

The nervous writer visualized what he called “the possessing class” as colonizing those without resources, and feared that a successful revolution, like that of the former slave colony Saint-Domingue, which became Haiti, could only be a matter of time. Indeed, in March 1871, the Paris Commune took over the entire city and created what it called a “free, autonomous and sovereign” space. French troops swept back in a few weeks later, killed an estimated 25,000 people, and restored central government. That regime lasted as the Third Republic, right up until Hitler’s invasion in 1940. The pacified imperial city became the backdrop to the Impressionist paintings and other nostalgic trappings of today’s museum Paris.

Outside the inner core of today’s Paris is another city, four times as large. Once the home of the white working class, it is now where the descendants of France’s empire mostly live. Known as the *banlieux*—the suburbs—here are the homes of the immigrant populations from North and West Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Unemployment is high. Consequently, so is crime and drug use. Policing, which is typically discreet in central Paris, is visible everywhere. Transport is difficult, since the metro ends at the “gates” of Paris. From there you must take a bus or an additional light rail to the *cités*, or “cities,” as the huge public housing projects are known. There is none of the charm of inner Paris here, no little squares and cafés, just block after block of high-rises and very little to see or do. Paris’s layout was designed to keep this separation as intact as possible. A separation by ethnicity has replaced the old separation by class.

DIVIDED CITIES

During the Cold War, certain cities became separated and divided in ways that could not be ignored. If Paris was the paradigm of nineteenth-century imperial cities, Berlin was the classic city of the military-industrial complex (1947–90). Governed by the victorious war powers, it was divided by the monumental Berlin Wall from 1961 to 1989. The city was visually split in dramatic fashion, equivalent to the clarity of the U2 photograph of Cuba (Figure 33). In Berlin, no visual work was required. You simply lost the ability to see the partitioned space. Although the Cold War is long over, divided cities are recurring and reviving in critical areas of global counterinsurgency, from Baghdad to Jerusalem and Kabul.

At the end of the Second World War, in 1945, Berlin was divided into four sectors, one controlled by each of the Allied powers, namely Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union. On August 13, 1961, astonished Berliners awoke to find the former GDR (East Germany) building a wall between its sector of Berlin and the Western sector. For nearly thirty years, the wall served as both a symbol and the reality of Cold War separation. It was 87 miles long, 11 1/2 feet high, and surrounded with mines, dogs, lights, and other security devices. It cut through neighborhoods, separated friends and families, and provided the ultimate visible symbol of the Cold War. Although East Germans were able to learn about the West from television and radio broadcasts, their personal movement was directly limited by the wall. Subway lines eerily

missed stations on “the other side.” Before the construction of the wall, as many as 3.5 million East Germans are estimated to have defected to the West. The wall made that almost impossible, although some six hundred people died in the attempt to cross it.

The official position of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) in the GDR was that “there exists no objective political or social basis for opposition to the prevailing societal and political order.” In other words, no sane person could oppose what the SED named its “comprehensive form of democracy.” Any opposition was therefore wrong and carefully monitored by the Stasi (Ministry for State Security). You can now visit its vast headquarters in East Berlin, which has been preserved as a museum. The Stasi had no expectation that its monitoring of the people would lead to better behavior; it simply wanted to control them. So, it regulated and determined the boundaries of acceptable behavior and held its fellow citizens accountable for any breaches of those boundaries. In the displays of Stasi equipment at the museum, you can see a 10-megabyte hard drive that was used to store information. As it is of late 1980s origin, the disk is 12 inches across and 6 high. It is surrounded with a display of the 5-inch floppy disks that were also used, as well as the mounds of paper generated by the constant surveillance. The display hints at a future that was yet to come—in 1989—but is now all around us. Indeed, the GDR made immense efforts through its Robotron company to keep pace with the digital revolution in the 1980s, which contributed to its financial collapse.



Figure 51. Checkpoint Charlie

The material fact of the wall created a social fact of segregation. This new fact had to be learned and was constantly emphasized by signs. Figure 51 shows the famous sign at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, seen in so many Cold War–era movies like *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965). It marked the boundary of the American sector of the city with East Berlin. It was one of only two crossing points for foreigners to enter the GDR in Berlin and the only one that members of the armed forces could use. It became mythologized as the location of spy exchanges and other intrigue. There were no such signs on the GDR side because citizens were forbidden to approach the wall.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy spoke at the wall and famously said: “Today, in the world of freedom, the

proudest boast is ‘*Ich bin ein Berliner!*’ . . . All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words ‘*Ich bin ein Berliner!*’” (I am a Berliner). His meaning was clear: that Berlin was a symbol of the freedom claimed by the United States in the Cold War, and the United States was willing to defend the city as if it were its own sovereign territory.

There was an obvious contradiction that Kennedy’s Soviet opponents did not fail to point out. Almost all American cities south of the Mason-Dixon Line, which separated former slave-owning states from free states, were still divided in 1963. Signs in the street indicated who could go where and who could do what. Only these were citizens of the same country, divided by the color line (Abel 2010). Across the South, you could see signs indicating that one restroom, water fountain, or entrance was for “whites” and another for “colored.” Such signs, and the law they indicated, divided these towns and cities as precisely as any wall. Crossing the line was often dangerous. The civil rights movement challenged segregation by undertaking highly visible actions in which the unity of the nation was posed against the divided reality of segregation. In the small town of Greensboro, North Carolina, students trained in nonviolent civil disobedience sat in at a lunch counter in Woolworth’s department store on February 2, 1960.

The students concerned were Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Billy Smith, and Clarence Henderson. On the first day, they sat for an hour at the end of the day without being served. On the next day, when this now-famous



Figure 52. Moebes, *Woolworth Sit-In, Second Day*, Greensboro, NC

picture was taken for the local newspaper, they sat for an hour and a half. The students were well dressed and conservatively groomed so that no objection could be raised about their personal appearance. During the sit-in, they sat quietly and often studied (Berger 2010). In the photograph, you can see an African American waiter or busboy studiously ignoring his peers, as did all Woolworth's staff. The hope was that the sit-ins would simply go away. Instead, they spread across the South.

The sit-in was a targeted tactic. The activists were asking only to be allowed to spend their money. By making it clear that the segregated South preferred prejudice to

business, the action made the color line indefensible at this particular place. By making the refusal to accept money apparent, the sit-ins created a new link between what was sayable and what was visible. Segregated businesses were not discussed, they were simply a “fact,” part of the common sense of race. The apparently simple act of sitting at a counter to ask for service was unthinkable. Once this was challenged, the lunch counters were integrated within weeks, though many arrests were made as well.

The relatively simple gesture of the sit-in again raised the stakes of the issue to another level. The provocative slogan “States’ Rights” that claimed segregation to be a matter for local decision making (by the white minority) was now countered with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s repeated reminder that the Declaration of Independence held it to be self-evident that all people are created equal. For John Lewis, then an activist with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (founded in 1960), and now a member of the House of Representatives, the experience of the sit-ins was one in which “democracy was lived as a reality.”⁸ Others spoke of having their soul cleansed. So successful was the countervisualizing of segregation that it has now been absorbed into the national narrative of the United States. In the 1960s, civil rights activists were described by the FBI as Communists, terrorists, and worse. Now, the civil rights movement is seen as a symbol of the American capacity to overcome hardship and create a more perfect union, as set out in the Constitution.

If we compare the history of South Africa, where an even more rigid system of segregation, known as apartheid,

or separate living, was enforced, the contrast is striking. It was not enough to simply make social and commercial segregation visible. Apartheid reached into every corner of South African life with extraordinary determination. Racial distinction was hypervisible and violently enforced.

The sign shown in Figure 53, now preserved in the District Six Museum in Cape Town, indicates the level of separation that apartheid tried to maintain: here a restroom is designated not just for “whites,” as in the United States, but specifically for “white artisans.” Based on the ownership of land, and the resulting agriculture and mining, apartheid was central to the country as a whole in a way that southern segregation in the United States no longer was by the 1960s. Apartheid was in fact made more rigid by the creation of the whites-only National Party in 1958 and the creation of a republic in 1960, ending all formal ties with Britain.

On March 21, 1960, the police opened fire on marchers in Sharpeville who were protesting the Pass Law by which



Figure 53. Sign in District Six Museum, Cape Town

all Africans (as the indigenous populations were known under apartheid) had to carry a passbook detailing their identity, residence, tax status, and more. When the shooting was over, 69 people were dead and 180 injured, with the images being reproduced in newspapers around the world. In most places, a massacre of this kind would have produced noticeable change. The terrible Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing in 1963 killed four young girls and is widely thought to have been a contributor to the passing of the US Civil Rights Act in 1964. Sharpeville changed nothing at the time. It convinced many black South Africans of the need for armed resistance as the only way forward. South Africa at that time was based on legalized white supremacy and until that came to an end, no single event was likely to change it. The visible distinction of “race” overwrote all other issues and priorities in defense of the social hierarchy.

The apartheid regime nonetheless did everything it could to spare its white residents from being confronted with alternatives. After Nelson Mandela was arrested in 1962, only two photographs of him were released during the twenty-seven years of his imprisonment. The non-white population lived in separate locations that were hard to reach. Yet there were all kinds of professional and personal relationships between the supposedly separate ethnic groups. The white minority supervised an African labor force and had Africans doing domestic work and child care. If we compare the work of (white South African) photographer David Goldblatt (b. 1930) and his (black South African) counterpart Ernest Cole (1940–1990), these

contradictions were interestingly visualized. Both photographers seem to adhere clearly to the modernist aesthetic of “show, not tell.” Their work is observational, not prescriptive. Both were nonetheless considered shocking, to different degrees.

Goldblatt’s book *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (1966) caused considerable controversy in the country at the time. Afrikaans-language (the language spoken by Dutch-descended Afrikaners in South Africa) media were incensed: “Blood Will Boil” was one typical headline. The scandal is, however, all in the implications.

In Figure 54, a photograph taken shortly after Nelson Mandela had been sentenced, we see a moment of everyday life that both epitomized apartheid and shows why its proponents wanted to keep it invisible. The picture is about land and power. The two figures are divided by race,



Figure 54. Goldblatt, *A Farmer’s Son with His Nursemaid*

gender, and access to power. The child is identified as the farmer's son, presumably the heir to all the land we can see. He stands confidently, directly addressing the camera in a classic *contrapposto* stance. The woman is identified as his nursemaid and it is possible that she did literally nurse him. She turns her body away from the camera and her expression is hard to read—a mixture of deference, recognition, and curiosity. The boy seems to dominate the adult. He places a hand on her shoulder, while she reaches behind her to touch only the back of his ankle. The furtive touch offered by the carer to the farmer's son takes place against the symbolic backdrop of a barbed-wire fence. The fence marks the limit for people without authority and for animals alike. The nursemaid is seated so that her head is below the fence, while the young farmer stands above the (color) line.

If Goldblatt explored everyday apartheid at “home” on its farms, Cole went into the divided cities, where it was contested and enforced every day. He learned his skills on the now-legendary intercultural Johannesburg magazine *Drum*, where he started as a teenager in 1958. Cole was able to get classified as “colored” rather than “black” despite his dark skin because he spoke Afrikaans. This classification allowed him sufficient freedom of movement to pursue his photographic project, documenting the newly onerous apartheid regime, taking photographs of street life until 1966, when he smuggled them out of the country. His book *House of Bondage* was published in the United States in 1967. It was immediately banned in South Africa, where his photographs were



Figure 55. “Pass Laws,” from Ernest Cole’s *House of Bondage*

not exhibited until 2010, some twenty years after his death. If Cole was indeed the “man in the crowd,” he worked in a context where all people were not equal.

Figure 55, a photograph from the book, shows how the enforcement of the Pass Laws in the streets of Johannesburg centered on the exchange of looking. An African policeman detains a young African man as many people watch. By today’s standards, the policeman is using minimal force because he expects to be obeyed. Passersby, some African, one white woman, two apparently “colored,” all regard the encounter with different degrees of engagement. The white woman seems not to be troubled, while the African woman closest to the scene looks directly at the arrest with apparent concern. To the right stands a white man with a moustache, apparently supervising the

arrest. It is not clear whether he has actual authority over the policeman, as his superior officer, or just symbolic authority as a white man in the apartheid regime, but it is clear that he feels in charge. He stands directly in front of a newspaper sign from the *Johannesburg Star*, which reads: “Police Swoop Again.” Even the poster on the pole at the right seems to be looking at the encounter. Indeed, taking this picture led to Cole’s own arrest. When apartheid finally collapsed, there was shock and dismay among many whites when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made visible what had been unseen by them for so long but had always been there—the violence of racial classification and separation. Like the woman in Cole’s photographs, white South Africans had simply passed it by.

Today there are black presidents in both the United States and South Africa. Clearly, much has changed. South Africa’s artists are as much part of the global art world as Johannesburg is part of global capitalism. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange is worth more than all the rest of Africa’s stock exchanges put together. All Africa’s top one hundred companies are in South Africa. Certainly that speaks to the economic weaknesses of Africa, but it also shows that the transfer to majority rule did not, as was so often predicted, lead to economic collapse in South Africa. Much has been done to extend electricity, water, and mains sewerage to the majority population. But immense wealth gaps between rich and poor and black and white persist. Despite some notable exceptions, the rich are still mostly white and the poor mostly black. The net worth of

the average white household is just under a million rand (\$72,375). Their black African counterparts are worth some 73,000 rand (\$5,283).⁹

One of South Africa's best-known new artists is Zwelethu Mthethwa, who works in the townships, mines, and farms, depicting those places where black Africans still largely live and labor. Mthethwa came to international attention with photographs like the one in Figure 56 (2000), showing the interior of a township house. Many visitors see the outside of townships, at least on their way to and from the airport. Few are invited inside. Mthethwa's work shows how the township residents take pride in their homes and do their best to decorate them, using colored pages from magazines and newspapers. James Agee's photographs of



Figure 56. Mthethwa, *Interior*

impoverished white households in the American South during the Depression show a similar wallpapering with newspaper. The layer of paper also serves as insulation. In the Mthethwa image, the necessity and labor of fetching water predominates. The small space is filled with buckets and other water-holding devices. The shelf on the wall is not level. The floor is made of brick, so the dwelling is not intended to be temporary. The seated woman is no longer formally contextualized by racial difference. She is alone in her space. Clean and well presented, visually she refuses to be a victim.

It is also the case that the expectations she might have had when freedom came in 1994 have not been met. Ending the formal classifications of apartheid has not erased the color line. There are now some white South Africans living in informal housing like this, but very few. As a result, South Africa has developed a major problem with crime, leading to a highly policed and segregated urban space. Personal wealth is now indexed by the number of keys a person carries (Vladislavic 2009). The few strands of barbed wire in the Goldblatt photograph have been replaced with high walls and rolls of razor wire. Surveillance cameras, dogs, and armed guards are everywhere in white neighborhoods, while townships are brightly illuminated by very tall streetlights, set high to prevent theft of the fixtures. In an extraordinary development, Mthethwa himself has been accused of murdering Nokuphila Kumalo, a black South African woman, said to be a sex worker, in Woodstock, a township near Cape Town. The case is set

to come to trial in 2015. Kumalo was exactly the kind of person that Mthethwa photographed. Whoever killed her, her death shows the limits of “freedom” in the global city for the global majority.

By the same token, although the Cold War is over, wall building is back in fashion worldwide, from gated communities to national borders. States have reverted to walls of exclusion. Most notably, Israel is now divided from its Occupied Territories in the West Bank by a separation wall that is 26 feet high. The wall was first announced in stark terms in 1994 by then prime minister Yitzhak Rabin: “We want to reach a separation between us and them.” Construction began eight years later in 2002 and the wall is currently over 430 miles long. It roughly follows the “green line” that



Figure 57. *The Separation Wall, Israel-Palestine*

divided Israel in 1948 from what are now the Occupied Territories. However, it extends from 656 feet to 12.4 miles into that space in order to “protect” Israeli settlements and other interests. The wall is redrawing the international map on the ground, and its path is often confusing.

It has gradually been covered with graffiti and posters and is becoming an uncanny reminder of the Berlin Wall. In the photograph above, someone has written Kennedy’s famous quote “*Ich bin ein Berliner*” on the separation wall. Today, “Berlin” is in the West Bank, the tagger suggests.

However, the Berlin Wall marked a clear dividing line, known to all. Now, in addition to the physical barrier created by the wall, separation takes place on many levels, as part of what Israeli architect Eyal Weizman has dubbed the “politics of verticality” (2007). In this politics, separation is more crucial than ever, but it extends from underground to the sky, dividing domains such as water supply, air traffic control, and mineral rights. Even the access to roads is divided according to whether you live in Israel or Palestine.

In the graphic in Figure 58, created by the Beirut-based collective Visualizing Palestine, we can see that many roads are accessible only to those with orange Israeli license plates, even in the Occupied Territories. Such license holders also have access to bridges and tunnels that connect Israeli settlements to the east of the separation wall. By contrast, road blocks, checkpoints, and even trenches prevent or restrict travel between the different Palestinian enclaves for those with Palestinian green and white plates. The checkpoints are mobile and can appear at any place and at any time. Israelis and Palestinians have

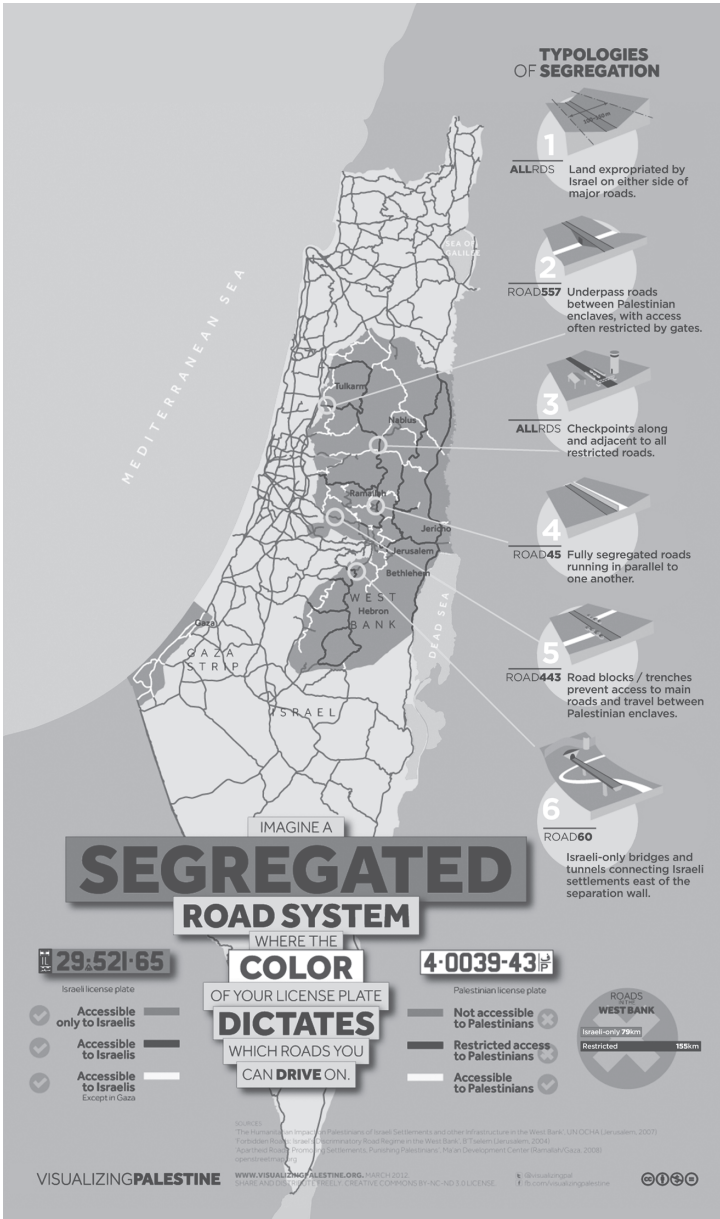


Figure 58. Visualizing Palestine, Segregated Road System

become invisible to each other. Divided cities are always a tiny minority of all cities, but they express the key tensions of their time by means of the highly visible physical barriers that make some places invisible to others.

THE GLOBAL CITY

The global city is a space of simultaneous erasure, division, and expansion that is hard to see and harder to apprehend. Old divides are erased, only for new ones to be built. Familiar spaces disappear, to be replaced with endless new space that is hard to differentiate. Seeing becomes a complicated matter, closer to the visualizing of a battlefield. We have to remember what was there before, try and take in what has been put in its place, and keep up with the pace of change. While there are fewer formal barriers, these cities are clearly not equal for all.

Recent thinking on memory and place has made much use of French historian Pierre Nora's concept of "places of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*),¹⁰ suggesting that particular physical locations are a key element in the mental construction of place in general and memory in particular (2006). While this may apply well to relatively stable and long-lived nations, such as France—where it originated—it does not seem as useful for rapidly changing cities like Berlin, let alone the global cities. Memory comes to seem like yet another first world privilege, odd as it may seem. For while the disasters of Europe are well remembered, those of Africa are far less well attested to.

That is not to say that memory remains the same. Today, the Berlin Wall has been almost entirely dismantled, its former course marked only by a line of cobblestones. Like many other global cities, Berlin is in the process of radical transformation. If you have not been back to the city for some time, you might exit a familiar U-Bahn station only to feel a radical sense of disorientation as an unknown new building or structure appears—am I in the right place, did I forget what it looks like, or has it changed beyond recognition? Memory is being changed.

In 2006, I saw the Palace of the Republic in the former East Berlin being dismantled as part of the active erasure of the Communist era. Built in 1976 to celebrate the Socialist state, the palace was the location of Party congresses and other such occasions. Now, a reconstruction of the eighteenth-century castle of the former Hohenzollern monarchs that preceded the palace in the same space is under way. It will be an odd building. It copies the old palace exactly on three sides but there will be a contemporary glass wall on the fourth. In theater, the *fourth wall* is the name given to the illusion created when we look at actors onstage, as if they are simply carrying on their lives behind a transparent wall. Now the global city incorporates zones of fake space. While these zones provoke controversy at first, they inevitably become accepted and blend into the cityscape. For the fake is emblematic of globalization, and today, it is often difficult to distinguish from the so-called real. For example, “fake” Chinese watches use the same Swiss watch movement as the brands