Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post-Interventionary Society

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The politicisation of aid has made helping others increasingly dangerous. The fortified aid compound is now ubiquitous throughout the global borderland. It has become the signature architecture, for example, of the UN integrated mission. In examining these developments, the article first looks at the potential for UN field-security training to normalise risk-aversion and the necessity, even desirability, of defensive living. Using the example of Sudan, the wider implications of aid bunkering, including its overlaps with such global trends as urban splintering and the proliferation of gated-communities are also examined. The fortified aid compound is symptomatic of the deepening crisis within the development-security nexus.

Keywords risk-management; gated-communities; urban splintering; international aid; field-security training; UN system; Sudan

Figure 1 UNDP compound Kaja Keji, South Sudan.

Introduction

The aid industry can be loosely defined as those networked assemblages of donor governments, multilateral organizations, UN agencies and NGOs, both national and international, that are formally responsible for disbursing international humanitarian and development assistance. As an object of study, the fortified aid compound helps make visible something that is usually hidden or occluded – that is, the aid industry as a sovereign actor (Edkins 2003). What is noteworthy about aid's material assemblages, at least with respect to their power effects, is that aid policy tends to operate as if such effects do not exist. Regarding current approaches to state and societal reconstruction, for example, a seminal text has been Robert Jackson's (1990) *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*. Weak states are defined according to their relative degrees of 'juridical' and 'empirical' sovereignty. The former stems from the international recognition of a state's legality while the latter denotes the actual capacity of the state to govern a given territory. Although weak states may enjoy juridical sovereignty, they lack empirical content. This distinction has been absorbed within aid policy. A consensus now exists that the gap between juridical and empirical sovereignty 'is the key obstacle to ensuring global security and prosperity'. Hence, for purposes of societal reconstruction, 'partnerships must be created to prepare and then implement strategies to close this sovereignty gap' (Ghani *et al*. 2005, p. 4).

From this perspective, the aid industry has no sovereignty or power effects of its own. In closing the gap between juridical and empirical sovereignty, it operates as a benign 'hidden hand'. In its search for technical solutions, the aid industry's unfailing ability to depoliticize its own actions has long been a subject of critique (Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1990). Besides depoliticization, however, we also need to consider the industry's related ability to *dematerialize* its concrete presence. As Lisa Smirl (2008, p. 237) argues, the spatial and material practices of the international community 'are almost completely overlooked in any analysis of post-crisis reconstruction or emergency response'. If you Google 'aid architecture', for example, you get some 20 million hits that are overwhelmingly concerned with the institutional arrangements necessary to enact aid policy. The industry appears oblivious to both its own built environment – the offices, houses, storerooms, leisure facilities and transport infrastructures that aid workers need – and, at the same time, the local power effects of the subjectivity and personal agency associated with these structures.

In helping to give material form to the aid industry, this paper is a modest contribution to the growing interest in the spatial attributes and effects of international intervention and assistance (Stepputat 2001, Siddaway 2007, Smirl 2008, Higate and Henry 2009). Its point of entry is the recent emphasis on field security training among aid agencies in response to the perception that aid work is becoming increasingly dangerous (Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006). The aim of field security training is to produce a new form of subjectivity or agency among

aid workers. This subjectivity not only normalizes defensive living, it experiences the fortified compound as necessary and even desirable. Buildings in themselves are not sovereign actors. However, when coupled with such forms of subjectification, they become embedded in wider technologies of security in which buildings 'offer cues suggesting how people should act. They tell us our relationships with one another' (Montgomery 2009, p. 6). Through analysing risk management and its relation to defensive architecture (Lacy 2008, Sorkin 2008), the intention of this paper is to give form to at least some of the spatial effects of the aid industry. While aid policy may think itself a hidden hand, it is leaving an increasingly permanent architectural footprint.

An Archipelago of International Space

This article arises from a visit by the author to South Sudan in May 2008.[1] Having travelled in the South on several occasions during the war years, this trip left two striking impressions. Unsurprisingly, given the return of a formal peace in 2005, the number of aid agencies operating in the South has increased visibly. Less expected, however, was the widespread withdrawal and encampment of donors, UN agencies and the larger international NGOs into what are, in effect, fortified aid compounds (see Figure 2). Such compounds typically have strengthened double gates and inner and outer walls or fences topped with razor-wire. They enclose accommodation, offices or support facilities, sometimes combining them all into a single complex. Movement in and around these visibly defensive and guarded structures is restricted and hedged with security protocols. The spread of the fortified aid compound is especially noticeable in South Sudan as it is occurring at a time of ostensible peace. Moreover, while conditions were different during the war years (1983–2005), the physical bunkering of the aid effort was not one of its effects; a more mobile approach to security was then in operation (Karim *et al.* 1996, pp. 51–53). The irony of the situation is that after

Figure 2   UNHCR compound Kaja Keji, South Sudan.

decades of war and dislocation, these militarized buildings are among the first material or built expressions of 'peace'. Rather than celebratory structures, they are exclusionary and disempowering in their workings and appearance.

As a bordered international space, the aid compound has long been a feature of Sudan. Representing a visible island of modernity where vehicles, diesel, electricity, medical supplies, safe water and telecommunications are concentrated, aid compounds have existed in South Sudan since at least the early 1970s (Tvedt 1994). Their present distribution, however, was shaped during the second civil war (1983–2005) and, especially, by the spread of bush airstrips.[2] Almost all of these airstrips have appeared since 1993. They emerged in connection with the international humanitarian relief operation then organized from Kenya (Duffield *et al.* 1995, pp. 172–175). Each bush airstrip became the site of an aid compound, the building and occupation of which was agreed with the main rebel groups (Levine 1997). Today, these compounds are connected by light aircraft to the rest of Sudan and hence the outside world (see Figure 3). From a security perspective, the invisible flight paths linking these aid compounds denote a restricted mode of transport with rules regarding who can, and cannot, move and circulate through it.

The architect Alsesandro Petti (2008) has urged caution in relation to equating globalization with fluid, borderless spaces of unlimited flows and circulation (Castells 1996). To the contrary, paralleling the spread of new networks and forms of interconnection, 'the numbers of barriers and checkpoints for the protection of networks is being multiplied' (Petti 2008, p. 9). While flows are becoming ever more diverse and intangible, the fortification of physical space is also accelerating. This 'has created a territorial system in which the *archipelago* (the smooth space of flows) and the *enclave* (the spaces of exception) cohabit' (ibid.). One can usefully extend the metaphor of the archipelago to the fortified aid compound. As physical signs of international assistance, such compounds architecturally mark out the boundaries of aid as an archipelago of international

Figure 3 UN Humanitarian Air Services.

flows. In 2008, for example, with the help of a UN fast-tracked visa, within a couple of days of leaving the UK, it was possible to be relaxing in an aid compound at Yambio, near the South Sudan border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Linking these two locations are a series of discrete and exclusive relays, including an international flight to Khartoum; pick-up by a UN driver and transport to a security-vetted hotel; completing field-security training to obtain an essential UN ID card; and then onwards via Juba, capital of South Sudan, to the final destination care of the UN's Humanitarian Air Services.

The irony of this fantastic international space of flows is that the beneficiaries that aid workers encounter cannot move, at least not legally; they appear as stationary subjects. Most people in South Sudan lack any personal documentation—birth certificates, educational qualifications, ID cards or passports (Duffield *et al*. 2008, pp. 25–26). Since doing anything other than manual labour requires proof of identity or a licence, the majority of the population are effectively confined to a precarious servility. From an official perspective, other than an object or statistic of aid, they have no formal existence; they are tantamount to a surplus 'waste life' (Bauman 2004). Even within the space of flows of the aid archipelago, however, aid workers themselves are distinguished according to their relative mobility or stasis. While those on international contracts are able to move and circulate, local aid workers, like beneficiaries, are also immobile onlookers trapped outside the archipelago's magical space of flows.

Securing Aid Workers

It is useful to first consider how the aid archipelago, including the fortified aid compound, is being normalized. More specifically, it is necessary to examine how forms of aid worker subjectivity or individual agency are being called forth that accept segregated living as necessary, even desirable. Important here is the concern that aid workers are increasingly finding themselves the deliberate targets of political violence. Between 1997 and 2008, for example, there has been both an absolute and relative increase in number of serious attacks (injuries, kidnapping and fatalities) on national and international staff worldwide. In absolute terms, such incidents have increased from around 30 to 160 per year (Stoddard *et al*. 2009). Several explanations have been given for this growth. Since the early 1990s, the UN has tended to focus on the changing nature of conflict, stressing the emergence of violent and, essentially, irrational non-state actors that have fomented 'brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural and linguistic strife' (Boutros-Ghali 1995, p. 42). More recently, this changing external environment theme has expanded to include irregular armies that do not respect the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian personnel 'and/or reject international agreements designed to [protect] such personnel' (UN 2001, p. 2).

Critical voices, however, have pointed to growing international intervention-ism and internal changes within the UN system itself. In particular, the effects of the UN integrated mission that brings together in a unified management system the UN's humanitarian and development work with that of peacekeeping and political affairs (Eide *et al*. 2005). The integrated mission is an example of the search for greater coherence between aid and politics that has shaped a decade of policy debate and organizational reform (Macrae and Leader 2000). UN integrated missions are not only found in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, they range from the Caribbean, through Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and into East Asia. UN specialist agencies and allied NGOs have been drafted into ambitious donor-led post-interventionary programmes of disarmament, demobi-lization and reconstruction in support of an internationally recognized state. Besides pursuing a humanitarian agenda, integrated missions are instrumentally involved in attempts to reshape the social, political and economic structures of the countries concerned. Warring parties, especially non-state groups that have done badly in a peace agreement, 'may sometimes perceive such agendas as biased and politically motivated. Thus the universality of the values promoted by the UN no longer guarantees the security of its access in conflict situations' (Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006, p. 65). In places like Afghanistan, this politicization of aid work has led to its effective paralysis (Donini 2009). However, it is important to emphasize that such problems are not confined to the TV hotspots but, like the integrated mission itself, are more general and widespread. Growing security concerns underpin both the spread of the fortified aid compound and the associated universalization of field security training for aid workers.

With the breakdown of the early post-Cold War UN-negotiated access programmes in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, a need for better field security training first emerged in the mid 1990s. From this time, improving field security for aid workers, especially enhancing risk perception and more recently hardening of physical security, has been an ongoing issue (van Brabant 1998). A key publication was Koenraad van Brabant's *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (2000). Largely based upon earlier *ad hoc* NGO programmes and training initiatives, *Operational Security* brings together in a comprehensive manner what has since become an industry-standard training template. It is in the nature of field security training to tend towards standardization; having different people or different organizations doing contrary things is counterproductive. In this way, security underpins a strong centralizing tendency within organiza-tions. It has been significant, for example, in transferring important managerial responsibilities from field operatives to HQ staff. The generic training framework that has emerged typically divides security into a number of scenarios, including movement, work, home and personal components. Training programmes exist in basic or advanced forms, they can last from several hours to several days, and vary in realism from classroom examples to outdoor role-play exercises, including car-jacking and hostage-taking. In all essentials, the development of field security training within the UN builds upon and consolidates earlier NGO initiatives.

While individual UN agencies have developed their own policies, the main trend has been towards a 'system-based security approach' (Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006, p. 65) involving the increasing centralization and standardization of security policy. Importantly, this has occurred at the same time as the global roll-out of the UN integrated mission. In this institutional context, a system-based approach to security is argued to offer scalability and replication. This process began with increasing cooperation between the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) to ensure uniform security standards and procedures, including working towards comprehensive security and stress management training (UN 2001, pp. 3–4). By the beginning of 2002, complementing individual agency initiatives, the UN had begun one-off security training in 111 countries. At the same time, Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS) were introduced. MOSS represents the development of an objective set of security standards covering security planning, training, communications and security equipment, for implementation at each UN duty station. These minimum standards spell out 'the standard which must be met in order for the system to operate safely' (UN 2001, p. 6). The adoption of MOSS standards, and more recently Minimum Operational Residential Security Standards (MORSS), is also a requirement of the UN's insurance underwriters. The question of insurance is returned to below.

The August 2003 bombings the UN and ICRC HQs in Baghdad added further impetus to the centralization and standardization of security policy (Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006). Headquarters oversight was strengthened and, following an improvement in the career prospects of security personnel, standardized security protocols were rolled out through what was now a global network of security officers. In December 2004, a new UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) was established within the UN Secretariat. This brought together existing security personnel, such as UNSECOORD and the civilian security components of DPKO, under one roof. In January 2005, a former Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard was appointed to head DSS at Under Secretary General level. With a specific mandate 'to professionalise the UN security system' (Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006, p. 76), this was the first time a security professional had been appointed at this level within the organization. One outcome of this centralized, expert-driven security regime is that standardized field-security training is now mandatory for all UN staff.

The Militarization of Risk Management

In relation to risk management, apart from doing nothing, either you resolve a given threat at its root or, alternatively, you change and adapt your behaviour, so increasing your resilience to this threat (Reid 2009). For many commentators, the main threat facing aid workers stems from the local backlash to the politicization of Western aid (Fox 1999, Stockton 2002, Donini 2009). A possible root solution

would be the disengagement and distancing of aid agencies from the ideology, practice and aims of liberal interventionism, including the rejection of state funding. It would also involve publicly talking back to Western foreign policy and the promotion of genuine independent action. For an embedded and dependent aid industry, this is an impossible political choice; hence the seemingly easier organizational option—*but arguably costlier in aid worker lives*—of staying and attempting to adapt to the security threats created by liberal interventionism. The price of resilience is the reduction of aid workers to a 'bare life' (Agamben 1998) that is wagered against the efficacy of risk management.

As a means of strengthening resilience, field security training has a number of generic characteristics. The literature on increasing aid worker deaths contains ambiguity, conjecture and competing claims. For example, there are uncertainties over motivation, or whether increases are relative or absolute, or the implications of the different exposures of national and international staff, or the significance of geographical differences (Stoddard *et al.* 2006, 2009). Field security training, however, strips out all shades of grey. It adopts an uncompromising view of the external environment; aid workers everywhere and at all times are now facing *permanent and pervasive danger*. It is not difficult to understand why this sense-certainty should exist. The purpose of professional security training is to encourage behavioural change and so strengthen personal and organizational resilience; it cannot do this if its main message is hedged with doubts and exceptions. At the same time, this purity of message means that training materials lend themselves to the deconstruction of field security as a design of power.

In Sudan, in order to enter the UN's logistical system it is necessary for visiting HQ staff or temporary consultants to first pass the UN's Basic and Advanced Security in the Field training modules (UNBSF 2003, UNASF 2006). Without passing these modules, you cannot get a UN ID card, and without an ID card you cannot enter UN compounds, board UN flights or travel in UN vehicles; you are condemned to remain outside the international space of flows. These training modules come on two interactive CD-ROMs that combine voice-overs, video clips and role-play exercises with multiple-choice end of level tests. The Basic and Advanced modules both culminate in a final multiple-choice examination. The identity of the trainee is password protected and an animation at the bottom of the computer screen records their progress through the levels. Reflecting the content of the training, it features a white UN SUV travelling along a twisting road bordered in places by trees that could conceal an ambush. Correct answers incrementally advance your journey to the safety of your destination. Wrong ones knock you back, keeping you longer in this threatening environment. Each CD takes about an hour to work through. Upon successful completion, the software prints a named pass certificate.

The UN aid workers encountered by the author in 2008 generally enjoyed and appreciated the field security training they received. They felt that the knowledge imparted was useful. Moreover, it gave the feeling that the UN was serious in fulfilling its duty of care. While there is a growing literature on field

security in hazardous environments (van Brabant 2001, ECHO 2004, Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006, Stoddard *et al*. 2006), it is mostly part of the training enterprise itself. This literature ignores the appearance of the fortified aid compound. Nor does it problematize the content of field security training or analyse its unintended consequences; field security training appears as a self-evident good. If one takes a step back, however, such training looks different. Using generic messages and reinforcing techniques, the aim is to create a conformist and risk-averse aid worker subjectivity. While in certain locations this might be necessary, when institutionalized and universalized, even in areas where threats are more imagined than real, this subjectivity reshapes the perceptions, interactions and exchanges that link aid workers and host societies. Not least, it normalizes the segregation and bunkering of the aid industry within fortified aid compounds. Rather than go through field security training in detail, a few of the important themes are described before discussing their implications.

UN's field security training is structured around a prime message from which all the desired behavioural changes can be derived. In its opening section, the Basic Security in the Field CD-ROM quotes Mary Robinson, the former High Commissioner of Human Rights, to the effect that 'some barrier has been broken and anyone can be regarded as a target, even those bringing food to the hungry and medical care to the wounded' (UNBSF 2003, Module 1: 2). In different ways, this prime message is repeated throughout the module. Field security training reinforces the idea that times have changed and, like it or not, *aid workers now face pervasive threats from a calculating and unpredictable enemy*. Since this enemy is faceless, follows no particular pattern and can strike anywhere, it requires constant vigilance and attention to one's surrounding environment. The onus is on the aid worker to make the right choices from the available information and visual cues. As the environment changes, staying safe requires endless risk calculation and adjustment. 'In certain countries, the advice will be to stop when your vehicle runs somebody over on the road; in another setting, the advice will be certainly not to stop until the next police post' (van Brabant 1999, p. 9).

In terms of helping achieve such resilience, the aim of field security training is to embed an interpretive framework and guide to action within the mind of the aid worker. Besides outlining the organizational protocols and local security procedures at the duty station, training covers all aspects of movement, home and office security, health and welfare, and personal safety, including how to respond if under fire or taken hostage. With regard to *movement*, for example, apart from avoiding travelling at night, the UN's Basic Security in the Field CD ROMs cover such things check-point etiquette; how to behave with child soldiers; how to react to weapons; anti-highjack techniques; and how to read the road, for example, slowing down before traffic lights so as to avoid stopping. Regarding the *home and office*, things covered include selecting a home neighbourhood. Important here are such things as the level of street lighting, numbers of pedestrians, levels of traffic and parking facilities. The training endorses urban

segregation through pointing out that families 'with similar income levels tend to share similar lifestyles and security concerns' (UNBFS 2003, Module 2: 6). Inside the home, advice is given on locks, window bars and alarms. With regard to the office, apart from similar neighbourhood concerns, the importance of office design is flagged. For example, having a secure reception area for screening visitors; using the front desk as a defensive structure; barriers in interview rooms; and having a secure bolt-hole. Besides advice on handling suspicious telephone calls and packages, tips are also given on how to defuse tension and handle hostile crowds.

In working through this training, it is necessary to complete numerous small tests and end of section exercises in order to proceed to the subsequent levels. For example, the actions that aid workers should take when first arriving at their duty station are rehearsed in a series of yes–no exercises. Those requiring a 'yes' answer include: do you seek a security briefing; meet your local warden; register your family members with the office; and find out how to obtain medical services? In contrast, the 'no' questions are: do you 'check area around the office and your residential areas on foot' or 'try food from local food vendors' (UNBFS 2003, Module 2: 16)? By outlawing walking around or engaging with local people, the exercise reinforces dependence on the organization while emphasizing the danger of the streets. Repeated on the CDs in different scenarios, the main response to the pervasive threats faced by aid workers is to encourage *isolation* and *risk-aversion*. This subjectivity is rapidly becoming the default setting of contemporary aid work.

External risk management, however, is reliant upon a complementary internal psychological practice. Aid workers cannot deal effectively with pervasive external threats unless they acknowledge and respect their own inner vulnerabilities. The importance of protecting the inner self as a necessary adjunct to managing external beneficiary groups has been intrinsic to field security training since its early days (van Brabant 1998). Trainees are told, for example, that empathy for victims 'does not mean sharing their diseases. To work effectively for others you need to be healthy' (Dr Gro Harlem, former Director General, WHO, UNBFS 2003, Module 5: 2). The need to take care of oneself is central to the UN's Basic and Advanced field security training. Thus, in relation to *health and welfare*, how to recognize fatigue and stress in oneself and others is explored. Arguably, this is an internalization of the practice of medicalizing distress through the concept of trauma. During the 1990s, aid agencies were newly discovering (or rather constructing) traumatized populations in war-affected societies using this practice (Summerfield 1999). However, aid work is itself now subject to such medicalization. The antidote to work-related stress is to maintain a 'normal' life within the confines of the aid archipelago, for example, taking regular exercise, following a balanced diet, achieving a good work/life balance including a buddy system, and avoiding excessive alcohol consumption. The key message is that without protecting one's vulnerable inner self—including taking time out from traumatized beneficiaries—then the constant vigilance needed to manage pervasive external threats is undermined.

Care of oneself involves a psychological distancing that complements, and requires, the physical walls and razor-wire of the fortified aid compound.

It should be emphasized that no one is arguing that risks do not exist. It is obvious that they do. Nor is there intent to insinuate that the advice given is somehow flawed or useless. There is something more fundamental under discussion—that is, a new mode of collective risk-management. New, at least, in relation to an earlier approach to danger that made room for the rational subject and allowed him/her to make considered individual decisions on the basis of available information (Pupavac 2001). Under discussion is the institutionalization of risk management and the erosion of individual and local autonomy in favour of rule through distant security experts. Risk management within the civilian aid industry has been *militarized*. In this respect, it is not accidental that the aid world's security experts are usually from a military background. With this come inescapable organizational demands for greater social conformity including the acceptance of social segregation and defensive living as part of everyday life. As with other aid agencies, the UN's field security training is not optional; it is a MOSS/MORSS requirement and, importantly, conditional for personal claims under the UN's Malicious Acts Insurance policy: if you suffer loss, injury or death while not following security guidelines, you or your family get nothing. When militarization is coupled with concerns over psychological stability, insurance requirements, including aid agency fears of litigation over lax security procedures (Butler 2003), a powerful governmental technology for changing behaviour and shaping new forms of subjectivity has come into existence.

Even if the surrounding environment does not warrant the averse and isolationist behaviour that the militarization of risk management encourages, to satisfy organizational requirements, security becomes a mandatory performative act. With its centrally dictated restrictions and protocols, compared to the rational individual expected to make informed decisions, one danger of this generalized approach is that it infantilizes all those involved (remember ... don't eat local food!). The training reflected in the UN's Basic and Advanced field security CD ROMS, much of which is generic, is a good example of what Vanessa Pupavac, in relation to the construction of traumatized populations, has called 'therapeutic governance' (Pupavac 2001). In our case, however, since the aid worker is also a potential victim, it is perhaps better to talk of therapeutic *self*-governance. As a way of avoiding and minimizing risk, aid workers are expected to act upon themselves, to change their own behaviour and lifestyles in order to make themselves fit for helping others. This reflects another aspect of resilience, the promise that a life of constant adaptation will produce something new and better (Folke 2006).

A new form of aid subjectivity has emerged based upon the militarization of therapeutic self-governance. This subjectivity is different from the NGO voluntarism of the 1960s and 1970s. This agency emphasized 'giving something back' and was associated with modesty, self-effacement and appealed to those 'who had abandoned without regret what used to be called the glittering prizes' of a normal professional or business career (Jones 1965, p. 209). Rather than

militarized risk-aversion and defensive isolation, NGOs acted upon themselves differently. The organizational and personal ethos was that of symbolic identification with the world's poor through institutional frugality and denied personal consumption. In Oxfam in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, apart from unpaid work being common and consumerism discouraged, it was expected that employees would regularly forgo wage increments. At the same time, starting salaries were deliberately pitched at 10–15 per cent below market rates. With senior managers this increased to 50–60 per cent (Whitaker 1983). This 'hair shirt' comportment was the essence of NGO voluntarism. The extent to which such 'volunteers' interacted with beneficiary populations was largely a matter of individual choice and personal risk assessment.

Aid and Urban Pathology

For the new aid subjectivity, with its predilection towards risk-aversion, its associated architectural form is the fortified aid compound. The integrated UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), for example, supports the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that covers South Sudan and the border areas of the Transition Zone. UNMIS HQ lies immediately to the south of Khartoum International Airport where the UN operates both its own aircraft and those leased to support UNMIS and the African Union/UN Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) operations in the west. Given the volume of air traffic, the UN has its own terminal building to the east of the main runway. The UNMIS HQ is a large rectangular compound fortified with double walls, razor-wire and complete with watchtowers and armed guards (see Figure 4). Inside, besides a several storey office block, lines of air-conditioned pre-fabs house the administrative staff. Around the extensive perimeter are rows of the UN's ubiquitous white SUVs. At first glance, the overtly defensive and militarized appearance of the UNMIS HQ seems out of place. Khartoum is a relatively safe city and crime levels, especially violent

Figure 4   UNMIS HQ Khartoum.

crime, have historically been low.[3] While UNMIS is associated with the peace agreement in South Sudan, it has brought the architecture of war into the city. In this context the HQ seems anomalous, a sort of mini-Green Zone but without the obvious dangers and violence of a Baghdad. While the UNMIS HQ remains distinct in terms of its scale and fortifications, in recent years all UN office compounds in Khartoum have upgraded their defensive capabilities, including the erection of outer chain-link fencing, double entrance gates and crash barriers.

While MOSS/MORSS standards can vary, it is important to realize that they constitute a set of centrally driven *minimum* operational requirements. In practice, this means that all UN operations—regardless of the actual security situation—have to be MOSS/MORSS compliant. Propagated in the institutional medium of the UN integrated mission, fed by insurance requirements and driven by security experts, the fortified aid compound is now ubiquitous from the Caribbean, through Africa to the Balkans and the Middle East, the Caucuses and East Asia.[4] This centrally driven architectural dynamic creates a potential for both anomalies and unforeseen alliances. In Khartoum, for example, MORSS requirements have recently been updated. All UN office compounds now have to be at least 30 metres from the nearest road (Interview UN security official, 24 November 2009). Despite existing investment in defensive measures, these new regulations mean that existing UN compounds are no longer MORSS compliant. Driven by security concerns, the UN system finds itself part of the wider southward extension of Khartoum, as agencies begin to plan the rebuilding of MORSS compliant complexes in the city's newly designated 'diplomatic quarter'. In this respect, the aid industry is an important part of the spatial transformation of Khartoum currently underway, including the emergence of elite gated communities (SOL 2008; see Figure 5). Similarly, in Kabul, in order to overcome the fragmenting effects of the aid industry's *ad hoc* security measures on the city's urban landscape (Montgomery 2009), the authorities have raised the possibility of constructing a Baghdad-style Green Zone on the edge of Kabul. This

Figure 5 Entrance to Al Yasmine Residence, Khartoum.

would house the entire diplomatic, UN and aid community within one secure location with its own dedicated support infrastructure (Boone 2009).

As an architectural form, the fortified aid compound merges into the global trend toward elite gated communities, social segregation and defensive urban living (Blakely and Snyder 1997, Graham & Marvin 2001, Davis 2006, Minton 2009). How the security concerns of the aid industry are helping transform the urban geography of the global borderlands remains under-researched (Vöckler 2008). In relation to South Sudan it is important to stress that these militarized structures are among the first physical manifestations of the return to an albeit uneasy peace. The fortified aid compound is a defining feature of the architectural peace dividend. Instead of a celebratory rebirth, architecturally the aid industry has introduced the signs and visual tropes of international urban pathology. At the same time, there now appears to be more agency security protocols, restrictions and levels of bureaucracy than during the actual war.

In Juba, the capital of South Sudan, the type of aid architecture encountered in Khartoum is replicated. Besides the upgrading of older buildings, however, Juba has many new, purpose-built aid compounds. Not only is their size noticeable but, since 2005, whole districts have been taken over and divided up between different agencies. UNDP, for example, has a large compound that presents itself to the outside world as a high, white painted exterior wall, topped by razor-wire. 'NO TRESPASSING' is stencilled in blue all around its extensive perimeter (see Figure 6). The main gate to this office complex is complete with the familiar guardhouse, heavy steel gates and crash barriers. In considering these structures, it is legitimate to ask what sort of impression they make on the public and, not least, those aid beneficiaries that agencies claim to empower and better. In their appearance and intent, these buildings are the very opposite of empowering; they are intimidating structures designed to keep the public out. Paradoxically, the industry's current architectural form stands in contrast to the relatively open, low-walled government buildings, many of which date from the colonial period (Daly and Hogan 2005, pp. 231–252). Rather than the beginnings of peace and reconstruction, aid's alienating and exclusionary physical structures seem to embody failure, even before its developmental efforts have properly begun (also see Montgomery 2009). The aid industry, moreover, is introducing the

Figure 6   UNDP compound Juba (photo credit Hanna Mollan).

same fractured urbanism into the South's other small towns. Not only are these towns undergoing a process of rapid unplanned urbanization following the 2005 peace agreement (Duffield *et al*. 2008), given the relative paucity of the built environment, the spatial impact is, if anything, is even greater than in Juba.

Similar to the self-contained gated neighbourhoods emerging in Khartoum, the fortified aid compound is, ideally, self-reliant in terms of basic requirements; they share the same exclusive and independent logic. Aid compounds have their own boreholes for water and, with their diesel stockpile, run their own electricity generators. This electricity renders the compounds independent of the erratic or absent town supply. It powers their security lights, telecommunications, refrigerators, air conditioning units and computers, thus allowing aid workers to maintain direct HQ contact and granting internet and satellite TV access. A stock of spare parts keeps the vehicles running and, in the event of a medical emergency, a sophisticated drugs cabinet is maintained. Not only does their built form contrast with the low-walled government buildings, the aid compound's monopoly of resources and expertise heightens the apparent poverty and dependency of the latter. Established by treaty with the Government of Sudan, in most cases during the 1960s, UN aid compounds are sovereign spaces of the international. Agreements, for example, typically confer diplomatic status on international staff and inviolability of the offices, documents and equipment of the agency concerned (UNHCR 1968). Linked by exclusive and secure means of air and road transport, fortified aid compounds interconnect to form a spatial archipelago of international aid. From this perspective, the network of aid compounds that spans the global borderland provides an important material dimension to liberalism's external sovereign frontier: the fortified aid compound marks the place where the international space of aid flows physically confronts underdevelopment as dangerous.

Figure 7 UNHCR compound Yei, South Sudan.

Underdevelopment as Dangerous

The UNHCR's combined office and accommodation compound at Yei, near the border with Uganda, is new and purpose-built. In May 2008, parts of its interior were still under construction. As a new project, it brings aid, architecture and security together in a particularly clear way (see Figure 7). Apart from the usual double gates and outer perimeter chain-link fence, the wide dead-zone between the fence and the inner wall is patrolled by armed guards at night. This large compound combines accommodation, offices, leisure and essential support facilities. In addition to the usual guardhouse, water tower and generator, the Yei compound contains a block of about a dozen offices and work rooms; a dining area; a laundry; an open-sided tented gym; and, in two facing rows of three blocks each, a dozen semi-detached three-room bungalows each comprising a bedroom, lounge and shower. In May 2008, the dining area, where aid workers can get breakfast, lunch and dinner, was still a basic construction fashioned from two metal containers. The intention is to replace this with a built structure and, at the same time, to landscape the existing rough ground between the facing bungalows. These semi-detached bungalows are of suburban design, each having their own porch, air conditioning and links to the internet. Only their barred windows, and the razor wire on the inner wall running behind these bungalows, unsettle their air of normality.

Despite the aid industry's ethos of transience and working itself out of a job, as a means of minimizing risk and avoiding litigation the fortified aid compound is here to stay. Rather than speaking to a future South Sudan that is free of aid agencies, as an architectural form it signals long-term occupation and pacification. The fortified aid compound not only reproduces the longstanding development—underdevelopment divide, it signals its deepening institutionalization. Caught between war and peace, the fortified aid compound is a post-interventionary architecture. In this respect, it is significant that many aid workers, given the internalization of the field security training they receive, seem oblivious to the incongruities and contradictions of their built environment. The Yei compound, for example, is typically admired for the superiority of its deep field facilities rather than being seen as incongruous or alienating. As an oasis of private consumption, defensive living has been normalized. The walls and razor-wire fence off an external world that is otherwise threatening and unpredictable. As such, they demarcate an inner zone of normality and civilization. Reflecting the requirements of therapeutic self-governance, this zone provides the means for taking care of one's inner self. The fortified aid compound is a place of refuge and consumption (see Figure 8). It is somewhere to unwind, take a shower, drink a cold beer and watch some TV.

In considering what is being secured against, in most cases defensive aid architecture spreads, not as a response to clear and present danger, but as an insurance-driven exercise in minimizing risk. With the possible exception of Darfur, in much of Sudan, as with other integrated missions, it has preceded the insecurity it seeks to defend against. Rather than eliminating these conditions,

Figure 8   UN residential compound, Juba.

however, this form of architecture highlights the exclusivity of the international space of flows and its unequal relationship with the surrounding environment. It runs the danger of inciting the hostility and envy it claims to protect against. Not least, institutional risk-aversion and segregated living has had a major impact on relations between aid workers and beneficiaries. In South Sudan, even at a time of ostensible peace, aid work appears as a series of organized, security-approved aid sorties orchestrated from the confines of the fortified compound. International staff spend the least time possible in the uncertain outside world. Compared to the NGO voluntarism of the 1960s and 1970s, encounters with aid beneficiaries now lack informality and spontaneity. They are structured, contrived, time-limited exercises. Usually reliant upon local staff, or local NGOs to do the bulk of the organizing, they range from information gathering exercises, beneficiary training and, in cases of actual insecurity, more arms length forms of engagement have emerged.

Information gathering usually takes place through focus group meetings, participatory workshops or using rapid appraisal techniques (Chambers 2002). The intention of training is to change beneficiary attitudes and behaviour. Just as aid workers are expected to act upon themselves and change their behaviour to better help others, beneficiaries are also required to change if they are to minimize risks to themselves and the threats they can pose to others. Beneficiaries, for example, are exposed to health risks; risks of human rights abuse; risks of excessive patriarchy; risks of social exclusion; and risks of ignorance and individualism. Taken together, these risks and dangers define the beneficiary population. They also come complete with their corresponding therapeutic training programmes and desired pattern of behavioural changes. The enemy outside the fortified aid compound is the enemy of underdevelopment or, to be more precise, it is underdevelopment as dangerous (Dillon and Reid 2009). Underdevelopment is synonymous with the essential inability of aid beneficiaries to lead full and proper lives unassisted (Mehta 1999). From a

security perspective, underdevelopment is threatening and unpredictable. Such a condition is kept at bay through training and other inducements to change behaviour. Because of the uncertainty of this task, however, underdevelopment also has to be defended against with walls and razor wire.

In areas of heightened insecurity or counterinsurgency, the interaction between aid worker and beneficiary is even more restricted. In Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, Somalia and northern Uganda, for example, a technique known as *remote management* has emerged (Bruderlein and Gassmann 2006, Rogers 2006, Stoddard *et al*. 2006). This involves working at arm's length through local staff or local NGOs. In Afghanistan, for example, it is common for international aid managers, through email or mobile telephone, to manage projects at a distance, in some cases never visiting them at all (Montgomery 2009). Indeed, such is the nature of the aid archipelago and modern telecommunications that it is no longer necessary for operational aid agencies to be based in the same country as the programmes they support. For example, Jordan has become a base for aid operations in Iraq, while Nairobi and Dubai serve Somalia and Afghanistan respectively.

Conclusion: Caught Between the Walls

In response to the seminar version of this paper (see note 4), a frequent comment from the audience was that the situation described above was limited to the UN and that many NGOs eschewed this type of bunkering. While it remains an under-researched area, the response of aid agencies to insecurity, in terms of both training and physical protection, appears directly related to their size and the resources they have to address the issue. While it is true that the UN is leading the field, importantly it is also raising the bar for the sector as a whole in relation to what are regarded as minimum security standards. Given the issue of insurance, rising staff expectations and concerns over litigation, the performative influence of these standards will continue to grow. Anecdotal evidence, for example, suggests that donor governments and UN agencies, again concerned over litigation, are tending to favour subcontracting to NGOs that follow formal security guidelines. Besides embassies and donor representatives, it is the larger international NGOs that are following the UN into fortified aid compounds. Those that remain outside are usually smaller single-issue or faith-based NGOs. The aid worker shot dead in October 2008 while walking to work in Kabul, for example, was employed by the Christian charity SERVE. This NGO had consciously ignored the tight security procedures followed by the UN and larger international NGOs (Gall 2008). As the type of centralized procedures adopted by the UN increasingly become accepted by the donor community as the industry standard, the contribution of such NGOs to the sector as a whole, especially within integrated missions, will remain limited, if not decline.

Besides being emblematic of important changes with the aid industry, the fortified compound also merges with international trends towards urban splintering and, reflecting the appearance of elite gated communities, the

Figure 9   UNDP constructed prison Rumbeck (photo credit John Ryle).

privatization of space. In this respect, rather than working against this pathology, or standing apart from it, the aid industry appears as a driving force. As a private space of international flows, the aid archipelago highlights the immobility of the beneficiaries it exists to serve. By their nature, fortified aid compounds are exclusionary and disempowering. In South Sudan it is revealing that one of the few other new-build programmes relates to prisons, such as those constructed under the UNDP's Rule of Law Programme (see Figure 9). What is striking about these buildings is their outward similarity to the fortified aid compound. One functions to keep people in, the other to keep them out. This outward similarity, but different purpose, says much about the abjection of the undocumented surplus life existing between these walls. They suggest different but interconnected sets of possibilities: on the one hand, a future of containment and confinement, on the other, a pacified life of managed poverty.

After more than half a century of development activity, if the fortified aid compound represents a point of arrival, then it is symptomatic of the aid industry reaching a strategic dead-end. Aid bunkering sums up the short post-Cold War journey of the development–security nexus from initial optimism to political paralysis and intellectual sterility. There is little of value within the fortified aid compound. Reinforced by frequent staff rotations, aid workers are remote from, and often fearful of, the people they aspire to help. Rather an architecture befitting attempts to reduce the life-chance divide between the developed and underdeveloped worlds, for example by extending the sort of social protection taken for granted in Europe to the peoples of Africa, the fortified aid compound resonates with a deepening North–South divide. It is an architecture of pacification and occupation. In thinking a way out of this impasse, the first step is perhaps the easiest: it is deciding which side of the wire you are on.

Notes

1   This was to evaluate UNHCR's refugee return and reintegrate programme (Duffield *et al.* 2008). This essay does not draw on this work nor does it reflect the views of UNHCR.

2   For a map of these airstrips see, http://www.unjlc.org/sudan/maps/catalogue/ unjlc_sdn_706_A0.

3   In November 2009, working independently of the aid industry, the author spent a month in Khartoum travelling by foot or local taxi both day and night. The relative safety of the city has been frequently commented upon in the 'Making Sense of Dafur' blog: http://blogs.ssrc.org/darfur/.

4   I am grateful for audience feedback and anecdotal evidence regarding the geographic spread of the fortified aid compound from seminars given in Rovaniemi (Finland), London, Warwick, Cambridge, Amsterdam, Leeds, Bristol, Bradford and Coimbra (Portugal) during 2008 and 2009.

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