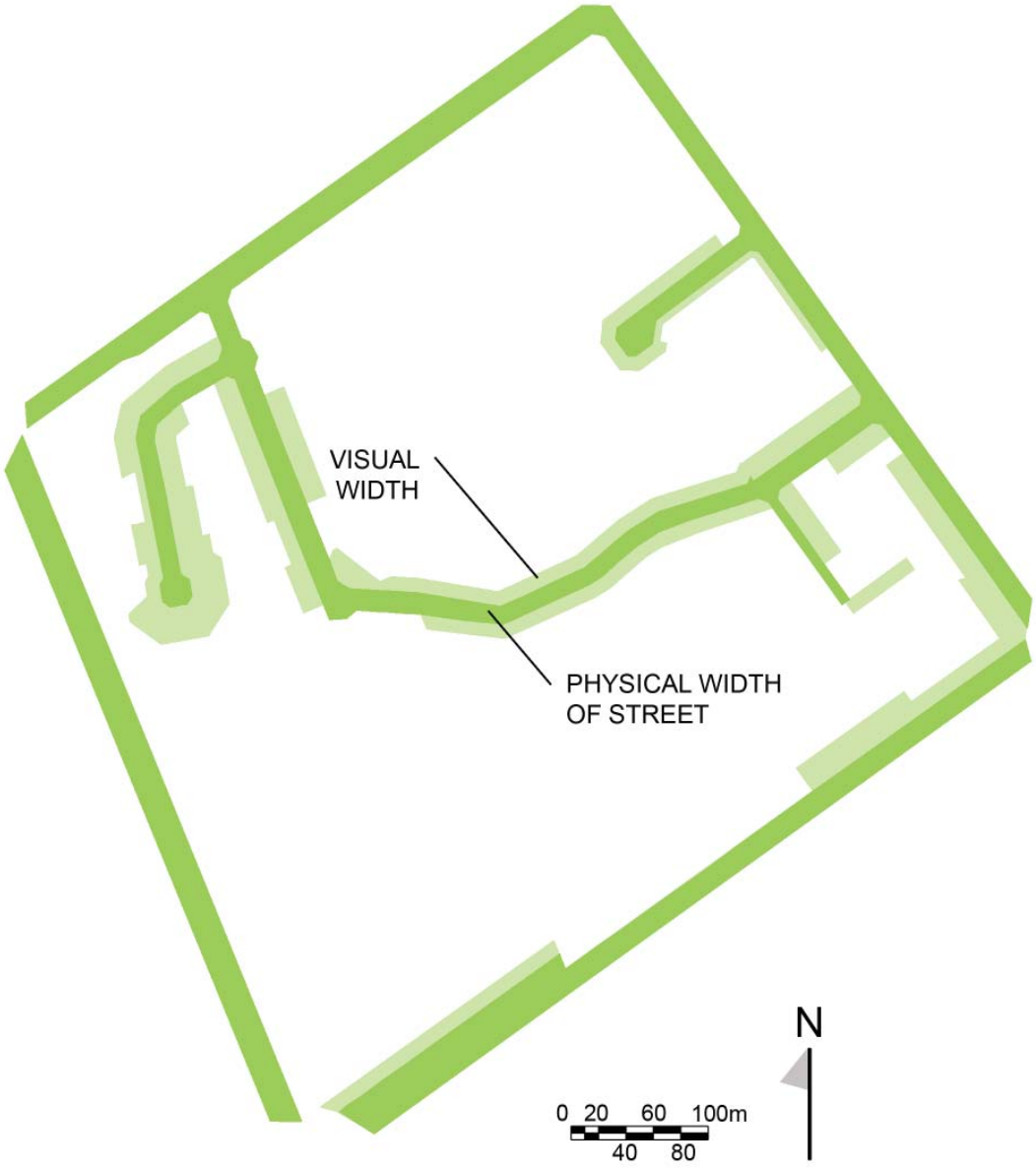


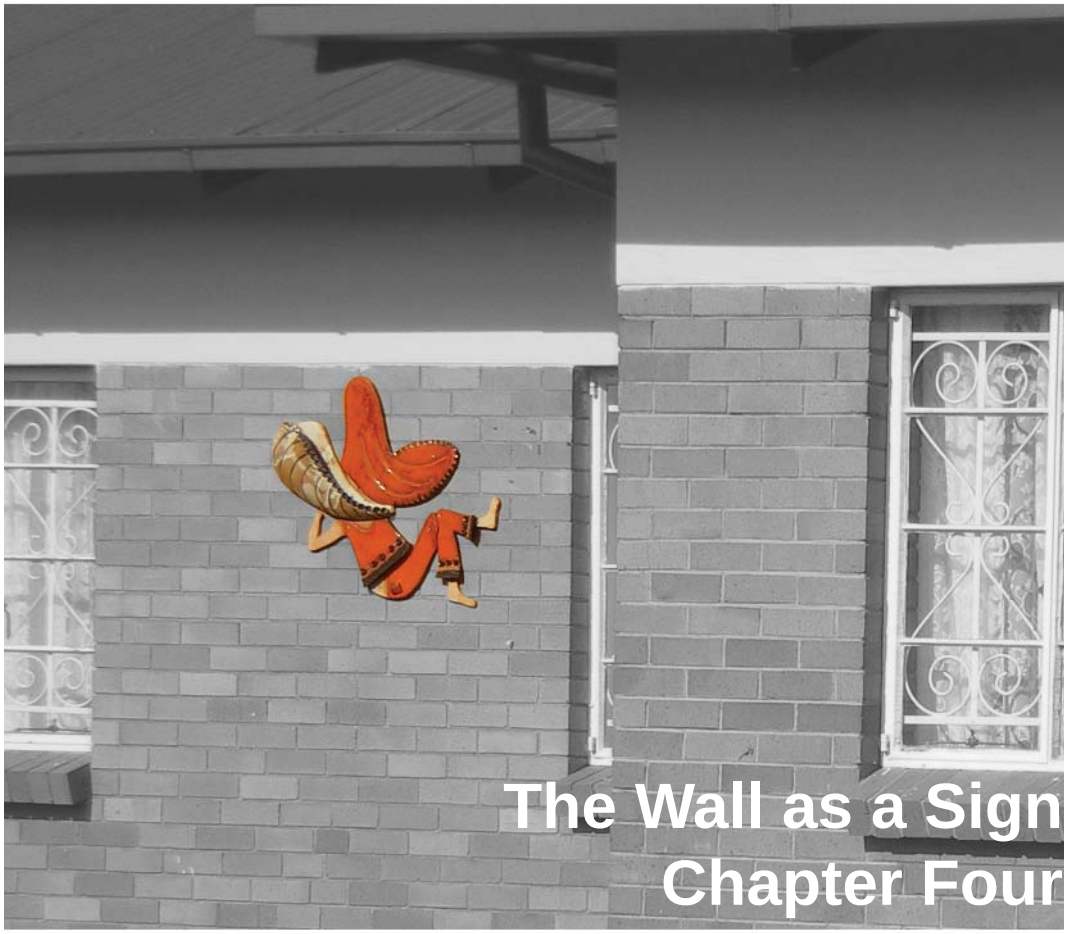
Figure 3.31 -Douglasdale visual width diagram

This diagram illustrates how the walls in Douglasdale do not add significant visual width to the existing streets.

the opportunity for passive surveillance. In the house number category, the masonry wall obscures the house from view, limiting the reading and interpretation of the house. In Chapter Four I explore the notion that the wall has replaced the house facade as the main form of communication.

The wall height category showed that this aspect of the wall is the most distinctive and definitive element. Each suburb derives its character from the average height of the wall demonstrated through each site's selection process. Witpoortjie has the lowest walls and Douglasdale has the highest. Douglasdale also has the most electric fencing, making it the most fortified area of the case studies. Despite this, Douglasdale still shows high level of visibility and this was mostly achieved through transparent vehicle entrance gates, in both Douglasdale and Montgomery Park. However, Witpoortjie showed the greatest level of visibility, resulting in the 'widest' streets and allowing for passive surveillance.
The most inconclusive category was that of the pedestrian entrance gate. All three case studies showed the various options in almost equal measure. The use and position of a pedestrian gate comes down to personal taste and economics. The most important finding was that gated communities, in both Montgomery park and Douglasdale, exhibited the same wall conditions as the average house in each area. The walls of gated communities are no more fortified than the walls of the houses in their respective suburbs and the only difference may be in length.

This chapter gives an overall picture of the visual impact of walls in the case study sites. More specifically, the wall is a visual barrier to the house and masks the facade. This has changed the meaning of the wall and this concept is explored in Chapter Four.



The Wall as a Sign
Chapter Four

"These structures [suburban villas] are ugly and often pretentious, of course, but each owner has created his own clearly defined world in the dimensions of today's collective psyche. Only in this spontaneous architecture, this architecture without architects, condemned by the esthetes, one can still see traces of authentic life."

(Marc 1997: 122)

A view of the street, from your house, is not always desirable in the suburbs. Friends sit on their front stoep, looking out, only to be confronted with a wall luminous orange in colour. As it so happens, it is also the most regularly maintained wall in the neighbourhood, and is painted at least once a year. In London, there are no orange walls or cobalt blue roofs, because all houses have to conform to the historical 'character' of the suburb. Our South African suburban walls may have no 'character' but they certainly have personality, even if it isn't to everyone's taste. As Robert Venturi points out that we should not throw out "the variety with the vulgarity" (Venturi, Scott Brown & Izenour 1977: 153).

Chapter Three looked at the visual and physical effects of the wall in a broad way in order to give a general overview of the wall in each case study. This chapter looks at the physical attributes of the boundary wall in much greater detail. The wall functions on two levels: at first glance, the wall functions to provide a boundary, privacy and security; but once probed, the wall functions as expression for the homeowners within.

This chapter first outlines these two different functional aspects, before detailing the levels, or planes of choice, at which personal expression occurs. Finally, I look at detailed examples in all three suburbs where walls have been explicitly decorated and where walls reflect more than a necessary purpose.

4.1 Function

4.1.1 The Function of the Wall

The physical characteristics illustrated in the diagrams in Chapter Three indicate the function of the wall. Some of these functions include the storing of motor vehicles, privacy and personal identification.

The function of a fence, on its own, cannot be considered to be privacy, although it may be supplemented with lots of vegetation to provide privacy. Vegetation and planting is not always for practical purposes and may also function as a decorative and personalised element. A hedge may function to provide privacy but if it has prickly thorns, it could also be considered to be an element of security. A masonry wall is more ambiguous in this sense, and could be providing any number of these functions. As discussed in Chapter Three, the height of the wall is also a sensitive indicator of its function.

Garage doors in a wall indicate that the function of the wall includes the storage of motor vehicles. A vehicle entrance gate, of solid material, suggests an emphasis placed on the continued need for privacy, completely shielding the house and front

garden from view. This may be desired in houses that face both north and the street, where the ideal living spaces are in full view of the street. As mentioned earlier, a separate pedestrian gate may have a more formal, ceremonial role, rather than a purely practical function.

The functions of a wall may extend beyond means of access and security. The wall begins to function as a means for communication, for the expression of identity. Nearly all of the physical elements in a wall can be personalised beyond their practical function so that they also speak about the owner's style and preferences.

If the house number features on the boundary wall, that wall starts to function as a communication tool, differentiating that house from its neighbour. Sometimes other decorative elements are applied in the same manner as the house numbers and serve to further personalise the boundary wall or house facade. Other elements of the wall can be used as a measure of differentiation but these are more difficult to define. A wall constructed of bricks may include a three-dimensional relief design in brick or a wall or fence may simply be painted a different colour to the surrounding houses in order to identify it. This is particular to context and therefore, difficult to define: a white wall in Douglasdale is quite common, though in Witpoortjie it stands out against the more natural colours more commonly used.

4.1.2 Identification

In Chapter Two, I discussed the meaning and symbolism present in the facade of the house, recalling that "[t]he doorway of a house, for example, contains a world of information about the people who live inside" (Lawlor 1994:9). And in Chapter Three, I looked at how a masonry wall affects the visibility of the house from the street. The ability for the facade of the house to communicate information about its residents is compromised by the presence of the masonry wall. In this chapter, I argue that the wall has begun to acquire these elements of identification and meaning, to compensate for the lack of visibility.

Conversely, the wall can be seen to be an impersonal and harsh element that requires a level of personalisation in order for it to reflect the house and its inhabitants. As Tadao Ando explains: "But a wall that bears a painted decoration – a signboard, in other words – becomes a sign and loses its wallness and its significance as a territory delineator" (Ando 1978: 13). According to Ando, the wall loses its purity and severity as a marker of boundary when it is embellished. Many residents may be wishing to soften the visual impact of their walls with personal details. Ando also stresses the fact that the wall becomes a sign. And in many cases, the elements of the wall begin to take on significance and meaning for its residents. The two reasons are subtle in their difference but, nevertheless, result in

the same personalisation of the wall.

4.2 Planes of Choice

In the chapter 'The Owner makes his Mark, Choice and Adaptation,' Ian Bentley outlines six planes of choice that inhabitants of 1930s semi-detached houses used to personalise their homes. These planes ranged from the house as a shell and its major features to items of furniture and accessories (Bentley 1981). In looking at how the boundary wall functions as a form of individual expression, I have applied the same concept of planes of choice. Because the boundary wall is far simpler than a house, I have chosen three planes of choice.
The first plane of choice looks at the initial decision to demarcate the boundary of the property. A household may choose not to indicate a boundary at all but, in most cases, the decision to demarcate the boundary also involves the decision concerning the dominant materiality of the boundary. This introduces the three main categories of the construction of the boundary wall: a masonry wall; a fence; or a hedge or vegetation.

These categories are the first plane of choice because changing from one category to the next may be difficult and expensive. The materiality of the wall may even feature when considering a house for purchase. Replacing an old established hedge with a masonry wall is just as difficult and expensive as replacing a masonry wall with a fence. This means that, in most cases, the main materiality of the wall will remain the same from homeowner to homeowner. This is similar to the shell of the house in Bentley's six planes of choice. The appearance and function of these boundary walls may be far more easily changed and adapted through the second and third planes of choice.

The second plane of choice for the boundary wall involves the elements that determine how the boundary functions in relation to the house. For example, the relationship of the boundary wall to the house will determine the positioning and number of vehicle entrance gates. The position of the garage may determine whether or not it is incorporated into the boundary. The inclusion of a pedestrian gate may dictate a formal garden path leading up to the front door. The level of privacy or security will determine the height of the masonry wall or fence.

These elements are primary to the practical functions of the wall. They control access and ensure privacy, the primary functions of the wall, but they are more easily adapted or changed than the first plane of choice. A pedestrian gate that is no longer needed can be removed or a fence that is too low can be extended. Therefore, these elements offer a higher degree of choice but still relate closely to the functional requirements of the wall.

The third plane of choice involves elements or aspects of the wall that can be very easily altered. Because they can be changed with little difficulty, these aspects function, most commonly, as a form of expression and identity, as each new resident can make his own mark on the boundary wall.

The primary element of identification is the display of the house number and here the variety of options is infinite. The variety of manufactured numbers available in hardware stores and garden centres is extensive, let alone the possibilities available for handcrafted house numbers. Other elements of personalisation may include ready-made decorative items, which can be bought from garden centres or flea markets, to be attached to the wall.

The third plane of choice includes many aspects of the wall, including the elements that form part of the second plane of choice. In the third plane of choice the functional elements go beyond the second plane when individual design and colour is considered. Further individual expression can be found in the variety of designs available in pre-manufactured items such as vehicle entrance gates and pre-cast concrete walling. In the cases of face-brick walling or some pre-cast walling, there is the additional choice of brick colour and texture.

But possibly the aspect that offers the most variety and flexibility is paint colour. Colour can be used to blend in with the neighbours' walls or stand out from them. Shades of colour can be highly personal or very neutral. This can be seen as the most powerful and most widely used element for personal identification. Simultaneously, though, because paint is so widely used for many elements of the boundary wall, it is difficult to establish when it is being used for practical purposes and when it is being used explicitly as a means of expression.

All of these elements in the planes of choice have a function in their own rights. A gate allows for access and paint protects the plastered wall but as Umberto Eco explains below; a primary function does not prevent these elements from communicating:

> "apparently most architectural objects do not *communicate* (and are not designed to communicate), but *function*...Indeed, this is so obviously and unquestionably the case as it might seem perverse to insist upon seeing as an act of communication something that is so well, and so easily, characterized as a *possibility of function*." (Eco 1986: 57)[Emphasis in original]

Three categories fall under the second plane of choice: wall material, gate designs and pre-cast wall designs. Two categories fall under the third plane of choice: wall colour and the house number.

4.2.1 Wall Material (Figure 4.1)

A boundary wall can either be primarily a masonry wall, a fence or hedge but many walls are actually a combination of these three main materials. Often, low masonry walls are extended in height with fencing or electric fencing. Sometimes masonry walls are extended with additional brickwork in a manner where this is made clear; however, in the case of plastered brickwork it is not always clear if a wall has been extended. Pre-cast walls and fences can also be extended and these changes are also usually visible. In this way, the history of the wall and its adaptation is clear to every passer-by.

Brick walls allow for a number of finishes and design that make it the most versatile wall material. A simple face-brick wall can be constructed with a variety of brick colours and texture to differentiate it from the next wall. The wall can also be plastered in a number of different textures and the brickwork itself can be used to create three-dimensional patterns or details. In comparison, fencing is very standardised and variations are minimal. Fencing can provide individual expression through detailing but the most common form of palisade fencing is free from any decorative elements and is widely used in all three suburbs, consequently, giving no sense of personalisation.

A hedge as a form of a boundary wall is very uncommon and it could, therefore, be said that from the outset a hedge differentiates itself from the neighbouring walls. A hedge may be used in conjunction with a low masonry wall or fence to give residents additional privacy. To a horticulturist or keen gardener, hedges can be further differentiated through the type of plant grown, but on face value a hedge may have a natural appearance or be personalised through the skill of topiary. Hedges are unpopular because they take a long time to grow and they require a lot of regular maintenance and some interest in gardening.

Walls are often a combination of these different wall materials. Hedges are accompanied by fences and brick pillars have fencing between them. Brick walls are sometimes clad with other materials including stone, fake rock and tiles. Gated communities use vegetation, usually flower beds or some topiary trees, to decorate and soften their high brick walls.
One wall in Douglasdale (Figure 4.1) incorporates vegetation explicitly into the design. The wall creates rectangular alcoves into which flower beds are constructed. The wall appears to be very bulky and formidable but this is softened by the greenery along the bottom edge.

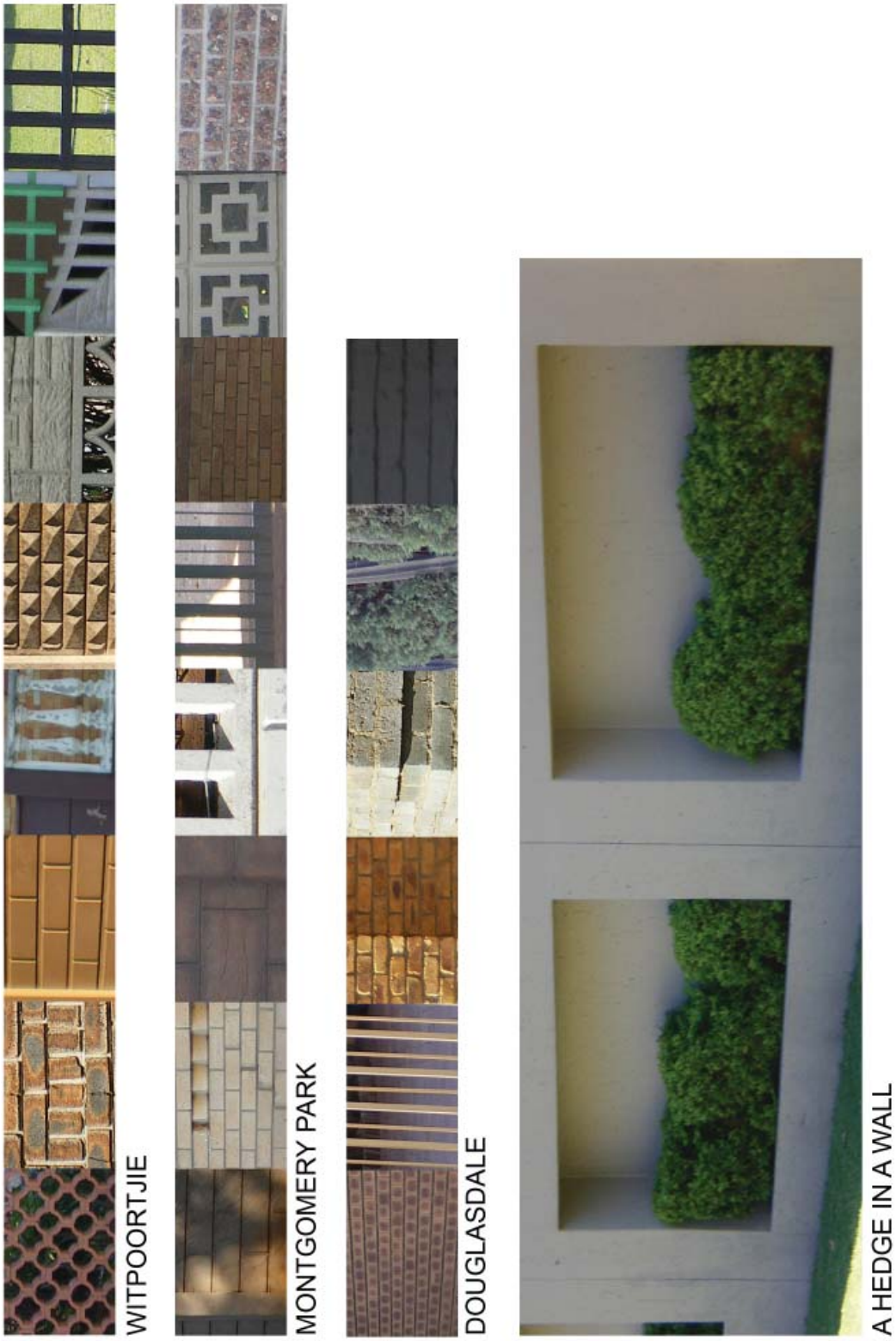


Figure 4.1 - Wall material

Various wall materials are illustrated in this diagram as well as an unusual example in Douglasdale where the hedge is incorporated into the design of the wall.

4.2.2 Gate Designs

Vehicle entrance gates and pedestrian gates can be pre-manufactured or custom made and while most are constructed of metal, some incorporate timber or other materials. Because of the wide use of steel, the differences between individual gates are more subtle, involving small variations and embellishments of the vertical bars.

Similarities in gate designs can be seen across all three case studies. Sliding gates (Figure 4.2) are often made to represent gates that open on hinges and have handles for ‘opening’ and ‘closing’. This gate design refers to a more traditional method of opening when the handles would have been used rather than the sliding motor more commonly used now. So it may, in fact, be a nostalgic design.

Another traditional style of gate consists of evenly spaced vertical bars divided in half by a single horizontal bar. Usually the bottom half has twice as many verticals for the purposes of keeping small pets within the property. The top of the gate is sometimes curved for additional decorative effect. Often, along the top and along the horizontal bar, between the vertical bars, there are spikes which deter thieves from climbing over the gate. These spikes are usually where subtle design differences are incorporated while, in other gates, additional ornament adorns the vertical bars.

In stark contrast with these more delicate gate designs, are the diagonal vehicle entrance gates. These gates use diagonal bars, usually of a thicker, square hollow section, instead of thin vertical bars. The result is a gate with a bold diagonal pattern. This design is seen to be more modern with cleaner lines and it reduces the prison-like connotations of the vertical bar to that of a simple geometric pattern.

These designs are present in all three suburbs (Figure 4.3). Montgomery Park showed enormous variety throughout chapter three and again is showing variety in gate designs. A good proportion of the gates make use of solid panels of timber or steel, reducing visibility, and stressing a need for privacy.
The gate designs of Douglasdale reflect the trend for uniformity with many similar gate designs. Because Douglasdale is an affluent suburb, I expected to find the most elaborate gates displaying high status levels. However, nearly all the gates are very simple, even those gates belonging to townhouse complexes. The gate designs of gated communities do not differ significantly from the gates of houses. Only one townhouse complex, Hanover Square, uses additional height to convey status.

In fact, the most elaborate gate design can be found in Montgomery Park and this

Figure 4.2 - Detailed gate designs
The subtle differences in gate design are illustrated in this image.

Figure 4.3 - Gate designs

The wide variety of gate designs in all three suburbs is apparent in this image.

example will form part of a detailed discussion later on in this chapter. Of course, personal expression is not only to be found in the most complicated and elaborate designs. A gate with little detail and clean lines can be a homeowner expressing a preference for a minimalist style. In this way we begin to see that even a pre-manufactured element such as a vehicle entrance gate may be chosen because of what the resident wishes to express of himself.

4.2.3 Pre-cast Walls

Nowhere can we see more clearly the need for personal expression than in the designs of pre-cast walls. Figure 4.4 illustrates the designs featured in the catalogue of just one company. The functional aspect of the pre-cast wall requires only two differentiations: a low wall and a higher wall. A low wall functions as a demarcation of boundary or to keep dogs inside the property. A higher wall functions either as an element of privacy or security or both. None of these functions require the embellishments or motifs present in the catalogue to achieve these functions.

The handful of designs in the catalogue is only a fraction of the many variations that can be seen in all the suburbs. The walls' designs imitate the textures of brick or timber and many motifs or symbols can be incorporated into the design. The most popular design is a candlestick pattern. This may be because the object is one found in many homes and, therefore, connects the wall with the concept of home. Many of the other common patterns are regular geometric patterns but these often incorporate circles or gentle curves which soften the hardness of the pattern and wall. Again, as we saw with gate designs, the owner is using the choice available to him to express himself.

Pre-cast walls do not feature in the walls of gated communities and, therefore, gated communities do not feature the patterns and motifs found in pre-cast wall designs. This is one of the ways that the walls of gated communities are less expressive than the walls of houses.

4.2.4 Wall Colour (Figure 4.5)

As mentioned earlier, the colour of the paint on a masonry wall or palisade fence is very easily and relatively cheaply changed and, therefore, is the most expressive aspect of the boundary wall. However, these colours tend to fall in an overall palette of colours that is used in all three suburbs, limiting the use of colour to an accepted standard. Therefore, unless the wall or fence colour is outside this accepted palette, it is difficult to identify an individual expression within the standard colour range.

During the 1960s, Julian Beinart conducted a study of wall decorations in the

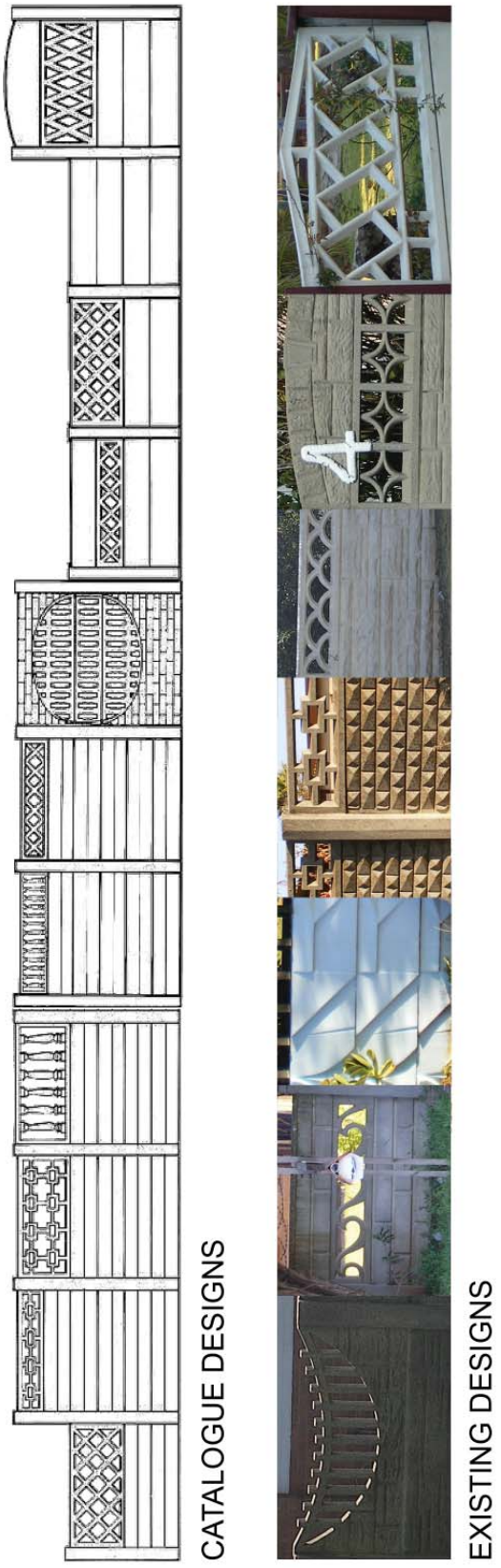


Figure 4.4 - Pre-cast wall designs

This diagram illustrates both the pre-cast wall designs available from a single catalogue (www.eastrandwaling.co.za) as well as existing designs in the suburbs.



Figure 4.5 - Wall colour

This image shows the paint colour palette of walls and fences in all three areas. A bright blue wall is an example of a wall using colour to stand out from the crowd.

Johannesburg suburb of Western Native Township. What he found was that while the decorations were intended to be highly expressive of the individual household, many of the decorations conformed to an unspoken standard (Beinart 1975). “Never stepping beyond certain tacitly approved norms ensured against displeasing others and trying your best to be different within this framework meant maximising your own well being” (Ibid: 173). This attitude towards a certain level of conformity continues to this day and is at work in all the elements of the boundary wall but is most easily apparent in the choice of paint colour.

Fences have a very limited colour palette including black, white, dark green and a rusty brown. Wall colours tend to be natural earth tones and are mostly lighter in colour than fences. The colour range includes white, beige, cream, peach, grey, pale yellows and occasionally earthy reds. The walls of gated communities are particularly neutral, rarely straying from white or shades of beige.

One house in Witpoortjie (Figure 4.5) has a boundary wall that is bright blue in colour. This immediately stands out from surrounding walls because it is far outside the normal palette. This wall is clearly a source of pride and is designed to be noticed as the wall stands out from the house and the design of the pre-cast wall is unusual in itself. In this case, the wall is clearly communicating a separate message from that of the house, despite the fact that the wall is quite low and does not obscure the house from view.

4.2.5 House Numbers (Figure 4.6)

The display of the house number is the most obvious starting point for differentiating one household from another and, as mentioned earlier, there are an infinite number of means for display. However, a good portion of houses in all the suburbs (see Chapter Three) had no numbers at all or had numbers that were minute or difficult to read. This suggests that while the house number can be used easily for identification purposes, it is not the preferred means. The reason for this may be linked to the way that people view numbers in general. Very few people consider their passport number (or any other personal number) to be a reflection of their personalities in any way. Numbers are regarded as impersonal and, therefore, I suspect that people view their house numbers in the same light. A number expresses very little on its own.

In Witpoortjie, to prove this point, house numbers are often accompanied by other ornamental decorations. In other houses, the number also incorporates a name; either the name for the house or the name of the residents. A house number that has been handcrafted in some way begins to express an individual simply because many house numbers are bought from hardware stores, and so these numbers

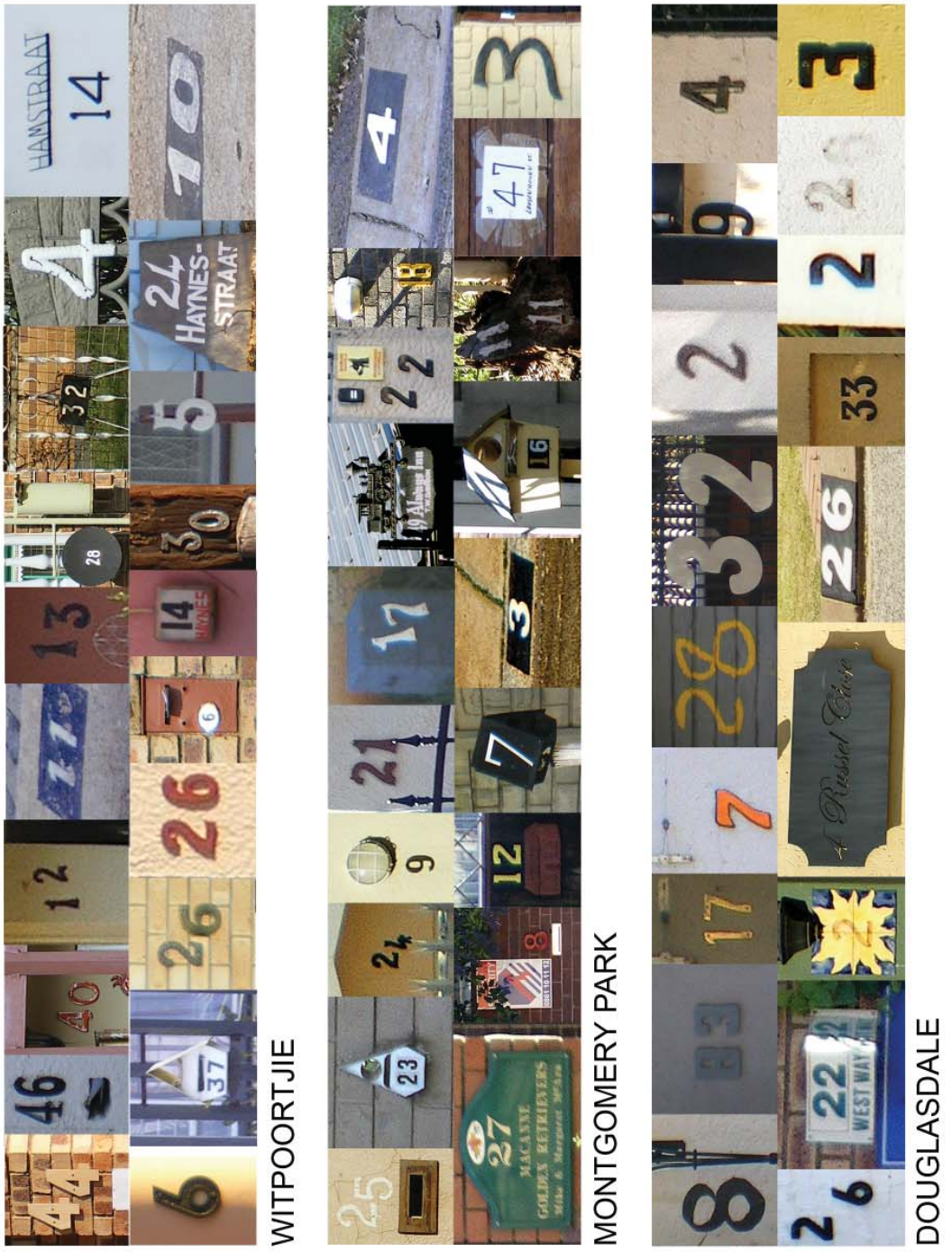


Figure 4.6 - House numbers

The variety in the display of house numbers in all three suburbs are shown in this image.

indicate little self expression. Because the house number is usually a decorative feature that is not steadfastly part of the wall, it falls under the third plane of choice, however, the fact that it is easily adapted, has not made it a preferred means of individual identity.

Brick walls offer the most variety in detail designs, colour options and textures which make them a popular choice of wall material for homeowners. The different designs available for entrance gates and pre-cast walls illustrate the need for differentiation and meaning when it comes to objects that are 'purely' functional. Wall colour is most easily changed and, therefore, the most expressive element. The house number is the most definitive element of identification but is seldom seen to be representative of residents themselves. In Chapter Five, residents reveal the importance of aesthetics with regards to their boundary walls.

Gated communities strive to be neutral; to be appealing to a wide variety of people and, therefore, give very few signs of expression. There are no patterns or motifs or personal designs. This may be the reason why we cannot read them so easily and may be leading to a form of misconception. Devoid of expression, the walls of gated communities communicate an impersonal atmosphere; a wall so neutral as to give those outside no understanding of the residents within. This is exacerbated by the fact that the walls of gated communities tend to be much greater in length, extending the sense of unease. The lack of personal expression may be contributing to the perceptions and meanings found in these walls.

4.3 Ornament

4.3.1 Witpoortjie

By definition, ornament has no other purpose other than to provide decoration and expression. Many of the houses in Witpoortjie (Figure 4.7) have ornaments decorating the facades of their houses, the boundary walls and front gardens. Witpoortjie stands out from the other two case studies for the proliferation of garden gnomes or statues. Many houses have the familiar manufactured garden gnomes while other houses have handcrafted birds or windmills placed beside bird baths or water features.

According to Paul Oliver, garden gnomes establish a connection between the suburban garden and its more rural origins (Oliver 1981). This concept has been carried through to the more 'modern' garden ornaments, especially in the windmill, an icon in the farming landscape. The presence of stables and smallholdings in the near vicinity of Witpoortjie, may explain why Witpoortjie, in particular, has so many garden gnomes.

Figure 4.7 - Ornament in Witpoortjie

Different types of ornametation in Witpoortjie are illustrated in this image. Of particular interest is the unusual 'alien' statue at 14 Haynes Street.

But Oliver suggests another motive for the display of gnomes in the front garden; that of security.

> "Though their laughing, jovial expressions may seem to invite the visitor, they inhabit the garden in a manner that inhibits any invasion. They face the road as a miniature uniformed army, at ease but watchful; laughter can be an aggressive act" (Oliver 1981: 170).

Garden gnomes are not likely to deter the hardened thief but they do serve as reminders as to the presence of people and the threat of being seen and caught.

One very unusual 'garden gnome' in Witpoortjie is difficult to analyse in these terms. Number 14 Haynes Street has a blue alien, about 1,5m in height, prominently displayed on the front porch. It is difficult to see how the alien might serve as a rural connection but as a means of personal expression, the house immediately distinguishes itself from the neighbourhood and is easily identified as different.

4.3.2 Montgomery Park

Only a few houses in Montgomery Park (Figure 4.8) make use of ornament or decoration and most of these were associated with the number of the house itself. Number 2 Thomas Pringle Street has a mural on the house facade showing the family name and possibly the family crest. Number 3 West Park Road has a ceramic relief of a meerkat that serves as pure decoration and, therefore, pure personal expression.

One house in Montgomery Park (Figure 4.9) has spared no expense in distinguishing its boundary wall. The house at number 3 Von Dessin Street is not visible behind the wall but, in this case, it is clear that the wall is making a statement on behalf of the facade of the house. The high face-brick wall has elaborate brick details as well as elements of tiling and cladding. The vehicle and pedestrian entrances are emphasized with small canopies projecting above and the gates themselves are elaborate with polished metal detailing. There is a fountain enclosed in a brick structure with coloured glass windows. This structure disguises the fountain so much, that its only purpose appears to be the display of wealth in erecting the expensive but functionless object. Even the doorbell intercom for vehicles is an elaborate aluminium structure that lights up at night to reveal the full address.

The use of expensive materials; elaborate and excessive details; and the use of purely decorative elements to such an extent, are all an expression of wealth and status. This boundary wall claims to be a residence extraordinaire and ultimately superior to any around it. This wall no longer functions to only provide privacy or security but also functions to give identity. The boundary wall has replaced the

Figure 4.8 - Ornament in Montgomery Park

The personalisation of boundary walls is less common in Montgomery Park than Witpoortjie and these are the few examples of ornament found in the area.



Figure 4.9 - Ornament in Von Dessin Street

This boundary wall is unique in many of its elaborate details. This wall is clearly making a statement of status and wealth in the absence of any view of the house facade.

facade of the house (which undoubtedly could not live up to the reputation put forward by the boundary wall) as a device of communication and expression.

4.3.3 Douglasdale

Douglasdale has almost no overt evidence of personalisation or ornament. Only one house in Falcon Lane (Figure 4.10) has a large ceramic mask or head placed in front of the boundary wall. It serves only a decorative purpose but its direct association with the wall serves to give the wall a personal touch; preventing it from being a harsh utilitarian wall and differentiating it from neighbouring walls.

Witpoortjie has the most ornamentation and it is no coincidence that Chapter Three revealed that it has the highest level of visibility. Houses and front gardens are still very much on display in Witpoortjie and so garden gnomes and mounted wall decorations abound. These elements are a source of pride and meaning.

4.4 Detailed Wall Examples

4.4.1 Witpoortjie (Figure 4.11)

The house at number 46 Haynes Street is styled after Cape Dutch architecture. It has a central white gable, over the front door, which extends beyond the roofline and is a typical feature associated with this style. The scale is somewhat grand for this small house in Witpoortjie and, therefore, sets it apart from the other houses in the suburb.

It is clear that the style of the house is a source of pride for the residents because the architecture is explicitly reflected in the boundary wall. The boundary is a plastered masonry wall, painted white to match the gable of the house. At the centre of the boundary is a large masculine statue on a pedestal, centred with the front door and also painted in white. On either side of the statue is a metre or so of black fencing revealing the symmetrical facade of the house beyond. The statue and fencing are set back from the boundary line, allowing the wall to curve convexly to meet the fencing. In plan, these two curves echo the curves of the gable on which they are centred.

On either side of these two walls are black vehicle entrance gates which are connected via a semi-circular driveway that passes right in front of the house. The garage is to the right of the house and, therefore, one vehicle entrance would suffice for access to the garage. But the design of the boundary wall with its two entrance gates, in conjunction with the driveway, serves to provide the front garden with grandeur reflective of the house's architecture.

This boundary wall does not mask or hide the house from view but works to draw



13 FALCON LANE

Figure 4.10 - Ornament in Douglasdale

The only element of ornament to be found in the case study area of Douglasdale. This head is personalising and differentiating the boundary wall.

46 HAYNES STREET, WITPOORTJIE

Figure 4.11 - Detailed example in Witpoortjie

This boundary wall in Witpoortjie is an extension of the facade of the house and emphasizes the symmetry of the house.

attention to the facade and enhance its symmetry. Functions of security and privacy are secondary to the fact that the wall functions as an extension and expansion of the statement made in the facade of the house.

4.4.2 Montgomery Park (Figure 4.12)

Number 26 Langenhoven Street is on the corner of Max Michaelis street and Langenhoven street and it is this corner condition that has resulted in an unusual boundary detail. The double storey house faces north and Langenhoven street. Along the front and round the corner, the boundary wall is a green palisade fence of standard height. But along the length of Max Michaelis street the boundary is a face-brick wall. This is the only house in all three suburbs to have a boundary that is so clearly divided vertically by two such different materials.

The vehicle entrance gate for number 26 is off Max Michaelis street and the use of the masonry wall would suggest the need to shield this service side yard from view. This theory is supported by a wall of brise soleil blocks that masks this same space from the front perspective. The fence along Langenhoven street has a small pedestrian gate which leads up to the front door via a small path. The front facade of the house is fairly ordinary but it has been honoured through the emphasis placed on it being visible to the street.

The owners of this house have used the properties of the corner to separate more formal functions from service functions and they have also clearly differentiated between front, back and side yards. The private activities of the back and side yards are shielded from view, while the front yard is for open display. This goes so far as to contradict other certain practical aspects. The front garden, being north facing, would be better used as an outdoor entertainment space with year round sunshine, rather than just for display purposes. Langenhoven street is also the busier of the two streets and, therefore, there is a greater need for privacy along this street, which is not reflected in the use of fencing. But what is clear from this house is that the functions of the yards have determined the materiality of the boundary wall.

4.4.3 Douglasdale

The wide driveway at number 5 Falcon Lane (Figure 4.13) extends from the pavement right up to the house and garages. It is unusual in Douglasdale for this large driveway to be open to the street and not to be enclosed with fencing for additional security. On the left hand side of the driveway is a vehicle entrance gate that leads to the side yard of the house. To the right of that are two garage doors and to the right of those is a double pedestrian entrance gate. The pedestrian gate

Figure 4.12 - Detailed example in Montgomery Park

The use of two very different materials in this boundary makes this house unique in all three suburbs. The use of wall material is closely linked to the functions of the yards.



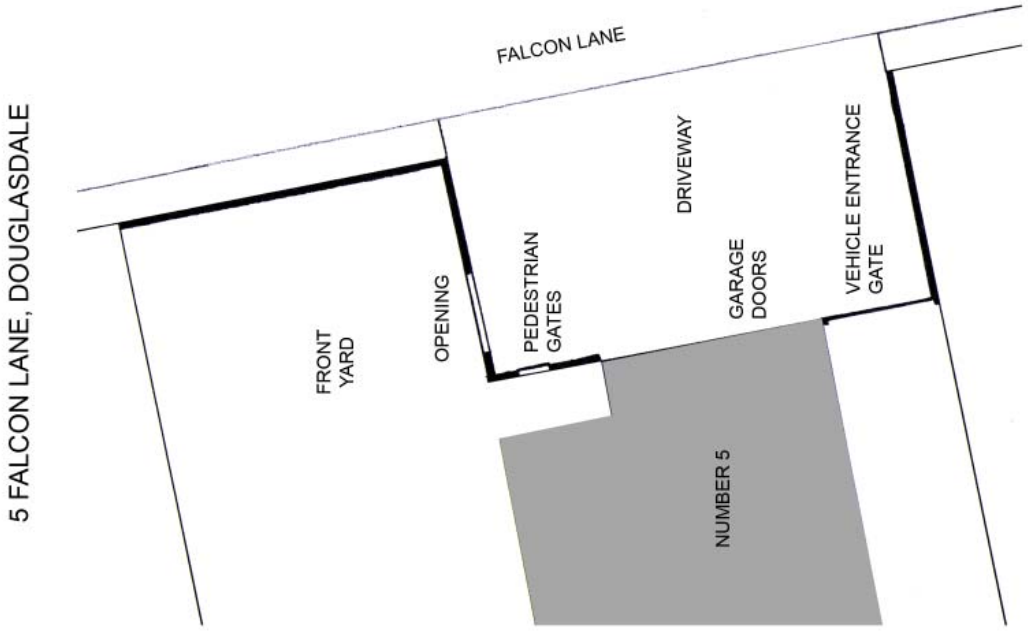


Figure 4.13 - Detailed example in Douglasdale

This detailed example shows the unusual feature of an opening in the boundary wall, allowing for a visual connection.

opens up to a few steps leading to the front door. The pedestrian gate is painted the same shade of paint colour as the masonry wall in which it is set.

The wall does a dogleg after the pedestrian gate so that the remainder of the boundary is in the outermost position. In the dogleg of the wall is a type of 'window' opening out onto the driveway. The 'window' is a large rectangular opening secured with vertical steel bars. This opening gives a glimpse of the front yard from the street.

The function of the opening is unclear. The wall is on the southern side of the front yard and, therefore, the opening does not provide additional light to the garden. The driveway and the front yard are visually connected though this opening but it is not clear to what end. It may be used to monitor the comings and goings of cars in the driveway for security purposes or it may be a decorative element that reveals the beauty of the garden before the visitor enters. This feature is again unique to this house but does suggest that the boundary wall has a different meaning for the residents.

It is clear from these three examples that the wall's meaning goes beyond its functional requirements. In Douglasdale, the meaning may be unclear but the additional element of an opening has added to the wall's meaning for those residents. In Witpoortjie, the wall pays homage to the house and its meaning is intricately linked to the meaning of the facade. In Montgomery Park, the meaning of the wall is tied to the functions of the yards of the house but also to the meaning of those functions. the front yard is about presentation and display and the boundary assists in the display of the house.

Conclusion

> "Sometimes a single feature, such as an elaborately appointed gateway that conceals what is inside while displaying the resident's ability to do so, accomplishes both [concealment and display]" (Ellin 1997: 38).

When the boundary wall masks the house, the wall begins to acquire some of the meaning of the house facade through elements of identification and personalisation. In Chapter Two, fortification was discussed as a compromise, an ugly reality and the process of personalisation can be seen to be a 'softening' or disguising of the reality. Interviews, in Chapter Five, reveal how, sometimes, the wall is resented for being necessary.

Different designs and motifs in functional elements of the wall have allowed personal expression. The house number is the least expressive and the wall colour is the

most expressive. The walls of gated communities are often shades of beige and offer very little personalisation. In Chapter Five, residents of gated communities discuss their ability, or lack thereof, to personalise the outside of their homes. Witpoortjie has the greatest level of ornamentation which is directly connected to the high level of visibility which provides the opportunity for display.

Finally, three examples illustrate how the wall is, simultaneously, an element of function and of meaning and how these two elements are connected. And according to Umberto Eco, meaning is a function of communication:

> "So the title function should be extended to all the uses of objects of use (in our perspective, to the various communicative, as well as to the denoted, functions), for with respect to life in society the *symbolic* capacities of these objects are no less *useful* than their *functional* capacities." (Eco 1986: 65)[Emphasis in original]



The Wall as Security
Chapter Five

"Repelled at the ramparts. 'Villa Toscana' was printed on a salmon-coloured wall to the left. Below each wrought-iron letter was a streak of rust like dried blood, as if a host of housebreakers had impaled themselves on the name. Would the defenders of this city-state pour down boiling oil if he ventured too close? He got out of the car and leaned against the fender. The fortress-like atmosphere of the place dissipated. The tones and textures were passable, clumpy wooden beams, pastel plaster, flaking artfully, yellow stone."

(Vladislavić 2004: 9)

The wall of the house that I grew up in, also in a Johannesburg suburb, had a deep alcove where the doorway led onto the street. Spanning across this alcove was a small concrete slab that provided shade and shelter from the rain. As children, my brother and I would clamber up the adjacent tree to sit atop this slab. This hideaway afforded us views of the street, allowing us to observe passers-by from a safe and unseen distance. Occasionally, as children do, we would throw berries at unsuspecting pedestrians. The wall had turned into a concrete tree house, just for us.

This chapter is based on the interviews of pedestrians, residents of houses and residents of gated communities, conducted in all three case study areas in order to understand how people feel about walls and what they mean to them. Pedestrians fall into the category of those who experience the wall from the outside and residents, of both houses and gated communities, are in the category of those who experience the wall from the inside. These two categories form the two sides of the wall, the inside and the outside and are intended to give the full picture. Different wall conditions, the different heights of each case study, as well as the walls of houses and the walls of gated communities have been represented in the interviews.

The first section compares the viewpoints of people from all the case studies, category by category. In the second section, I compare the opinions of people from the two main categories, the inside and the outside of the wall, on five major issues that arose during the interviews. These issues are safety and crime; visual impact; identity and meaning; neighbour relations; and perceptions. Sometimes these viewpoints coincide, such as on the purpose of the wall, and on other occasions expressed opinions are very different, especially with regards to people's perceptions of each other.

When a respondent is quoted, the specific interview transcript is referred to with a code and each interview has a unique code. For example:

> This man said 'In the street, you don't have anywhere to run to, there is no one to help you' **(D7)**.

The letter 'D' refers to an interview from the Douglasdale case study and the number gives that specific interview transcript. All the interviews are included in Appendix 2B at the end of this dissertation, and are grouped according to the case study and numbered consecutively.

5.1 Interview Summaries

5.1.1 Pedestrians

Witpoortjie

Nearly all of the people questioned resided or worked in the area. Only one man was in the area to find work. Three people felt unsafe, with one man citing a recent attempted break-in at his house. The other respondents all felt very safe.

Half the respondents had no problems with the boundary wall, in general, and felt that they were ‘alright’. Two people emphasized the need for security and the fact that there were criminal elements outside of the walls. Only one respondent said he felt ‘less safe’ in the street because of boundary walls.

The majority of the respondents felt that it was better for the boundary wall to have transparent elements. One pedestrian felt that a low wall was not safe and another emphasized the need for electric fencing. Again, the majority of respondents felt that residents of houses were right in erecting walls and bore no ill-feelings towards those residents. One pedestrian had no opinion of house residents while another felt that they were ‘enslaved’ (W1) by their own walls.

In response to the question of the purpose of the wall, all those questioned, stated the need for protection and to ensure safety. One respondent also stated that the wall was indicative of a need for protection which could be interpreted from the outside that the house has something worth stealing (W2).

Montgomery Park

All of the respondents lived or worked in the area. Five of the pedestrians questioned felt safe while three said that they did not feel safe. One woman explained how the house, where she resides, had been robbed during the day that previous Saturday.

The majority of respondents had no problem with the boundary walls, while one respondent did not have any thoughts concerning walls. One pedestrian felt that walls were not right while another felt safer inside the house than standing on the street. Only one pedestrian rejected a more open transparent wall, while the other respondents preferred fencing, although, some were indifferent to the idea of more visibility.

Two people expressed indifference towards residents of houses while only one person, a dislike. The majority of respondents had positive attitudes towards residents of houses. Again, in reference to the purpose of the wall, the most common reason given was for protection and safety. One person succinctly said that the purpose was ‘to divide the yards’ (M4), while two pedestrians did not know why people built walls around their houses.

Douglasdale

All of the respondents were in the area with a definite purpose, with most of them residing or working in the suburb, while two of the respondents were visitors. All of the pedestrians felt safe in the streets, though a few, while expressing that they felt safe, clarified that they did not feel completely safe. A female domestic worker had this to say 'It's still safe here, but you can't feel safe anywhere. This is a quiet area. Crime is crime, but it is not too much here' (D3).

Six pedestrians could see no problem with the boundary wall and did not express any definite views with regards to them. One respondent positively liked walls and only one pedestrian expressed negative views of the wall. This man said 'In the street, you don't have anywhere to run to, there is no one to help you' (D7).

There were mixed views with regards to the transparent elements of the wall. Two people felt indifferent to this aspect, while four pedestrians felt that it was better for a variety of reasons. A middle-aged gardener felt that it made it more difficult for criminals to intrude, while a young man said that it allowed you to see more people and, therefore, feel more comfortable. Two people disliked having more visibility in the wall, one woman stating 'I don't like it, because you might see something' (D6).
Four pedestrians expressed indifference towards the people who erect walls while three people sympathized with the house-owners' need for protection. One woman also felt that it was part of her own security: 'It's making it safe for me and for people, it's easy for people to break in, therefore, a high wall is better' (D3). Another woman, in response to the question, expressed her fear that she sometimes felt while inside the walls. All of the respondents saw the wall simply as a measure of security. And some expressed the importance of protection against crime.

Pedestrians, in all three suburbs, expressed very similar views. Respondents from Douglasdale felt most safe, although, all but one pedestrian, mentioned the issues of security and crime in connection with the discussion on walls. Despite the difference in wall heights and materiality between areas, the opinions expressed on the transparency of the wall were all very similar: nearly all respondents were in favour of more visibility.

5.1.2 Residents of Houses Witpoortjie

Two of the residents interviewed have been residing in their current houses for over thirty years while the third resident has only been living there for seven years. All the respondents felt safe in the area. All three residents built their boundary

walls but for different reasons. One woman said she built the wall, where there was no wall previously, to keep her dogs inside. One man built his wall for privacy while another built his wall because he did not like the previous wall and 'wanted something that I would like' (W11).

In response to how they would change the boundary wall, two residents wanted to add fencing, extending the height of their walls. All three respondents felt that the wall was an important aspect of their house. There were mixed feelings towards neighbours and people outside of the wall. One man doesn't 'trust everybody' (W11), while the woman had no problem with the people outside of her walls. When it came to neighbours and their walls, one resident expressed that the neighbourhood was very nice and another erected a dividing wall together with his neighbour. The woman did not agree with her neighbours' high walls but said it was 'their problem' (W9). None of the respondents felt vulnerable or superior in any way to their neighbours. The respondents had mixed opinions on the meaning of the wall but two felt that the boundary wall was a reflection of their house and family.

Montgomery Park

Only one resident of a house volunteered to be interviewed. He has been living in the house for twenty-nine years and built the wall and the house. Originally, the wall had been lower but after a few burglaries, he raised the height of the wall.

He prefers the house without a wall and, therefore, does not feel that the boundary wall reflects his family or house. But the wall provides them with security and also privacy because they are opposite the townhouse complex, Calais.

He is happy with his neighbours' wall because their security is his security and, therefore, he only feels marginally more secure than his neighbours. Despite his concern over security, he feels very safe in the area.

Douglasdale

The three respondents have been living in their current houses between three and seventeen years. All of them built their boundary walls as well as their houses. All three have brick walls. Two of the residents have considered changing the wall to palisade fencing. Respondents cited privacy, security, demarcation of boundary, and keeping pets inside as the purposes of the wall. Two residents liked the privacy the wall afforded them and its aesthetic qualities, while the third didn't 'like the feeling of walls' (D9).

In response to the concept of the wall being a reflection of the house and/or family,

all three residents referred to the condition of the wall and its aesthetic qualities and felt that presentation was important. There were mixed views on the importance of the boundary wall in relation to the house, ranging from not being important at all to being very important.

Two of the respondents have good neighbour relations, while the third had an issue with one neighbour, concerning privacy. None of the residents felt superior or vulnerable in relation to their neighbours. Two of the respondents felt safe in the suburb, but one resident felt that it depended on the area.

Across the board, all residents of houses had built their own walls and all had a number of reasons for erecting them. In addition, a number of residents spoke of the importance of aesthetics and presentation. Opinions and viewpoints did not differ significantly from one suburb to the next and was fairly uniform.

5.1.3 Residents of Gated Communities

Montgomery Park

The respondents have lived in the townhouse complex, Calais, between a year and eight years. Four out of the five respondents cite security as the main reason for choosing to live in the complex. Other reasons include the fact that the complex is in a central location for a number of them, while one woman said that she had downsized.

Two residents had no opinions on the boundary wall of the complex, while the other respondents felt that it was integral to the security offered. Four residents would not change anything about the wall, while one woman felt that it should be better designed and more aesthetic. The majority of residents did not identify with the wall in anyway and only two people had a problem with the fact that they could not change the exterior of their homes.

Many of the respondents did not know any of their neighbours outside of the complex but felt that people, generally, ‘keep to themselves’ (M15) and that ‘everyone gets on with their own lives’ (M21). However, the residents also commented on how nice and considerate people, generally, were, in the complex.

Responses to the question of safety were very mixed. Two respondents felt unconditionally safe, while three residents connected their sense of safety explicitly to the confines of the complex, stating that they did not feel safe outside of the complex.

Douglasdale

Both respondents reside at Hanover Square townhouse complex; one from

1999 and the other from 2004. One resident cited security and a 'lock up and go lifestyle' as the reason for choosing to live in a townhouse complex, while the other respondent had just moved to this country and decided it was the better option.

One resident loves the boundary wall of the complex and has no problems with it, while the other resident saw the need for it but expressed disappointment at this requirement. Both felt that the wall was for security purposes, 'to keep those out who should be' (D18).

Both residents enjoy their neighbours within the complex and one resident expressed a wish to have more contact. Again, both residents were indifferent towards people outside of the complex. One respondent felt superior in relation to his neighbours and felt safe in the area. The other resident did not feel superior and felt only a 'six out of ten' (D17) level of safety in the area, stipulating that she felt safer in the complex.

The individual units within the complex are also walled off from each other and both residents felt that they were equally necessary to demarcate their properties and give privacy.

Security was a common thread to interviews from both gated communities, but there were also a number of other reasons given for choosing to live in the complexes. Respondents differed the most on the topic of neighbour relations and this issue will be explored further on in the section on neighbours.

5.2 Functions and Perceptions

5.2.1 Safety, Crime and Protection

The issues of safety, crime and protection were consistently mentioned in all the interviews, across all categories. The number one reason for building walls is the need for protection and this is understood by people on both sides of the wall. Pedestrians repeatedly mentioned the need for protection and high crime levels. More specifically some pedestrians stated that the purpose of the wall is so that thieves cannot climb over the wall and 'so that robbers can't go in' (D4).

Many pedestrians felt that it was only right for people to protect themselves with boundary walls and expressed no animosity towards these residents with walls. Many sympathised with the need for protection: 'it's to be safe in the night, because crime is too much. It's to protect the kids and the family' (D3). Many domestic workers who work during the day in the suburb or who live on the property felt that the boundary wall was also for their own benefit. One woman recalls how she

and the family ‘we were robbed on Saturday during the day’ (M5). Another woman explains how she ‘mustn’t open the door unless my madam or my boss says so, because in these times crime is bad you see’ (D2).

The issue of crime and the need for security is so at the forefront of these pedestrians’ minds that only one pedestrian in all three suburbs gave any other reason for the purpose of the wall. This woman stated simply that walls were ‘to divide the yards’ (M4). People, on the whole, viewed the wall as a practical and necessary element that serves to protect both the families of the houses and themselves.

All of the respondents on the other side of the wall, residents of both houses and gated communities, cited security as one of the purposes of the wall but most mentioned other reasons for having a boundary wall. One resident of Calais spoke of ‘the false sense of security’ (M21) that the boundary wall of the complex instilled, implying that people are less alert when surrounded by so much security.

Another woman at Calais suggested that a high masonry wall encourages crime because ‘boundary walls actually attract attention’ (M20). A pedestrian in Witpoortjie also shared this viewpoint stating that criminals ‘think you have something to protect’ (W2) if you have high walls. Walls are still strongly associated with crime but here they are seen as a signal for thieves, rather than a deterrent. A high level of security also suggests a wealthy household which would also attract a would-be thief. Together with the concept of passive surveillance, these opinions devalue the masonry wall as an element of protection. But walls have more than a single purpose and, therefore, cannot be easily dismissed.
Three pedestrians in Witpoortjie and three pedestrians in Montgomery Park felt unsafe in the area, while no pedestrians in Douglasdale felt unsafe in the suburb. This means that a quarter of all the pedestrians questioned felt unsafe in their suburbs and yet none felt unsafe in Douglasdale. This is also despite the fact that Douglasdale, of the three suburbs, had the least visibility between street and house. Personal levels of safety did not necessarily reflect in people’s opinion of the boundary wall. Most people said that they felt safe and most people had no problems with the boundary walls.

Some people did take issue with the boundary wall. Two of the respondents in Montgomery Park stated that they did not feel safe and had negative feelings towards boundary walls. One pedestrian felt that boundary walls were ‘not right’ (M2), while one woman felt that walls made her feel safer inside the house but that she did not feel safe standing on the street. She did not stipulate that boundary walls contributed to her feeling less safe on the street but perhaps, in comparison with a walled and secured home, she feels more vulnerable in the absence of that security.

In Douglasdale, one man said that he felt safe in the area but expressed a number of concerns about the boundary wall. He felt that there would be 'no one to help you' (D7) if something had to happen in the street. In this case, even if a person feels completely safe, they are not excluded from considering potentially dangerous situations. It is possible that the fear of crime and a sense of safety may be independent of one another. Another pedestrian expressed a liking for boundary walls, even though he felt 'not all that safe' (D8).

Two respondents, who felt unsafe in Witpoortjie, also expressed an attitude of indifference to boundary walls. One man felt that they were 'necessary, unfortunately' (W2) but neither respondent connected boundary walls with their sense of safety. One pedestrian, who said that he felt safe, stated directly that boundary walls made him feel 'less safe' (W3). Despite the fact that the question about boundary walls followed on directly from the question on safety in the interview structure, very few pedestrians connected feelings of safety with boundary walls.

On the other side of the wall, nearly all residents felt safe in their suburbs. Only one man in Douglasdale said that he did not feel safe, especially 'in comparison to gated communities' (D11). Most of the respondents, who felt safe, qualified this feeling by connecting it to the boundary wall or gated community. Statements such as 'I feel safe because of the wall' (W10) or '[I feel safe] because we are in the complex' (M15), were common. Residents who did not make such qualifying statements emphasised security or safety as one of the wall's purposes, therefore, linking the wall with their sense of security.

Only two residents in all three areas did not associate the wall with security. One woman, in Witpoortjie, saw the wall, simply, as a means of demarcation and identity and, indeed, her low wall of 1,2m could not be considered an element of security. Her interview was exceptionally unusual in her lack of reference to issues of safety or crime. One man's interview was similarly devoid of such responses despite the fact that he resides in Calais, the townhouse complex in Montgomery Park. He felt that the boundary wall of the complex 'says we really feel insecure, that we need walls and electric fencing' (M19). Not once did he mention crime or security and was only living in the complex because he had moved to Johannesburg from Durban and had friends who stayed in complexes.

Overall, those people who live in houses and gated communities felt more safe than those people interviewed in the streets. However, those that did not feel safe, seldom attributed this to the physical environment. Alternatively, those that did feel safe mentioned or emphasised the role of boundary walls in their feelings of safety. The presence of boundary walls in the streetscape does not influence the level

of safety experienced by pedestrians in the street. In fact, the suburb with the highest walls and most electric fencing, Douglasdale, was where pedestrians felt most safe. Therefore, a wall, in most cases, provides a sense of safety, rather than promoting a sense of unease. In only three interviews of all the respondents, the issue of protection and security was not raised in connection with the discussion of boundary walls. The concepts of protection and security are the concepts most strongly associated with boundary walls.

5.2.2 Visual Impact

There were very mixed opinions about the level of transparency a boundary wall should have. The majority of pedestrians were in favour of walls that allowed for visibility. A few pedestrians mentioned the value of surveillance in some obscure ways. One pedestrian, in Douglasdale, said that its 'safe, because you can see people' (D3), while, in contradiction, another pedestrian said 'I don't like it [visibility], you might see people' (D6). It is quite clear that being able to see people has different implications for different people.

A young man, in Douglasdale, coming from a rural background, felt that people in the street feel more comfortable when they see other people (D7). Another woman, also in Douglasdale, connected the level of visibility with the benefits of surveillance in crime prevention. She said '[If you can see through the wall] its worse for people taking chances' (D8). Three pedestrians, in Witpoortjie, stated the opposite and felt that a transparent wall would not prevent crime. One said 'you shouldn't even see through walls, the way crime is' (W6) and another said, pointing to a low wall, 'the wall is too short, it's not actually safe' (W8).
The majority of people, residing in houses or gated communities, preferred a more transparent wall or fence to a high masonry wall. However, in contradiction, many of these people were living behind walls that afforded very little visibility. One man, in Montgomery Park, and two more people, in Douglasdale, despite living in houses with high brick walls, made comments such as: '[the boundary would be] better with visibility' (D9); and 'It's nice to view what's going on [outside]' (D10). Some people suggested that they might change their boundary to something more transparent, while others could not see the discrepancy between what they had and what they would prefer, especially considering that nearly all of the respondents from houses had erected their boundary walls themselves.

Residents in gated communities were more indifferent to the visual impact of the boundary wall. In Calais, because many of the units are on the first floor, residents' views are not obstructed by the boundary wall. One woman explained: 'we overlook the wall. It doesn't obstruct our view' (M21). Another man emphasised the fact that the wall was a 'blockage to the scenery' (M19) and felt that the wall had a negative

impact on the visual environment.

Of the two respondents from Hanover square, one woman said ‘It [the boundary wall] doesn’t bother me’ (D17), while the man stated that while he would prefer to have no wall at all, to be more open, though, he still ‘prefer[s] a wall to a fence’ (D18). A woman, in Witpoortjie, with a low wall, was quite emphatic about the sense openness it gave her and would only change her wall for ‘pillars with fencing’ (W9) in between, in order to maintain a high level of visibility.

5.2.3 Identity and Meaning

Only residents of houses and gated communities were questioned about their identification and interpretation of the boundary wall. This is, certainly, not to say that pedestrians do not identify with walls but it was difficult to address the question without a specific example at hand.

There is a vast difference between the level of control and, therefore, the level at which residents can identify with the wall, between residents of houses and gated communities. Unless it is a cluster development (freestanding houses surrounded by a common wall), most gated communities have varying restrictions limiting the changes owners can make to the outside of their homes and the boundary wall. The ability for individuals to express themselves is, therefore, limited, as many decisions concerning exterior appearances are made through a committee.

When asked to reflect on how residents identify with their boundary walls, many commented on the aesthetics or appearance of the wall. One man stated that his wall ‘ties in with the appearance of the house’ (W11), even though his face-brick boundary wall did not exactly match the plastered and painted walls of the house. His current boundary wall was a replacement of the previous owner’s wall and was built expressly to match his aesthetic tastes, saying ‘[It was] something that I’d like’ (W11).

One woman, in Douglasdale, said that the wall definitely reflected the house because she had ‘recently repainted and added an architrave’ (D9). While another woman hoped that her wall was not a reflection of her home because of its current poor condition (D10). In this way, it is clear that the condition and appearance of the wall is important to residents of houses because they feel that it does reflect themselves and their homes. It is important to them that the wall is aesthetically pleasing and in good condition, in order to make a good impression to outsiders.

Residents of Calais were less concerned, even indifferent, with the appearance of the outside of their homes and boundary wall. The two men questioned said: ‘It

doesn't bother me, the place is nice enough' (M18); and 'it's not exactly something you see when you look out the window' (M19). Two women had slightly different responses, finding it 'frustrating' (M15) or a 'bit annoying' (M21) that they had no control over exterior appearances, although one qualified her statement by saying 'it's something I would compromise for security' (M15).

And this, perhaps, becomes the most important difference between residents of houses and of gated communities and their respective walls. Both groups emphasise the need for security and the fact that the boundary wall performs this function, but those who live in houses are able to 'soften' the reality by making the wall aesthetically pleasing to themselves, while those residing in gated communities are not able to change the wall to suit their tastes. In this way, they have compromised the ability to express themselves for greater security.

> "An ability to control one's fate is an essential aspect of behaviour. Individuation or freedom of action is needed. De-individuation or the loss of personal identity, is destructive of the individual." (Jefferey 1977: 271)

In this way, gated communities compromise the individual more than they compromise the rights of the masses outside the complexes.

Most respondents, in response to the question on the meaning of the wall, refer to the wall's functions, such as demarcation of boundary, privacy and security. To one woman, in Witpoortjie, her wall was the ultimate definition of space and had this to say 'People who come inside [the wall] must know that they are visitors' (W9). Despite speaking repeatedly about security during his interview, a man in Montgomery Park, felt that the wall's only meaning was that it 'just gives me privacy' (M9). For another man, in Witpoortjie, the meaning of the wall is the security it provides, saying 'It keeps outsiders out' (W10) and he only feels safe because of the wall. An explanation of security may be allowing some people to have more privacy and to be able to fully utilise a front yard for private functions. For these people the meaning of the wall is strongly associated with the function it performs. This confirms the findings of Chapter Four.

A number of respondents mentioned the wall as an unpleasant necessity. These residents of both houses and gated communities found that the boundary wall is far from an ideal condition but felt that there were few or no alternatives. A woman, in Douglasdale, explains 'There is a sense of confinement. I would prefer not to have a wall but it's not realistic to not have walls' (D9). All three respondents, who felt this way, had different wall conditions, ranging from a 1,5m wall in Witpoortjie, to a high wall in Douglasdale, to a heavily secured gated community. Therefore, it is not particular physical characteristics but rather the presence of the wall in the first place, that produces the sense of necessity.

Only one man, in Calais, attached a meaning to walls that did not relate to function. He expressed this view 'Walls generally are a part of life. We have subconsciously accepted them as a decorative element. They are not just for security; they are painted, decorative elements' (M19). Consciously, the meaning of walls is related directly to the way in which they function. Subconsciously, we paint and decorate walls to disguise their sometimes, selfish functions, and our discomfort with them. Again, interviews have confirmed the interpretations of the wall discussed in chapter four.

5.2.4 Neighbour relations

The respondents from the two gated communities were asked to comment on their neighbours within the complex itself as well as their neighbours outside of the complex. The two complexes have very different internal conditions. Calais, in Montgomery Park, has about 200 units which are situated in close proximity to one another and with no internal dividing walls. All outdoor space is seen as communal. In contrast, Hanover Square, in Douglasdale, has only eighteen houses which are individually walled off from each other. The difference in the attitude towards neighbours is quite surprising, in light of the physical conditions of the wall.

Residents in Calais did not express animosity towards their neighbours but did not suggest a sense of intimate community relations, either. The three women had this to say 'People keep to themselves' (M15); 'I like to stick to myself' (M20); and 'Everyone just gets on with their own lives' (M21). One woman has even rejected invitations from her downstairs neighbours in order to maintain her own privacy. The residents from Hanover Square were very much more enamoured with their neighbours, one man saying that 'I would like more contact' (D18).

In Calais, where units are more densely spaced, one on top of another or side by side, and there are no internal walls, a sense of privacy cannot be obtained through the physical environment and so it is enforced through limited interactions between neighbours. In Hanover Square, residents are more open to interaction because their sense of privacy is maintained through the built environment. Jane Jacobs emphasized the fact that privacy is indispensable in cities (1962). Some forms of boundaries, in this instance walls, are required for people to feel comfortable enough interacting, emphasizing the point made in Chapter Two by Richard Sennett.

Two house-owners in Montgomery Park and Douglasdale commented on their neighbourhood proximity to gated communities and had mixed opinions of them. A man, whose house is opposite the townhouse complex, Calais, felt his brick wall was especially necessary for privacy because the double storey units of the complex overlooked his property. In this case, the non-domestic scale of the

complex was a greater infringement on this man's sense of privacy, than any of the surrounding houses. In contrast, a woman in Douglasdale, felt that being the next-door-neighbour of Hanover Square had only benefits. She said 'We are very lucky to live next door to a townhouse complex. They have electric fencing and 24 hour security and so we get free security. We are very happy' (D9). Sometimes the walls of gated communities can be beneficial to more than just those who reside within them, and sometimes, it is the fact that the gated community has replaced houses, that makes it more obtrusive.

5.2.5 Perceptions

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to portray viewpoints and opinions from both sides of the wall on the major issues. This next section looks at how boundary walls shape people's feelings towards those people who are on the other side of the wall.

Nearly all pedestrians interviewed, expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards people living behind walls. Those that did not only expressed indifference. Two people expressed a sense of sympathy saying 'They are doing what they have to do' (W2). Another pedestrian, in Witpoortjie, felt that it was a democratic right: 'Anyone can choose what they want' (W3). No one felt that it was an aggressive or exclusive act, on the part of house-owners, against themselves, the people on the street.
This may have something to do with their relationships with the people living in houses. Two women explained their feelings in terms of their working relationships. A woman, in Montgomery Park, said 'They are nice. They employ you and give you money' (M4). In Douglasdale, another woman expressed this: 'They are making it [the house] safe for me and for people. It's easy to break into a house. A high wall is better' (D3). In this way, pedestrians view home-owners favourably because they provide them with work and, in same cases, with accommodation.

However, it is likely that some pedestrians did not feel comfortable discussing grievances with me, as I may have been interpreted as a house-owner myself, being a middle-class white woman. Those who responded with indifference, may have been disguising ill-feelings, although, one woman who seemed to be having a particularly bad day, did express her grievances and said that she 'did not feel nicely' (M2) towards those living behind walls. The majority of positive responses suggest, though, that pedestrians do not experience wall as a mental barrier, and, in fact, sympathise greatly with the need for security.

The same question posed to residents of gated communities and houses was a little less specific and, therefore, interpreted in slightly different ways. Some people

said that they had no thoughts of or feelings towards people outside of their walls, while others responded that they knew very few people outside of their walls and were unable to comment further. A man, in Douglasdale explains ‘I have nothing against them if their intentions are good’ (D18).

It is clear from a number of responses that the general presence of people outside, are seen as an element of threat or danger. A man, in Witpoortjie, said ‘I don’t trust everybody’ (W11), while a woman, in Douglasdale, had this to say ‘You know, we live in a cul-de-sac and so I am not too worried. Sometimes people drive in and sleep in the car but we don’t get crime like in West Way Road’ (D9). Another woman, in Montgomery Park, began by describing the elderly neighbours of the gated community but ended by saying ‘There are patrolling guards outside’ (M15). It seems that regardless of whether people are residing in a house or a gated community; at some point outsiders are viewed as an unknown and as a threat.

This is an extension of the pervasive fear of crime, because crime is an attack from the unknown, from the outside. Although pedestrians, as outsiders, are seen to be a threat, this is not felt by the pedestrians themselves. They do not feel that they are the ones being excluded from the gated communities and houses. In fact, they are all too well aware of criminals in the streets and, therefore, sympathize with the need for security.
The final question put to residents of houses and gated communities used the terms vulnerable and superior, intended to be emotionally strong and less than politically correct words to really understand whether there is an elitist or exclusive agenda behind boundary walls. The responses were very mixed. Some people instantly expressed a dislike of the terms and said that they felt neither way towards others. A woman in Montgomery Park explains: ‘I wouldn’t feel either. I don’t think of it in that way’ (M20). Others avoided using the terms in their responses and instead spoke of being more or less secure: ‘I feel less safe compared to my neighbour on the right and more safe compared to my neighbour on the left’ (W11).

In other instances, people answered instinctively, without questioning the terminology. One woman from Calais said ‘maybe superior for some reason but it is very subjective’ (M21). The most interesting answer came from another resident of Calais: ‘It depends. On a security level I feel superior. This is way better security. On a personal level, I feel vulnerable, when it comes to immediate neighbours. They are in very close proximity and they can be in a position to invade my personal space’ (M18). In this case, the wall provides protection from those outside of the complex but this man feels threatened, in some way, by his immediate neighbours. This also suggests that feeling threatened by outsiders goes beyond just a fear of crime.

Most importantly, though, was that people did not immediately associate with the concepts in the question, or people interpreted the question at face value, seemingly suggesting that those feelings are not at the forefront of residents' intentions and, therefore, unlikely to be manifesting in the wall itself.

Conclusion

Pedestrians in Douglasdale felt the most safe of all three case studies, despite the low level of visibility and ability for passive surveillance to take place. In fact, respondents who felt safe often referred to the protection of walls and additional security. However, those that felt unsafe did not refer to the physical environment as a possible impediment to their safety. Walls were seen to be a necessary and practical element and were most strongly associated with protection and safety. While the wall symbolizes protection, in some cases, to thieves the wall can signal a protection of wealth and, therefore, form a target rather than a deterrent.

In general, people in houses and gated communities felt safer than pedestrians, though; for some residents the perceived need for a wall can, sometimes, be resented. Most people who resided in gated communities cited security as an important factor for their decision to move into a complex but low maintenance and a particular lifestyle were other reasons. Some residents of gated communities have had to compromise the ability to change the appearance of the outside of their homes, and, therefore, an aspect of self expression, in order to gain more security.

The aesthetics and the presentation of the boundary wall is important to the residents of houses because they feel that the wall is a reflection of their homes and families. The meaning of the wall is strongly related to its function but the wall is also decorated to disguise a discomfort or resentment felt towards it. The walls of gated communities can be seen as both beneficial to neighbouring houses and an infringement of privacy.

The perceptions of other people were the most interest findings. Those on the inside of the wall viewed all outsiders as a threat and with suspicion. Residents of gated communities did not necessarily feel comfortable with their neighbours within the complex. Privacy was heavily guarded in the complex of Calais. In contrast, those on the outside of the wall sympathized with residents of houses and gated communities, and saw the wall as part of their own protection. The wall is an act of defense, built out of fear, and is seen as such by pedestrians. It is not seen to be aggressive and exclusive as was often expressed by critics in Chapter Two.

Conclusion

To conclude, this section summarises the effects of the walls in the three broad categories laid out in the dissertation: the visual effects of the wall; the function and meaning of the wall; and the people's perceptions of the wall. Finally, I look at the issues raised in Chapter Two and compare my findings with these issues and suggest further areas of study.

6.1 The Visual Effect

Six elements or categories were considered to combine to give the overall visual effect of the wall. These were the house number, the wall height, the wall material, the vehicle entrance gate, the pedestrian gate, and electric fencing and these were all illustrated in Chapter Three. The three case study sites were chosen because of their different wall conditions, in terms of both the walls of houses and the presence of gated communities, so that comparisons could be made. Although all three case study sites are in previously 'white' suburbs, the suburbs vary in their socio-economic conditions and the different types of community facilities that were available.

The category of wall height was revealed to be the most distinctive feature, as each case study area was differentiated by its wall height. The wall material category was where walls could achieve their highest or lowest levels of visibility. And, because, many walls were of masonry construction, the next element that offered visibility was the vehicle entrance gate. Douglasdale had the highest walls, with the most masonry walls and, therefore, the least visibility, although, some visibility was still achieved through the entrance gates.

The consequence of reduced visibility is a reduced opportunity for crime prevention through passive surveillance. In Chapter Two, passive surveillance was cited as an important crime prevention tool. Witpoortjie was the only case study that could support passive surveillance because of the high degree of visibility but, despite this, it was not where most people felt safe. Douglasdale, with little visibility and high levels of fortification, was where people felt most safe. Chapter Five revealed that the physical presence of walls did not significantly add to people's feelings of danger but rather the physical effect was to contribute to people's sense of safety.

One of the most important findings concerning the visual effect of walls was that the walls of gated communities did not significantly differ physically from their housing counterparts. In other words, the walls of houses and the walls of gated communities are physically and visually equal. This means that the walls of gated

communities are no more ‘menacing’ or ‘exclusive’ than the walls of houses. However, the interpretation and the meaning of the walls may differ and this is discussed in the next section. The walls of gated communities are seen to have benefits for some because they give immediate neighbours additional security, while for some gated communities are problematic because the increased density creates issues around privacy.

Most people, in Chapter Five, expressed a preference for greater visibility or transparency concerning the wall. This may have more to do with the visibility of the houses and the ability to interpret the house facade, than to do with the benefits of passive surveillance. As mentioned earlier, the presence of walls was not seen to add to the perceptions of danger. In Chapter Three, it was shown that the wall forms a mask that obscures the house from view. This prevents outsiders from interpreting the meaning that is imbued in the facade of the house. In some cases, this causes a sense of discomfort or miscommunication but in other instances, the wall has acquired some of the meaning once conveyed in the facade of the house.

In theory, the wall affects visibility in the street and the opportunities for passive surveillance, but in reality, more people than not derive comfort from the physical presence of the wall. This visual effect can, therefore, be seen to be a positive effect. The visual effects of the walls of gated communities are no more positive or negative than the effects of the walls of houses. The only point where walls have a negative visual effect is in the visual obstruction of the house facade. Sometimes, this is compensated for through the wall acquiring personalisation and meaning. In fact, Chapter Five revealed that people are all too well aware of the possible negative visual effects of the wall and are using aesthetics and personalisation to disguise the functional necessity of the wall.

6.2 The Function and Meaning of the Wall

The presentation and aesthetics of the wall are important to people because the wall is seen to be a reflection of the home and family. The meaning of the wall is also closely linked to its function. In this way, the wall embodies security and protection, and is seen as a practical necessity and a psychological comfort. Some residents are aware that the wall does not provide a guarantee of safety, and that it may, in fact, encourage criminals, but it continues to be a source of comfort.
The boundary wall has many elements through which people can express themselves and meaning can be conveyed.

Personalisation is achieved through the choice of wall material, gate design, pre-cast wall design, wall colour, and the display of the house number. People

identify least with house numbers and are able to be most expressive through paint colour. The visual effect of the wall has direct consequences for personalisation. In Witpoortjie, where the level of visibility and transparency were high, elements of decoration and personalisation abounded, whereas in Douglasdale, there was minimal ornamentation.

The walls of gated communities tend to be very neutral and plain, in order to appeal to more people. Individuals are not able to express themselves on the outside of their homes or boundary walls. In some cases, this left residents feeling frustrated but the perceived need for greater security is seen to be more important than individual expression.

In the same way that all the elements of expression present in houses and their walls can be interpreted to give an image of the people who reside there, the walls of gated communities give very little indication of the people who live there. This is perhaps resulting in a miscommunication because the wall is only functioning to secure and is not functioning to communicate. The individual is not visible in the gated community and with this loss, there is a loss of understanding. This concept was discussed with reference to rights in Chapter Two.

The meaning of the wall is strongly based on its primary function of security. But its secondary function is to disguise this meaning through expression. The wall represents the aesthetics and tastes of the household beyond, while, simultaneously, representing protection and security. This meaning is integral to its functioning. Both these aspects are important in the way that they affect people's perceptions of the wall and one another, which will be discussed in the next section.

6.3 Perceptions

The wall's strong association with security results in favourable perceptions from people on the outside. Pedestrians, on the outside of the wall, understand and sympathise with the need for protection and, therefore, view those residents of houses and gated communities with positive attitudes. And, because they often work or reside behind those same walls, the security of others is also their own security. Here the function and meaning of the security of the wall has resulted in positive perceptions.

But pedestrians are not viewed with the same positivity. The pervasive fear of crime and fear of others means that, those who reside on the inside of the walls, view all outsiders as potential threats. Residents of houses disguise their reliance on security, their insecurities, and the ugly necessity of the wall, through decoration and self expression but they remain constantly aware of their fears.

As stated in Chapter Two, fear is a powerful emotion and it is pervasive in modern society. When we are little it is ‘stranger danger’ and as we get older, fear and crime sell newspapers. Crime statistics and figures that detail the effectiveness of walls or electric fencing or gated communities are immaterial in the face of raw fear. As long as walls provide comfort against that fear, even if it is a false sense of comfort, they will continue to exist. Walls literally mask the houses behind but they also act to mask fear.

But this is not the problem it is perceived to be, because walls do not build barriers between people. People on the outside of walls do not resent those people that build walls, and for the people on the inside, walls may be providing a level of security and comfort that enables them to reach out to others.

6.4 Conclusion

This study has shown that some walls do not have huge negative implications for the way people experience suburban spaces. Walls affect suburbs visually but this is not perceived negatively by the pedestrians in the street. Walls are providing a wealth of meaning and expression for both residents and pedestrians. Walls give us additional insight into the people who reside behind them.

The walls of gated communities are no worse than the walls of houses and their only fault is to hide the individual behind their ‘faceless’ walls. Walls can positively affect the relations between people because the perceptions of people are enhanced by the presence of walls. When there are no dividing walls, as in Calais, people are more cautious in their interactions with others.

In Chapter Two, I looked at some of the issues that have been discussed in connection with gated communities and suburbs. These issues are exclusivity; the fear of crime and others; the division of public space; and changes in social patterns.

The notion of exclusivity is one strongly associated with gated communities and some feel it is embodied in the wall itself. The pedestrians that I interviewed, those people who experience the gated communities from the outside, did not feel excluded from them, and therefore, for them the wall does not represent exclusion. In fact, there is very little evidence to suggest that the physical attributes of the walls of gated communities represent exclusivity, because they are visually no different from the walls of houses.

The concept of exclusivity may stem from the fact that gated communities are

not all inclusive; they are not available to everyone. But this is an extension of the suburban condition. Suburbs and gated communities are intimate and private spaces where even an innocent passer-by may feel like an intruder. And this is not because suburbs and gated communities have been designed to be homogenous and exclusive, but because they are the realms of the family home; the modern-day sanctuary.

Previously 'white' suburbs and gated communities may not yet be representative of the population in terms of race, but as illustrated in Chapter Two, they are far from homogenous. The idea that they are a continuation of Apartheid was not confirmed by this study, and in fact, one woman had this to say about her neighbourhood: "they are all different races, all friendly people, all very close, all together" (M5).

This study has not focused on the effectiveness of walls and gated communities as tools for the prevention of crime. Instead I have focused on whether walls make people *feel* more or less safe. This study has shown that people feel safer with walls and that walls do not contribute to a sense of danger. And in fact, the additional security features that gated communities provide an increase the sense of safety for their neighbours. A definitive study of these security elements and their effectiveness as crime prevention tools is needed in order to evaluate the value of walls, electric fencing and security guards.

The discussion around the right to public space should not be directed at all types of gated communities. As Joel Garreau points out, some gated communities are merely tenements laid out horizontally (1992). As discussed in Chapter One, some types of gated communities enclose what was once public space and other types of gated communities are as large in size as to be villages in themselves. But the majority of gated communities, townhouse complexes, is equal in size and has the same facilities as apartment blocks. As such, they should be viewed in the same light.

I have touched briefly on how walls may be influencing the way people interact and have, surprisingly, shown that walls may provide a level of comfort that encourages interaction rather than prevent it. The nature of social interaction and neighbour relations has changed with the growth of cities and this would be an intriguing study in itself.

Ultimately, what I have illustrated through this study is that not all gated communities are evil, menacing forces destroying the city. At face value, the wall is a linear element that divides and fragments, but having probed beyond the surface, the wall strives to communicate and express. Gated communities, in the form of townhouse complexes, are an improvement upon suburbia. This new form of suburbia is

greater in density and is more communal.

Walls have become part of the suburban language and they have acquired meaning, almost equal to the meaning of the house, for residents. This research has focussed on the walls of previously 'white' suburbs, but as discussed in the introduction, walls surround a number of different conditions. Townships are an intensification of suburban conditions. The rows of identical low-cost houses mean there is a greater need for self expression and identity. Simultaneously, there is less money for expensive high walls and additional security features, even though, the crime rates are generally higher in the townships. A study that compared the conditions of previous 'white' suburbs with the 'new' suburbia of townships would generate further understanding in the way that walls affect Johannesburg's suburban spaces.

In contrast with the private spaces of suburbs, more and more boundary walls are enclosing public spaces. The fences surrounding shopping centres, parks and offices function differently and will have different meanings for people. These more public boundaries could form the basis for further research into the effects of walls.

Suburbs may still be more desirable without walls, as some pedestrians stated that they would like more visibility and transparency. More houses and gardens would be on display and suburbs would be softer, more attractive places. But as Teresa Caldeira points out it may be difficult to eradicate walls:

> "Usually it takes organised political action to resist walls or to dismantle patterns of segregation. In everyday life, it is a difficult matter to contest walls and rituals of suspicion and humiliation." (Caldeira 2000: 299)

Because walls are a reaction to crime levels or the fear of crime, a solution to the removal of walls may lie with the reduction of crime. Beaty Naudé suggests that crime reduction should not focus on physical measures but rather focus "more on improving the many negative social and economic conditions contributing to crime in order to reduce crime." (Naudé Unknown Date: 9)

And this solution returns to the larger debate of the effectiveness of architecture as a whole on our environments. This study has shown that there are a variety of factors that have caused walls to be erected in our suburban spaces, but at the same time, residents have been conscious of the harsh visual effect and associated meaning, and have counteracted these aspects through personalisation and decoration. The walls of houses and the walls of gated communities are a reaction to current conditions in the city and a carefully considered compromise between what is ideal and what makes us comfortable.

Appendix 1

Summary of physical / visual wall data

Witpoortjie

79 houses were surveyed. On the placement of the house numbers: 5 were on the driveway; 53 were on the house; 29 were on the wall or gate; and 7 had no number. Of the type of wall material: 44 were fences; 37 were masonry walls; and none of the houses had hedges.

2 walls were greater than 1.8m in height, while 49 were equal to 1,8m and 25 were less than 1.8m. For the material for the vehicle entrance gate: 3 were made from a solid material; 2 were garage doors and 70 were of a fence material. 4 houses had no vehicle entrance gates at all. 45 houses had no pedestrian gate, while 22 had separate gates and only 11 had provided a pedestrian gate within a gate.

10 houses out of the 79 had electric fencing. For the category of visibility: 34 houses could be seen over the wall; 20 through small gaps; 25 through the vehicle entrance gates; 2 through the pedestrian gate; 45 through the fence to the front yard; 9 through the fence to the side yard; and only 1 where the back yard was visible through the fence.

Montgomery Park

68 houses were surveyed. On the placement of the house numbers: 21 were on the driveway; 11 were on the house; 39 were on the wall or gate; and 4 had no number. Of the type of wall material: 26 were fences; 51 were masonry walls; and 6 of the houses had hedges.

16 walls were greater than 1.8m in height, while 47 were equal to 1,8m and 4 were less than 1.8m. For the material for the vehicle entrance gate: 15 were made from a solid material; 5 were garage doors and 50 were of a fence material. 31 houses had no pedestrian gate, while 22 had separate gates and only 16 had provided a pedestrian gate within a gate.

18 houses out of the 68 had electric fencing. For the category of visibility: 7 had no visibility whatsoever; 16 houses could be seen over the wall; 7 through small gaps; 32 through the vehicle entrance gates; 7 through the pedestrian gate; 19 through the fence to the front yard; 4 through the fence to the side yard; and only 4 where the back yard was visible through the fence.

Douglasdale Houses

27 houses were surveyed. On the placement of the house numbers: 14 were on the driveway; 5 were on the house; 18 were on the wall or gate; and 1 had no number. Of the type of wall material: 7 were fences; 24 were masonry walls; and 1 of the houses had a hedge.

26 walls were greater than 1.8m in height, while 1 was equal to 1,8m and none were less than 1.8m. For the material for the vehicle entrance gate: 1 was made from a solid material; none were garage doors and 26 were of a fence material. 7 houses had no pedestrian gate, while 8 had separate gates and 12 had provided a pedestrian gate within a gate.

24 houses out of the 27 had electric fencing. For the category of visibility: 2 had no visibility whatsoever; 1 house could be seen over the wall; 1 through small gaps; 21 through the vehicle entrance gates; 3 through the pedestrian gate; 20 through the fence to the front yard; and none through to the side or back yards.

Douglasdale Enclosed Neighbourhood

14 houses were surveyed. On the placement of the house numbers: 1 was on the driveway; none were on the house; 10 were on the wall or gate; and 4 had no number. Of the type of wall material: 1 was fences; 13 were masonry walls; and none of the houses had a hedge.

All 14 walls were greater than 1.8m in height. For the material for the vehicle entrance gate: 3 were made from a solid material; 1 was garage doors and 12 were of a fence material. 8 houses had no pedestrian gate, while only 2 had separate gates and 4 had provided a pedestrian gate within a gate.

12 houses out of the 14 had electric fencing. For the category of visibility: 1 house could be seen over the wall; 3 through small gaps; 10 through the vehicle entrance gates; 1 through the pedestrian gate; 11 through the fence to the front yard; and none through to the side or back yards.

Douglasdale Townhouse Complexes

8 townhouse complexes were surveyed. On the placement of the name: all 8 were on the wall or gate. Of the type of wall material: all 8 were masonry walls.

All 8 walls were greater than 1.8m in height. For the material for the vehicle entrance gate: 1 was made from a solid material; none were garage doors and 7 were of

a fence material. 4 townhouse complexes had no pedestrian gate, while 4 had separate gates and none had provided a pedestrian gate within a gate.

All 8 townhouse complexes had electric fencing. For the category of visibility: 2 complexes could be seen over the wall; and 6 through the vehicle entrance gates.

Appendix 2A

Interview Questions

Interview Questions for pedestrians / passers-by

1. Do you live in this area?
2. Do you feel safe / secure in this suburb?
3. How do you feel about boundary walls?
4. How does it make you feel if you can see through parts or all of the boundary wall?
5. What do you feel about the people inside of the walls?
6. What, do you think, is the purpose of the wall?

Interview Questions for residents of houses

1. How long have you been living at this current house /property?
2. Why did you build the boundary? / Why do you keep the boundary?
3. Why did you choose the materials you did to build the boundary?
4. Are there things you would like to change about the boundary?
5. What purpose does the boundary serve?
6. How do you feel about the boundary? / Do you like the boundary?
7. In what ways, if any, is the boundary a reflection of your home and family?
8. How important is the boundary in relation to your house?
9. How does it make you feel if you can see through parts or all of the boundary wall?
10. How do you feel about people outside of your walls?
11. How do you feel about your neighbours' walls?
12. Do your walls make you feel vulnerable or superior in relation to your neighbours' walls?
13. Do you feel safe in this area?
14. What does the wall mean to you?

Interview Questions for residents of gated communities

1. How long have you been living at this current house /property?
2. Why did you choose to live in a gated community/townhouse complex?
3. How do you feel about the boundary of the gated community? / Do you like the boundary?
4. Are there things you would like to change about the boundary?
5. What purpose does the boundary serve?
6. In what way do you identify (or not identify) with the boundary of the gated community?
7. How do you feel about the fact that it is difficult (or impossible) to make changes and personalise the outside of your home?
8. How does it make you feel if you can see through parts or all of the boundary wall?
9. How do you feel about people outside of the gated community?
10. How do you feel about people inside of the gated community?
11. How do you feel about your neighbours' walls?
12. Do your walls make you feel vulnerable or superior in relation to the surrounding neighbourhood?
13. Do you feel safe in this area?
14. What does the wall mean to you?

Appendix 2B

Witpoortjie Interviews

W1
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Female, 45-60 years old

1 – lives nearby, domestic worker
2 – yes
3 – 'its for people to protect themselves because people kill other people'
4 – 'yes they are better'
5 – 'they are in a circle, they are slaves'
6 – 'protection'

W2
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – yes, just walking to the Spar
2 – no, had an attempted break in recently
3 – 'they are necessary, unfortunately. You are a prisoner in your own home'
4 – 'yes they are better, the yards feel bigger'
5 – 'they are doing what they have to do'
6 – 'hopefully to keep people out, to discourage burglars, but also at the same time they think you have something to protect'

W3
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – yes
2 – yes, but it also difficult to answer that question
3 – 'they make you feel less safe'
4 – 'better'
5 – 'its good to build a wall, anyone can choose what they want'
6 – 'to make them safe or safer, its too easy to get inside'

W4
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – yes, live near by
2 – yes
3 – ‘its okay for them to put up walls’
4 – ‘better’
5 – ‘no, don’t feel anything’
6 – ‘to protect their houses’

W5
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – works in the area
2 – ‘no, you never know what’s going to happen, you never know who will get you’
3 –
4 – ‘better’
5 – ‘alright’
6 – ‘they aren’t safe and they want to be safe’

W6
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – lives in the area
2 – ‘not at all’
3 – ‘feel fine, alright’
4 – ‘you shouldn’t even be able to see through the wall – the way crime is’
5 – ‘they are alright there’
6 – ‘to protect themselves’

W7
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – lives in the area
2 – ‘yes’
3 – ‘they are right’
4 – feels better if there is electric fencing

5 – ‘they are right, not bad, not feeling so bad for them. They are people who are working’
6 –

W8
Pedestrian Witpoortjie
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – visiting the area, looking for work
2 – ‘yeah, so far’
3 – ‘feel good, alright
4 – ‘it means the wall is too short and they are not actually safe’
5 – ‘they are alright’
6 – ‘because people need safety in their yards’

W9
House Resident Witpoortjie
Female, 45-60 years old

1 – ’34 years’
2 – yes, built the boundary
3 – no wall previously, kept the dogs inside
4 – would like maybe pillars with fencing
5 –
6 – its old but its nice and open
7 – it is a reflection of our home and our beliefs
8 – ‘very important’
9 –
10 – ‘no problem’
11 – ‘its their problem that they are all closed in by walls’
12 – ‘no not at all’
13 – yes
14 – definite space, ‘people come inside and they must know they are visitors’

W10
House Resident Witpoortjie
Male, 45-60 years old

1 – ’7 years’
2 – yes, for privacy, to keep people separate
3 – no wall previously, kept the dogs inside
4 – would like maybe pillars with fencing

5 –
6 –
7 –
8 – ‘yes, quite important’
9 –
10 – ‘60/40, they are mostly blacks’
11 – ‘the neighbourhood is very nice, they are nice’
12 – ‘no, equal’
13 – quite
14 – keeps outsiders out, security, feel safe because of the wall

W11
House Resident Witpoortjie
Male, 45-60 years old

1 – ’30 + years’
2 – yes, built the wall, the old one didn’t look nice, wanted something I would like
3 – chose materials according to what I wanted the wall to look like
4 – a palisade fence extension for security
5 – to keep the dogs inside, it is not too low
6 – ‘happy to have a wall’
7 – ‘ties in with the appearance of the house’
8 – ‘important’
9 – ‘prefer it’
10 – ‘don’t trust everybody’
11 – ‘no objection, on one side we erected a wall together’
12 – ‘less safe compared to the neighbour on right, more safe than the neighbour on the left’
13 – yes but not 100%
14 – ‘the wall is necessary, I see no symbolism in it’

Montgomery Park Interviews

M1
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – works in the area, domestic worker
2 – yes, only feels unsafe inside late at night
3 – ‘well they do have to have them but they keep you like you are in prison’

4 – ‘its okay’
5 – ‘its okay’
6 – ‘to prevent crime, but also so they do not see, the higher the wall, there is something to hide’

M2
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – works in the area, domestic worker
2 – ‘not safe’
3 – ‘not right’
4 – fence is nice
5 – ‘not feel nice towards them’
6 – doesn’t know

M3
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – works in the area, sells ice-creams in the area
2 – ‘no’
3 – ‘I don’t know’
4 – its true
5 – ‘I don’t know’
6 – ‘I don’t know’

M4
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 18-30 years old

1 – lives in the area, domestic worker
2 – ‘yes’
3 – ‘you are safe’
4 – ‘its better’
5 – ‘they are nice, they employ you and give you money’
6 – ‘to divide the yards’

M5
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 45-60 years old

1 – lives in the area, domestic worker
2 – ‘no, we were robbed on Saturday during the day’
3 – ‘feel safer behind walls, but on the street, standing here, we are not safe’
4 – ‘nice’
5 – ‘they are all different races, all friendly people, all very close, all together’
6 – ‘they have to be safe, this country is dead.’

M6
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 18-30 years old

1 – works in the area, domestic worker
2 – ‘yes’
3 – ‘its fine’
4 – ‘no problem, it is protective’
5 – nothing
6 – ‘they want to protect themselves’

M7
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – works in the area
2 – yes
3 – ‘the walls are nice’
4 – ‘its much nicer’
5 – ‘they are good people’
6 – ‘because they want to be safe’

M8
Pedestrian Montgomery Park
Female, 18-30 years old

1 – lives in the area
2 – yes
3 – ‘they are fine’
4 – ‘its not okay’
5 – ‘they are nice people’

6 – ‘for security’

M9
House Resident Montgomery Park
Male, 45-60 years old

1 – ’29 years’
2 – yes, built the boundary and the house too
3 –
4 – in the beginning we had a very low wall, but we have increased the height twice since then
5 – for theft, to keep outsiders out
6 – makes it more private, especially with the townhouse complex across the road
7 – ‘preferred the house without the wall’
8 – ‘makes me feel secure, no incident since the increase in height’
9 – ‘happy with that’ put up extra street lights
10 –
11 – happy with them, everyone has done the same, if he is secure we are secure, crime has dropped, so we have to do it. We had three cars stolen
12 – ‘about the same’
13 – very safe
14 – just gives you privacy

M15
Gated Community Resident Montgomery Park
Female, 18-30 years old

1 – 3 years
2 – ‘because it was secure and because it was central – convenient. It was certainly not for its architecture’
3 – ‘yes, I think so. It gives you a sense of security.’
4 – ‘I think it could be a lot more aesthetic, better designed, perhaps more environmental.’
5 –
6 – ‘I don’t know, I haven’t really thought about it. I have grown up with walls.’
7 – ‘It’s very frustrating. I hate it, the fake Tuscan pillars. But it is something I would compromise for security. And when we bought the place, we bought with the intention of renting it out at a later stage. It was an investment.’
8 –
9 – ‘They are generally old people. The house across the road is a security risk. They are not house proud and the house is dirty and untidy. It’s important to be

house proud. But it doesn't feel dangerous outside. There are always guards patrolling outside.'
10 – 'You don't really see them. People keep to themselves. If you see families you think they are good people. People are generally considerate. There is a good sense of respect. It's a mixed community.'
11 – 'A fence is friendlier, much friendlier. Feels more human, watching people. The other house opposite has ugly pre-cast walls which do not match the house.'
12 – 'feel less vulnerable. I could never be in a house without a wall, with a fence. I need a solid wall especially in relation to where my bedroom is.'
13 – 'yes, because we are in the complex. I don't think I would want to be in a house because I am on my own quite a bit.'
14 –

M18
Gated Community Resident Montgomery Park
Male, 30-45 years old

1 – 8 years
2 – 'safety, good security. It's very close to where I work, close to the SABC, to the Media Park. It's also low maintenance and therefore cheaper.'
3 – 'not really, no thoughts, no. I live in a duplex and so I look over the wall. People have never tried to get over the wall.'
4 –
5 –
6 – 'I spend too little time here.'
7 – 'It doesn't bother me. The place is nice enough. It is already like a little village, there is a certain buzz about the place.'
8 –
9 – 'I don't know them. I guess there the wall does isolate you.'
10 – 'I only have one neighbour, she is very nice. I don't really connect with a lot of people here although they are very nice people. I also have lots of friends in the complex.'
11 –
12 – 'It depends. On a security level I feel superior. This is way better security. On a personal level, I feel vulnerable, when it comes to immediate neighbours. They are in very close proximity and they can be in a position to invade my personal space.'
13 – 'yes, considering this is not a safe suburb. I know of two incidents while I have been living here. They caught one guy trying to get in and they caught a drug lord operating from within the complex.'
14 –

M19
Gated Community Resident Montgomery Park
Male, 30-45 years old

1 – 1 year
2 – ‘I come from Durban and I have stayed in a complex ever since I came to Johannesburg. I knew people from Durban who were staying in complexes.’
3 – ‘well, it says we really feel insecure, that we need walls and electric fencing. The wall is a blockage to the scenery, it gives a jail impression. But we have to compromise.’
4 – ‘I haven’t really thought about it. If its not broken don’t fix it. But they could paint it nicely.’
5 –
6 – ‘Sometimes I identify with the wall. Mostly no, about 80 percent of the time. The other 20 percent is when I feel I need it. But mostly I have become relaxed with regards to security.’
7 – ‘Not really. It’s not exactly something you see when you look out the window.’
8 –
9 – ‘I know hardly anybody outside of the complex but generally its lovely place to be. The people across the road [from the complex’s entrance] are laid back and accommodate all the parking in the street. There are quite a few old people living outside of the complex.’
10 – ‘It’s quite quiet, sometimes too quite. I like to pay my music loud but I have to be considerate, everyone has to be considerate.’
11 – ‘No, nothing. It’s anyone’s preference what they do with their walls.’
12 – ‘I don’t feel either. I feel like I have a place to stay. But I would prefer to be in my own house.’
13 – ‘I have learnt to feel safe anywhere. I feel safe here as well.’
14 – ‘Walls generally are a part of life. We have sub-consciously accepted them as a decorative element. They are not just for security, they are painted, decorative elements.’

M20
Gated Community Resident Montgomery Park
Female, 18-30 years old

1 – 3 years
2 – ‘I thought it was safer. I was broken into nine times in a free standing house I was staying in before.’
3 – ‘The wall is what makes it safer. Ideally I would like to live in a cluster house as there is a privacy issue here and not everyone has access there. Here the security sometimes don’t check and there are always stories of in-house thefts,

once the thieves are living inside.'
4 – 'No – it gives me a sense of security.'
5 –
6 – 'No I don't identify with them. I think boundary walls actually attract attention. When I was living in Melville, we had lower walls which allowed for surveillance and we were only broken into once.'
7 – 'It's a bit annoying. Living in a first floor unit is not the same as having a garden.'
8 –
9 – 'I don't really know anyone. I know someone who feeds the birds.'
10 – 'I know a few people. I like to stick to myself. The neighbours downstairs have invited me to a few things but they are not my sort of people and I don't want those sort of neighbour friendliness.'
11 –
12 – 'I wouldn't feel either. I don't think of it in that way.'
13 – 'I have lived in the suburbs my whole life. They are very convenient. I could live in Soweto because it is cheaper but transport is a problem. Walls should be plain, red walls can affect your mood. I don't feel safe outside of the complex if I am going to the west.'
14 –

M21
Gated Community Resident Montgomery Park
Female, 45-60 years old

1 – 7 years
2 – 'We downsized. And maybe for security or the false sense of security.'
3 – 'I have never thought about it, It's fine.'
4 – 'Not really. We overlook it, it doesn't obstruct.'
5 –
6 – 'Not at all.'
7 – 'It's no problem.'
8 –
9 – 'No, no.'
10 – 'I know who they are but everyone gets on with their own lives.'
11 –
12 – 'Maybe superior for some reason. It's very subjective.'
13 – 'Yeah.'
14 –

D1
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Male, 30-45 years old

1 – sister works in the area, just visiting, looking for a job
2 – feels very safe, has no problem
3 – ‘no problem’
4 – generally can’t see anything
5 – they are friends
6 – people can jump over the walls

D2
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – works in the area, domestic worker
2 – yes, very safe
3 – ‘there is no problem, its okay’
4 –
5 – ‘its okay, no problem’
6 – ‘for criminals, burglars, tsotsis. They must ring the doorbell and I mustn’t open the door unless my madam or my boss says so, because in these times crime is bad you see’

D3
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – yes I work in the area, domestic worker
2 – ‘It’s still safe here, but you can’t feel safe anywhere. This is a quiet area. Crime is crime but it is not too much here.’
3 – ‘fine, can’t jump over the wall easily, the tsotsis struggle’
4 – ‘its safer, you see people’
5 – ‘It’s making it safe for me and for people, it’s easy for people to break in therefore a high wall is better’
6 – ‘It’s to be safe in the night, because crime is too much. It’s to protect the kids and the family’

D4
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – just visiting
2 – yes
3 – ‘fine’
4 – ‘its better to know nothing, to not see’
5 – ‘nothing’
6 – ‘So that robbers can’t go in’

D5
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Female, 18-30 years old

1 – domestic worker
2 – yes
3 – ‘no its fine, no problems’
4 – ‘good’
5 – ‘good, no problem here, this place is safe, have security’
6 – ‘to prevent crime, to protect themselves, a house without a wall is not safe’

D6
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – domestic worker
2 – not 100%
3 – ‘they are fine’
4 – ‘I don’t like it, because you might see something’
5 – ‘I am scared sometimes, inside’
6 – ‘some they are building just to see that some people don’t rob you’

D7
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Male, 18-30 years old

1 – working in the area
2 – ‘of course’
3 – ‘sometimes you feel you won’t know your neighbour. In the street, you don’t have anywhere to run to, there is no one to help you.’
4 – ‘you feel like you are in the country, you see people and you feel more

comfortable’
5 –
6 – ‘for security for themselves, no other circumstances’

D8
Pedestrian Douglasdale
Male, 30-45 years old

1 – working and living in the area, gardener
2 – ‘not all that safe’
3 – ‘yes I like them’
4 – ‘its worse for people taking chances’ [to break in]
5 – ‘its okay’
6 – ‘for their own safety’

D9
House Resident Douglasdale
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – ’9 years’
2 – ‘Yes we built the wall - there was vacant land all around and so we needed to put a wall up.’
3 –
4 – ‘Yes, facing the road we would like palisade with a gate to make it more transparent.’
5 – ‘The boundary demarcates the property and provides safety and privacy.’
6 – ‘I would change it. It would be better with more visibility. I don’t like the feeling of walls.’
7 – ‘It is a reflection of our home. We have recently repainted and added an architrave.’
8 – ‘It’s not very important, this is just a private residence.’
9 –
10 – ‘You know, we live in a cul-de-sac and so I am no too worried. Sometimes people drive in and sleep in the car but we don’t get crime like in West Way Road.’
11 – ‘They are all in good shape, they are all very new neighbours.’
12 – ‘No I don’t.’
13 – ‘Yes’
14 – ‘There is a sense of confinement. I would prefer not to have a wall but it s not realistic to not have walls.’
We are very lucky to live next door to a townhouse complex. They have electric fencing and 24 hour security and so we get free security. We are very happy.

D10
House Resident Douglasdale
Female, 30-45 years old

1 – ‘3 +years’
2 – yes, wanted to keep the boundary ‘to stop all the neighbourhood’s pets coming here’
3 –
4 – three boundary walls are brick and the fourth is a precast wall which she would change to a brick wall
5 – ‘keeps dogs and cats inside, security and privacy’
6 – ‘yes, because I can’t see my neighbour’
7 – ‘well, currently, none because of the holes in the wall. But it is painted to match the house so the front is half decent. It also helps with identification, I can say mine is a green wall and theirs is a purple wall’
8 – ‘quite important, I wouldn’t buy a house without a wall in a residential area’ on a farm it is another matter
9 – ‘nice to view what’s going on’
10 –
11 – the back neighbours can see into the property, so have a privacy issue with them
12 – ‘about the same, more secure than the house with a wooden fence down the road’
13 – yes, never had a problem
14 – security, safety, boundary

D11
House Resident Douglasdale
Male, 45-60 years old

1 – ’17 years’
2 – ‘Yes, we built the house and everything else. We keep the boundary for protection from a security perspective and also to keep unwanted people out.’
3 –
4 – ‘A boundary wall may not be best – the security experts say palisade is better but the wall gives me immediate privacy without having to grow plants and the wall is there from a security perspective.’
5 – ‘Yes, I like the boundary wall, it achieves certain aesthetic objectives. The other boundaries I am not so happy with, they are not aesthetically pleasing. The street facing wall is face brick which matches the house.’
6 –
7 –

8 – ‘well, it has multifaceted importance. From a security aspect, yes, it is vey important.’
9 –
10 – ‘We had a residents’ association. I was chairman of that previously.’
11 – ‘We on very well with our original neighbours. We have four neighbours, we didn’t get to know two of our neighbours and we had a dispute over one of the walls.’
12 – ‘All the houses are walled and we have recently erected electric fencing, so we are just as secure.’
13 – ‘No in comparison to gated communities such as Dainfern or Fourways Gardens. But are probably safe – it depends on the area.’
14 –

We tried to establish a larger enclosed neighbourhood, a whole project. They have their role if they are properly managed but they do bring a false sense of security, especially if the security guard is being paid peanuts. What you need is more active security and more cameras.

Again, the Residents’ association had lots of fights over townhouse complexes. They have a place and I would consider moving into some of them.

D17
Gated Community Resident Douglasdale
Female, 45-60 years old

1 – moved in in 1999, when it was brand new
2 – ‘for security, to lock up and go’
3 – ‘I love it, no problems’
4 – make it higher
5 – ‘for security, a hedge costs a fortune to maintain, to water and the wall demarcates the property’
6 –
7 –
8 – ‘doesn’t bother me, doesn’t infringe’’
9 – ‘don’t feel anything’
10 – ‘great neighbours, it’s a huge chance you take when moving into a complex’
11 –
12 – ‘not superior, demarcates the property, you need side walls, would not want a hedge, and would not be nearly so safe’
13 – ‘6 out of 10, nobody is safe, but feel safer in a complex’
14 –

D18
Gated Community Resident Douglasdale
Male, 30-45 years old

1 – moved in 2004
2 – ‘had just moved to this country, seemed the best option’
3 – ‘I accept it, I value it as security, but it’s a shame to live behind a wall’ [from London, and lived in Austria for 16 years]
4 – ‘no, the security is guaranteed’
5 – ‘keep those out who should not be inside’
6 – ‘I have a strong need for personal security’
7 –
8 – ‘I like it, but I prefer a wall to a high fence’
9 – ‘nothing against them as long as their intentions are good’ [wish there was more of a sense of community in the country]
10 – ‘great, fantastic, would like more contact with them’
11 – ‘very imposing, there is no sense of community’
12 – ‘probably superior’
13 – ‘yes, actually’
14 – not that much ‘it is necessary and wish it wasn’t’

Purpose of walls inside the complex – a physical division of property and an issue of privacy

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