

Gated Communities: The search for security

Dana Quintal and Susan Thompson
The Faculty of the Built Environment, The University of New South Wales

Abstract: The response of many to a growing sense of anxiety and insecurity in today's society has been to retreat from the public realm to the private sphere of the home. For some this means living in gated communities, where the uncertainty of the outside world is perceived to be better controlled. Gated communities - residential developments characterised by physical security measures such as walls, controlled entry points, security guards and closed circuit television - are often criticised because of their potential to cause physical and social divisions in established communities. . While confirming some of the long-held concerns expressed by urbanists about gated living, this paper also challenges aspects of these critiques. Our findings from site visits and interviews with a range of stakeholders in gated communities around Sydney reveal that gated communities can be a positive expression of the desire of individuals to exert greater control over their living environments. They may also help to reduce uncertainty, provide personal protection, and shield family and home from unwanted intrusion. An understanding of the diverse experiences of residents and their motivations for moving to gated communities is essential for both housing providers and policy makers. This will facilitate the provision of alternative residential forms that can encompass these positive expressions, while ensuring better physical and social integration within existing communities.

Introduction

Fear, anxiety, and insecurity increasingly occupy the minds of contemporary urban inhabitants. The causes are diverse. They include factors such as economic restructuring, global terrorism, crime, immigration, the privatisation of public services and an undermining of democratic processes. Individuals may feel that they have little influence or control over the course their lives (Parker, 2006, p. 30). Accompanying this is, a disengagement of society from politics, from current affairs and from social issues (Mackay, 2005, p. 1) and a sensation of helplessness. People can feel daunted by the 'big picture', choosing instead to bring 'their horizons up close: [themselves]...family, the backyard, the street, the school, the weekend, the holidays' (Mackay, 2005, p. 1).

A desire to create a buffer between the individual and society has developed as people search for a means by which to protect themselves from uncertainty. For some, this may be achieved by living in gated communities – residential developments which focus on physical security measures that restrict access to non-residents. Motivations vary for moving into a gated living situation and may be summarised as follows:

- A desire for security and fear of crime/others;
- A desire to live with like-minded people or people of a similar socio-economic status;
- A desire for a high quality living environment with recreational/leisure facilities;
- Exclusivity;
- Predictability and property values;
- Search for community;
- Retreat from failing public government; and
- Identity, packaging and social homogeneity (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Forwood, 1999; Low, 2003; Frantz, 2006).

Gated community environments have been criticised by academics, the media and the wider community. Much of the critique focuses on the potential that gated communities have to cause divisions within society. There is however, an alternative view. Gated communities can address the fears and anxieties of individuals by enhancing personal safety, the security of material goods, as well as protecting the home from unwanted intrusions. Further, there is evidence that the physical design and management structures of these accommodation forms assist in fostering a sense of community and common purpose among residents (McKenzie, 1994).

Having established the context for this research, we now turn to examine the history and nature of gated communities. Our research focussing on the experiences of residents from three gated communities in Sydney is then discussed. The research addresses the following:

- Why people choose to live in gated communities in Sydney;
- Resident perceptions of security; and
- Notions of community within gated communities.

While gated communities are often seen as a symptom of an underlying community anxiety, the research presented here shows that they are not a wholly negative manifestation. The paper concludes with some suggestions for planners, design professionals and governments to ensure that the development of gated communities is regulated for the creation of built environments that encourage social interaction and improve community well-being.

Gated communities

Gated communities are residential developments characterised by a focus on physical security measures such as gates, walls, guards and closed-circuit television cameras. A common feature is a perimeter wall which encloses the whole development. Vehicular access is usually restricted by a gate or boom, either controlled through the use of an access card or pin code, or by security personnel. Inside the development protection is ensured through various means, including 24-hour security patrols by guards; 'back-to-base' alarm systems and panic buttons; closed-circuit television cameras; guard dogs; and electric fencing, spikes and other forms of anti-intruder treatments to the perimeter.

History of gated communities

Modern gated communities emerged as part of the international trend towards the suburbanisation of cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However the fortification of cities is not a recent phenomenon. In Roman England, soldiers erected walls and defences within the villages they occupied to protect themselves from mutinous villagers (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). Medieval towns also featured walls, towers and gates (Low, 2003). In pre-eighteenth century London, the royal family and other wealthy persons 'forted up' to protect themselves from the sometimes rebellious lower classes (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). During the nineteenth century, gated settlements appeared in the Caribbean in the form of Spanish fort towns (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).

It was not until the late nineteenth century that residential gated communities first appeared in the United States. These developments were exclusive resort enclaves with a focus on leisure pursuits and were used primarily as second homes (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003). By the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the US, a lack of adequate attention to ongoing racial conflict, violence and inequities in residential accommodation and schooling had led to an urban crisis in the US (Sandercock, 2003, p. 115). This provided the impetus for a white middle-class exodus to the suburbs. Instead of addressing social problems, those who had the necessary financial resources elected to 'buy' protection, thereby facilitating the creation of residential developments centred on security (Sandercock, 2003, p. 116). The first of these was 'Leisure World', a retirement development in Orange County, California, which Low (2003, p. 14) identifies as the beginning of the trend where 'middle-class Americans walled themselves off'.

During the 1970s, the first Argentinean gated country clubs were developed in response to 'a decade of social unrest and pre-revolutionary troubles' (Thuillier, 2005, p. 256; Roitman, 2003, 2005). Gated developments also appeared at this time in Brazil (Caldeira, 1996; Carvalho, Varkki, and Anthony, 1997; Coy and Pohler, 2002), Chile (Salcedo and Torres, 2004) and Saudi Arabia (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002; Glasze, 2006).

The 1980s saw gated communities spread across the globe. 'Fourway Gardens', developed in 1987, was the first walled development in Johannesburg, South Africa (Jurgens and Gnad, 2002). Bulgaria (Stoyanov and Frantz, 2006), Canada (Townshend, 2006), England (Blandy, 2006), Indonesia (Leisch, 2002), Lebanon (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002), Portugal (Raposo, 2006) and Russia (Blinnikov et al., 2006) also experienced the development of modern gated communities. In 1987, 'Sanctuary Cove' on the Queensland Gold Coast marked the arrival of this residential form in Australia (Gleeson, 2006, p. 72).

It is difficult to know how many people reside in gated developments, primarily because comprehensive surveys have not been undertaken. By far the most gated communities are located in the US. Low (2003) estimates that 16 million Americans live in such communities. Atkinson et al. (2004) indicate that there are approximately 1,000 gated communities in England. Approximately 100,000 people live in gated communities in Australia (Burke, Montefiore and Atkins, 2006). Numbers of gated communities and their residents in Australia may be increasing in line with an ageing population who desire attractive environments with sophisticated recreational facilities (Cadzow, 2007).

As this brief summary indicates, gated communities are by no means new or recent. However, the increased prevalence of this residential development since the 1970s has drawn attention from scholars and commentators worldwide (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).

Criticism of gated communities

Gated communities have been criticised for a multitude of reasons. It has been argued that they create divisions within communities by erecting physical barriers between and within neighbourhoods which alter street connectivity and permeability (Burke and Sebaly, 2001). This physical separation may also have social impacts because the design of the typical gated community eliminates the need for interaction with non-residents. This works against government policies to enhance social cohesion and linkages between neighbourhoods (Blandy et al., 2003, p. 6; Grant, Greene and Maxwell, 2004). By excluding others, particularly those who cannot afford to purchase property within these developments (Grant, 2005), an 'us and them' mentality can develop between residents and outsiders (Burke, 2001; Low, 2003; Sandercock, 2003). Indeed, Low (2003, p. 231) has stated that 'the gated community contributes to a geography of social relations that produces fear and anxiety simply by locating a person's home and place identity in a secured enclave, gated, guarded, and locked'.

Gated estates tend to attract people of similar socioeconomic status and cultural grouping, which may exacerbate land use, class and age segregation at the local scale (Grant, Greene and Maxwell, 2004, p. 83; Montefiore and Atkins, 2006). Regional impacts are less clear. In regard to the community of Macquarie Links in Sydney's south-west, some argue that while it may have created local differences in status and economic advantage, effects at a regional scale have been beneficial. '...it has allowed [a large number of] families, who otherwise would have lived on the North Shore of Sydney, to actually live in the Western Suburbs thereby decreasing the regional disparities' (Montefiore and Atkins, 2006).

Despite their additional security features and their ability to exclude non-resident 'intruders', crime within the community may not be reduced or eliminated. Low's (2003) respondents reported that robberies were often committed by members of the community or by 'outsiders' such as cleaners, builders and landscapers working inside. Furthermore, Atkinson and Blandy argue that fortifying an area may simply cause the displacement of crime from fortified spaces towards residential areas which present softer targets (2005, p. 185). In addition, the ability of additional security to assuage the fears of residents is questionable. Research in the US and UK has found that residents do not necessarily experience a reduced sense of fear after moving to a gated development. In fact people can become more fearful and anxious about leaving the safety of their community (Low, 2003; Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Atkinson and Flint, 2004). Ironically, living in a more secure environment can actually reinforce (or even enhance) existing fears and insecurities about unsecured areas and unfamiliar people. This has significant implications for the integration of gated community residents within the wider community.

Benefits of gated communities

While gated communities have their disadvantages, they also offer certain advantages, including the achievement of desirable planning outcomes. These include higher densities of development; higher quality urban design; provision of community facilities and open space; increased pedestrian safety; and opportunities for the development of a sense of place, character and community (Grant, Greene and Maxwell, 2004, p. 83).

Newman (1972) developed the concepts of 'territorial reinforcement' and 'defensible space' whereby a clear definition of space is considered to increase awareness and 'ownership' of that space. This theory can be applied to gated communities, where walls and gates, which clearly define the community space within a development, result in an increased desire by residents to protect that space. Further, restrictions on non-resident entry means that gated community residents are likely to be more familiar with their neighbours and thus are easily able to recognise a 'stranger' or potential intruder.

A greater sense of ownership of space is also facilitated by the private provision and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities. This is initially overseen by the developer and then by resident-led homeowner's associations (HOAs), community associations or bodies corporate. Inherent in this 'ownership' is the requirement for payment of levies to the HOA to fund maintenance. HOAs are also able to regulate resident behaviour and ensure that community rules are enforced.

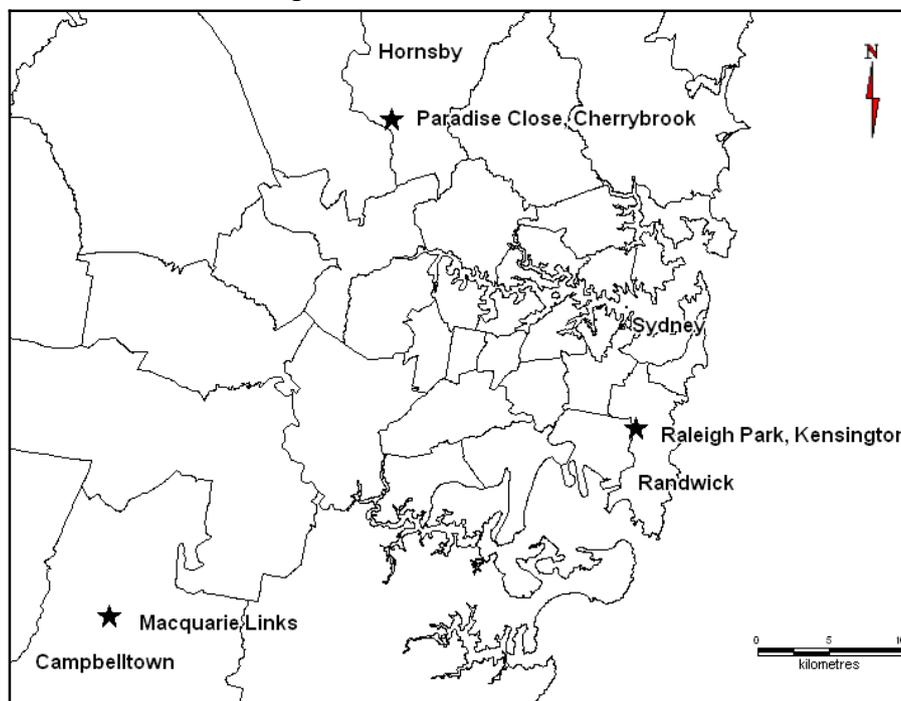
Developer provision of facilities and infrastructure also reduces the burden on local government to provide recreational and community facilities and maintain infrastructure such as roads and stormwater systems. As residents still pay council rates, Grant (2005, p. 283) describes gated communities as ‘cash cows’ for local government. Researchers have reported that local governments in the US (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003; McKenzie, 2006), Canada (Grant, Greene and Maxwell, 2004; Grant, 2005) and Argentina (Roitman, 2005; Libertun de Duren, 2006) are reluctant to discourage gating because of the clear financial advantages of this form of development. Similarly, some local government authorities see gated communities as a means to increase the socioeconomic status and tax base of their area (Libertun de Duren, 2006).

Gated communities in Sydney

The geographic focus of our study was the greater Sydney Metropolitan area. Three communities were selected to undertake a detailed examination of the experiences of residents in gated communities in Sydney. The methodology was principally qualitative, supported by field work and specific observations of gated communities across Sydney. The qualitative research comprised four individual in-depth interviews and two focus groups, with a total of 12 gated community residents. Participants ranged from 22 to 80 years of age. Interviews were also conducted with developers and real estate agents involved in the development and marketing of gated communities in Sydney. All interview data was transcribed, coded and analysed according to qualitative methodological protocols.¹

The three gated communities chosen for in-depth study represent a cross-section of this type of development in the Sydney area (Figure 1). The communities are disparate in terms of location, time of development, scale, demographics, socio-economics and the prevalence of crime in the surrounding neighbourhood. The interviews with residents provided detailed insights into the complex motivations for selecting this type of accommodation and the actual experience of living in a gated development. We now turn to discuss these insights, which indicate that living in a gated estate has distinct benefits – something the critiques have, to date, dismissed far too lightly.

Figure 1. Location of case studies



Source: MapInfo (2007)

¹ This study was undertaken in 2006 as a final year thesis project for the Bachelor of Town Planning Degree at UNSW by then student, now researcher, Dana Quintal, supervised by Planning Program academic, Susan Thompson.

Motivations for living in gated communities

Much of the research focussing on gated developments examines residents' motivations for selecting this form of housing. Unlike inhabitants of American and South African gated communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003; Beall, Crankshaw, and Parnell, 2002; Jurgens and Gnad, 2002), the search for physical security was not necessarily a motivating factor for the interviewees in this study. Rather, residents reported being attracted by the 'package' of features provided by the development including location, house design and community facilities. This reflects research by Glasze, Webster and Frantz (2006, p. 2) who believe that there is an over-emphasis on insecurity as an 'explanatory factor' for the popularity of gated developments as 'locational choice is made on the basis of subjective evaluation of bundles of civic goods'.

Contrary to popular discourse regarding the exclusivity of gated communities, many residents were motivated by the value for money that the house represented when compared to other dwellings in other areas.

Our reason for moving into that house was price performance of the house, the features, you know the tennis court and our house had a pool and the features with all of that in this location - if you go 150 metres that way to West Pennant Hills you pay literally twice as much for exactly the same thing...So it was very good value for money with all the features. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

Interestingly, a number of residents were at first hesitant about the security.

...the expectation you have not knowing anything about a street with a gate is that people will be completely security-conscious and utterly paranoid and hiding behind ten security screens on top of the gates and it's actually the complete opposite. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

...we were a bit apprehensive at first, it's just the gates almost look like people don't want to visit you and we didn't know whether the gates were there to keep us in, if we were that dangerous, or people out. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

Notwithstanding this, the security features of gated communities did play a role in the decision to purchase.

I guess the idea of having a closed gate was an attraction. The security. Knowing there was security. (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

Location also played a role in selecting a dwelling in the gated developments in this study. Interviewees from Macquarie Links were locals looking to stay in the area, as were a majority of Paradise Close residents. The Managing Director of Macquarie Links Realty noted that 'about a quarter of the residents have moved...from homes within ten kilometres of the [Macquarie Links] estate' (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 12).

Security in the gated community

Gated communities are designed to protect material goods as well as the people who live in them. Our findings indicate that 'security' is derived from both the physical and social aspects of gated communities. Physical security is the most immediately obvious feature of a gated community and clearly perceived as a benefit for residents in this study.

...it's something we hadn't thought of before moving in here...that security might actually be of benefit. [But] because we're the kind of people who accidentally leave our doors open when we go on holidays it's probably a bit of a bonus. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

...it's true that you don't get the graffiti and the hoon type element that you get in some suburbs because of the security. And that's a big plus, a very big plus...I appreciate it very much now and in talking about the area I stress that to friends who say, "What's it like?" I say, "Well, it's lovely, I can get out of my car and leave it in the drive and sometimes leave the key in". (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

Even in Raleigh Park, which is not formally gated but has security guards and cameras, residents felt secure. Most importantly, they reported feeling *more* secure than they would outside of the development, although they acknowledged that this may have only been a perception of greater security rather than an

actuality (Resident Interview 30/8/06). Respondents from the three communities had, over time, come to appreciate the security afforded by their residential environment. Initial reservations about the gates have since been replaced by an appreciation of the security they provide, particularly for residents whose partners travel or work overnight.

It's the same with me because I travel a bit, perhaps one or two nights away a week, and for [my wife], she likes the fact that the gates are closed, the neighbours are close and it's a lovely street. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

[The security system is] beautiful. And we want it that way. They say you know, it's a bit ostentatious to have the security guard on the gate and all this sort of thing but that's what we want and we're willing to pay for it. (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

For those in this study, security is a broadly defined concept, which brings different levels of 'peace of mind'. As well as property and personal protection, gated communities offer protection for the future amenity of the residential environment in the form of stability, continuity and certainty. Restrictions on dwelling design, fencing, driveway materials and landscaping are imposed by covenants and by-laws in the three communities examined. These enhanced residents' feelings of certainty and security – a sentiment that is at odds with some critiques of gated and master planned communities.

The image of the local community has been extensively commodified by many urban developers for the purpose of marketing residential properties; with the support of local authorities, these developers have imposed detailed regulations and restrictions on developments in order to ensure the purity of their 'product'. (Peterson, 2003, pp. 2-3)

Our findings indicate that the ability to prevent unwanted change in a neighbourhood can be a very positive thing for residents. The previous experiences of some gated community residents are evidence of the impact that unwelcome changes to a neighbourhood can have on a person's sense of satisfaction with their living environment.

...Chipping Norton, when it first started to be developed over there it was quite nice but then a lot of old homes got pulled down and units were built. So once the units went in, it lost the niceties about it. (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

...the Government approved a horrendous development immediately on the other side of the railway line [from our house in Ingleburn]...that was a 24 hours a day, seven days a week container terminal. With four rail sidings and gantries, the noise was intolerable, so we decided...we were determined never to leave but they drove us out. (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

Accordingly, predictability can equate to security for residents in that 'the security of living in an environment in which the physical and social qualities are regulated by private contracts and perceived to be more stable than in 'normal' neighbourhoods' (Webster and Glasze, 2006, p. 232). In turn, this stability may have positive effects on property values, thereby making gated communities a 'less risky investment' (Frantz, 2006, p. 73).

Search for a sense of community

Blakely and Snyder (1997) found that 'sense of community' is not a primary social value of residents within American gated communities. Wilson-Doenges (2000) found that a sense of community in the gated communities she studied was ephemeral, based on common interests and income levels and not on an actual bond with others. A lack of 'territorial functioning' may explain a reduced emphasis on relationships with neighbours in gated communities (Newman, 1972). Wilson-Doenges (2000, p. 608) believes that the 'bulwarking' approach utilised in gated developments may not be effective in creating appropriate ownership of space.

A gated community resident pulls up to the gate in her car, rolls down her window long enough to insert her card to electronically open the gate. She drives through, drives down the street to her house, presses the garage door remote control, drives in, and shuts the door. She enters her home after deactivating the alarm system, closes the door behind her, and reactivates the alarm.

This research does not support these assertions. Interestingly, security was not limited to the physical security provided by gates and walls. We found it had a number of dimensions, including facilitating a

sense of community and belonging between residents. Respondents in this study reported experiencing an enhanced sense of community and belonging since moving into their gated community.

I was sick last year and I had so much, so many people want to do things, it's amazing. Whereas at Chipping Norton I would have only had my own personal friends. And these are people [living in Macquarie Links] that we've never met, we hardly know. (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

This experience shows that there is a community within the bounds of gated communities that is not necessarily based on long-held friendships. Rather, a connection with other residents develops simply because they live within the same geographically-defined area. Indeed, some residents reported that 'everybody's there for one another, I don't know of anyone here that wouldn't do something for you' (Resident Interview 8/9/06). This sense of community and connection was also reflected in the experiences of other gated community residents.

...people borrow things from each other and help each other out...people have done things like that, when people's appliances have broken, you've got people wandering around the street with their half-cooked dinners going, "Does your oven work? Mine's broken, can I put my dinner in your oven?" (Resident Interview 29/8/06)

A resident explained that because of 'the closeness of the people in [our community], they're watching out for everybody' (Resident Interview 8/9/06). This 'closeness' is particularly important in that it allows residents to identify something or someone that is out of place and take action to remedy the situation.

Because we're a little community if somebody sees something they immediately ring the gate and the security guard's up there. (Resident Interview 8/9/06)

The protective nature of the case study communities is particularly evident in regard to residents looking after others' children.

...even the fact that the kids have been on the street riding their bikes and my neighbour has said, "Put your helmet on", you know, things like that which I really like, in a community that's what you do, you look after one another's kids and that sort of thing. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

...if something unforeseen happens I feel confident that [my daughters] could go to anybody else in the street and someone would sort them out...you hope that doesn't happen, but you feel secure...you do feel that little bit more confident that other people watch out for them too. (Resident Interview 17/9/06)

Implications for planning

This research shows that gated communities provide a sense of community and stability for their residents. However, for those outside the walls, the perception of the community may be different. As Low (2003), Sennett (1974), Young (1990) and Petersen (2003) have stated, we need to be cautious about considering community to be an intrinsically positive thing, particularly with respect to gated communities.

While [the gated community] provides a feeling of stability and comfort for "insiders," in an extreme form it reinforces perceptions that those who are not in the community are "outsiders" or marginal, and unworthy of being included. (Low, 2003, p. 65)

Gleeson (2006) suggests that the search for 'community' *within* gated developments is just as much about escaping *from* wider society. Local politicians such as Graham West, State Member of Parliament for Campbelltown, feel similarly about gated communities.

I say 'suburb' and not 'community' as [gated communities like Macquarie Links] are the enemy of community. (Cited in Bladen, 2001, p. 1)

Gated community residents do not see themselves as excluding non-residents from their community. The majority have lived in the locality for some time and see themselves as part of the wider community in their locale, as well as members of their immediate gated community. Residents are aware of the negative connotations associated with their kind of community, noting that some non-residents believe 'people that are too good for everybody else live here' and that residents are 'snobs who want to bring

their children up so they don't have to mix with the people out in the community' (Resident Interview 8/9/06). Many residents regarded the perception that they are trying to secede from society as absurd.

It's interesting though the perception you get from, even [my daughter's] geography textbook at school, there is a picture of our estate...The perception, and what they said in it, and what you sometimes see in the media is the portrayal that people come into these estates because they want to hide themselves away from what's outside, but nobody here perceives it like that. It's very interesting, they've got a completely different idea about it [to us]. (Resident Interview 29/8/06)

Low (2003, p. 230) argues that gated communities 'are disruptive of other people's ability to experience "community": community in the sense of an integration of the suburb and the city, community in terms of access to public open space, and community...[characterised by] racial and ethnic integration and social justice'. As this research has not examined non-residents' feelings about gated communities it is not possible to comment on the effects of the case studies on the surrounding area, nor whether non-residents are made to feel like 'outsiders'. However, as community facilities are privately owned and gates prevent access, recreational spaces of gated developments are exclusive to residents and cannot provide any spill-over benefits for the broader community. Nevertheless, similar exclusive use situations can be found in some master planned estates (see Gwyther, 2005) and in other developments that use design features and signage to exclude non-residents.

Alternatives to gating

This research has in part examined what draws people to gated communities and the aspects of these developments that are attractive to residents. It is crucial for planners to understand why people are motivated to live in these developments so that alternative and improved residential environments can be provided.

As the suburbs become more and more urbanized, researchers and citizens have become concerned with a decline in sense of community and an increase in fear of crime. In an attempt to reverse this trend, planners and developers have used design strategies to create communities that provide residents with a more close-knit and safe place to live. (Wilson-Doenges, 2000, p. 597)

Providing the benefits of gated communities without excluding non-residents is a difficult task as trying to discourage this type of development is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, gated communities are very attractive to developers.

Developers recognise the opportunity for niche marketing [of gated communities]: they effectively combine the aesthetics and common appeal of a private controlled development (with its attractive amenities and common maintenance) with the lure of a homogenous community of residents: people of similar ages, wealth and lifestyles. (Grant, 2005, p. 282)

Secondly, local governments in Australia are vulnerable to the lure of gated and master planned communities, 'especially in traditionally working class subregions that have come to view them as investment prizes and/or means for reducing their own planning and servicing responsibilities' (Gleeson, 2006, p. 170). For local governments, it may be easier to allow developers to provide gated communities.

'Who's going to pay for a Macquarie Links the whole world can use?' (Peter Icklow, cited in Bladen, 2001, p. 2)

A councillor from Campbelltown Council concurs with this assessment.

There are advantages to council from community type developments as the infrastructure is provided and maintained by residents. (Rudi Kolkman, cited in Bladen, 2001, p. 2)

Thirdly, gated communities can provide additional benefits for local governments.

Affluent developments of adult households are typically seen as good neighbours, unlikely to generate NIMBY responses. Attractive entry features, fences, and landscaping can improve land values in an area. Hence it becomes hard to say 'no' to such proposals. (Grant, 2005, p. 283)

Finally, a lack of planning guidelines for gated communities in Sydney prevents local councils from controlling this type of development (Forwood, 1999; Quintal, forthcoming). If, as this research suggests, gated communities are not as problematic as is portrayed in international literature and existing academic research, what grounds do local or state government have to refuse a development application for a gated estate? Without specific controls for gated developments, there are no agreed upon matters for consideration in the assessment of developments that propose to restrict non-resident access. Indeed, even if council intended to argue that gated communities are not in the public interest (Section 79C(e) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 NSW*), there is no evidence on which to base this assumption in Australia.

In short, planners need to take another look at gated communities.

Concerns about segregated projects and the possible impacts of gating will not make private communities go away, nor will they reduce the demand for enclaves. As a profession, planners need to engage in a public debate about the implications of gated developments and the character of government responses to them so that we can establish appropriate policies and practices for future planning. Only then will we find ourselves prepared to deal with this important issue. (Grant, Greene and Maxwell, 2004, p. 84)

The next step is to encourage local and state governments to develop policy relating to gated communities. Policy for gated communities must be supplemented by government investment in the public realm of new and existing urban areas. Gleeson (2006) suggests that masterplanning in conjunction with investment in the public realm can play a role in shaping new development that is not exclusionary.

Planning controls could be implemented to ensure that the negative features of gated communities are minimised and that the positive aspects are accentuated. At a local government level, statutory controls that require developers of gated communities to provide a percentage of affordable dwellings and a mix of dwelling types could be put into practice. Covenants on open space, like those in Raleigh Park, could be imposed to ensure public access to open space. Public access to open space does not necessarily confer a right to use resident recreational facilities. Private use of recreational facilities could be maintained by the use of lockable gates which can be opened only by residents using a swipe cards or pin code. Notwithstanding this, masterplanned communities such as Newbury in Sydney's north-west have private community facilities and are not gated. Therefore, we suggest that justification for the gating of roads and pedestrian accessways be required at the development application stage, given Burke's (2001) research, which indicates that gated communities alter the pedestrian activity of non-residents. Consequently, traffic studies would be required for gated proposals to ensure that impacts on external traffic flows and pedestrian networks are minimised.

Conclusion

This research indicates a need for planners to provide appropriate and viable alternatives to current forms of residential development. Gated communities are an extremely attractive form of development for residents as they provide physical protection and offer a high level of residential amenity and recreational facilities. Significantly, the sense of community and belonging felt by residents affords a more valuable notion of 'security' than could be provided by gates alone. Further, through restrictions on design and access, gated communities may help to reduce uncertainty by enabling residents to exert greater control over their living environment.

It has been argued that the desire to live in gated communities represents the retreat of the individual from the public realm and an increasing focus on the private sphere of the home. This research does not entirely support this assumption. To some extent, gated communities address the anxieties and insecurities that characterise the Australian consciousness and in this respect have a positive influence on the lives of residents. However, relying on gated communities in the private sector and additional policing in the public is not an acceptable means by which to placate the insecurities of the community (Low, 2003).

Alternate residential communities must provide privacy, security, opportunities for social interaction, desirable local amenities and adequate traffic management (Grant, Greene and Maxwell, 2004). Indeed, through the design of new living environments, planners and urban designers can play a role in

encouraging social interaction and in doing so improve the well-being of the wider community. Therefore governments must refocus their attention on the public provision of infrastructure, facilities and services in order to restore confidence in the public realm. Otherwise who can blame gated community residents for wanting to live where they do?

References

- Atkinson, R. and Blandy, S. (2005) 'Introduction: International Perspectives on The New Enclavism and the Rise of Gated Communities', *Housing Studies*, 20(2), pp. 177-186.
- Atkinson, R. and Flint, J. (2004) 'Fortress UK? Gated Communities, the Spatial Revolts of the Elites and Time-Space Trajectories of Segregation', *Housing Studies*, 19(6), pp. 875-892.
- Atkinson, R., Blandy, S., Flint, J., and Lister, D. (2004) 'Gated communities in England', (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).
- Beall, J., Crankshaw, O. and Parnell, S. (2002) *Uniting a divided city: governance and social exclusion in Johannesburg* (London: Earthscan Publications).
- Bladen, E. (2001) 'Fortress fury: Enclosed suburbs attacked', *The Macarthur Chronicle*, 13 March 2001, pp. 1-2.
- Blakely, E. J. and Snyder, M. (1997) *Fortress America: gated communities in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press).
- Blandy, S. (2006) 'Gated communities in England: historical perspectives and current developments', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 15-26.
- Blandy, S., Lister, D., Atkinson, R. and Flint, J. (2003) 'Gated Communities: A Systemic Review of the Research Evidence', Research Paper No. 12, Centre for Neighbourhood Research, Economic and Social Research Council, United Kingdom.
- Blinnikov, M., Shanin, A., Sobolev, N. and Volkova, L. (2006) 'Gated communities of the Moscow green belt: newly segregated landscapes and the suburban Russian environment', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 65-81.
- Burke, M. (2001) 'The Pedestrian Behaviour of Residents in Gated Communities', paper presented at the *Australia: Walking the 21st Century conference*, Perth, February 2001, pp. 139-150.
- Burke, M. and Sebaly, C. (2001) 'Locking in the pedestrian? The privatised streets of gated communities', *World Transport Policy and Practice*, 7(4), pp. 67-74.
- Cadzow, J. (2007) 'Do fence me in', *The Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend Magazine*, 7 May 2007, pp. 33-37.
- Caldeira, T. (1996) 'Fortified enclaves: the new urban segregation', *Public Culture*, 8, pp. 303-328.
- Carvalho, M., Varkki, G. and Anthony, K. H. (1997) 'Residential satisfaction in condomínios exclusivos (gated-guarded neighborhoods) in Brazil', *Environment and Behavior*, 29(6), pp. 734-769.
- Coy, M. and Pohler, M. (2002) 'Gated communities in Latin American megacities: case studies in Brazil and Argentina', *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 29, pp. 355-370.
- Forwood, M. (1999) 'Walls in the suburbs: The development of gated communities within Sydney', Bachelor of Town Planning Thesis, University of New South Wales.
- Frantz, K. (2006) 'Private gated neighbourhoods: A progressive trend in US urban development', in G. Glasze, C. Webster and K. Frantz (Eds.) *Private cities: Global and local perspectives* (London: Routledge) pp. 64-75.
- Glasze, G. (2006) 'Segregation and seclusion: the case of compounds for western expatriates in Saudi Arabia', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 83-88.
- Glasze, G. and Alkhayyal, A. (2002) 'Gated housing estates in the Arab world: case studies in Lebanon and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia', *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 29, pp. 321-336.
- Glasze, G., Webster, C. and Frantz, K. (Eds.) (2006) *Private cities: Global and local perspectives* (London: Routledge).
- Gleeson, B. (2006) *Australia's heartlands: making space for hope in the suburbs* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin).
- Grant, J. (2005) 'Planning Responses to Gated Communities in Canada', *Housing Studies*, 20(2), pp. 273-285.
- Grant, J., Greene, K. and Maxwell, K. (2004) 'The planning and policy implications of gated communities', *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 13(1), pp. 70-88.
- Gwyther, G. (2005) 'Paradise Planned: Community Formation and the Master Planned Estate', *Urban Policy and Research*, 23(1), pp. 57-72.
- Jurgens, U. and Gnad, M. (2002) 'Gated communities in South Africa – experiences from Johannesburg', *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 29, pp. 337-353.

- Leisch, H. (2002) 'Gated communities in Indonesia', *Cities*, 19(5), pp. 341-350.
- Libertun de Duren, N. (2006) 'Planning a la Carte: The Location Patterns of Gated Communities around Buenos Aires in a Decentralized Planning Context', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30(2), pp. 308-327.
- Low, S. (2003) *Behind the Gates: Life, security, and the pursuit of happiness in Fortress America* (New York: Routledge).
- Mackay, H. (2005) 'The Australian paradox: Relaxed, comfortable...and anxious', New Matilda Website: www.newmatilda.com/policyToolkit/default.asp?PTCategoryID=14, (Accessed 18/10/06).
- McKenzie, E. (1994) *Privatopia: homeowner associations and the rise of residential private government* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- McKenzie, E. (2006) 'The dynamics of privatopia: Private residential governance in the USA', in G. Glasze, C. Webster and K. Frantz (Eds.), *Private cities: Global and local perspectives*, (London: Routledge), pp. 9-30.
- Montefiore, I. and Atkins, J. (2006) 'Gated communities', *ABC Great Southern WA radio transcript*, 31 May 2006.
- Neighbourhood Watch Western Australia (2006) 'About us', Website: www.nhw.wa.gov.au/About+NHW/default.aspx, (Accessed 20/10/06).
- Newman, O. (1972) *Defensible Space* (New York: The Macmillan Co).
- Noble, G. (2005) 'The Discomfort of Strangers: Racism, Incivility and Ontological Security in a Relaxed and Comfortable Nation', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 26(1), pp. 107-120.
- Parker, M. (2006) 'A grave new world', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2-3 September 2006, p. 30.
- Petersen, A. (2003) 'Is home where the art is?: reflections on the politics of 'placemaking' in CEAD projects', www.sustainability.murdoch.edu.au/community/su/html/default_placemaking.html, (Accessed 13/10/06).
- Quintal, D. (forthcoming) 'Gated communities in Sydney', Masters of Planning Thesis, University of New South Wales.
- Raposo, R. (2006) 'Gated communities, commodification and aestheticization: The case of the Lisbon metropolitan area', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 43-56
- Roitman, S. (2003) 'Who segregates whom?', paper presented at the *Gated communities: Building Social Division or Safer Communities conference*, Glasgow, 18-19 September 2003, pp. 1-24.
- Roitman, S. (2005) 'Who Segregates Whom? The Analysis of a Gated Community in Mendoza, Argentina', *Housing Studies*, 20(2), pp. 303-321.
- Sandercock, L. (2003) *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel cities of the 21st Century* (London: Continuum).
- Sennett, R. (1974) *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Random House).
- Skenner, J. (2004) 'Place management, community and cultural development', *Australian Planner*, 41(3), pp. 19-22.
- Stoyanov, P. and Frantz, K. (2006) 'Gated communities in Bulgaria: interpreting a new trend in post communist urban development', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 57-63.
- Thuillier, G. (2005) 'Gated Communities in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, Argentina: A challenge for Town Planning', *Housing Studies*, 20(2), pp. 255-271.
- Townshend, I.J. (2006) 'From public neighbourhoods to multi-tier private neighbourhoods: the evolving ecology of neighbourhood privatization in Calgary', *GeoJournal*, 66, pp. 103-120.
- Webster, C. and Glasze, G. (2006) 'Conclusion: Dynamic urban order and the rise of residential clubs', in G. Glasze, C. Webster and K. Frantz (Eds.) *Private cities: Global and local perspectives* (London: Routledge), pp. 222-237.
- Wilson-Doenges, G. (2000) 'An exploration of sense of community and fear of crime in gated communities', *Environment and Behavior*, 32(5), pp. 597-611.