In Bombay (Mumbai), the global phenomenon of gated residential enclaves is burgeoning. The city has a long history of residential segregation along religious and ethno-linguistic lines; the new developments are more inward-looking, however, in that they seek to create private, self-sufficient living and leisure spaces. This shift is located within the local dynamics of a perceived rise in crime, Bombay’s increasing communalism, and the politics of exclusion in the city. It is also a characteristic of urban formations worldwide. [Bombay, gated communities, housing, urban segregation, middle class].

There on that ground that received so many European children and infants . . . the young of the well-to-do families from Queen’s Road and Marine Drive swing and jump and slide down the trunk of a giant model elephant; they are protected by a watchman, and by a paling of Disneyish animal cut-outs, from the street families that would otherwise infiltrate (108)

Gillian Tindall, City of Gold: The biography of Bombay.

Bombay (Mumbai) is often described as a city of contrasts, a city where the upwardly-mobile middle class and the glamorous elite rub shoulders with the masses of urban poor. The former feel threatened by the latter while simultaneously using their labor at very cheap rates. Elites adopt certain strategies in order to protect the lifestyle they feel they deserve. In this article I examine
one such strategy: “fortification” (Blakely & Snyder 1997) and the parallel sanitization of urban space. Specifically I will discuss the rise of gated residential enclaves. Central to my inquiry will be the following questions: In what ways is space fortified and sanitized in Bombay? Why do Bombayites increasingly think of gated developments as desirable places in which to live? Can the answers to these questions be generalised, or do they pertain to Bombay alone?

Between 1999 and 2000 I spent several months conducting research among Sindhis in Bombay. I went back in autumn 2000 with the specific intention of collecting material on gated developments. I visited several sites in Bombay and interviewed residents of gated communities. I examined newspapers (the Times of India Bombay edition, for instance, publishes a weekly Property supplement), real estate advertisements, and websites of construction companies.

“Gated communities,” or “fortified enclaves,” are privatized, enclosed, and monitored spaces for residence, consumption, leisure, and work (Caldeira 1999). Their historical antecedents are few but significant—monasteries, for instance, and Oxbridge colleges. They are found in various locations around the world and have been discussed, for example for the case of the US, where over three million households lived in such communities in 1997 (Blakely & Snyder 1997). Low notes that 16 million individuals lived in these communities in 1998 (2003). Others have discussed the cases of Britain (Gooblar 2002), South Africa (Robins 2002), São Paulo (Caldeira 1999), Buenos Aires (Pírez 2002), and Indonesia (Leisch 2002). Gated developments underline the fact that, as Harvey (1973: 278) stated, “what is remarkable is not that urbanism is so different but that it is so similar in all metropolitan centres of the world in spite of significant differences in social policy, cultural tradition, administrative and political arrangements, institutions and laws, and so on” (1973:278). Attention to the phenomenon has increased in recent years within the scholarly community, as the publication dates of the books cited above indicate.

Gated communities and their antecedents in Bombay

Bombay is an extraordinary city. It is India’s economic capital. In the British colonia era, it shared with Calcutta a “dual dominance” (in many ways outshining the Bengali city) with regard to the economy (Markovits 1996). Today it is the undis-
puted financial capital and houses the headquarters of almost all the major banks, financial institutions, insurance companies, and mutual funds. It has India’s largest stock exchange and contributes 10% of the country’s factory employment, 33% of income tax, 60% of customs duties, 20% of central excise, and 40% of India’s foreign trade. (The enormity of these figures becomes apparent when one considers that India is the world’s twelfth largest economy.) Bombay is the most important transport junction in India and an increasingly significant player in the global economy (Harris 1996, Charles 2001).

Fuelled by daily influxes of migrants drawn, among other dynamics, by the “city of gold” image peddled in Indian cinema, Bombay’s population has grown rapidly since Independence. In 1951 the population of Bombay City was just under 3 million; in 2001 it was 12 million (16.4 million if one includes the satellite towns grouped under the “Greater Bombay Urban Agglomeration”). Bombay’s residents include millions of urban poor, many of whom have neither fixed residences nor access to basic resources. About a third of urban dwellers are estimated to live below the poverty line (Sharma 2000). The population of the city also includes a small but prominent upper class, which is dominated by a business elite often drawing on generations of wealth, and, very significantly for the purposes of this article, a growing middle class. The latter are partly the result of Bombay’s integration into a global economy and the associated burgeoning of the service sector. They are the beneficiaries of Bombay’s uniquely successful economy.

Bombay’s population growth has been paralleled in recent decades by a residential shift northward, away from the old centres and towards the new suburbs notably Andheri, Jogeshwari, Kandivli, Juhu, Versova, Powai, and Malad—all of which lie beyond Mahim, a marshy creek which in the minds of Bombayites separates south and central Bombay from the northern suburbs. Seventeen wards in the northern suburbs area experienced a population growth of over 50% from 1981 to 1991, while several wards in south and central Bombay experienced a loss of population. Many middle- and upper-class families who lived in central and south Bombay indeed moved to the northern suburbs. Krishin, a resident of a gated community in Thane, explained this move: “I moved a few years ago, when I retired. Real estate values are higher down in the centre, and I made some money by moving. I do not have to go to work anymore, so I can live comfortably here and make some money in the process.” This shift is significant, because
it is in the new suburbs that some of the more impressive and extensive gated communities are found.

Before examining these new constructions it is important to understand the historical context of residential architecture in Bombay. The city has a tradition of several decades of self-contained apartment blocks. Given the scarcity and value of land (Bombay has tended to grow through the expensive process of land reclamation—the employ, as Rushdie put it in *Midnight's Children*, of “tetrapods and sunken piles”), apartment blocks have been the main form of residence particularly in the post-Independence period. Living in an apartment block in Bombay is more than simply a place of residence. Individual blocks are generally referred to as “colonies”—which implies enclaves—and they are frequently segregated along the lines of religion, ethno-linguistic origin, or caste (see below). Bombayites have mental maps of where the prominent colonies are located. When asked for directions, individuals typically explain places along the lines of, “turn left by Parsi Colony, then ask the driver to stop you at Scheherazade (this being a typical name of an apartment block).” Individual buildings are the city’s landmarks. They are the places where distinct communities of people live, and they, rather than street names, are Bombayites’ main points of orientation. One should note that these residential units are often organized as co-operative societies, an idea that has a long history in Bombay, where the first Co-operative Housing Association was formed in 1913 following the Co-operative Societies Act of the previous year (for a history of housing co-operatives in India, see Dabolkhar 1959, Naik 1971, Khurana 1997).

The word “community” here needs to be elaborated upon, not least because academic discourse might unwittingly adopt the language of real estate developers and assume that “gated developments” are also “gated communities.” In the popular Bombay perception, there are two types of colonies. “Cosmopolitan” colonies are heterogeneous, whereas “communal” ones are segregated along ethnic, linguistic, regional, caste, and/or religious lines. Both types are generally surrounded by walls, and these walls are perceived as the boundaries of particular interactive fields. Many Sindhi colonies, for example, included a *tikana* (Nanakpanth places of worship) where (mainly) women from the colony pray together in the morning. They also included a communal hall and other facilities for their residents. Women might walk or jog in small groups, or leave the colony to shop together. People know about their neighbors’ lives, and events such as Holi (a Hindu spring festival
that celebrates Krishna) are often played out in the common areas inside the colonies’ walls. As residents of a “Sindhi Society Co-op,” told me (my parenthesis):

The advantages of living in a society are many. First, the atmosphere is a “Sindhi atmosphere”—there is quite a difference culturally between north and south Indians, and people like to stick to their own. Second, Sindhuvarkis (here this means Sindhis who work abroad) feel that, although they are away, their wives are still part of a community of neighbours. It’s a oneness sort of thing; from Sindhis you can expect more help, and we do help each other here. Another advantage is the availability of servants who you know are honest, through word of mouth.

Before buying one looks at the area. Secretaries and members of the (housing co-operative) societies discourage selling out to people from other communities . . . if my uncle lives in the building, my brother is there, my maternal uncle, etc., I will be more pleased. For every marriage, death, or birth ceremony you need your own people.

A detailed analysis of these fields of interaction is beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that they are vibrant enough to have spawned a number of novels—Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), and Manil Suri’s *The Death of Vishnu* (2001), are vivid portraits of life in such blocks.

Housing colonies have their historical origins in the colonial enclaves of the British (interestingly, also a translocal phenomenon), and the blocks of flats specially designed for civil servants (e.g. such as “Customs Colony,” or “Railway Colony”). Clearly, inward-looking, enclosed residential constructions in Bombay are not recent inventions, and should not be understood exclusively as part of a recent global phenomenon which originated in US cities. Another genealogical point needs to be stressed here. The *mohalla* or *pol*, the neighborhood where extended kin, ethno-linguistic groups, or people of particular religious allegiances cluster, is a well-known feature of Indian towns and cities (see e.g. Gillion 1968, Vatuk 1972). Yet, neighborhoods were only very occasionally “gated.” They ranged from loose concentrations of extended kin clusters in particular streets, such as were found in pre-Partition Hyderabad in Sind (Falzon 2004), to more systematic units such as the *pol* in Ahmedabad, which had a formal council that raised funds, put
issues to the vote, and co-ordinated common projects. The pol was also to some extent physically segregated, with the back walls of houses forming its boundary (Gillion 1968). During my fieldwork I encountered many instances of segregation by neighborhood. Their underlying idea is that people “like to be with their own.” “Living here is very difficult,” Ajita, a Hindu who lives with her family in a predominantly Muslim area told me, “we have to tolerate the smell of roasting beef, and the sound of animals being slaughtered at Eid.” Here, the neighborhood is only one step away from the gated community. Yet, it is a step that historically has been rarely taken—indeed, as Kostoff notes, “material enclosure in the design of urban populations has been the exception” (1992: 104). In the US, the rise of gated communities can be understood as an intensification of the exclusionary land practices already in place—that segregate residents primarily along the lines of race and income (Low 2003). In Bombay, one way of looking at gated communities is as extensions of the mohalla principle that has for centuries kept residents apart along lines of religious, ethno-linguistic, and caste affiliations.

What is new about the gated communities of the northern suburbs is the degree of “inward-orientation” they offer. Whereas “colony” usually refers to residential units and the social interaction that goes with them, the new developments broaden the interactive field (even as they restrict it to the few) and offer a lifestyle wherein residents do not merely reside but live within the protective walls. Increasingly, this space offers—or claims to offer—a number of facilities or “amenities.” Real estate advertisements invariably list these amenities, and they range from the basic security system (guards) and “manicured lawns” in the case of small gated developments, to swimming pools, landscaped gardens, children’s “play parks,” club houses, gymnasium, indoor games rooms, internet connections, and hi-tech security systems such as CCTV for the more extensive examples. Most advertisements stress the advantages of staying within the walls in that they attempt to relocate aspects of daily life which are usually performed in public space (jogging, playing, etc.) to private, fortified spaces. A number of these gated communities are “communal,” that is their population is drawn from a particular community. Some, for instance, advertise Jain temples as one of their amenities and thus encourage Jains to buy flats there. Others, the majority by my reckoning, are cosmopolitan, in which case the only criterion for living there is class/money.

I will now explore one particular development.
The Hiranandani Gardens “complex” covers about 300 acres and is situated by the side of Lake Powai, approximately 18km north of downtown Bombay and about one hour away by auto-rickshaw and suburban train. It is a uniquely fascinating place because it is conceived as a “city within a city”—a total, self-contained constellation of residential apartment blocks, shopping malls, entertainment facilities, and “business parks.” It is a collection of individually-gated developments. The name Hiranandani is everywhere, from the façade of the most upmarket shopping centre to the humblest rubbish bin. The streets have Hollywood-style names such as “Lake Boulevard” and “Orchard Avenue,” a far cry from the Adi Shankaracharya Marg (marg = “road”) which skirts the complex.

At present the Hiranandani Gardens “mini township” has 34 residential apartment blocks, which on average are 30 storeys high. With an average of about 80 flats per building (they range from thirty to well over a hundred), the entire complex houses approximately 3000 households. Each block at Hiranandani Gardens is surrounded by a wall and is, quite literally, gated; a guardhouse with uniformed security men flanks each gate, which is also watched by close-circuit systems. The shopping, entertainment, and business areas are similarly, if less conspicuously, protected. Although the streets of the complex are public and allow free circulation, the whole conglomeration is sanitized, with security measures very much in evidence. The community has none of the throngs of hawkers and pavement dwellers that are typical of the Bombay streetscape. Nonetheless, small shantytowns dot the surrounding areas, and servants and laborers
commute between their makeshift dwellings and the posh blocks where they work.

A closer look behind the gates reveals a world of middle- and upper-class lifestyles. The residential blocks are a post-modern architectural pastiche, often incorporating different styles such as classical and baroque. Each block is individually named according to its section. There is a section with botanical names—Cypress, Daffodil, Canna; one with names reminiscent of US suburbs—Birchwood, Brentwood, Golden Oak; a Gaelic one—Glen Heights, Glen Croft, Glen Classic; and an Italian section—Florentine, Tivoli, Verona.

As noted above, the Hiranandani Group provides more than just housing for its residents. The Hiranandani Business Park, a group of buildings within the complex, houses 70 corporate offices including many multinational companies. It promises “a clean and safe working environment for its working populace.” The Hiranandani Foundation Trust runs a school which is attended by about 1500 pupils. This school is modelled on the English public school system. Faithful to its motto, “a strong mind can only lie within a strong body,” it offers various sports facilities. Residents of Hiranandani Gardens also have a selection of fitness clubs at their disposal—notably the Eden and Forest Clubs with their “swimming pools, wading pools, health spas, jacuzzis, steam, sauna, and Turkish baths.” They also have access to the Nirvana Park, where “the stone pavements are a welcome relief after the tar and concrete roads one rides on all day long.” The Nirvana Park advertisements tap into an environmentalist discourse; it notes that, “all those die-hard environmentalists out there will be pleased to know that all the water used in the maintenance of this beautiful garden, is all treated and recycled sewage water.”

The shopping centres at Hiranandani Gardens are paragons of global consumer culture. The shops are “well-stocked with various
national and international brands,” and the “food courts” serve “anything from Mexican tacos, Italian pasta, Chinese chopsuey, and our very own masala dosa.” Equally interesting is The Culture Shop, which sells Indian printed textiles, scented candles, ethnic crafts, and such: it is “your ultimate destination if you are inclined to beautifying your home or office or any place special for that matter.” The list is significant since it replicates a style of interior (and therefore lifestyle) which became popular in the late 1960s and which advocated a “return to nature” with ethnic artefacts, natural materials, candle-light, and patterned textiles. This style is best represented by Terence Conran’s “Habitat” chain of stores which, since its beginnings in London in 1964, has become a global concept (Massey 1990).

“Those fortunate to live in Hiranandani Gardens have the world at their doorstep,” beckons the website. Indeed it is possible to live there without ever leaving the complex. It is taking the word “community” one or many steps further: not just a gated community in residential terms, but one which pays good money to reside, work, shop, jog, relax, and play together. As Low (2003) argues for gated communities elsewhere, Hiranandani Gardens can be understood as seeking to create communitas in a situation where people perceive it to be slipping away. The lifestyle presented in the adverts and the streetscape itself is of crucial symbolic—in Cohen’s (1985) sense—importance since to some extent it incorporates the differences and tensions of middle-class Bombay into a world of common meaning.

Secure living

In Bombay, it “makes sense” to live in a gated community. Whether or not these developments are desirable from the urban planner’s perspective is beside the point. What concerns me here
is the rationale behind people’s choice of residence. In order to find answers we must look at the world beyond the gates for, gated communities are the products of what they seek to isolate themselves from.

There are three reasons why Bombayites choose to live in gated communities. No doubt all three are shared in some measure by residents in gated communities worldwide. Bombay is a global city, which means it is directly linked to economic, social, and cultural dynamics of the world’s major cities (see e.g. Friedmann 1986, King 1990, Sassen 1991). In Bombay, gated developments are sold on three bases: security, a pleasant environment, and lifestyle.

Security from violence is a primary force behind many households’ choices. Once I interviewed a woman about the need to live in a gated community and she made several points, which I duly consigned to my notebook. The next day, she phoned to tell me that she had thought long and hard about what we had said and that she “should have emphasized security more.” In Bombay, as in all large cities, violence is a complex issue. Three complex dynamics are at work here: a crime rate which is perceived as rising fast, a sense of an undercurrent of organized crime which thrives on practices such as extortion and periodically terrorizes private citizens, notably the well-to-do, and the local history of communal politics and tensions which threaten to erupt into bloody riots.

Statistics indicate that crime rates in Bombay have been rising for several years now. Homicide rates, for example, doubled between 1986 and 1990. However, a thorough understanding of crime rates in the city would require a detailed analysis that takes into account, for instance, different neighborhoods and their respective circumstances, and issues of definition, registering, and reporting of crime. The crucial aspect for the purposes of this article is popular perceptions of the issue and the ways in which a discourse of fear and feelings of insecurity are produced and reproduced. I have argued elsewhere (Falzon 2002) that various forms of “danger” are often cultural constructs that thrive independently of the empirical realities of crime rates and risk assessments. In the case of Bombay, a number of discourses and processes conspire to produce the feeling that danger from crime is an essential ingredient of city life.

My informants all thought that Bombay was increasingly becoming an unsafe place. They held that living in gated communities affords a measure of security although they did point out that a significant part of the crime in Bombay takes place within the environs of such residential areas. They felt particularly wary of ser-
vants. Households consider it essential to employ trustworthy servants and to monitor their activities regularly, ideally by establishing long-term relations between individual servants and particular colonies (see also Waldrop, this volume). Increasingly, crime makes the news in Bombay. Newspapers regularly report incidents involving violent theft, particularly involving the elderly in their homes. An excellent illustration is a Times of India article (December 28, 2001) entitled “The Lawless City,” in which the columnist gives vent to his feelings and expresses a general concern:

Just beneath our city’s energy and its bloodstream of vehicles hurrying like grey corpuscles . . . just under the surface symptoms lurks another dark and lawless city. Suddenly you come upon it. Maybe you read of an old lady’s flat taken over with impunity by an evil “developer” if somebody’s knife hasn’t reached her first. Or you need to report a theft and thus are exposed to the careless brutality of the average police station . . .

This feeling of danger applies equally to organized crime. In fact, the mafia-style underworld is a favourite topic in Bombay. The city has in recent decades seen the rise of several criminal groupings. An unwitting major catalyst here was the passing of a number of Acts aimed at protecting Indian industry through the imposition of heavy levies which subsequently transformed illegal activities into lucrative business. Organized crime emerged in the 1950s and engaged in bootlegging, extortion, and running brothels. A few small-timers were able to grow through a combination of business acumen and ruthlessness. They made use of bureaucratic and patron models of management. Dadas (thugs) held court for years and in the 1960s their style became more organized, taking on new lucrative activities such as drug and diamond smuggling. Inter-gang rivalries and consolidation marked the 1980s and subsequent years witnessed the growth of transnational organized crime with bases in other countries. Today organized crime is “a normal part of life in Bombay,” with a number of dadas becoming household names (Charles 2001: 360). This creates a substratum of terror.11

The fear of communal violence is another important element. Bombay is an outstandingly heterogeneous city with a multitude of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional groups. It is generally thought of (by residents, observers, and tourists alike) as the most cosmopolitan place in India. Yet, communal tensions are rife and...
the history of the city is replete with examples of riots and inter-community violence (see for instance Tindall 1982, Engineer 1984). This history culminated in the riots of December 1992 and January 1993, when a series of violent outbreaks triggered by the demolition by Hindu nationalists of the Babri Masjid in faraway Ayodhya left almost 800 dead and the city in a state of shock. The significance of the 1992/3 riots was much more than statistical. Sharma (1996: 269) holds that “the riots were considered a watershed in Bombay’s contemporary history because they symbolized, in some way, the demise of the city’s “cosmopolitanism.” As one of my informants put it, “the riots affected the psyche of the people.” Suddenly the threat of communal violence became a very real one indeed. “It’s simple to start a riot,” I was told, “just dump a pig’s carcass in a Muslim area, or a cow’s in a Hindu, and you get one.” On a larger stage, this shift needs to be understood within the framework of Hindu nationalist politics in Bombay since the 1960s—particularly the phenomenon of the Shiv Sena. As Hansen (2001) documents, the change of name from Bombay to Mumbai in 1995 signified the long process that over a couple of decades transformed Bombay’s cosmopolitan image into that of a city riddled by communal strife.

The consequences of this rising tension were, first, that communal residential alignments became more rigid, and second, that urban dwellers in general felt the need for security, if necessary behind walls and gates (see Appadurai 2000). There is a rich hoard of stories about Hindus who bought flats at rock-bottom prices from Muslims who were desperate to sell in order to move out of a Hindu area. An article in The Sunday Times (December 5, 1999) sums it up beautifully: “Seven years after one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the city . . . it is evident that despite appearances of calm, the wounds are still to heal . . . there has been a marked ghettoization, even in middle and upper middle class localities.”

These three elements—rates of crime that are perceived to be rising, the fear of an organized underworld, and the threat of communal violence—combine in Bombay to engender feelings of threat and insecurity in many residents. This sense of intimacy with terror leads to the question of the penetration of the state into the realm of violence. When the state monopolizes (hopefully the lack of) violence in an effective manner, as for instance through an efficient police force, citizens tend to assume that security is the prerogative of the state. Yet, when the state is perceived as inefficient with respect to control over violence, citizens resort to private means of protection. This is true in the case of the Sicilian mafia and Mediterranean banditry in general, which have been described
as types of parallel (private as opposed to state) monopolies over violence in the absence of a strong state (see e.g. Hobsbawm 1985, see Sant Cassia 1993 for a critique of this idea).

Many Bombayites remark that the police are at best ineffective as a means of controlling violence, particularly violence through crime. One journalist remarked for Indian cities generally, “For, let’s face it, pizza gets to our homes faster than the police do. And it’s the same story with many other public goods that the state is supposed to provide . . . Lack of security haunts, even kills, people who live beyond expensive gates and guards.” There is also a widespread belief that the police are often in league with criminals by way of bribes. Bhagirathi (2000, as cited in Charles 2001: 361) holds that the police commonly collect money from the accused and the plaintiff. Many urban residents consider the entire system to be corrupt. Most of my informants noted that corrupt enforcement bodies are generally backed by equally dishonest civil servants and politicians. (Indeed there have been numerous instances in the past years of criminal prosecution against public officials for corruption.) Given this wider lack of trust in public bodies, it is hardly surprising that people resort to private means of protection. Living in a gated community is one such means. The proliferation of new technologies of surveillance is another.

Scholars have linked the rise of gated communities to a perceived erosion of the social order. Caldeira (2000), for instance, links practices of urban segregation in São Paulo primarily to a complex dynamics of fear. Low relates the burgeoning of gated communities in the US to “globalization and economic restructuring,” that “weaken existing social relations;” in this situation, “social control mechanisms and their associated institutions, such as the police and schools, are no longer seen as effective” (2003: 17). This negative relation between fortification and the social order was already commented on in the sixteenth century by Macchiavelli, who wrote that “the prince who has more to fear from the people than from foreigners ought to build fortresses, but he who has more to fear from foreigners than from the people ought to leave them alone” (1992, Chapter X).

The bliss of urban country life

The second reason why residents in Bombay want to live in gated communities is the lure of a pleasant environment. The pleasant environment that ostensibly exists within the gates is a direct product of the environment that exists without. With a
population density of 20,000 persons per square kilometre, Bombay is an extremely congested city. Efforts to ease the population pressures (including the Vasai-Virar sub-regional development and the planned twin city of New Bombay) were not successful (Banerjee-Guha 1996). Urban dwellers continue to crowd the central vertical axis of the city between the suburbs of Borivali and Colaba, putting an immense strain on infrastructure and especially transportation. Trains in Bombay carry an estimated total of 5.5 million passengers daily, with up to 4000 riders per train during peak hours. (A load of 2000 passengers is known as the “supercrush load” by the railway authorities.)

These factors contribute to a problematic environmental situation which is perceived to be further deteriorating. Mohan, a resident of Mahim, told me that “pollution in Bombay is getting from bad to worse; it is becoming impossible to travel; buses are out of the question; taxis have become so expensive that for the first time in years I have been forced to use trains which, as you know, are horribly packed.” Mohan’s words reflect broader sentiments. Daily and weekly newspapers carry innumerable articles, letters to the editor, and columns on the subject of environmental degradation and protection. There are several active environmental groups in the city (e.g. Save Bombay Committee) and they all call for the “beautification” of public spaces, more green areas, better air quality, better control of the traffic situation, and solutions to the sewage problem which has rendered many beautiful beaches out of bounds for bathers.

Thus it is not surprising that advertisements for gated developments emphasize clean air, greenery, open spaces, and protection from the besieging city. These are qualities that middle-class families are likely to spend their money on. As gated spaces, the new communities are safe from the “encroachments” of the surrounding city. Many advertisements have some backdrop of greenery, birds in flight, or autumn leaves; they draw on an ecological discourse which sets the pleasant environment of the development in opposition to the degraded and unhealthy city. The following are three examples taken from promotional materials in *The Times of India*:

Enjoy the bliss of Country Life without leaving town.

The aesthetically landscaped surroundings begin to work their magic almost as soon as you step inside—draining stress and refreshing your senses. The beautiful gardens are perfect for taking a leisurely stroll and the children’s play area offers a tremendous sense of safety and is a sheer
delight.

At Country Park, there is an abundance of space, fresh pollution free air and refreshing greenery.

This last example is interesting as it suggests that even the air is different from that of the rest of the city. Much like the atria of new business centres and shopping malls, which attempt to construct a glass-clad space filled with plants and running water apart from the surrounding city, the new communities suggest to be extended upwards in a sort of biosphere.

The politics of space in Bombay

The third theme for an understanding of Bombayites' choice in favor of gated communities concerns lifestyle. Gated communities can be located in a framework of what I will call the "politics of exclusion" in the city, a force that seeks to sanitize public spaces in order to render them acceptable to a certain middle-class set of standards. What is striking in Bombay is the degree of contestation of public space, a process which represents conflicts between the needs and ambitions of the urban poor, middle-class expectations, official regulations which are often backed by powerful interest groups, and the popularity concerns of politicians. This process, vividly portrayed in Anand Patwardhan's film Bombay Our City (India, 1985; shown in London in 2001 at the Tate Modern's "Century City" exhibition), is complex and deserves detailed analysis. I will only touch on a few points. Three dynamics are central here: first, a growing middle class; second, a huge and mostly poor laboring population that provides all sorts of services to the middle and upper classes for a pittance; third, the very high population density of Bombay.

Bombay's middle class participates in aspects of global consumer culture (including globalized fast food, branded consumer goods, mobile phones). It is no different from its counterparts anywhere. Middle-class culture produces middle-class lifestyles which include particular perceptions of space and its organization. A safe, well-regulated middle-class lifestyle requires a healthy environment characterized by clean air, cleanliness, "beautification," and greenery. Leisure and recreation also play a role here, and with them the need for specialized spaces to jog, exercise, walk dogs, rollerblade, or even attend the "society of laughter's" early morning meets.17
Widespread poverty and overpopulation tend to counteract middle-class dreams of urban serenity. About half of Bombay's population live in slums or are altogether homeless (Patel 1996). A tenth are pavement dwellers (Appadurai 2000). These dwellers have no access to private space and occupy public spaces—parks, maidans, roadsides. The middle and upper classes tend to perceive the homeless, slum dwellers, beggars, “urchins,” and hawkers as undesirables who “encroach” on the city's public spaces and make it difficult for the former to lead what they see as a decent, healthy, and safe life. For the elites, life in the city is a constant siege, it is “a zero-sum battle for residential space and street commerce” (Appadurai 2000: 649). It is against this siege that one must fortify. The siege is not metaphorical: the middle class is in engaged in an ongoing struggle against the “misuse” of space. Avtar Singh presents a typical conversation in The Beauty of These Present Things):

I tell you why it's a big deal. Bombay's become too big, it's got too many people. There isn't enough to go around. That's why there's so much rage, that's why the people have anger in their eyes. This city's collapsing into the sea. It can't cope. It's all over for it. Unless the people stop coming. Or they start to leave (2000: 74).

The lack of greenery and parks, overcrowding on the trains, slums and encroachments, and hawkers clogging the pavements are frequently mentioned in public debates. Appadurai describes how Bombayites fantasize about “huge tracts . . . ready to be transformed, at the stroke of someone's pen, into Mumbai's paradise of habitation” (2000: 642). Raj, a Sindhi businessman, concurs: “This can all change. The Bombay Port Trust has lots of disused land . . . There are lots of textile mills lying abandoned . . . If I were in power I would tackle the slums, the mills, and the port areas.”

The conflict over public space is visible in numerous contexts. Bandra Bandstand, a rather uninspiring stretch of recreational area along the Bandra promenade, is one such example. This place is a favourite of many who like to take their evening walks there. In order to protect the space, which has been “beautified,” the “Bandra Bandstand Association” was founded. Supposedly, the promenade is a public space, yet not completely so. One notice there reads “No video filming allowed without permission.” Other notices, all bearing admonitions to cleanliness or civility are also posted. In addition, private security guards patrol the area. Hawkers, beggars, and other “encroachers” are not tolerated. On one occasion I observed
two security guards chase and catch a small boy who was begging in the area. Bandra Bandstand is not unique. In nearby Andheri a sizeable area has been declared “hawker free.” Private security guards, the police, and a sort of neighborhood vigilance supervise this area. Periodic (and histrionic) “demolition and anti-hawker drives” by the Bombay Municipal Council, supported by shop owners and other interests, sweep some urban quarters.

A somewhat unusual but highly indicative illustration of these urban tensions and power contests are the regular stories about leopards straying out of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Powai area that from time to time make it to the local and international Press. In 2001 for instance, slum dwellers were described as “encroaching on wildlife territory” when a leopard killed a number of children in a slum on the edge of the Park. On the other hand, when a leopard killed a child near an upmarket gated development in Powai, the authorities were accused of mismanagement. Just as in the final line of Lampedusa’s novel the fleeting and decomposing image of the leopard symbolises the disjunction between the old and the new Sicily, in Bombay, the leopard, its population under pressure and dwindling, sums up the broadening gap between the old Bombay, with its green spaces and virgin forest, and the new, overcrowded and spreading like a cancer. As it happens, leopards are not exempt from a gated life—forest officials were planning to build a wall three metres high and ninety kilometres long, to keep them away from trouble.19

What I called the “constant siege” by the poor on middle- and upper-class expectations remains an ambiguous process. As much as they perceive themselves under siege by the ever-encroaching masses of the urban poor, households living in gated developments need these same poor in order to maintain their comfortable lifestyles. Domestic servants, hawkers and, ironically, security personnel are drawn from among the lower classes. Rich and poor thus interact daily even behind or at the gates of their idealized developments. As a rule middle- and upper-class households employ domestic servants. Sometime are live-in servants. Most, however, live in simple quarters around the apartment block wall. The use of domestic servants is so widespread because they are very affordable based on the large numbers of urban poor. Appadurai aptly summarizes this: “one wants the poor near at hand as servants but far away as humans” (2000: 637).

As these tensions remain, it needs to be seen how the different groups accommodate and react. There are two ways in which the globalizing middle class can realize its new lifestyles. Existing public
spaces can be improved and new public spaces created. Or, it can create new segregated private “public” space and take cover there. This of course illustrates Gupta’s diatribe against India’s “westoxicated,” “stand-offish,” “elitist,” “hypocritical” middle class (Gupta 2000). Clearly, this is not a case of either/or. There are some efforts underway to achieve the former, yet this is difficult because of overcrowding, corrupt municipal council officials and police, inefficient bureaucracy, cynicism of anything public, and lack of political will. The second method is costlier and less accessible but allows better regulation and efficient segregation of space, using force if necessary. At present, I observed a tendency toward the second option in Bombay. Using private means, the privileged realize their dreams of ideal lifestyles. Gates communities are one their most tangible results.

Concluding remarks

No space disappears in the course of growth and development: the worldwide does not abolish the local (86)
Lefebvre, The Production of Space, [italics in original]

In this article I examined the social, economic and spatial contexts of gated developments in Bombay. On the one hand I pointed out that gated communities are a global phenomenon. Jencks (1993), for example, shows how the Los Angeles riots of 1992 altered the politics of space there by heightening the urgency to segregate and fortify. Issues of lifestyle and security as encountered in Bombay reflect similar ones in Indonesia (Leisch 2002). Themes of high population density at Hiranandani Gardens echo Low’s (2003: 20) point that one economic factor behind the rise of gated communities in the US is that developers seek to maximize profits by density of construction. All such analysis refers back to King’s (1984) work, where he showed how the bungalow emerged from its beginnings as a peasant’s hut in rural Bengal, through its incarnation as a house for Europeans in India, to a globalized contemporary residential form. The subtitle of King’s book is “the production of a global culture” and indeed his thesis is that the bungalow, “a particular type of individual, and consumer-oriented urban development,” developed within an “ever-expanding world economy” (ibid.: 8). Appadurai (2000: 629) is certainly right in
generalising and describing cities in which “the rich . . . seek to
gate as much of their lives as possible, travelling from guarded
homes to darkened cars . . . moving always in an envelope of privi-
lege . . . where crime is an integral part of the municipal order.”

Seen from this perspective, Bombay is not unique.

I also argued, however, that Bombay’s gated developments have
local roots in the context of terror, the perceived lack of penetra-
tion of the state, environmental degradation, and broader politics
of exclusion. This raises the question: Are gated communities a
product of local circumstance, or are they global phenomena which
happen to fit within a local context? I want to stress here that gated
communities are not an inevitable product of the three local condi-
tions I outlined. Early modern London teemed with footpads and
such unsavoury street types, yet this did not lead to gated communi-
ties. My argument is that there are historical and contingent links
between how elite Bombayites feel and the measures they adopt to
fortify their lives. This is not a causal but a historical relation. It is
also important to overcome the global/local divide and to realize
that gated communities make sense both in the global context and
the production of a global architectural idiom, and in the local spa-
tial context. Gated communities, to use Clifford’s words for diaspo-
ras, are “always embedded in particular maps and histories” (1994:
302). Leisch (2002) makes an important distinction in his analysis
of gated communities in Indonesia. In terms of style, he holds that
they are a direct import from the US; with respect to function,
however, they accommodate the needs of Indonesian cities. Just as
King’s bungalow absorbed local meanings and idiosyncracies as it
spread, it would seem that gated communities worldwide do indeed
share an origin and represent a global style of living in the contem-
porary world. Yet it is important to realize that they by no means
constitute a homogenous field of meaning.

Notes

1See Falzon (2003).

2I wish to thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Emslie
Horniman Scholarship Fund (RAI) for funding my fieldwork with
Sindhis. Clare Hall (Cambridge) provided money for my second trip.

3In December 1999, for instance, a workshop was held in Hamburg
on “Gated Communities as a Global Phenomenon,” during which con-
tributors described examples from 16 regional cities worldwide (this initia-
tive has now developed into a research network which aims to shed light
on gated communities from a multi-sited perspective). See also, Research
Network website, including details of the Hamburg conference, at www.gated-communities.de.

4 Source: Census of India 2001.
5 Source: Census of India 1991 (Maharashtra).
6 Most Hindu Sindhis are Nanakpanthis, which means that they follow the teachings of Guru Nanak and perform various rituals associated with Sikhism, but at the same time have not abandoned their devotion to the Hindu pantheon or to the rituals of mainstream Hinduism.
7 See also Falzon (in prep.), “Colonising the cosmopolitan city: Sindhi colonies in Bombay.”
8 Apparently one of the very first gated communities was Fremont Place in Los Angeles, built in 1915 and over the years home to people like razor-blade tycoon King Gillette and Muhammad Ali (Oliver Bennett, “It’s the Great Gate Debate,” The Sunday Times of London Home supplement, 13 January 2002). Scholars broadly agree that cities in the US were the birthplace of gated communities.
9 The Hiranandani family is a high profile Sindhi business family, associated mostly with real estate. The numerous cited passages in the main text are taken from (mainly online) promotional materials. See http://www.hiranandani.com/property/powai.html.
10 Source: www.uncjin.org.
11 In which I partly shared. One evening, while waiting in a cinema queue, I saw a masked man get off a motorcycle and try to shoot a man whom I later learned was the proprietor of the cinema. Thankfully, his gun jammed.
12 Anand Patwardhan’s film Father, Son and Holy War (India, 1995) portrays the anatomy of the riots very well indeed.
14 Source: Census of India 2001.
16 This has become a common theme in real estate. In Malta, for example, a small Mediterranean island far removed from Bombay but similarly perceived by its inhabitants as overpopulated and environmentally degraded, new developments are sprouting that propose a car-free, clean air, spacious lifestyle (pers. obs.)
17 A society whose members believe that laughter has therapeutic qualities, and who meet every morning in parks and maidans to laugh.
18 “Urchins” as understood in India are street children who have no fixed dwelling and who roam the streets begging, doing small odd jobs and, allegedly, pilfering. Dario Mitidieri (1994) has produced a set of beautiful and sensitive photographs on this theme.
19 As reported on BBC News on 23 December 2003.
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1985 India. 82 mins, First Run/Icarus Films.

Father, Son and Holy War
1994 India. 120 mins, First Run/Icarus Films.