

## **Walling In and Walling Out**

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# Walling In and Walling Out

WHY ARE WE BUILDING  
NEW BARRIERS TO DIVIDE US?

*Edited by Laura McAtackney and Randall H. McGuire*

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side of the US-México border wall at Nogales,  
2011. Photo by Randall H. McGuire.

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## **Walling In and Walling Out**



*Introduction*

## Walling In and Walling Out

RANDALL H. MCGUIRE AND LAURA MCATACKNEY

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offense.  
— Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"*

In a twenty-first-century global phenomenon, walls are being built at a dizzying pace (Brown 2010; Rice-Oxley 2013; Vallet 2014; Jones, this volume; Saddiki 2017). At the macro-level, nations have raised barricades of barbed wire, steel, brick, and concrete as the focal points of militarized landscapes that often include inertias (deliberately empty spaces that impede movement) and watch-towers to patrol their borders (Jones, this volume). These walls purport to provide security, control movement, and fortify against the ill-defined dangers of terrorists, smugglers, and undocumented migrants. At the micro-level, barriers partition modern cities; they are often hidden in plain sight, facilitating social segregation that frequently has ethnic and religious as well as economic dimensions (Bishara and McAtackney, both this volume). Town planners, usually at the behest of communities, wall off preexisting streets and curtail access and freedom of movement. Developers design new neighborhoods based on the form of the defensive cul-de-sac or gated community to allay fears of violence and of contact with undesirables. At the individual level, people of means build walled enclaves as part of their homes to protect themselves from "crime" and "the poor." While the proliferation of walls as a multiscalar phenomenon has many negative connotations, they are associated with the fundamental longing for security in an insecure world and therefore

include the positive, if insular, desire to protect. Their use to demarcate space can engender a sense of community and belonging in an otherwise dispersed society—but how you feel about them is often determined by which side of the wall you happen to find yourself on.

The chapters in this volume are arranged in three parts in order to engage with the forms and experiences of walls across various scales and temporalities. After a timely overview of historical walls (McGuire), the first part explores three forms of local manifestation of walls: walls built to differentiate on the basis of economics and race (Dinzey-Flores) and those constructed to maintain political and ethnic divisions (McAtackney, Bishara). Moving onto national walls in part II, we begin with an enduring case study of the famous Cold War remnant, the Berlin Wall. The author considers how the material remains of supposedly defunct walls can make a difficult and long transition from active barrier to heritage (McWilliams). The two other national walls—to the north and east of Greece and between the United States and México—reveal two very different approaches to border hot spots between the Global North and Global South in contemporary Europe (Papadopoulos) and in North America (Dear). The last part of the book examines how surveillance technology and software compromise our civil rights and add to the potential roles of walls (Dorsey and Díaz-Barriga), and what meanings, roles, and symbols we associate with walls at a global scale (Jones).

This range of case studies is intended to reveal the particularities of a variety of wall-building projects across the globe. In doing so, the contributors point out an array of commonalities, such as the idea of using walls to keep undesirables out, as well as differences, such as the form and use of the material that walls put in place. This diversity is to be celebrated, but throughout this volume we emphasize two questions: How do contemporary walls succeed or fail at resolving the problems they are built to address? What are the unforeseen repercussions of an increasingly materially segregated world?

This volume developed from an Advanced Seminar held at the School for Advanced Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico, April 17–21, 2016, a time that could not have been more apt for studying this subject. Only two days before the workshop began, Human Rights Watch publicly condemned Turkey for closing its border crossing with Syria, stopping 30,000 recently displaced people from fleeing the war-torn country, and for shooting at the prospective refugees as they approached the newly erected wall marking Turkish sovereignty (Human

Rights Watch 2016). Such material divisions provoking violent interactions are becoming increasingly commonplace at the outer reaches of Fortress Europe.

The proliferation of walls to solve local, national, and transnational social problems has become a global reaction to a variety of issues and not only has provoked critique from scholars across many disciplines, including geography, anthropology, sociology, and archaeology, but has garnered mass media, political, and public attention. The seminar included a cross-disciplinary group of open-minded scholars working in various locations, across a multitude of scales, with varying time depths, and with different disciplinary insights to discuss the phenomenon of walls. We met to bring a different perspective and insight on the scale, form, and impact of this phenomenon of walling in and walling out. The aim of the seminar was to bring together diverse perspectives, mind-sets, and problematizations fundamentally based in real case studies. Ultimately, we aimed to locate some common ground regarding what we are doing, how we are doing it, and why. We think we were at least partially successful in achieving our aim, and we discuss new insights and our agreements (as well as disagreements) more fully in the conclusion.