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**The struggle to belong:  
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.**

**Amsterdam, 7-9 July 2011**

**The Autotomic City:  
The Strategic Ejection of Unruly Urban Space**

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## **The autotomic city: The strategic ejection of unruly urban space**

Rowland Atkinson and Simon Parker

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### **Abstract**

A central focus of work on public access to cities and public spaces has rightly emphasised the privatisation of public space and the modification of access rights. In this paper we argue that such work should also embrace alternative modes of governance and citizen usage that suggest the ejection of responsibility and access respectively. We refer to the ‘autotomic’ production of space as the social, political and economic processes through which the costs of maintaining ‘unruly’ space and state and civil exposure to risk bearing agents are mitigated through spatial abandonment and rejection. Prominent examples of such spatial practices include policing ‘no-go’ areas (high crime and social disorder zones), urban wastelands, derelict buildings, public transport ‘misery lines’ and those spaces tacitly understood to be under informal curfew. We map the particular forms and features of these autotomic relations, showing how the relationship between city residents, workers and visitors and these ungoverned and eviscerated spaces and time-space configurations is mediated and negotiated. In the second part of the paper we develop these proposals by drawing on the work of Lefebvre, De Certeau and Deleuze and Guattari on the nature of liminality (interzones and threshold spaces) as both a product of material discourse and affect. In particular we are keen to explore the motives and mechanisms through which certain spaces become detached and disarticulated from the urban body. We draw upon a range of materials including parliamentary debates, press articles, crime surveys and social media to survey narratives of governmentality implicated in the concept of the ‘no-go area’. We conclude that ‘spatial amputation’ responses can be identified variously as strategies of public risk management, fiscal cost reduction and revanchist impulse.

### **1. Introduction**

Urban studies has been regularly preoccupied with the management of public spaces and the way that increasing forms of regulation are seen to express both a desire to escape from fear and promote order, on the one hand, while also generating aggressive and socially regressive implications for public participation. Three general observations can be offered of this analysis. First, the tendency for what has been identified as a privatisation of the management and ownership of public spaces (Minton, 2010; Davis, 1991) has shifted the dynamics of entry and exclusion from historically open spaces. Second, the emphasis on consumption activities has supplanted or diminished the role of public spaces as sites of contestation, participation and daily social spectacle (Low and Smith, Mitchell, ) which, in some cases, has been aggressively policed (Smith ) or manufactured, resulting in a generally bland template of enclosed malls and sterile squares. Finally, we can see how there has been a significant intersection of urban safety agendas with broader political concerns about disorder and the regeneration or economic and physical renewal of both neighbourhoods and public spaces (Atkinson and Helms, 2007). These combinations have produced regimes of social control and policing that have emphasised a new connection between economic and local well-being and the

visibility of forms of crime and other risks that bring about disinvestment and anxiety.

Taken as a whole these three approaches to the issue of public space have tended to see economic systems, political action and urbanism as self-contained and self-powered systems. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre and De Certeau we instead emphasise the intrinsically social and contingent nature of spatial production and the corporeal nature of governable space as commodity form. Fear and desire in the urban imaginary should not therefore be considered as ephemeral constituents of socio-spatial ontology, but as a necessary precondition for the construction, deconstruction and eviction of discrete forms of habitus (Agamben, Bourdieu). If Zygmunt Bauman's notion of the *agora* calls for a reconsideration of the public square, the commons and the market place as an essential domain of civic life—we nevertheless argue that the voices and motivations of the *demos* have played little part in the governmentality of public space (Bauman, 1999). Instead urban politics has increasingly become reduced to a joint venture between the private realm of the *oikos* and the strategic capital accumulation strategies of the *ekklesia* in which the agoric invokes dangerous and threatening fantasies of polymorphous, heterodox and ungovernable spatialities.

*Incorporation and ejection: managing and engaging space through enclosure and autotomy*

Rhetorically the sovereign state must reject the possibility of exceptions to its monopoly of the means of violence; repressive state apparatuses have always been reliant on 'molar' strategies of containment, mitigation and vengeful displays of symbolic force against the potential resistance of subaltern bodies (Deleuze and Guattari; Guattari 1975). When Rancière talks of this 'police' function of the state it is not the repressive instrument of control represented by Hobbes' *Leviathan* nor the 'control on life' proposed by Foucault but the production of 'a society [that] is a totality comprised of groups performing specific functions and occupying determined spaces' (Rancière, 2000). Rancière goes on to argue that '[t]he political', on the other hand, 'is what disturbs this order by introducing either a supplement or a lack'. Politics is therefore created through dissensus—by the claims of 'the part that is no part'—and the *demos* therefore exists 'in excess' of the bearers of power.

Rancière's notion of the 'policed' or 'policeable' city contrasts with those uncharted territories that are 'the part of no part' and which must therefore be divided and estranged from the 'consensual' polity. The production of 'dissensual space' and its subsequent containment and ejection is the result of the dual process of the state-led securitization, militarization and pacification of public space in the wake of the global civil rights protests and new social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s (Castells, 1983; Sennett, 1992; Davis, 1991, Graham, 2010; Zukin; Scott ; Atkinson, 2003) and the acceleration of neoliberal restructuring from the late 1970s following the crisis of Fordism and the Keynesian Welfare State. In its wake, precarious urban populations, including the young unemployed, migrants and refugees, together with those who possessed a more explicitly political commitment to non-market based, anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist lifestyles, established alternative communities in the abandoned remnants of social housing, industrial buildings and vacant private properties of the metropolis. Together with those residual elements of the working-class that could not or would not be commoditised as mortgage holders, the inner

city became home to an increasingly large and at times angry counter-public, which was increasingly identified by the authorities and their standard bearers in the mass media in terms similar to the 'dangerous classes' of Victorian England (Stedman Jones, Hall et al ; Parker, 2004).

The comprehensive and systematic illegalisation and elimination of squatting and other types of informal housing by public authorities and private owners and developers together with a sustained counter wave of gentrification has largely recuperated the commodifiable dissensual urban space once occupied by metropolitan counter-publics in western cities (Smith; 2000; Davis etc). But the sudden presence of 'the part that has no part' in the urban order has induced a social scarification of public space in order to promote safer and easy social and commercial exchange (Sorkin, 1992; Sorkin 200 ). This drive to displace and remove unruly urban subjects has long historical precedents, but despite its more recent neoliberal inflection (Harvey 2005), we also need to understand how efforts to produce communitarian solidarity through the estrangement and containment of othered bodies might help to counter particular threats to civility (Rose ).

Approaching and defining public space is a complex matter. At the outset we might suggest that it is space that is not necessarily publicly owned, but publicly accessible. Such notions are inherent in the kind of policies and practice statements in countries like the UK, where public space management is now intimately connected with approaches to liveability, economic development and, particularly, to crime control (Atkinson and Helms, 2007). For **Low and Smith (200?)** public space is a historically complex and contested phenomenon. After initially suggesting it is that which is 'bound up with the contrast between public and private space' (p.4) they encompass debates about civil society, state, market and the difficulties associated with complex forms of public and private micro management and ownership within public space. They argue that protest, revolution and dissent are unthinkable without public space – thus do we see the projects of centralised authority structures of all stripes to orchestrate, filter and exclude groups from such spaces.

Techniques of surveillance, social control and socio-legal powers of removal suggest that the distinction between public and private space have been largely superseded (Bottomley and Moore, 2007) by complex overlays of ownership, control, information, circulation and monitoring. The UK has many such examples including the Highways Act (1980) which included the offence of 'obstruction of the public highway'; the Public Order Act (1986) on 'trespassory assembly'; the Vagrancy Act (1824) with its 'begging in a public place' and, since its amendment in 2003, now an imprisonable offence. In the Local Government Act of 1972 injunctions were created to restrain anti-social behaviour that constitutes 'public nuisance'. While the stringency of such earlier measures can be remarked on we can also observe a ratcheting up of interdictory measures under the Blair government. These were not only fixes on the 'anti-social' but also tended to target areas of public housing. The discretionary aspect of fixed penalty fines for littering, exclusion of individuals by name (ASBOs) (Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003) led to a geography of injunction that varied in relation to the relative energy of local elected officials and administrations, rather than being triggered only by particular kinds of behaviour (Flint, ).

The legal basis of private homeownership has also been extended through the collective ownership of discrete neighbourhoods – gated communities – and the leasing of what was once public space by civic authorities to private developers (this can be seen in numerous cities including Melbourne, Sydney, Los Angeles, New York, Birmingham and Sheffield). Thus it would appear that what was once public is ceded to private control, by resident and developer/management bodies. Even where streets and squares remain in public ownership, innovations like Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), in the US and UK or the use of Street Wardens has blurred the traditional boundaries of their management. Security is now often provided privately in public areas, and there are now more private security personnel than public police in some states; safety is often no longer a public good (Zedner, 2003) and access to security has become, in some cases, a club good conferred by ability to pay for access to bubbles of security in predictable and secured spaces (Hope, 2000).

In this context there has been an incorporation of the *agora* into the *oikos* in which the ‘outdoors’ expansion of domiciliary space in the form of gated and secured residences shows the internalisation of notions of the public into domestic scripts that operate outside the home itself. Security in gated communities, for example, is conferred to the extent that personal liberties are, in fact, cast off. Thus we see and come to understand how the parameters of conduct and expression in public space are subtly shifted. The ‘internment’ of privilege in such spaces is driven by a desire to assuage fears of otherness, disorder and unpredictability that are attached to the public spaces and domains outside the domestic realm. The interdictory city of Flusty’s analysis ( ) can thus be seen as the remotely articulated desires of affluent residents lobbying politicians, police forces and related institutions concerned with the management of disorder, difference and the sources of potential harm to property and the person wherein these arrangements:

‘Produce, because of the hypercontrolled nature of their internal spaces, a standard of security comfort that virtually no external environment can sustain, unless that external environment itself becomes a larger internal space. As the family is placed in ever more nested security, the goal is redundancy. Locked inside SUVs, parked in a secured garage, locked inside a “gated” and privately policed subdivision, the contemporary suburban family is arriving at an “equilibrium” as circumscribed as the much-feared career criminal, locked inside a high-technology armoured cell with a super-max prison’ (Simon, 2007: p.203-4)

Of course in some contexts these changes in the qualities of public space have been bolstered by surprisingly aggressive attacks on social vulnerability (Smith, 1996) and by restrictions on the use of public space (Wyly and Hammel, 2005). In the context of this paper such cases reveal the social forces that have coalesced to produce an interdictory (Flusty, 2001) space ‘desocialised’ (Atkinson, 2008) space in which privatism has facilitated an unlearning of social interaction in public spaces, points that Sennett ( 197 ) has been making for some decades.

‘processes of economic and demographic change drove the growth of affluent white suburbs marked by an intensely private, home-centred culture and attitudes toward the city that range from indifference to open antipathy. In the resulting, socially polarized metropolitan landscape,

representations of cities as “landscapes of fear” and of their residents as inherently threatening flourished’ (Macek, 2006: XVII)

Such judgments, by individual private and institutional state actors, create complex patterns of the assessment of public space which are seen as either being capable of being accessible and manageable, or are interpreted as being hostile, anti-social and otherwise prohibited to access by particular social groups. Even while all public space is in some sense shared our social backgrounds and milieu will also offer a particular vantage point from which such determinations are made. What is ungovernable and unpredictable to one person may be seen as the everyday to another.

Public impressions of potentially ungovernable space produces a sense of camp-like spaces (following Agamben, 1998) in which that which goes on is outside the law and of no concern to respectable society – this is popularly invoked in discourses of laws of the jungle, ‘no-go’ areas and sites of intolerable personal insecurity and danger to non-residents or those not sufficiently streetwise (Anderson). These themes are ongoing and long-standing but we want to suggest here that debates about the nature of contemporary public space have tended to over-stress either the punitive control of space (Smith etc etc ) or its pacification.

The second is the counter response of an autotomic ejection of public space. This generalised set of understandings presents certain public spaces as ungovernable, dangerous and repulsive to outsiders. In this conception strategic daily and policy decisions are effectively made to cast such space outside the body politic and this can take the form of interdicts on access to residents, curfews, voluntary decisions to skirt around such spaces and would also include diminished or absent forms of official law enforcement due to real or perceived risks. In this sense, even within the city proper, space may lie outside yet inside in ways reminiscent of Agamben’s notion of the ban in the customs and laws of German antiquity, where the bandit or wrongdoer could be killed with impunity. The status of *friedlos* (literally ‘the man without peace’) is conferred on the outlaw to the extent that anyone is permitted to kill him without consequence—‘Whoever is banned from the city on pain of death must be considered as dead’ (Agamben, 1998, 104-5).<sup>i</sup> In extending the notion of *friedlos* to the ‘peaceless spaces’ of the ‘part that is no part’ we can identify the camp as ‘the hidden matrix and and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living’ (Agamben , 1998, 166).

To the extent that the camp as a controlled state of exceptional space represents a solution to the biopolitical control of ‘bare life’, it can never be a complete one. Agamben’s *loups garoux* (weir-wolves) or the dissensual counter-publics identified by Ranciere can never be entirely excluded from the *agora*. Indeed we contend that because the *agora*-colonising strategy of the *oikos* is opportunistic, capital intensive and prone to frequent market failure and crisis—it often results in the abandonment of *agoric* space to a more lupine twilight world of violence, illicit exchange and sexual and narcotic transgression that has become the stock in trade of fictional *noir*<sup>ii</sup> and the media representations of the ‘no go’ which constantly feed the urban repulsion-desire fantasies of the consensual public.<sup>iii</sup>

We therefore propose a concept of autotomic space that is variously nomadic, situated and encamped — extending from the fear of unpredictable domestic/domesticated *agora* invasion, through to the carnivalesque violence and

disorder of the night time economy, to the soft bordered containment zones of the public housing estate and the securitized camp of the prison, and the immigration detention centre.

### *Enclosure and annexation/accession*

We are now in a position to provide a broad taxonomy of public space with reference to the *oikos*, or private household, and a dramaturgical model of public subjects, to which two ideal types can be identified. The first of these refers to processes of enclosure in which public space is appended to the values and orientations of domesticity. This script, or set of social rules and governing principles, also suggests that the public management and organisation of public space will tend to connect with the expectations and needs of higher income users of these spaces, even where such spaces are conceived as being largely 'open'. Such civilising modes have emerged as the roles and behaviour associated with the *oikos* present the domestic as a continuing thread of social needs and etiquette for action and expectations in public spaces. To this end public space is enclosed, or appended, successfully it occurs largely in relation to the regimes of taste generated by the expectations of higher income groups (Hannigan, 1998). The result is that public spaces, particularly city squares and other iconic central spaces, are managed in ways in which their rules of conduct stress civility, designing-out difference and poverty, bylaws against profanity, drunkenness and so on. These shifts have tended to privilege and secure the place of affluence and consumption while marginalizing politically and socially unacceptable groups – the city has been partitioned and overlaid in ways that dis-embed, or apparently lift-out, richer groups (Rodgers, 2004) while further ghettoizing and containing the poor. These changes, in the physical and social fabric of cities, suggest that higher income groups are no longer so averse to the potential amenity of urban life; yet the risks that are associated with these spaces need to be made manageable to enable this selective participation—in effect they need to be 'domesticated'.

The growth of gated communities in the UK has suggested precisely this kind of rationale, wherein secured micro enclaves are constructed to add value to 'dangerous' locations and to protect against property and car crime (Blandy et al ). The first of these refers to processes of **enclosure**. Here domesticity becomes a script for the running and organisation of public space as well as the expectations of, higher income, users of these spaces. Such apparently civilising modes have emerged as the roles and behaviour associated with the home present the domestic as a script for action and expectations in public spaces. To this end public space is enclosed and thereby appended to the regimes of taste generated by the expectations of higher income groups. The result is that public spaces, commonly city squares and iconic spaces, are managed in ways in which rules of conduct mirror those required of domesticity – the stressing of civility, designing-out difference and poverty, ordinances against profanity, drunkenness and so on.

Writers like Blomley (2008) have shown these regimes at work in relation to ordinances in Canada in which new rights against the impudence of pedestrians were enacted, where being approached was equated with being interfered with. Critically, in the work of Mitchell (2005) we also find that such processes raise the bar of legal precedent, so that the person on the street is accorded the same rights of quiet enjoyment as the domestic denizen so that bodies in public space are seen as away



from home, rather than public beings that should be capable of some range of civil behaviour. In other words, we can now find examples of the encoding of law in ways that shift our sense of what it means to be in public space.

Processes of enclosure can be identified in Zukin's ( ) analysis of the strategies of managing Bryant Square Park, what she termed a form of 'domestication by cappuccino' was lauded as a means by which a previously untamed space was brought back into the realms of respectability and gendered fears of harm in this space. Similarly Allen's (2006) analysis of the pacification of Potsdamer Platz in Berlin through what he terms 'ambient power' served to highlight the modes under which the pro-social may arise as a partially scripted response to the design and other configurational features of particular public landscapes that, again, occur without the use of heavily suggestive influences or orders.

Yet in much urban research we can see how an understanding of enclosure and the domestic are revealed as more antagonistic forms of governance and social regulation. Blomley's (2008) instructive analysis of ordinances in public spaces in Canada again draws attention to perceptions of the natural rights of private individuals whose impedance was countered by new by-laws that acted to prevent panhandlers in these streets. More critically, in Mitchell (2005), we find a more direct assessment in which the values of the home are linked into the rules of particular public realms:

a new wave of "aggressive panhandling" ordinances being adopted by American cities, indicate that Courts and lawmakers are creating a new model of citizenship. This model is marked by a radical individualism and extreme libertarianism based on transformed property relations. Courts are finding that individuals have an innate "right to be left alone" in public space – a strong departure from early jurisprudence which restricted that right to be left alone to private property.

Yet we can also locate these fears in the exemplary story of Herbert (2008), whose son requested not to have to return through the confrontations of Skid Row in Seattle:

'Individuals who appear unkempt and somewhat irrational violate shared norms that help produce predictable behavior. Unaware of the less-obvious structure that regulates these communities, insufficiently 'streetwise', my son and thousands of other Seattlites would rather bypass Skid Row than confront the realities it displays.' (Herbert, 2008: 659)

The rules of home and domestic relations, safety, refuge and predictability, are projected onto common understandings of the shared rules of public space. More importantly these understandings are influential in setting out the role of public and private institutions in the management of public space. Hannigan's 'fantasy city' (1998) highlights many of these features, where excitement and experience are sought while, at the same time, closing down the possibilities of risk:

'we can identify [in the public cultures and spaces of cities] a continual search for "riskless" mass entertainment which minimizes contact between rich and poor, blacks and whites, at the same as it maximizes returns to a

small cohort of developers and leisure merchants...a pleasant public setting where people can enjoy a public space without fear.' (Hannigan, 1998: 192)

Hannigan himself draws upon Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis in asserting the confluence of space and commercial logic which has generated blandness, spaces of consumption, predictability and control (Ritzer, 199?). Joining these debates we can also trace, in both Sennett (1990) and Sibley (2005), the psycho-social content of actors, in their anticipation of potential threats and the articulation of demands for safety and comfort in public space. The broader meta-social questions of anxiety and atomisation have also been connected to calls for punitive and direct sanctions against those deemed to be at the root of such public risks, as Sibley argues:

'In effect, rules that might be applied in the well-ordered private space of the home are extended to public space, so that all space becomes *heimlich* [homeland or home] for the powerful. The idea of public space as a space of difference, of encounters with strangers as well as with familiars, is erased' (Sibley, 2005, p. 158).

Gated communities highlight a defensive position in relation to public space *in extremis* wherein the neighbourhood itself becomes a strategy for insulation and social reproduction by the households within them (Atkinson, 200 ). Indeed spaces of this kind appear to 'follow' their residents around the city via patterns of avoidance behaviour and shielded modes of conveyance (Atkinson, 2008). The identification of this seamless premium space (Graham and Marvin, 2001) helps us see how home, neighbourhood and broader city scales are sewn together by the strategies of higher income residents. This has created an impermeability of wealth to outsiders on the one hand and a 'solipsism of riches' (Young, 2007) on the other, while middle and lower income groups are subjected more strongly to the insecurities of the age (Sennett culture of new capitalism).

### *Autotomy and ejection*

The second mode under which public space operates can be located in its occasional and particularised ejection; the denial of certain spaces from forming some part of private cognitive or public political understandings of the available territory for access and enjoyment. Here spaces that are seen as being beyond the possibility of broad participation and management and invite a reaction we may describe as **autotomic**<sup>1</sup>. This term refers to the casting out, or subtraction, of particular spaces from a public understanding of spaces that are safely, morally or physically, capable of being accessed and underwritten by individual social actors or official agencies of law enforcement.

Talk in the UK of 'broken Britain' by Conservative politicians and, in the right wing press, of Muslim enclaves hostile to 'white' outsiders build on longer-running discourses of no-go spaces ruled by dangerous groups. This discourse can be traced concretely back to the early 1970s at which time the question of Republican enclaves

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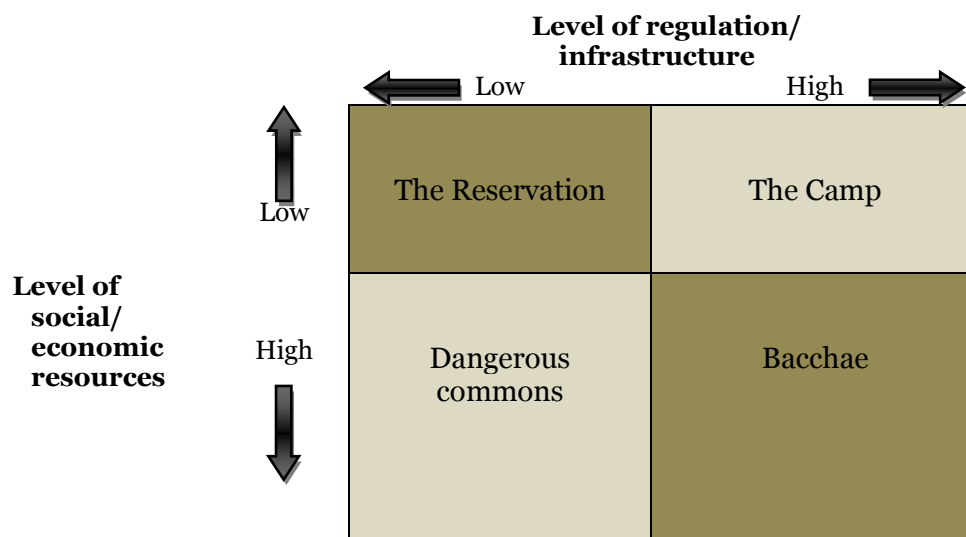
<sup>1</sup> Autotomy refers to the ability of some animals to amputate limbs threatened by predators in order to effect escape under such emergency conditions. We use it here in the sense of a socio-spatial expulsion from the surrounding healthy community.

in Northern Ireland were the source of much discussion in Westminster. Talk of no-go areas was picked up in the early 1980s in relation to the question of the inner cities, policing and the series of significant 'disturbances' in Bristol and Brixton, London. In these contexts the very idea of a space to which agents of state control could not be sent and of populations ungovernable was seen as an untenable threat to the functions and perhaps also the dignity of government itself. In numerous debates around the case of Londonderry's Republican enclaves in Northern Ireland, for example, it is clear that the central state found it difficult to maintain a hold over the discretionary local practices of the army which clearly found particular spaces closely to ungovernable in a civilian urban context (Hansard, CMDs X).

In a strict legal sense these spaces still remain publicly open, yet they are understood to be largely and exclusively the domain of delimited subsets of the resident population of the wider city, by virtue of the uncertainty or fear that they, and the neighbourhoods they inhabit, tend to instil. Such public spaces are seen as being too far away from the ideals of the home, of normalcy and predictability to warrant inclusion in intersubjective mappings of the city. The script of autotomy then refers to shared understandings of commensurate behaviours in certain public spaces that are effectively ceded: lost to effective control or maintenance by the state, officials, private agencies or individuals.

The script of autotomy is, no doubt, familiar to us in the discourses around decaying public spaces, neighbourhoods and streets, often described by media and political actors as being 'taken over' by the deviant, by an overly extensive presence of the poor, the disorderly or criminal. The 'no go' areas of cities highlight the clearest examples of autotomic space (though this status is often denied by official agencies). In a much broader sense this form of removal from the polity is also achieved through the retrenchment of welfare programs and by offering socially residualised public housing. The abject status of these spaces is further underwritten by the way in which welfare is both reduced and restrained and also by the kind of incarcerating spaces generated by these allocative mechanisms (Wacquant, 2008). Public housing thereby contains and maintains a population that itself generates fear, but in spaces that are maintained on minimal revenue spending and more or less separated from contact with domesticated, enclosed spaces (Venkatesh, Allen, banlieues).

Figure 1: A typology of autotomic urban space



The strategic rejection of external space is considered in Sennett's (1974) description of the *emigration interieure* by the French aristocracy as they shunned public political and retreated to life on their estates, or by Robert Reich's notion of the 'succession of the successful' in contemporary America (Parker, 2004). Similarly, in Lasch's (1995) account of a revolt of the elites, impressions of civically withdrawn political and cultural elites are further developed. More recently writers like LeGales ( ) and Atkinson (flowing enclave) have highlighted what they see as contemporary circuits of withdrawal and selective participation, with forays only made into those zones deemed safe enough. These patterns of disaffiliation have been developed in sophisticated ways at a time when many analysts have been pointing to the retrenchment and re-working of welfare systems that has had significant spatial consequences for the dependency and containment of low and unpaid urban residents.

In the script of autotomy we find a fairly familiar discourse in which particular public spaces, neighbourhoods and streets, are seen as being territorially controlled by the deviant - 'taken over' by the poor, the reckless, the disorderly and, by extension, the criminal. What are seen to be the 'no go' areas of many US cities highlight examples of such autotomic public space – it is possible that we might enter such space, but it is widely considered to be dangerous to do so. In a much broader sense this ejection from the polity is also achieved by seeking the retrenchment of welfare programs and offering-up subsistence forms of concentrated areas of public housing provision, offered on enormously restrictive conditions to those most in need. In other words, such spaces are further underwritten by the operation of the stripped down welfare states promoted under conditions of neoliberalism.

### **Case study 1: Public housing**

It is possible to incorporate these social patterns within the script of autotomy as critical systems like public housing are perceived as being too concentrated, with their associations of danger and neglect ( ). A central strategy has been the deployment of strategies of social and tenurial diversification, sometimes resulting in

gentrification (Slater? ), but with the broader aim of providing a script of enclosure and annexation to those spaces that otherwise appear hostile, often to their residents as well as to outsiders. In more extreme cases (Smith, 1996; Uitermark? ) the state has acted to broker the needs of social elites and corporate investment by creating localised and aggressive laws and programs, apparently seeking the elimination and displacement of social problems.

Outside the home there have been continued efforts to support the sorting of respectable society from dangerous areas and groups. Political action has supported strong socio-legal sanctions, such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), and the spatial separation of 'trouble' from private domestic spaces. Strategies of segregating and containing disorder have been employed by both defensive owners and local states seeking to manage those with mental health problems, those incarcerated by the state (in ghettoised state housing and prisons) (Wacquant, 2008), the poor and vulnerable (Flint, 2006) and so the effects of a spatialisation of risk become ever more apparent (Rose and Valverde, 1998).

These issues are deeply bound up with the role of home as a place of social reproduction and daily meaning-making between members of the household unit (Marcus, 1995). Housing tenure, our relationship to the rules of ownership and use of property, can be used to provide a spatial break with the risks of disorder. So, for example, as social renting has come to be seen as a space containing vulnerable and poorer groups so buying into homeownership may be used as a means of insulation from these problem places (Watt 2009? ).

### ***Case study 2: Policing***

The nature of contemporary media reporting (Davies ) has highlighted the dramatic and exaggerated features of life in spaces of ghettoised poverty and relative disorder as spaces and lives that do not correspond with conventional understandings of civility or sociability (Macek, ). The nature of such reportage has tended to deny the reality of what are generally spatially and socially restricted forms of victimisation that more often tend to fall hardest on the most vulnerable sections of these populations ( ). Yet media discourses inevitably feed autotomic scripts may generate release from responsibility for statutory services and law enforcement. This may either come about through explicit autotomic reactions, such as the kind of withdrawal of policing services we have recently seen in neighbourhoods in some Jamaican, Mexican or South African cities (). Alternatively, we see the de facto ejection and withdrawal of support by police and other services and we find evidence of this in the accounts of policing and urban space management of particularised areas of the UK ( Flint ), US ( ) and France (Wacquant? ) to name a few examples.

### ***Case study 3: Street-level bureaucracy***

The more transparent forms of withdrawal and autotomy have historically been underpinned by the diminution of roles around state-based officialdom (the park keeper or street cleaner) and in the dwindling strands of state support and flows of welfare monies into areas of ghettoised poverty. A significant feature of the tendency of autotomy, as an organising motif for these neglectful shifts in direct and indirect governance arrangements, is that they appear likely to exacerbate the features of

fatalism, self-destructive violence and the escalation and militarisation of both criminal and police responses.

#### **Case study 4: The night-time economy**

*Indeed this sense of a breakdown in traditional pacification processes has underscored the status of spaces of the British night-time economy as being 'no go' for many people anxious about the levels of violence in these spaces (Hall and Winlow, 2005). Intersection of neoliberalism, masculinity and youth recklessness*  
Percy-Smith, B. and Matthews, H. (2001) Tyrannical Spaces: young people, bullying and urban neighbourhoods, *Local Environment*, 6: 1, 49 – 63.

Percy-Smith and Matthews highlight:

how some children, through their propinquity within neighbourhood spaces, clash and collide to such an extent that their experiences of a locality become severely blighted. For these unfortunate young people local environments are tyrannical spaces, defined in terms of 'no-go areas', danger and threat. These are not remarkable geographies, however, and we suggest that, like many school environments, where bullying has increasingly been recognised and disclosed, within many localities there is a 'hidden' geography of fear waiting to be uncovered. (Percy-Smith, B. and Matthews, 2001: 50)

For those threatened by the likelihood of bullying, many found salvation through strategies of spatial and social avoidance. Avoidance strategies of this kind undermine young people's right to use public space, limit the capacity of the neighbourhood as a recreational resource and blight the quality of young people's neighbourhood experiences. Hence, whilst providing an immediate response to the problem, avoidance strategies are not effective solutions for combating the problem and maintaining a safe environment for young people to grow up in. p.59

#### **Scales of Autotomic Space**

	<b>Neighbourhood</b>	<b>Urban/Regional</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Global</b>
Reservation	'Problem estates' Street homeless Homeless shelters	Inner London boroughs S. Wales valleys, Merseyside, Tyne-Tees, Glasgow East,	Coastal & ex- mining Ex-industrial mill towns	Special Economic Zones Maquilladore
Bacchae	Brothels, street drinkers, drug corners, squats	Binge drinking NTE	Notting Hill Festival/Gay Pride	Rio Mardi Gras/Sex Tourism
Camp	informal curfew, ASBO/e-tag hotspots	Local prisons, bail hostels, army barracks, police cells	High security prisons/IRCs	Guantanamo /Abu Ghraib
Dangerous commons	Parks, school gates, fast-food outlets, taxi ranks, subways, car parks	Water margins, railway and bus stations/routes	bank holiday gang fights, soccer violence, EDL marches	Somali/ Yemen coast Intl airports Earthquake/ Hurricane/ flood zones

## 2. Discussion: Ceding space to maintain control

Denies the right to the city – those in autotomic space are not included within common understandings of citizenship, they (whether the disorderly or local respectable) are beyond, or only partially, within traditional frames of public service provision and law maintenance.

The antecedent factors of needs for ontological security, a more unsettled mode of social fluidity and hypermodernity (Lipovetsky, ) and a broader ingestion of neoliberalism and market docility have propelled an assertive role of homes and households in generating systematised efforts at defending both the home and its adjunctive spaces. The result is the production of more domesticated and thereby enclosed public spaces outside the home, and a more firmly sealed form of domesticity itself. The home is the space from which other spaces are envisaged, desired and imagined; as places that might offer unfettered autonomy, calm and security (Mitchell, ), in short qualities that underpin the traditional conception of the liberal state subject (Blomley, ). Where public spaces are unable to accommodate these desires and values we can understand how more diffuse forms of agoraphobia have become attached to the contemporary urban resident. This has produced an overwhelming need to find shell spaces that might offer security for the life of the household and the finite project of the self and its consumption choices (Bauman, 2008).

In gated developments the idea of the collectivity is rescaled to the level of the neighbourhood and reflected in broader calls for secession or accession to local government jurisdictions, depending on the relative economic benefits of doing so. This highlights a strategic engagement with public resources that Angell ( ) has trumpeted as the new barbarianism; wherein new economy elites plunder public assets and maximise their locational advantages. Recast as the attractions of place and benefits of this economy one might equally connect the work of Florida ( ) to the processes of local state and neighbourhood segregation that are emerging, bolstered by community informatic systems that permit the entrenchment of patterns of enclosed affluence and autotomic poverty.

As Burrows ( ) has argued, class is increasingly woven into the constitution of place and status so that class itself becomes reconstituted in large part as the resources and attributes of the places we inhabit. From this formulation impressions of risk become ever more closely attached to the domestic and neighbourhood spaces which are seen by their residents as mechanisms of class-place risk management (people like us, Butler ). Processes of insulation from harm thereby become connected to where we live, and with whom we associate. Sennett (1990) may then be right in suggesting that we will tolerate the blandness of public space for fear of exposure, even where the result is militarization and no-less pronounced forms of social fear (Setha Low and Mike Davis'). The result of these fears is the feeling of being led back into the interior spaces of the home, where our presence may be cloaked and the door can be locked behind us. Spaces which are incapable of being requested to attend to the script of enclosure will therefore tend to be substituted for those in which predictability and civility can be realised.

These examples are no doubt overlaid by a 'culture of fear' (Furedi, 1997) which appears to be influencing residential choices in increasingly transparent ways. With the dramatic rise of real incomes the possibilities for spatial and social withdrawal by the affluent have grown. Executive housing estates, private social and leisure services, protected consumption spaces and prototype mass-market armoured vehicles have appeared.

Desires for spatial autonomy, the protected interconnectivity of home, work and leisure sought out by high-income groups can be seen as expressions of deeper strategies to manage contact with socially different or 'risky' groups (Atkinson and Flint, 2004). In some of the most recent analyses the possibility of such neoliberal utopias (Davis and Monk, 2007) has already been realised by casting out difference and poverty and securing national, urban and neighbourhood boundaries (Sorkin, 2007).

In the final analysis, we can see how this ceding of responsibility and withdrawal of engagement is itself a powerful strategy by which control is asserted, if not over apparently ungovernable and abject spaces, then into the spaces over which such control can be assured. Spaces which cannot be controlled are dropped in favour or a more assertive control over remaining spaces in which control can be consolidated more effectively.

## **Conclusion**

The home is a territorial core, yet its repertoires of control and civility also underpin projects of control and management in public spaces outside the home. As we pass into urban spaces we become subject to intersubjectively shared understandings, or scripts, that give shape to social conduct, exchange and sanction. These social scripts of expectation and collective frameworks of the normative can be referred back to the domestic and psychosocial needs for security, autonomy and, increasingly, the presence of a market ontology that is attached to the prevailing property relations that exist in many western societies.

Contemporary theories have tended to look within city and public spaces in explaining the constitution of civic life and its regulatory aspects. In this paper I have tried to extend these discussions by emphasising the role of the home and the values sociologically attached to it (in terms of social privatism, autonomy, shelter and economic exchange) to illustrate their centrality to debates about the expectations, character and role of public space. As private selves we are driven to the shelter of the home, by virtue of its ontological, social and personal anchorings, but, in emphasising our interior lives, our understanding of the relative risks of our public lives is also reworked and emphasised. To this end we might suggest that the scripts of both public and private space are overlapping and mutually constitutive fields of social life. As we track the changing nature of contemporary social, political and economic forces we can also observe changes in the relationship between the private and public domains. As fear rises in one area it is likely to have some effect on the other.

Not only have we seen higher income groups move further into protected neighbourhoods and homes, but there seems to be some credibility to the idea that it is to homeowners and to the affluent that scripts of public space remain oriented. If



we might sustain this crude impression of the social structure a moment longer; we can see how low income groups are not only disempowered by the asymmetries of this relationship to the dominant narratives of public space, but are also more likely to be affected by discourses and forces of autotomy and thereby to the oxymoronic status of a position of social expulsion.

Entering the no-go areas of autotomic space becomes grounds for the absolution of official law enforcement agencies deemed to be responsible for citizens. These understandings of trajectories through the city are internalised as embodied practises (such as the avoidance of particular times and locations by women or young men, REF). Under the narrative of autotomy, the self-administered amputation of space from the body politic, is adopted by strategic choice - to eject that which is too cumbersome or costly to the overall vision of a socially vital, prototypical and predictable public spaces. Into public and private space we carry a disposition that is increasingly crystallised around a need for continuity, predictability and risklessness. Yet these dispositions are also based on deeper drives that embrace the possibility of 'digging-in', finding residential shells and forms of mobile social armour by which we might be protected from real and projected fears.

Regimes of personal safety are undertaken side by side with the articulation of the necessity of public safety. The broader debates generated by these legitimate needs have often been driven and inflected by the complexity and short-run nature of media and political timeframes for action and intervention. Understanding these interfaces becomes critical to explaining how it is that ambient fear is more closely embodied in the identification of dangerous publicly present others (migrants, paedophiles, criminals, gangs, young people, minority ethnic groups and so on). It is but a step from this analytical frame that we may identify how the social sources of fear embodied by these groups are themselves generated by the structures and micro social kinetics of social systems so dominated by inequality and the grievances of class and material asymmetries. From this we may go full circle by connecting the very project of these market-based systems of allocation and opportunity to those other projects of prosperity found at the level of the household and its desires and incentives to own property as a means of providing a bulwark against these excluded casualties.

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<sup>i</sup> The most extreme and audacious contemporary example of this sovereign principle is the killing of Osama Bin Laden by US special forces in Pakistan in May 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> See in particular Angela Carter's *In the Company of Wolves*. The experimental drug toleration zone of 'Hamsterdam' in David Simon's HBO television series *The Wire* is also emblematic.

<sup>iii</sup>