Title	**Gated community as a postmodern utopia**
Keywords	Gated community ; utopia/ideology ; dominant/ dominated ; balance of power ; spatial segregation ; spatial reversal ; public sphere/private sphere ; Postmodernity ; the United States of America ; Brazil ; South Africa
Author (s)	**PERRIN Mathieu**
Address	Institut d'Urbanisme de Grenoble Laboratoire CNRS Pacte-Territoires 14, Avenue Marie Reynoard 38100 Grenoble FRANCE
Telephone	
Fax	
Mobile	(+33) (0)6 80 67 29 58
E-mail	perrin.mathieu@yahoo.fr
Abstract ID no.	**077**

GATED COMMUNITY AS A POSTMODERN UTOPIA

Abstract:

Raymond Ruyer (L'Utopie et les utopies) explains that a lot of utopias are closed worlds that aim at facing the outside world which is perceived as a chaos, a means to secure and to protect the utopian world's privacy. The majority of utopias put forward a system without risks or unexpected events, a very homogeneous society, strict rules, a high level of interest for architecture and urban form, a spatial and temporal fixity and so on. These characteristics can also be spotted in gated communities, although they are not present in such a degree. Should we therefore consider the gated community as a utopia?

According to Karl Mannheim (Ideology and Utopia) and Paul Ricoeur (Lectures on Ideology and Utopia), a utopia is a set of ideas trying to shake up the predominating conception of the world. Thus, utopia is the way dominated people think; it is therefore the contrary of "ideology". Hence, it seems fair to wonder whether gated communities' residents are new types of utopians. People who opted for this kind of residence in the first place were, above all, elites. A large part of them probably choose to live in a gated community to cope with a world in which they have lost effective control. Elites would not be as dominating as before. That's the Alain Minc's thesis (Le crépuscule des petits dieux / Twilight of the Little Gods) and part of what Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira explains in City of walls: crime, segregation, and citizenship in São Paulo.

This is where the "spatial reversal" hypothesis appears.
Spatial reversal would be the transition from a first phase during which elites kept the unwanted populations outside of the privileged areas (like the "haussmannisation" of São Paulo, the South-African bantustans, zoning in the United States during the first part of the twentieth century) to a second phase during which elites have to isolate themselves from unwanted populations. This spatial reversal can be examined during the twentieth century according to three points. Elites would have moved from public to private areas, from downtowns to peripheries. Thirdly, considering the United States' example, elites would have emigrated from some states (of "white emigration") to others (of "white immigration"), according to E. J. Blakely & M.G. Snyder (Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States). This transition can be studied in the United States of America, as in Brazil or in South Africa. This spatial reversal would be the consequence of a social reversal designing a society in which being a member of the elite is no longer associated with domination. In other words, elites would have adopted a utopian way of thinking and a kind of utopian residence to struggle against the ideology, a world they could not control any more.

GATED COMMUNITY AS A POSTMODERN UTOPIA

In 1969, Warren Chalk, one of the utopian architects of Archigram, claimed poetically: "Owing to lack of interest, tomorrow has been cancelled." Postmodernity was actually born while the myth of progress and faith in the future would have become less obvious than before. Jean-François Lyotard considers postmodernity as "incredibility towards metanarratives"[1], towards totalizing explanations of the world. In Jean Baudrillard's conception, postmodernity would be the consequence of a disappearance of utopian visions[2]. Today, some architects, urban planners, politicians or thinkers are deploring a shortage of utopias in the Western world and are campaigning for new utopias in order to give a direction to societies. This call for new utopias sounds wrong. Since when is it necessary to implore an artifical return of utopias? Have utopias really disappeared? During the same period, the United States of America and, later, the rest of the world witnessed the proliferation of gated communities. And this paper will put forward the hypothesis that gated communities could be a postmodern kind of utopia. It is right that gated communities are very different from what the modern utopians dreamt up. But this gap would be due to a profound revolution of the society between modernity and postmodernity.

The term "utopia", was invented by Thomas More. It means "no place". In 1516, More wrote *Utopia*, in which he depicted a perfect world located on a lost island and its fifty identical cities ruled by the same principles. That writing would have been a pretext to criticize the European and above all English societies through the description of those principles ruling the island of Utopia. Although some specialists of utopias explain that *The Republic* of Plato was already utopian, More influenced a lot of authors and utopia became a literary style. Urban planners, architects, thinkers have also been influenced by this will to conceive this perfect city, this perfect community.

It may seem normal to seek perfection, but a lot of people act in the real world, in society, in order to improve the world: it is an ideological behaviour. Utopian thinkers accomplish their wishes in the free lands of the imagination or in closed communities, out of society, because of their lack of power to act in reality. That specific way of thinking stimulating the utopia

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[1] LYOTARD Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, p. XXIV
[2] BAUDRILLARD Jean, *The Illusion of the End*.

would be linked to a particular place of the thinker in the balance of power. Thereby utopia would be more than a simple image of a perfect world. In order to justify that classification of the gated community as a utopia, this paper will describe the process leading to the gated community from the balance of power to the image itself of the "created world", by analysing the specific way of thinking too.

Thus, if the gated community is really a utopia, it would be based on the same pattern as other utopias. Its urban characteristics will be studied and compared with those which are generally present in utopias. Secondly, it will be necessary to look at the inhabitants of gated communities themselves: is their choice to settle in a gated community a result of a utopian behaviour? Thirdly, the gated community will be situated in a historical evolution. Thus, the developement of gated communities will be interpreted thanks to a spatial study of the balance of power evolution during the twentieth century. A fourth part will define clearly what could be a postmodern utopia. It will be time to explain what the use of the adjective "postmodern" relates to and what would be so different between modern and postmodern utopias. To sum up, this paper argues in favour of a new approach of society: the postmodern world is often studied through an outdated analytical grid conceived to examine the modern world.

Before this, here is a warning about the limits of this paper. In social sciences, it is impossible to build a hypothesis without simplifying reality. Humans are too complex to be totally understood through a simple hypothesis. This paper does not offer a comprehensive analysis of society, it rather suggests a new way of approaching society as a whole.

1   The urban characteristics of a utopia

By reading Raymond Ruyer's book entitled *L'utopie et les utopies* (The Utopia and Utopias), it appears that a majority of utopias tends to describe worlds showing the same characteristics. Astonishingly, the main characteristics of utopias can be more or less applied to the gated community.

1.1   The gating

Firstly, utopians live in a closed world. Ruyer writes that the utopian community needs this closure to keep its unity and its dreamt environment safe. More located his Utopia on a lost island (Picture 1) and gave a detailed description of the cities fortifications. Christianopolis, a

city elaborated by the theologist Johann Valentin Andreae in 1619 proved this characteristic with its huge ramparts (Picture 2). In 1623, Tommaso Campanella imagined his Città del Sole (the City of the Sun) with seven ramparts. This period was not very safe, but those seven ramparts or the location of Utopia on a lost island are rather surprising. Although gated communities are not so closed, those are gated. And that kind of closure was not very common in the occidental cities of the twentieth century.

Source: 1st edition of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516)

Picture 1: the island of Utopia
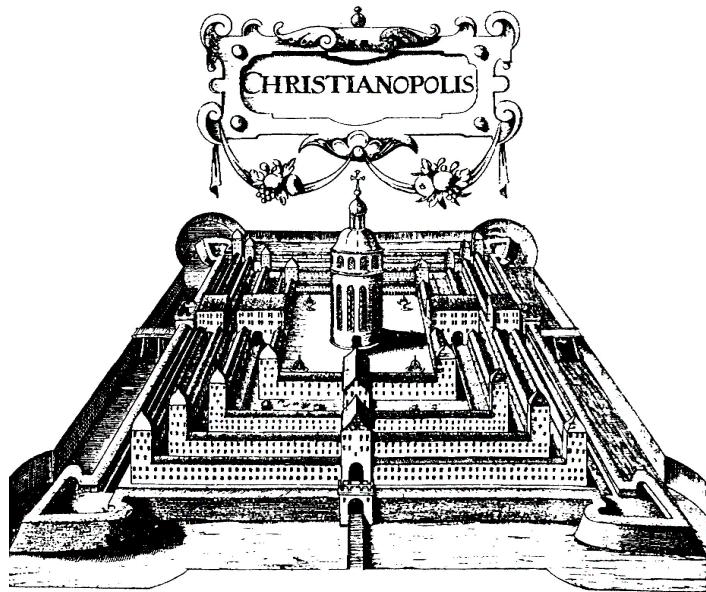
Source: P. de Moncan (2003)
Author: J. V. Andreae, *Christianopolis* (1619)

Picture 2: Andreae's engraving of Christianopolis

1.2 An antithesis of the real world

Secondly, according to Ruyer, utopias are conceived as antitheses of the real world. This point is probably more than a characteristic of utopia. In my opinion, it is even utopia's essence. When the real world is black, utopia is white. This process implies a Manichaeism thinking. While evil and chaos lay in the real world, the good and the order structure the utopia. According to Setha Low, in the gated community: "The gates represent a compromise, even a defense, between the way things are and the way they would like them to be. Gated communities are an attempt to recapture an ideal world in the face of

contemporary realities."[3] In other words, Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira explains that the *condomínios fechados* are perceived as an "antithesis to the chaos"[4].

1.3 Homogeneity

Thirdly, Ruyer explains that utopias require uniformity. Streets are generally based on the same model, houses are often similar. And above all utopians generally look alike. Protests do not exist in utopia. The utopian thinks for all the residents of utopia. In gated communities, a lot of writings demonstrate that the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions offer the possibility to select the potential buyers. For example, Setha Low explains that gating "selects for a certain type of person and level of income"[5]. Thus social – and sometimes racial – homogeneity is secured. According to Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira: "Finally, the enclaves tend to be socially homogeneous environments. People who choose to inhabit these spaces value living among selected people (considered to be of the same social group) and away from the undesired interactions, movement, heterogeneity, danger, and the unpredictability of open streets."[6] Besides, in some gated communities, architectural restrictions are so detailed that houses and gardens look the same and it also increases uniformity.

1.4 Strict rules

Fourthly, strict rules are one of the characteristics that Ruyer notices in utopias. Most utopias are based on a big social control. In some of them, sexual relations are constrained by law. Sometimes utopians must wear uniforms. All activities are often managed by a tight schedule. And all utopians dread the fact that stangers introduce elements of the real world inside the utopia. Concerning the gated communities, the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions ruling the gated communities are generally stricter than state laws: residents are not always allowed to invite friends once the gates are closed. In other gated communities, it is forbidden to raise young generations' members for more than several days. And this restriction is also true when grand-parents take care of their grand-children after tragic events. And some of them are constrained to leave the gated community to carry out their

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[3] LOW Setha, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, p. 224

[4] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 265

[5] LOW Setha, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, p. 71

[6] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 258

task. The respect of these restrictions is often important to the residents. These restrictions are conceived as a way to stop the "Spread of Evil"[7], as a way to avoid the contamination of the gated community by the chaos of society. If an exception is allowed, residents fear that the enclosed area would experience the same issues as the rest of society.

1.5 Harmony and geometry

Fifthly, utopias are often harmonious worlds built with geometric shapes. Architectural and urban shapes are very important in the etablishment of a utopia. In *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometric Order*, Spinoza explains that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."[8] Ruyer perceives the same link between the geometric order and the moral order in the thinking of Plato who is considered by Ruyer as the first known utopian. This harmony based on geometric and moral orders is sometimes an element of what the residents seek in gated communities. Homeowner associations are sometimes conceived as entities which have to control the social structure and the architectural patterns.

1.6 Fixity

And finally, utopias are worlds of fixity. This term fixity can be understood as a temporal fixity, a spatial fixity, or as a fixity of thought. All is immutable, engraved in marble. It is impossible to perceive marks of erosion. In utopia, risks and unexpected events do not exist. In gated communities, it is not so hard. But the restrictions are very strict and the inhabitants generally don't accept any violation of the rules. McKenzie quotes the case of a sick woman applying for permission to turn her porch into a conservatory, thereby changing the house's exterior design. It had been refused by the common interest development[9] because it "could have started an inexorable slide towards anarchy"[10]. And it is often very difficult to change the covenants, conditions and restrictions. Reglementations sometimes include restrictions concerning the height of hedges, of trees or residants have to mow the lawn every week. Nature doesn't experience time and evolutions.

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[7] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 234

[8] SPINOZA Baruch, *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometric Order and Divided into Five Parts.*

[9] A common interest development is not necessarily a gated community but the relationship will be explained later.

[10] McKENZIE Evan, *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government*, p. 41

These six characteristics (closed worlds, imagined world as antithesis of the real world, uniformity, strict rules, harmony, fixity) would lead to a reinforcement of the unity, the integrity and the distinction of utopias against the real world. This first part suggested that gated communities could be based on the same pattern and could be a kind of utopia. However, utopia is more than a set of characteristics: in the first place, it is a way of thinking.

2 Utopia and the balance of power

How can thinkers be led to think as utopians? Thomas More could have published his suggestions in a political treaty as Niccolò Machiavelli did it in *The Prince*. But utopians would adopt that specific way of thinking because of the lack of power they feel.

2.1 The utopians and the quest for power

By taking into consideration the writings of Roger Mucchielli in *Le mythe de la cité idéale* (The Myth of the Ideal City), the utopian would be a person looking for power and freedom. And the imagination of a dreamt world could be a kind of mental repression. A lot of famous utopian writers tend to confirm the powerlessness they felt. Thomas More was a Lord Chancellor for Henry VIII for three years (1529-1532) but it did not save him from death penalty in 1535: More had refused to recognise the spiritual supremacy of the king. He had imagined his utopia before that dramatic event but it points to the low degree of liberty enjoyed by the English author. Besides, in 1508, More had already fled to France because of his opposition to new taxes wanted by the king Henry VII in order to finance the Scotland war. Campanella, the author of *The City of the Sun* was put in jail for 27 years. James Harrington who dreamt up *Oceana* was jailed too by Charles I, Charles II and Cromwell. As for Francis Bacon, who published *The New Atlantis* in 1627, he was charged with corruption after the end of his public career in 1621. The author of *Voyage en Icarie* (Trip to Icarie), Etienne Cabet fled to London. In 1619, Christianopolis had been designed by Andreae in order to protect people who were persecuted during the wars of religion[11]. There is probably something psychoanalytical in the process leading to utopia. This point is claimed by Roger Dadoun in *L'Utopie, haut lieu d'inconscient, Zamiatine, Duchamp, Péguy* (The Utopia, place of unconsciousness, Zamiatine, Duchamp, Péguy). Like Françoise Choay in *La règle et le modèle* (The rule and the model), Dadoun notices that utopian texts are written using the first person. And it would not be a simple coincidence. This first person would be a sign of this psychoanalytical origin: there would be a will of power in utopian thoughts. The men who

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[11] MONCAN (de) Patrice, *Villes utopiques, villes rêvées*, p. 62

cannot act in reality would try to act in areas out of societies. These areas have been the discovered lands of the new world or the free lands of imagination. In utopia, inhabitants live in a safe world: nature is under control, risk does not exist. All these elements make the inhabitants powerfull and masters of their environment. On the other side, inhabitants of gated communities would be in the quest for a world under control too. Setha Low explains that residents move into gated communities "in order to have control of their environment and of the environment of those who live nearby."[12] Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder claim that "the residents of gated communities seek security, but more broadly they seek control."[13] Even in its origins, the gated community would tend to be a utopia.

2.2 Utopia as a resistance to ideology

Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia* and Paul Ricoeur in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* defined utopia as a set of ideas trying to contest the legitimacy of the main ideology and to shake up the predominating conception of the world. In another way ideology is a set of ideas conceived to keep the world as it is. Because of his dominant position, the ideologist tends to legitimate the system set up. On the contrary, utopia is the way of thinking of powerless people because of its revolutionary side. According to Ricoeur, in utopia, nothing is more challenged than the power and its institutions. The utopian develops its reflection out of the present time and out of the real world perceived as repressive. The imagination of a new world is the result of this reflection tending to deligitimate the main ideology by proving that another reality is possible. The first part demonstrated that gated communities tend to be based on the same urban characteristics as utopias and suggested that the gated community would be a kind of utopia. But, how gated communities could be a resistance to ideology? The first gated communities were mainly conceived for rich people and elites. It is not so right today but this point sounds like a problem to consider the gated community as a utopia. In order to understand that dilemma, it appears necessary to study the gated community in a historical evolution.

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[12] LOW Setha, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, p. 231

[13] BLAKELY Edward J. & SNYDER Mary Gail, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, p. 143

3 Spatial reversal

The gated community could just be an element of a long spatial evolution. Spatial reversal is a hypothesis to explain how a gated community could be a resistance to ideology, and how elites could be thought as dominated people. The balance of power would have evolved during the twentieth century and space might reveal this transition. This demonstration will take place in South Africa, in the United States of America and in Brazil. In these three countries, social distinctions are clearly visible and let marks on the space perhaps more than elsewhere.

3.1 In South Africa

In the first part of the twentieth century, a large part of Black populations lived next to White populations because they often worked as maids or farm workers for the landowners. White populations dominated society and Black people were not very powerfull. In a second phase, after the Second World War the African continent experienced decolonization. South African authorities feared to have to concede the right to vote to Black and Coloured populations. In order to avoid this event, it has been decided to create new states called Bantustans or black states. From 1950 to 1979 approximately 3.5 million people were removed from their homes and sent to Bantustans[14]. The Bantu Homeland Citizenship Act voted in 1970 had to attach every Black person to a specific homeland and to remove Black people from the South African citizenship. The Bantustans were an administrative device for the exclusion of Blacks people from the political system. This act could be considered as a proof of the predominance of the White people in the South African society. But, it would be a mistake: "Segregation and apartheid assumed their shape, in part, as a white response to Africans' increasing participation in the country's economic life and their assertion of political rights."[15] From 1989 to 1991, the laws of apartheid were finally abrogated by the De Klerk's government. During the following decade, black people got the right to vote and their right status in society. In this third and last phase, post-apartheid South-Africa experienced a massive growth of the number of enclosed neighbourhoods (Affordable Housing Institute, 2005).

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[14] Official website of the South African government, http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/history.htm, accessed April 17th, 2005.

[15] Official website of the South African government, http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/history.htm, accessed April 17th, 2005.

This phenomenon could be summarized in three phases[16]. During a first phase, part of a society is dominated by another. Spatially, these two parts are generally very close because of an economic dependence. Furthermore, the elites don't fear the rest of the population: they have the power to submit them. The second phase would be the period during which non-desired people are evicted of urban areas by elites. These elites use public legislation to organize spatial discrimination: in the previous case, it was the Bantustan. Although this phase underlines the strength of elites who use legislation to segregate, it would be paradoxically the sign of a loss of power. In fact Bantustans were a "white response to Africans' increasing participation". During the third phase, elites leave the city and the public sphere to keep the non-desired people away from them through private rules. Elites would have lost a big part of their power in the public sphere. The enclosed neighbourhood would be a spatial figure of this logic. The spatial reversal would be the transition between the second and the third phase, between a society in which elites are dominating the public sphere and a society in which elites are constrained to continue the "struggle" in the private sphere. This concept of spatial reversal will be applied to the Brasilian and American societies.

3.2 In the United States of America

Zoning appeared in California at the end of the nineteenth century and has been one of the legislation used to organize discrimination through the public sphere: "The zoning gives a determinative advantage to the land or building owner. Furthermore, this safety measure offers possibilities which are ethically debatable. It makes it possible for a residential community to impose its designs on people who have not yet carried out their projects. And these designs can be elitist as well as discriminatory (building restrictions ensuring the selection of potential buyers) or Malthusian (refusal of a future extension of the community). Zoning tends to favour the interests of those who are already settled at the expense of new arrivals."[17] Thus, zoning would be a characteristic of the second phase previously described. The third phase and the post spatial reversal phase have appeared with the proliferation of common-interest developments (CID). "Common interest developments [...] are residential housing communities — like condominiums, cooperatives, and planned communities — where individuals own their unit and share part-ownership in common property."[18] According

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[16] Those three phases are approximately the same phases as developed by Teresa Caldeira in *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*

[17] RUEGG Jean, *Zonage et propriété foncière*, p. 53. Personal translation.

[18] ROLAND Helen E., *Residential Common Interest Developments: An Overview*, http://www.library.ca.gov/CRB/98/06/98006.pdf, accessed April 12th, 2007.

to McKenzie, there is already something utopian about CID and the author highlights the private sphere's growth. CIDs clearly ensured segregation: "Deed restrictions were the legal means by which developers were able to conduct privatized land planning and, in effect, lay out the suburbs of most major American cities. They intentionally created patterns of housing segregation by race and class that persist to the present."[19] CIDs' proliferation dates back to the 1960 and 1970 decades: from 1962 to 1975 the number increased from 500 to 20.000 in the United States of America[20]. The number of gated communities increased during the following decades. Zoning, CIDs, gated communities are not segregationists in themselves but some people used it in order to keep non-desired populations far from them. Like in South Africa, the impossibility of continue the segregation in the public sphere would have been challenged by the power of the private sphere. But the spatial reversal would not be limited to the dialectic between public and private. Elites would have moved from downtowns to peripheries too. And elites would have emigrated from some states of "white emigration" to other states of "white immigration": "The states where gated communities first took root, and where they now are most widespread, are also those where foreign immigration has been highest: California and Florida. [...] White are now fleeing entire states and regions in the face of dramatic demographic change. Many of the other states with large or growing numbers of gates, such as Arizona, Oregon, Washington, and Nevada, are destination states for the increasing numbers of white Californians fleeing the state."[21]

3.3 In Brazil

In order to highlight the Brasilian spatial evolution during the twentieth century, this paper will refer to Caldeira's writings in *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*. The author relates the spatial evolution of the city of São Paulo during the twentieth century in three phases. At the end of the nineteenth century, the different populations were concentrated in a compact city. It corresponds to the first phase, as described before with South Africa. Elites tended to live in the central part of the city and the segregation existed but different populations were very close. The second phase began with the haussmannisation experienced by the city in the 1910's. In order to accomplish urban modernisation, non-desired people have been rejected outside of the city. In the second part of the 1910's and in the 1920's, the segregation was reinforced by zoning: "The main effect

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[19] McKENZIE Evan, *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government*, p. 36
[20] Community Association Institute, *Community Associations Factbook*, quoted by McKENZIE Evan, *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government*, p. 82
[21] BLAKELY Edward J. & SNYDER Mary Gail, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, p. 152

of this early urban legislation was to establish a disjunction between a central territory for the elite (the urban perimeter), ruled by special laws, and the suburban and rural areas inhabited by the poor and relatively unlegislated, where laws were not enforced."[22] These public decisions led to a splitting of the city into two parts, between the "rich" center and the "poor" periphery, from the 1940's to the 1980's. In a third phase dating back to the 1980's, the city has become fragmented and the previous splitting rich center / poor periphery is now outdated. "For the first time in the history of modern São Paulo, rich residents are leaving the central and well-equipped areas of the capital to inhabit distant areas."[23] According to Caldeira, the development of *condomínios fechados*, which are the brasilian version of the gated communities, is clearly an element of this transition.

And the most interesting element is the attempt to explain this trend formulated by the Brazilian writer: "In fact, the segregation and the model of obvious separation put in place in recent decades may be seen as a reaction to the expansion of this very process of democratization, since it functions to stigmatize, control, and exclude those who had just forced their recognition as citizens, with full rights to engage in shaping the city's future and its environment."[24] So to resist to this process of democratisation, elites would seek refuge in the *condomínios fechados* and in the private sphere: this sphere would offer a place to resist changes that might lead to a more egalitarian society. Democratisation can be understood as something that has more than a simple political dimension. There would be a democratisation of society in all spheres: public space is not as dominated as before by elites, symbols are not longer the privilege of elites: "Upper-class people may have trouble purchasing luxury items at the rate they once did, but they think they should be able to do so. But consumption by the poor is reprehensible if it appears to transgress the imagined boundaries separating social groups and keeping them in their "proper" place."[25] Violence is also disturbing the established social order. And elites would be on the defensive. Thus, according to Caldeira, this spatial reversal would be the consequence of a social revolution.

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[22] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 218

[23] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 232

[24] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 255

[25] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 72

3.4 The socio-spatial reversal

Like Caldeira, other authors such as Blakely and Snyder suggest the same link between social and spatial evolutions. The following table summarises the changes of the three countries (South Africa, United States of America and Brazil) and the social and spatial evolutions experienced.

	First Phase	Second Phase	Socio-spatial reversal	Third phase
Social relations	Elites are dominating the public sphere	Elites fear the gain of power by others	Social reversal	Elites are less powerfull as before and fear a social decay
Spatial relations	Socially distinct populations are very close to each other	Elites use public legislation to keep non-desired people far from them	Spatial reversal	Elites are constrainted to use the private sphere in order to keep non-desired people far from them
South Africa	Populations are generally very close because of an economic dependence	Bantustans		Enclosed neighbourhoods
United States of America		Zoning		Multiplication of CIDs Multiplication of gated communities
Brazil (São Paulo)	Compact city	Haussmannisation Zoning		Condomínios fechados

The gated community would be only an element in a large socio-spatial transition. Gated community could be a utopia because of a specific evolution of society. Elites would have adopted a utopian way of dwelling and a kind of utopian residence to resist to the ideology and to a world they cannot control any more. In other words, it is "possible to interpret the elite's retreat to private enclaves as a form of resistance to democratization"[26] and to the gain of power by minorities.

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[26] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 281

4 The gated community as a postmodern utopia

The postmodern world would be now analysed with an analytical grid which was conceived to grasp the modern world.

4.1 Are elites really as powerful as they were before?

What system of beliefs do populations trust today? It is hard to answer. The traditional elites ensured they kept their status through religion. Kings were kings thanks to gods and their divine ancestors. The myth of modernity was underpinned by scientific progress. Elites were legitimated by their scientific knowledge or by their ability to develop and to commercialise scientific and technological innovations. But how about today? Is there still a system of legitimation to stabilise the social order? In other words, "where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside?"[27] Jean-François Lyotard asked. Are elites still elites without a strong system of legitimation? The transitions from tradition to modernity and from modernity to postmodernity would correspond to changes of values. But those changes of values would mean changes of balance of power too. In *Le crépuscule des petits dieux* (The twillight of the little gods), Alain Minc develops the idea that elites are dying. This assertion is probably immoderate because elites would still enjoy their social, economic and cultural capitals. But it is not sure they are really as powerful as they used to be. In the past, the status of elites was respected and people often recognized their ability to govern them. Today, the civil society and a lot of associations are limiting the power and the breathing space of governments and contesting the state's resolutions. For example, it is now very hard to send troups and make war without the support of the civil society. States are now forced to lie to gain the civil society's support in order to send troups. Until the Second World War, populations had no choice. War was declared and men had to fight. This gain of power of the civil society could mean the empowerment of the middle and lower classes. Alexis de Tocqueville[28] was probably visionary because his analysis of democratisation linked to an empowerment of the middle class seems right.

4.2 When reactionary differs from conservative

According to Ulrich Beck, society would be now organized to face risks. In the class society, people were linked in order to struggle against starvation. Risk and fear would be now

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[27] LYOTARD Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, p. XXV
[28] TOCQUEVILLE Alexis, *Democracy in America*

playing the same role as starvation did before. The German sociologist explained this evolution by the fact that people are now becoming aware of the effects of modernization on nature and themselves. Although the author does not voice this hypothesis, I will suggest that such an evolution could be the consequence of a change in the balance of power too. Another interesting element of Ulrich Beck's thought is that the "negative" utopia of security would be the substitute to the "positive" utopia of equality. This association of the words "negative" and "utopia" is rather new. Utopia was generally conceived as a positive way of thinking. But something seems to have changed. In "Tout le monde en parle"[29] (Everybody is talking about it), a French TV talk show that used to be broadcasted, Clémentine Autain who is member of the *Parti Communiste Français* (French Communist Party) and a deputy-mayor of the Parisian municipality criticized Eric Zemmour's speech. She was scandalized by the misogynist discourse of the French journalist. And she deemed the address to be conservative[30]. Eric Zemmour replied that he is probably reactionary but not conservative, adding that the conservative person would in fact be Autain herself. And he is probably right. Women conditions in the French society are better than before and Zemmour's thought is now politically incorrect. Hence, this journalist would be a revolutionary because of his will to see a change in society, and a reactionary because of his opposition to a kind of social progress. On the contrary, Autain shows that a progressive person can be conservative: through her struggle for a more egalitarian world, she is progressive, but she is also conservative because of her will to defend rights which are now institutionalised. These combinations of "reactionary" and "revolutionary", of "progressive" and "conservative" may seem very strange. The opposants to the French Revolution and its "progress" were considered as "reactionaries". Hence, the reaction to the progress has become a reaction to the revolution and to the revolutionaries. However, we can wonder whether that dichotomy between reaction and revolution is still relevant when revolutions sometimes appear to be a reaction to progress. That inertial conception dating back to the post-French Revolution has strongly structured our minds: it is now hard to "dismantle" it. Like Zemmour, I promote a conception in which the opposition progressive/reactionary only refers to the nature of values which are defended (linked to progress and to more equality / opposed to the progress). Likewise the opposition revolutionary/conservative only refers to the role of the partisans who fight for those values, in the struggle for power. Consequently, such a terminology allows us to conceive the revolution as progressive (towards more progress) or as reactionary (opposed to progress).

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[29] *Tout le monde en parle*, at March 18th, 2006, on the TV channel France 2.
[30] Here, "conservative" is not used as a political term and does not refer to the conservative parties which exist in a lot of countries.

4.3 And the utopia became reactionary

Thus, why could utopia not be reactionary? In Mannheim and Ricoeur's conception, utopia is of course revolutionary because they defined it as a set of ideas trying to shake up the predominating conception of the world. According to Mannheim, utopias would be progressive too. And this point is logical because he studied utopias that had stemmed from modernity. The modern utopians generally struggled to obtain a more egalitarian society, and rights. On the contrary, postmodern utopias would be reactionary because of their link to a "defensive"[31] struggle in order to defend privileges and a status in the face of the empowerment and aspirations of others. Gated communities could be a form of such a defensive utopia. "Gates are reassuring in the face of anxiety levels heightened by economic, demographic, and social change. They shield us from a world where we feel vulnerable."[32] All that context leads us to believe that elites could now be forced to adopt utopia as a way of thinking. Elites would behave as people who do not have as much power as before: some inhabitants probably choose, consciously or unconsciously, to live in a gated community to cope with a world in which they have lost effective control. In other words, the spatial reversal would be the consequence of a social reversal designing a society in which to be a member of elite does not mean any more to be dominating. "The enclaves are, therefore, opposed to the city, which is represented as a deteriorated world not only of pollution and noise, but, more important, of confusion and mixture, that is, social heterogeneity."[33] When populations are complaining about the social order that would be disrupted and are feeling the confusion, the deterioration or the decline of society, it is generally due to a decline of their own status. The terms "order", "chaos", "decline" are really subjective and often reveal the balance of power: for each revolution, the chaos felt by the old elites is perceived as a new order by the revolutionaries.

5 Reconsidering society

For sure, the multiplication of gated communities is closely linked to the post-modern society. The use of the concept of utopia may sound more surprising. Some postmodern theorists

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[31] Ulrich Beck would have probably used the term "negative" more than "defensive".
[32] BLAKELY Edward J. & SNYDER Mary Gail, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, p. 129
[33] CALDEIRA Teresa Pires do Rio, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, p. 264

consider that utopia is outdated. However, we could paradoxically improve our analysis of the society by finding where utopias are now hidden.

5.1 When the way you live reflects who you are

In "Building Dwelling Thinking", Martin Heidegger stated: "Man's relation to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in his dwelling. The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, strictly thought and spoken"[34]. Consequently, dwelling is a mirror of who we are. This statement is inspired by the fact that the two German verbs *bauen* (to build) and *sein* (to be) are etymologically linked. The old English and high German word for building, *buan* (to dwell) would be the root of *ich bin* and *du bist* (I am/you are) and *bauen* (to build). That heideggarien conception in which our way of dwelling would engage our being and our thinking on space, in society, on Earth, has underpinned this paper. The fact that people chose a particular type of dwelling is probably not an accident, but something which is unconsciously and deeply ingrained in our being. Therefore utopia is probably one of the rare concepts that establishes a relationship between who we are (our status in society), what we feel (our frustrations, our feelings of powerlessness), what we think (how our thoughts are structured), what we "dream of" (utopia as image of a perfect world), and probably how we live. Hence, I am convinced that a better examination of space would allow us to understand humans and society better.

5.2 Towards postmodernity

Finally, because of the division "utopia/ideology", the global approach has been very binary. It was a first attempt to reconsider postmodernity and to understand gated communities differently. Society is surely more complex than the way it has been described here. In fact, the reasons why people live in gated communities are very different and numerous: a unique hypothesis cannot outline all tendencies. However, to consider gated communities as a postmodern utopia allows us to explain a set of characteristics (gating of the community, antithesis of society, search for uniformity, harmony, fixity and strict rules) by the one and only concept of utopia. Gated communities could be a good indicator of significant evolutions in Western societies. The balance of power appears to have changed, societies would not be stuctured by the same values as they used to be and legitimacies would be more contested. In this upside-down world, utopias would now be reactionary.

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[34] HEIDEGGER Martin, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: "Building Dwelling Thinking"

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