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## **Author response to comments on *Domestic Fortress* by Elsa Noterman and Heather Rosenfeld**

This review article offers an energetic, constructive and comprehensive overview of *Domestic Fortress* and we thank its authors for a series of comments. In this short response we focus on four key areas that appeared particularly fruitful for further elaboration. These are: first, the desire to see some further elaboration of the tessellated neoliberalism thesis; second, a reflection on what may appear to have been some of the ethnic/national centricities of the book; third, an opportunity to say a little more about cross-national variations in aesthetics and practices of defence and, finally, some discussion of how modes of resistance to the seductions of a fortress mentality can be engaged.

One of the core arguments of *Domestic Fortress* is that, as social inequalities have become more firmly attached to tenurial structures, there has been an increasing alignment between market incentives and operations orchestrated by national governments and the landscape of home-making on the ground. Put more simply, the promotion of homeownership has generated a connection between the lived and concrete experience of habitation in dwellings and the ideological and material framing of life through housing and macro-economic policy. The interaction between these structural forces and the nature of home we chose to term tessellated neoliberalism. On the one hand the metaphor of tiles or tessellated pieces is deployed as an allusion to the spatial layout of homes. The term also refers to the market-alignment of owner household actors who act in sympathy and consort with policy executives who have used ownership to offer emancipation through the expansion of personal wealth. Thus tessellated neoliberalism is most firmly formed around the physical archipelago of owned homes and finds its strongest expression amidst the growing numbers of apparently fortified homes as well as gated communities.

We tried to deploy the metaphor of an interlocking mosaic of domestic dwellings to enable an imagining of domestic residence today that speaks to the ideological and economic forces which underpin it. These forces also animate the value systems of many homeowners who take on defensive social outlooks in order to protect both the value (equity) and physical fabric of the home. Home is, to some large degree, the place where such ideological framings resides and is experienced within everyday social relations and incentives. Within the tessellated geographies of homeownership we suggested that scales of defence may be nested where defensive orientations exist within other protective scales. The most obvious examples might be armed owners in defended homes, or the use of fortifying practices applied to homes which lie within gated communities. This sense of layering and impenetrability is a significant feature of the wider residential landscape that emerges as domestic fortification becomes a more widely observable aspect of the streetscapes around us.

The reviewers would like the issues of race and racism to be addressed in more depth, inquiring whether we hold that race is constitutive of the domestic fortress and defended enclaves, or merely an additional factor. The objective of our critique in the book is the defensive privilege produced through both whiteness and homeownership, and acknowledges both the (often racialized) fear of others outside the home and also the potential for gendered unease and violence within. The argument of the book necessarily focuses on themes which are common across the UK, the US and Australia, and this did not always allow for a full discussion of the differences between them. The connections between homeownership and white supremacy are perhaps clearer in the context of the US, with its specific history. For example, events post-Katrina revealed the extent of spatial racism in New Orleans and the lengths to which residents of white suburbs, above flood levels, were prepared to go to exclude desperate black people seeking safety. However, throughout the western world racially homogenous and virtually segregated neighbourhoods exist, created through 'white flight' from black neighbours, although such neighbourhoods are in the main not enclosed.

Gated communities are more prevalent in the US than in the UK and Australia. Walls, fences and gates are a very potent symbol of segregation. Physical enclosure together with the legal ties which bind gated community residents may serve to reinforce a feeling of solidarity, which in turn allows residents to justify and carry out exclusionary strategies. We could perhaps have cited two recent anthropological studies which shed light on the connections between gated communities and segregation by race in the US. Middle class homeowners in suburban gated communities make use of two mechanisms for maintaining whiteness and white privilege: the fear of others and the 'desire for niceness', which combine to inscribe racist assumptions on the landscape (Low, 2009). In contrast, the working-class white seasonal retired residents of fortress communities employ overt racism to exclude the wealthier, predominantly Latino, settled population that surrounds them (Foiles Sifuentes, 2015). There are many ways of obtaining, maintaining, and securing spaces of white exclusivity.

One criticism levelled at *Domestic Fortress* by Elsa Noterman and Heather Rosenfeld is that we might have done more to comment on the illustrations that we used in the book. This is a fair point though our aim had always been to avoid any attempt at offering a more literal architectural guide to the forms and practices of fortification itself. What do such illustrations, however, tell us about national variations in practices or their aesthetics? Two comments might be offered here briefly. First, national variations may indeed be significant in terms of the relative extremity of fortification practices while being partly masked by more universal design elements. In the US, for example, it is possible to see many, very clear examples of spiky designs and fortification. On the other hand, construction of new gated communities in Europe and elsewhere appears to be developing international styles and shared conventions that sometimes extend to the architecture within. Second, variations may be significant at the micro scale itself within districts. The most obvious examples here are neighbourhoods in which extensive, often electronic, gating systems are installed in otherwise traditionally 'porous' areas. Generalisation may be possible while finding many important exceptions.

The reviewers wonder if it is possible to resist a fortress mentality, a question which we accept is inadequately addressed in the book. In determining its scope, we were very aware that we offered no optimistic alternative to the trajectory it describes – a future of further withdrawal into the home and ever more defensive strategies connected with it. Our intention was to track and analyse the demise of neighbourhood and community as sources of support, rather than suggesting these as viable alternatives to a defensive and exclusionary mentality. We agree with the reviewers that the concepts of neighbourhood and community are malleable and often romantic illusions, fraught with the possibilities of distortion for exclusionary ends. If more space had been available, we might have included in *Domestic Fortress* a critical discussion of the potential of alternative forms of community, often dismissed as utopian, in which residents live collectively and consciously attempt to provide a transformational example of a different way of organising society (see for example, Sargisson, 2012).

At the scale of the individual home, we appreciate the reviewers' discussion of 'homeplace'; this is a very useful contribution to our understanding of the home as a safe place for members of oppressed groups. It is also a complex issue: safe places are inherently paradoxical spaces which protect some and exclude others (The Roestone Collective, 2015) and cannot be assumed to foster resistance and political organising which extends beyond the home. Here we should note that analysis of US census data indicates that gated enclaves 'may even be a refuge for minorities who are strongly outnumbered in the city in question' (Kirby et al, 2006: 23). To take one example, the high number of gay couples living in a gated community in East London may suggest that walls provide security for people who are vulnerable to harassment on open streets (Blandy, 2008). Whether such self-imposed refuge is a progressive response is perhaps another question worth debating as questions of identity, hate, vulnerability and the public sphere continue to be discussed.

Thanks to Elsa Noterman and Heather Rosenfeld for raising some important issues, and for the opportunity to unpack these a little further.

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