An American Effect: Contextualizing Gated Communities in Canadian Planning Practice

Jill Grant
School of Planning
Dalhousie University

Résumé

Au cours d'une série d'entretiens avec des urbanistes à propos des quartiers privés au Canada, les répondants ont initié un discours inattendu touchant des questions d'identité nationale. Du au fait que ces quartiers deviennent de plus en plus populaires au Canada et que les répondants les associent davantage avec les municipalités américaines que canadiennes, les répondants ont été poussé à dissocier leur propres municipalités du crime auquel ils relient aux municipalités américaines. Ceci démontre la façon dans laquelle les urbanistes canadiens sont peut-être portés à interpréter les pratiques locales dans un contexte international.

Mots clés: quartiers privés, identité nationale, urbanisme

Abstract

During interviews about planning responses to gated communities in Canada, respondents initiated an unexpected discourse around national identity. The growing popularity of gated enclaves, a form that respondents generally associate with the USA, forced those interviewed to distance their own communities from the problems of crime they associate with American cities. The case illustrates the way in which practitioners may interpret local practice within an international context.

Key words: gated communities, national identity, planning practice

Stories in Practice

Studies of practice have become an important tool for understanding the context of planning and for generating theory in the profession (Watson, 2002). Theorists like John Forester (1989; 1999), Patsy Healey (1992; 1997) and Judith Innes (1992; 1995; Innes & Gruber, 2005) have illustrated the role of communication in action by using studies of practice to illuminate theory, and theory to interpret planning practice.

Detailed studies of practice reveal some ways in which planning theory and principles influence the decisions that planners take and the advice they offer. Interviews with practitioners help to clarify the ways that practitioners understand and interpret their actions in a context that makes sense locally. Case studies can also reveal the implications of Throgmorton's (2003, p. 134) claim that "Local planning takes place in the context of a global-scale web of relationships." Investigations that engage practitioners in talking about their work begin to show how practitioners construct explanatory frameworks within which to embed their practice.

Storytelling permeates planning practice (Forester, 1999; Forester et al., 2001; Throgmorton, 1996). Interviews offer practitioners opportunities to tell stories about their work and their lives. Researchers provide social settings within which participants try to contextualize their activities in ways that generate intellectual and normative coherence. The interview provides a forum in which respondents may recognize value incongruence and seek to reconcile it in ways that make cultural sense. As they tell their tales, participants in the planning drama cast themselves as heroes while describing those they oppose as villains (Grant, 1994). The messages transmitted may vary, depending on the aims of the storyteller and the storyteller's perceptions of the listener. As Throgmorton argues, "In the end, such stories shape *meaning* and tell readers (and listeners) what is important and what is not, what counts and what does not, what matters and what does not" (2003, p. 128, italics original).

This paper examines a discourse around national identity that emerged in interviews investigating planning responses to gated communities in Canada. The qualitative research spawned an unanticipated discourse that illuminates how the participants in local development activities in Canada interpret the web of global-scale relationships that Throgmorton (2003) suggests affect practice. Using discourse analysis to examine the recurrent references to American experiences that appeared in interviews focussing on Canadian gated communities provided unexpected insights. The findings illustrate the extent to which living on the edge of the USA influences Canadian interpretations of urban life and residential options. Discomfort with what respondents perceive as an American effect in urban development frames resistance to the idea that gated communities mean the same thing in Canada as they do south of the border.

Gates Appear in Canada

In the last few decades, gated communities[1] appeared in new locations around the world (Webster et al., 2002). As more experiences are documented, scholars seek to explain the variability in gated developments in various countries (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004). Extensive research on gated communities in the United States offers insight into the extent of the form (Blakely & Snyder, 1997) and the nature of the experience for residents (Low, 2003). Recent analyses of census data suggest that millions of Americans live in such enclaves (Sanchez et al., 2005). Studies of gated cities and suburbs in Brazil (Caldeira, 2000), Saudi Arabia (Glasze & Alkhayyal, 2002), and South Africa (Landman, 2003) reveal a strong security rationale for enclosure that motivates local elites to move within the walls. By contrast, studies in Britain (Atkinson et al., 2004) find a relatively low incidence of gated communities and suggest that social segregation plays a significant role in their proliferation (Atkinson & Flint, 2004).

In an inventory of gated developments in Canada, Grant et al. (2004) documented 314 gated enclaves, most relatively small. About two-thirds of the projects were in British Columbia, in regions heavily favoured as retirement destinations due to temperate weather and scenic views. Few projects employed guards and many had low fencing, suggesting that security is not the principal concern for residents in Canadian enclaves (Grant, 2005).

A flurry of press coverage in the late 1990s acknowledged the arrival of enclaves in Canada (Anthony, 1997; Carey, 1997; Dinka, 1997; Western Report, 1996). Despite some negative stories in recent years (e.g., Ford, 2003; Wilton, 2003; Yelaja, 2003), the issue has not generated significant popular concern. Canadian planners told researchers that they do not expect gating to gain in popularity (Grant et al., 2004). At the same time, though, Maxwell (2004) found that developers continually advertise new gated developments to prospective buyers.

Canadian Planning and Policy - Aménagement et politique au Canada

Many authors believe that gated projects reflect a growing trend towards private communities and private governance (Kohn, 2004; McKenzie, 1994). The planning literature has largely condemned gating (e.g., Atkinson & Blandy, 2005; Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Marcuse, 1997), yet professional organizations appear strangely quiet about the issue. While planning associations have developed policy statements on themes like smart growth, they say little about gated communities.[2] Given the pervasive influence of new urbanism and smart growth in recent years (Downs, 2005; Grant, 2003) mainstream planning values connectivity, a vibrant public realm, transportation options and mixed use. Gated communities explicitly refute these principles that planning schools teach and that planning books advocate.

How do planners reconcile the gap between what they see in practice—in the growing popularity of gated enclaves—and what they believe in theory? How do they explain the increasing frequency of a phenomenon which they do not advocate? In the next sections I examine some rhetorical strategies encountered in interviews with a range of actors involved in producing, regulating and consuming gated communities in Canada.

A Survey of Practice

As part of a study of Canadian planning responses to gated communities my research assistants and I conducted a series of interviews in 2003.[3] While the research focused principally on how planners responded to the phenomenon, we also interviewed council members, developers or project managers, and presidents of residents' associations from developments that had gates or had actively sought them. Table 1 describes respondents by category.

Table 1: Respondents interviewed[4]

Respondent group	Interviews
Planners and municipal staff	20
Developers and project managers	7
Councillors and mayors	5
Residents' association presidents	2
Total	34

Given the resources available, the study recruited respondents from each category (except association presidents) in three provinces: 10 from British Columbia, 17 from Ontario, and seven from Nova Scotia. The interviews followed a semi-structured schedule, and took 45 to 80 minutes to complete. Most interviews were

recorded and transcribed; when respondents did not wish to be taped, the interviewer took detailed notes.

None of the questions requested comments on circumstances beyond Canada. As I analysed the discourse of the data to satisfy the primary research objectives, however, I noted that many respondents referred to the American context. Consequently, I recently went back to the data to conduct a systematic discourse analysis of all references to the USA. In 20 of 34 interviews, respondents made explicit comments about the USA in discussing Canadian gated projects; respondents from all categories provided such comments.

Table 2: American States, Cities, and Gated Projects Mentioned By Respondents

States	Cities	Projects
Florida	Phoenix	Sun City
California	Miami	Ocean Reef
Arizona	Palm Springs	
South Carolina	Key Largo	
	Atlanta	
	New York	
	Detroit	
	Buffalo	

Table 2 describes specific states, cities and projects respondents identified in comments. Florida, California and Arizona came up repeatedly. The pervasiveness of comments on the USA contrasts with the relative paucity of remarks on experiences in other countries. Only five respondents (three developers and two planners) referred to an international context outside of North America. For example, one developer respondent described social exclusion in enclaves in the Middle East: "If done properly we won't get into that—such as the gated compounds in Saudi Arabia and Dubai where the westerners don't interact at all with the local residents." Two planners (interviewed together) noted that gated projects in Nova Scotia were often developed by or for unspecified "foreigners".

I interpret the anecdotes respondents told to suggest that they contextualized the gated community phenomenon in terms of their understanding of urban issues and development trends in the United States. That is, they constructed the meaning of gating in Canada at least in part in comparison with or in contrast to the meaning they gave gates in the USA.

My detailed analysis of the interviews sorted excerpts by respondent category and identified themes appearing across the responses. References to the USA appeared linked to several themes in respondents' comments.

- Most commonly, respondents connected the Canadian and American

social contexts, revealing the great familiarity that Canadians have with the land and people in the nation to their south. The interviews clearly reflected the ways respondents distanced Canadian social contexts from the negative elements they perceived in their neighbour's cities.

• The interviews showed that respondents often explicitly linked innovation in urban form and marketing in Canada to development practices in the USA. Some respondents appreciated the aesthetic features that characterized some gated projects in the USA, and saw their neighbours as trailblazing for Canadians.

• Some of the discomfort that respondents showed with gated developments helped to illustrate the contrast between the premises associated with enclaves with the planning principles dominating today.

The next sections present the findings on these themes, illustrated with quotes from a range of respondents.

The Social Context

Living near the USA border, many Canadians are deeply familiar with American culture and cities. American television and radio stations penetrate far into Canada. American programming dominates prime time coverage even on Canadian TV networks. Many Canadians have visited the USA, and many "snowbirds" winter in Florida, Arizona or California. Canadians cannot easily ignore what one prime minister referred to as "the elephant" next door.

One resident association president described the extensive connections residents of gated communities have to the USA:

"We have one-third of our population out of here in the winter. They go down to Florida and places like that. Twenty percent is out of here in the summer time because they have cottages. …What they have done is say, 'OK I can afford my place in Florida still, but I want to retire'…. I know my brother years ago looked at one out east…. What he remembers very clearly is when you came out of the village (it was a gated community) there were two signs: one said 'Toronto so many miles' and one said 'Miami so many miles'. And literally that is what happened. The place was empty in the winter time."

Most respondents explained that the gated trend began in the USA and then made its way into Canada. For instance, a BC planner noted that council members first adopted a policy on gating because

"At this time, the 'gated community' as a development option was making its way up from California, and was becoming increasingly common in suburban areas such as Langley and Surrey."

Developers described their marketing research before beginning their projects: "We spent time looking at the product in Florida and Arizona." Several respondents had visited gated enclaves in the USA. For instance, a councillor respondent said:

> "It is more like the States where you go into these—where do I go? Ocean Reef in Key Largo. It is like the size of [our] Town … and it is gated. You have only one entrance and from there you go off to wherever it is, but the whole place is gated. …It is about 10,000 people. It is still a very secured community. Ours aren't quite the same."

Several planners had seen gated developments during trips to the USA. One asked to enter a gated development in Florida but the guard told her she would need "a real estate agent glued to my hip". Another planner framed his understanding of the character of developments in Canada with what he knew about American projects: "But I think there are not a whole lot [here]. The ones I have heard about are the same kind of things as [project A]. They aren't what I would think of initially as a gated community, an American-style one. They are more like this limited access design." Several respondents noted that enclaves in Canada rarely have guards at the gates. Thus these varying stories used American examples to set a standard against which respondents judged Canadian gated communities.

For residents who travel to the USA for part of the year, gated developments may offer the promise of greater security and perhaps a measure of familiarity. A councillor respondent noted:

> "It's very good for a community like this because people can go to Phoenix for two months in the winter, right? Somebody looks after their place. It's designed for that kind of group. And they probably go to a similar kind of place in Phoenix. I wouldn't be surprised. Palm Springs is the other model that I think of. Between the gated communities in Palm Springs all you see is plastic bags flying in the wind. This is really quite amazing. There was a very good story in *The New Yorker* a few years ago about kids who lived in a gated community down in that area and the kids were so bored living in this place they played outside. They had no interest in being inside the beautiful walled community."

The respondent began with a positive comment about Canadians traveling south, but gradually moved towards negative remarks about American enclaves. A practice "good for a community like this" is undermined by the end of the utterance by the suggestion that attractive gated developments do not engage children. Citing an American periodical, the respondent hints at the influence of media on perceptions of gated projects.

Eleven respondents explicitly contrasted the social context that frames gated developments in the USA and Canada. In the following examples, respondents specifically noted differences in crime between the nations. A residents' association president said:

> "I guess to put it this way, if you go back to the history of these gated communities, it started in the US, particularly in Florida and was driven by one thing—CRIME. There is no doubt. Now, that has nothing to do with us here."

In the words of a developer:

> "Regarding gated communities in general, we are fortunate that here there is not so much concern regarding safety and security. My brother is in South Carolina, in a gated community. Most developments are gated there because people want to feel safe."

The narratives suggested that American cities have issues with crime, but did not accept that Canadian cities share the problem.

In response to the question "Do you see gating as a solution or concern for any long range social or political issues?" one developer responded: "We like to think Canada doesn't have any social issues…by comparison we don't. [Laughs]." A few moments earlier he had spoken about the USA. The remarks, offered in jest, illuminated the respondent's understanding that Canadians implicitly use conditions in or perceptions of the USA as a benchmark to judge Canada advantaged.

Planners who were explicitly critical of gated communities suggested that low crime rates in the local area rendered enclosures unnecessary. Six planners directly contrasted experiences in Canada and the USA. For instance, when asked if he saw a market for gated communities, a planner responded:

> "No. No one has really enquired about it. Even [project B] which has a gate, you can climb in over the hill. You just walk over the top. They are just trying to make it unfriendly or unwelcoming, but truly gated? I doubt it. And frankly I don't think we would want that right now. …Certainly there are monitoring and security systems in some of these houses. Why? Why would you bother? Crime is not that huge a deal here. It's not the southern States."

Another planner revealed similar sentiments about the weak market for gating while acknowledging that Canada may not be as safe as some believe.

> "I am aware that there are a lot more of them in the US, and the issues may not be different there from a safety/security standpoint, but I

think in Canada we feel we are a much safer nation. All you have to do is cross the border into Buffalo or Detroit and there is a different feel in the US. I think it will remain low-key in Canada unless we get a public perception of a lack of safety or police can't handle things anymore."

Stories from a range of respondents shared the sentiment: American cities are dangerous, but Canadian cities are perceived as relatively safe. Given their understanding of the situation in Canada, planners interpreted the gates not in the context of a need for security but as a marketing ploy. As one noted, "There was this security idea. This is much stronger in the States: a very strong part of the allure or market. Here the marketing of the gate is a little less obvious than in the US." The same planner then suggested that gated developments contradict Canadian social values. "Here we are in Canada of all places setting up a reverse ghetto. The gates really symbolize it: this is OUR property."

In excluding people from some neighbourhoods, the gates thus challenged the planner's understanding of what it means to be Canadian. Gates dispel the myth of inclusion. Another planner made a similar comment: "Some are harder to enter such as [project C] which is truly gated. It is not a theory we live in Canada, or what we want to be promoting. We are supposed to be more inclusive. It is the kind of country we are." Gates, the respondent argues, contradict national values and his personal values.

A councillor worried that the political process could provide ways for new social values associated with gated developments to undermine government effectiveness. In his view, the USA represents a negative example of a potential future for Canada.

"In the long run if there are a lot of gated communities it can probably have political effects. In the US where they need plebiscites to raise money, there could be a problem of the money stopping for needs of those outside the community. People in gated communities might be less likely to pay taxes for services outside the community."

Throughout the comments respondents acknowledged the extent to which Canadian and American social networks are linked through personal interactions, popular culture, and professional organizations. At the same time, many respondents sought to distance the social context of urban development in Canada from that in the USA. They actively resisted the popular narrative of the city as a place of crime, or the suburb as an area of exclusion, asserting that Canadian cities are not like American ones. Their remarks suggested that the social values implicit in gated developments threaten their understandings of Canadian identity. Rather than accepting a security rationale for the gates, respondents (especially planners) pointed to marketing strategies as the basis for the enclosures.

An Innovative Development Concept

Many respondents directly suggested that gated communities came to Canada by way of the USA. One planner and six developers indicated that innovations in development practices in the USA influenced Canadian urban trends. The dissemination of gated enclaves, for these respondents, represented the spread of novel ideas. When asked "Do you see gating as a temporary fad or a long-term building trend?" two developers (interviewed together) replied:

Developer 1: "What is the States doing? We DO follow the States.*"*

Developer 2: "They are doing gated communities. There is no question."

One planner in a community with many enclaves admired the market success of some developers.

> "That company started off—those guys are both MBAs—started off very inconspicuously to say the least, and now they are multimillionaires. Just because of this. And they are very knowledgeable about these gated communities and what people want. They have gone down to the States—to Arizona, Sun City. They have been all over picking up all the little tricks and ideas that have taken place over years in these retirement communities in California, Arizona, Florida and that. And they gathered them up and put them in their projects. So they are always innovative, and have the new things. You know, they have learned from other people's mistakes. And they make a lot of their developments look very California-ish."

Several developers spoke about connections between the development industry in Canada and the USA. They looked to the USA for market research and for innovative ideas. One developer described the challenge of getting imported ideas approved.

> "We have also developed [project D] which is a rental community of 1200 townhouse units and a clubhouse. This too was a new idea from California and it took a bit longer for approvals. It is not gated. It was successful so the City is now more open to us coming to them with new ideas."

[Q. Have you had conversations with other developers about gated communities?]

> "More with developers in other areas than locally. I don't think there are any targeting the same market as we are...close, but not the same. It was more generalized conversation than anything specific. It has been mostly US developers."

Events in the USA have influenced development trends in Canada. As another developer noted,

> "there was a real change after 9/11. I would go so far as to say that I have seen a renewed interest in gating in the last year. What I have seen is a strong interest at the conceptual table in the gate and approval about the gate from prospective purchasers much more in the last year. From prospective purchasers I am seeing a strong interest in the fact that it is gated and strong approval that it is gated and positive comments that it is gated beyond what I have seen over my career."

Two developers seemed to accept the inevitability of particular kinds of changes coming to Canada as they have in parts of the USA. After commenting on the desire of Americans to feel safe, one developer said, "As we develop this area, gated communities will become more popular and desirable. Subdivision regulations make it tough to create gated communities now." He implied that declining safety follows growth, and that planning policy will at some point have to respond.

Another developer added a timeline to the picture, painting an image of the future that few planner respondents wanted to see.

> "We typically follow the US, though six to seven years behind. In six or seven years gated communities will be a bit more popular, as happened with condos before. … If it gets too far and we don't interact as much with neighbours this would be a negative. We are a long way from there though. We won't see this in my lifetime, but perhaps in my kids' and grandkids' lifetimes."

Several respondents provided American examples in alluding to the attractive physical features and amenities associated with enclaves. For instance, one residents' association president said, "I've been to gated communities in Florida and in British Columbia. They are fantastic. … I've been south in the winter and stayed in gated communities. When there is a grand entrance you feel really good going in. You know you are getting something out of your money." Another resident association president shared the sentiment. "Yeah that is the beauty of it all. The architecture of this looks like a gated community in Florida: the style of home. The architect who designed this is out of British Columbia. This looks like a place I saw in Florida with the big roof styles, etcetera." Residents clearly appreciated the aesthetics of some American projects.

Not everyone praised the look, though. One planner criticized the aesthetics of the enclaves while citing American examples.

> "Yeah, if you've got streets that are on a grid system so that you can go for a mile and all you see is walls and walls, then—you know you see

> that in Phoenix and some of those other southern locations. I think that's the kind of a situation that the issue emerges out of. But we don't have the kind of street that goes on for mile and mile—and as you say the design of these they tend to be more unobtrusive, tucked away."

Thus respondents argued that American design innovations influenced the pattern of urban form in Canada. Their narratives suggested that they see themselves as the recipients of an American effect in development approaches. While developers and residents' association presidents generally appreciated the aesthetics of the American examples they offered, one planner proved critical of the model.

A Contrast of Planning Principles

Canadian planning practice has been extensively influenced by the principles now associated with new urbanism, a theory originating in the USA (Grant, 2003). Since the 1970s, the largest Canadian cities have promoted intensification, quality urban design, and mixed use (Isin & Tomalty, 1993; Punter, 2004; Sewell, 1993). Professional organizations like the Canadian Institute of Planners and government agencies like Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation advocate planning principles associated with walkability, connectivity, and mixed income development. Governments in provinces like British Columbia and Ontario have in recent years encouraged Smart Growth initiatives, following that movement in the USA. We see evidence that this value framework influences planners' perceptions of the implications of gated developments, yet the respondents usually did not link the dominant planning theory with American examples.

Gated communities contravene some principles that currently dominate professional planning wisdom. In the context of the interviews, several respondents referred to new urbanism developments as a better development option, or as preferred by planners. A developer acknowledged planners' reservations about gated communities: "We know that certainly with respect to municipal planners, they would prefer not to have exclusive communities." A planner made a similar comment: "most Canadian planners would probably indicate [gated communities] aren't one of our preferences."

Several planners argued that gated communities undermine transportation and social connectivity. One referred to a local smart growth project as an example: "With our Smart [City] process, one of our core principles is being connected: in other words a community that has a feeling of community and connectedness and [a gated community] kind of isolates rather than brings them together."

Another planner used Jane Jacobs' (1961) terms to question whether enclaves improve security.

> "That's the negative of them to me more, then—the fact that people living in the community are then turning their backs on the street. There

are other ways to have security. You can have wrought iron fences. I've heard that criminals get in behind the fence and they've got it made. You know because there's no 'eyes on the street' to observe somebody in the gated communities. I'm sure you would find there's still break-ins there too."

Not all planners opposed enclosures. One was sceptical of the critics of enclaves. In response to the question "Has the public raised any issues about these [gated] communities?" he replied,

"None. I think maybe philosophically there is a planning issue involved there, where planners who read journals and whatnot are probably aware of, but it is not really an issue in Canada. If it got to be a prevalent form of development it could become an issue, but really, in my view, and I think most people around here feel that it occupies such a narrow niche in the market that it is really not a big deal."

The planner noted a conflict with planning principles but suggested that since gates are relatively rare, they present no significant threat. Another planner respondent said that neither the literature on Smart Growth nor the literature on gated communities coming from the USA proved very relevant in Canada because the situations are so different. These planners questioned the usefulness of academic literature coming from south of the border.

Within the municipal structure, different departments applied divergent principles to urban development. The only fire services responder interviewed challenged a principle he associated with contemporary urban planning—traffic calming—and in the process criticized American practices. "The most common [cause of concern at fire chief conferences] is traffic calming. Even in the US it is the issue, but most of the places we have been dealing with or contacting to get information from are the southern States. They don't have the snow issue."

In interpreting the comments about planning principles we see how Canadians use American examples. Pointing to the planning principles they aver to oppose gated projects, planners avoided mentioning the USA. They presented the ideas commonly associated with smart growth as generic planning principles, not as the by-product of a theory largely associated with American planner/designers. By contrast, respondents frequently linked the negative implications of gated communities to their understanding of American experiences. The emergency responder used an American example to criticize planning principles. In respondents' stories, then, good values were either Canadian or universal, while problems and irrational fears were associated with the USA.

An Identity in Question

Introducing gated communities into Canada appears to raise questions of identity for some respondents. How can we understand efforts by respondents to interpret the meaning of gated developments in terms of contrasts between Canadian and American culture and urban circumstances? The political scientist, Seymour Martin Lipset, has compared American and Canadian political values for decades. He argues that "Canadians have continued to define themselves by reference to what they are not—American—rather than in terms of their own national history and tradition" (Lipset, 1990, p. 3). Canadians may not know who they are, but they cite American examples to illustrate what they are not. We find evidence of that in the discourse on gated developments.

Planner respondents appeared to accept the premises articulated by Goldberg & Mercer (1986) that Canadian and American cities diverge in important ways: Canadian cities are denser, safer, more mixed, and with greater investment in public enterprise. In a recent paper, England and Mercer (2006, p. 38) argue that differences between Canadian and American cities persist. "We propose that the distinctiveness of Canadian cities continues—Canadian cities are more public in their nature and USA ones are more private." Canadian planners and councillors faced with evidence that their communities are adopting what they perceive as an American approach to increasingly private development sought to reconcile the incongruity. They resisted any suggestion that their communities are becoming like American cities. Developer respondents also asserted that gates are not necessary in Canada even as some suggested that Canadian cities are moving inexorably towards what they perceive as American conditions.

For planners enculturated in professional values associated with new urbanism, gated enclaves may prove especially troubling. Thus respondents struggled to find ways to understand and explain it. Few planners interviewed accepted that significant problems occur in Canadian communities. As one said:

> "I think some of it is a bit of a fear—a city fear and desire for security. We get a fair number of people move up from Toronto and they bring their fears with them. Here, security is not a major issue. We are a fairly safe community. I know a lot of farmers who leave their doors unlocked. People here in town don't lock their houses. It is not as safe as it was a few years ago, but it's not a major problem."

Irrational fears imported into the community—whether from the USA or from Toronto—were cited to explain the gates. Such interpretations argued that the problems that generate enclaves do not originate within local settlements but rather derive from the global-scale web of relationships that increasingly frames planning practice and consumers' aspirations.

The proliferation of gated communities represents a deeply unsettling phenomenon for many Canadians who become aware of it. Gates undermine the confidence of municipal employees and leaders that they provide safe and inclusive cities. The private and exclusive enclave challenges national identity myths of an open and caring society with an effective public sector.

The attempt to point to an American effect may have represented an effort by respondents to divert attention from significant issues. Planner respondents may have felt frustrated that they cannot achieve their professional values in a context where consumers make choices based less on local conditions than on their perceptions of the wider universe within which they experience their lives. Comments by council members may have expressed their worry that media reports of crime generate unwarranted concerns in their communities. Developers appeared careful to ensure that homebuyers do not fear that the presence of gates means neighbourhoods are dangerous. Of the 34 people interviewed, only one respondent, a residents' association president, argued that concerns about crime in Canada actually warrant building gates. Within a nation that construes gates as anti-social, those who elect to live within the enclaves may need to construct a stronger justification for enclosure than those building or regulating developments.

Although they opposed gated developments in principle, planner respondents recognized the political and market realities that make enclaves increasingly popular. The frequent allusions respondents made in their stories to an American effect reflect their understanding that the context within which gated developments are appearing in Canadian communities reveals extensive connections between urban trends in the two countries. Thus we gain some insight into the way in which an international web of relationships can affect local interpretations of planning practice.

As Throgmorton (2003, p. 127) argues, "Powerful actors will strive to eliminate or marginalize competing stories". Our analysis of the tales that respondents shared in these interviews reveals a contested context. By asking people their views on gated communities we created a social setting in which respondents told stories to put their views in the most positive light. Many gratuitously offered negative American examples as a weapon against opposing perspectives. Given the tendency of Canadians to identify themselves as "not American", respondents used examples from the USA to construct rhetorical positions to bolster their own views. Respondents of all categories sought to marginalize any suggestion that Canadian cities resemble American ones. Hence this case analysis may illustrate a culturally-situated discursive strategy we are unlikely to find paralleled in other contexts.

Notes

[1] Gated communities are residential enclaves that limit access to streets by means of gates or barricades at the entries. Some are completely enclosed by walls; some have guards or other security measures.

[2] A search of the American Planning Association web site on 28 July 2006 retrieved 19 hits on "gated communities", 116 hits on "new urbanism" and 252 hits on "smart growth". A similar search on the Canadian Institute of Planners web site retrieved 13 hits on "gated communities", 21 on "new urbanism" and 55 on "smart growth". Although more Americans and Canadians live in gated projects than inhabit new urbanism developments, the profession has more to say about the latter form.

[3] The research was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am deeply indebted to my research assistant, Kirstin Maxwell (who conducted the Ontario interviews). I am grateful to the respondents who made time in their busy schedules to share their thoughts with us.

[4] Related interviews conducted by another member of the research team in Nova Scotia were excluded from this particular analysis because they did not follow the same research protocol. The survey of planners includes three telephone interviews.

References

Anthony, L. (1997, July 21). Safe and sound behind the gate. *Maclean's, 25*.

Atkinson, R., & Blandy, S. (2005). Introduction: international perspectives on the new enclavism and the rise of gated communities. *Housing Studies, 20*, 177-186.

Atkinson, R., Blandy, S., Flint, J., & Lister, D. (2004). *Gated cities of today: Barricaded residential development in England*. ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research. CNR Paper 21. Retrieved 25 July 2005 from http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/cnrpaperspdf/cnr21pap.pdf

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2004). Fortress UK? Gated communities, the spatial revolt of the elites and time-space trajectories of segregation. *Housing Studies, 19*, 875-892.

Blakely, E. J., & Snyder, M.G. (1997). *Fortress America: Gated communities in the United States*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

Caldeira, T. P.R. (2000). *City of walls: Crime, segregation and citizenship in Sao Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Carey, E. (1997, June 15). Metro joins trend to guarded communities. *The Toronto Star*, A1.

Dinka, N. (1997). These city walls: gated communities arrive in Canada. *Id Magazine*, *6*(20), 24.

Downs, A. (2005). Smart growth: why we discuss it more than we do it. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 71*, 367-378.

England, K., & Mercer, J. (2006). Canadian cities in continental context: global and continental perspectives on Canadian urban development. In T. Bunting & P. Filion (Eds), *Canadian cities in transition: Local through global perspectives* (pp. 24-39). Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Ford, C. (2003, January 8). Gated communities bad for society. *Calgary Herald,* B7.

Forester, J. (1999). *The deliberative practitioner: Emerging participatory planning processes.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Forester, J. (1989). *Planning in the face of power*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Forester, J., Fischler, R., & D. Shmueli, D. (Eds). (2001). *Israeli planners and designers: Profiles of community builders.* Albany NY: University of New York Press.

Glasze, G., & Alkhayyal, A. (2002). Gated housing estates in the Arab world: case studies in Lebanon and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, 29*, 321-336.

Goldberg, M., & Mercer, J. (1986). *The myth of the North American city: Continentalism challenged*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Grant, J. (2005). The function of the gates: the social construction of security in gated developments. *Town Planning Review, 76*, 291-313.

Grant, J. (2003). Exploring the influence of new urbanism in community planning practice. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 20*, 234-253.

Grant, J. (1994). *The drama of democracy: Contention and dispute in community planning*. Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press.

Grant, J., Greene, K., & Maxwell, K. (2004). The planning and policy implications of gated communities. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, 13*(1) Supplement, 70-88.

Grant, J., & Mittelsteadt, L. (2004). Types of gated communities. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, 31*: 913-930.

Healey, P. (1997). *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Healey, P. (1992). A planner's day: knowledge and action in communicative practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association,* 58, 9-20.

Innes, J. (1995). Planning theory's emerging paradigm: communicative action and interactive practice. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 14*(3), 183-9.

Innes, J. (1992). Group processes and the social construction of growth manage-

ment: Florida, Vermont, and New Jersey. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 58*, 440-453.

Innes, J., & Gruber, J. (2005). Planning styles in conflict: the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 71*, 177-188.

Isin, E., & Tomalty, R. (1993). *Resettling cities: Canadian residential intensification initiatives*. Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Vintage.

Kohn, M. (2004). *Brave new neighborhoods: The privatization of public space.* New York, Routledge.

Landman, K. (2003). *Gated communities in South Africa: A national survey*. CSIR Pretoria.

Lipset, S. M. (1990). *North American cultures: Values and institutions in Canada and the United States.* Orono ME*:* Borderlands Monograph Series 3, University of Maine.

Low, S. (2003). *Behind the gates: Life, security, and the pursuit of happiness in fortress America.* New York: Routledge.

Marcuse, P. (1997). Walls of fear and walls of support. In N. Ellin (Ed.), *Architecture of fear* (pp 101-114). New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Maxwell, D. K. (2004). Gated communities: selling the good life. *Plan Canada, 44*(4), 20-22.

McKenzie, E. (1994). *Privatopia: Homeowners associations and the rise of residential private government*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Punter, J. (2004). *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban planning and design*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Sanchez, T. W., Lang, R. E., & Dhavale, D. M. (2005). Security versus status? A first look at the census's gated community data. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 24*, 281-91.

Sewell, J. (1993). *The shape of the city: Toronto struggles with modern planning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Throgmorton, J. A. (2003). Planning as persuasive storytelling in a global-scale web of relationships. *Planning Theory, 2*(2), 125-151.

Throgmorton, J. A. (1996). *Planning as persuasive storytelling: The rhetorical construction of Chicago's electric future.* Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Watson, V. (2002). Do we learn from planning practice? The contribution of the practice movement to planning theory. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 22*, 178-187.

Webster, C., Glasze, G., & Frantz, K. (2002). The global spread of gated communities. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, 29*, 315-320.

Western Report. (1996). Fear starts to reshape urban Alberta: The Province's first controlled access neighbourhood is in the works. *Western Report, 11*(23), 16-17.

Wilton, S. (2003, January 8). No barrier to gated projects: fences create divisions, critics warn. *Calgary Herald,* B1.

Yelaja, P. (2003). Safe and sound as the iron gates swing shut. *The Toronto Star.* Retrieved 18 January 2003 from http://www.thestar.com/