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## Gated 'communities' - their lifestyle versus urban governance

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# **Gated ‘communities’: their lifestyle versus urban governance<sup>1</sup>**

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Abstract

Today there is a widespread fear of crime on a global scale. This can be seen as a response to social inequalities, social polarisation and the fragmentation of cities, which has to a large extent been caused by neo-liberalism. Worldwide, an increasing number of middle and high-income groups have looked to security measures, such as cameras, fences, walls and gates, to separate themselves from other people in the city. These physical measures, in combination with hired guards, replace the ‘older’ social control mechanisms, which are based on social cohesion within the community concerned. One may question whether those living in gated ‘communities’ indeed feel responsible for other urbanites. In other words, will such a hard closure (physically-marked segregation) lead to soft closure, reflected in social-cultural and political segregation. What is the impact of the lifestyle(s) of those living in gated communities on the dynamics of the city, urban identity and urban governance?

## **1. Urban life today**

Cities are increasingly being shaped by global networks of money, goods, people and ideas, which in turn increasingly determine the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics of cities. As a result, national boundaries and nation states have become less relevant to urban life during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, the degree to which a city participates in the global system is what determines the polarisation within and between cities instead (Sassen 2001).

Koopmans (2004), however, begs to differ. He has demonstrated how the role of national borders is still relevant to the way in which national citizenship regimes develop their integration policies for migrants.

Apart from such different insights into the role of the nation state, trends of growing disparities can be traced in many western and developing countries. It is the wealth and income available to the elite, which has led to increasingly polarised cities where an urban identity is increasingly shaped by urban sites of consumption such as entertainment zones, art,

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theatre and theme parks. This does not necessarily mean that there is one lifestyle. On the contrary, a modern-day city may encompass increasingly different lifestyles, which are all mediated, engineered and packaged. The elites and middle classes enjoy the food, clothing and music of the other cultures that are present in the city, but this does not always go together with any meaningful interaction with the people who are members the culture(s) that are being consumed. These different lifestyles appear to be accompanied by widening disparities of income and wealth between cities and citizens. The elite exclude themselves from the ‘undesirables’, ‘deviants’ and the poor by, for example, building gated communities, shopping malls and other structures that are constructed around the semiotics of defence and new technologies (Latham 2003: 1701-1702). In other words,

‘Walls, ramparts, security fences, electric fences, armed guards and defensive urban design are the physically manifestations of this urban restructuring in both Northern and Southern cities. (...) ICTs supports the formation of enclaves through ‘smart’ home technologies, intelligent utility metering, electronic finance and consumption systems, and help to secure their safety through CCTV systems, electronic alarms, movement and face-recognition sensors, electronic gates and electronically tolled ‘smart’ highways that filter out the vehicles of the poor.’ (UNCHS 2001: 11).

The spatial differentiation between rich and poor areas in cities is far from a new phenomenon. A city always encompasses the concentration of differences (Sennett 2005) and inequality, which are reflected in spatial, social, cultural and political patterns of exclusion (Vranken 2005: 255). The urban environment reveals cultural and socio-political expressions of changing lives and everyday practices, which should not be seen as categories, but as characterised processes (Low 1996: 384). In other words, cities enable the links between the unexpected and the unexceptional. Urbanites experiment with how to live together with people of different backgrounds, incomes, wealth and values. This can result in new links, mixes and hybrids, but also in patterns of segregation (Latham 2003: 1719). The phenomenon of gated communities in the urban environment will be discussed in the next section.

## **2. Gated communities**

Since the 1970s, gated communities have emerged in urban as well as suburban areas in the USA and, more recently, in European countries. The first gated communities in the USA were retirement schemes in southern Florida and California; these provided a safe home for those above a certain age. In 2003, more than 32 million Americans (12%) lived in gated communities and this number continues to grow (Aalbers 2003: 4). In European cities, such as Paris and London, one can find privatised parks where only neighbours have a key. There are currently few gated communities in Europe, but their number is on the increase (see e.g. for the Netherlands Aalbers 2003; for the UK Atkinson and Flint 2004). Apart from western countries, gated communities can also be found in the cities of developing and transitional countries. At first sight, examples of gated communities appear similar, but their history and *raison d'être* may vary enormously: 'from racism in South Africa, to property vandalism in Accra, kidnapping and robbery in Mexico City, and car jacking and homicide in Nairobi.' (Low 2001: 46).

The greatest increase in gated communities has in fact taken place in the USA. It is, therefore, interesting to examine why this growth has occurred. The growth of gated communities in the USA is related to the changes that took place within urban America during the late twentieth century. Firstly, the economic restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s led to significant political and social changes as a result of uneven developments, which arose due to the rapid relocation of capital. The rich have most greatly benefited from the increasing importance of neo-liberal values. This has also led to segregation between the have and have-nots. In fact, 'the walls are making visible the system of exclusion that are already there, now constructed and concrete' (Low 2001: 55). Secondly, the growth of gated communities can be seen not only as an expression of the choice for a specific lifestyle, identity and status, but also a response to the (assumed) dangers of city living (e.g. Atkinson and Flint 2003; Blakely and Snyder 1997; Low 2001). Thirdly, the increase in gated communities can be explained by the rising importance of private home ownership, an increasing social-cultural differentiation and the shift of government responsibilities to lower and higher levels of urban governance, as well as to semi-public and private actors and actors from civil society.

Nonetheless, it is still not entirely clear how gated communities should be defined. There are many definitions of gated communities, but one of the most straightforward comes from Aalbers (2003: 3): 'A gated community is (...) a community surrounded by a fence and provided by a gate for entrance.' A gate may be missing, but they can, however, be fenced in

another way, physically (walls, hills, etc.) or non-physically (heavily guarded). Another broader definition, which better incorporates this dimension is:

‘Gated communities are **residential areas** or a development that is **fenced or walled-off** from its surroundings, either **prohibiting or controlling access** to these areas by means of gates or booms. The concept can refer to a residential area with restricted access so that use is restricted (other terms that may also mean gated communities include – security villages, fortress neighbourhoods, exclusive developments and so on)’ (Atkinson and Flint 2003: 3)

Residents of gated communities aim to keep their distance from and be free of intruders. These ‘intruders’ - people with different lifestyle and agendas – are considered obtrusive and troublesome and are thus excluded. ‘Prowlers’ and ‘stalkers’ are the fear-and hate figures (...) and it is freedom from such characters, promised by the heavily armed guards constantly on the beat and a dense network of electronic spy cameras’ (Bauman 2001: 54).

In gated communities, the ‘walls and fences preclude public access to streets, sidewalks, parks, beaches, rivers, trails, playgrounds – all resources that without gates or walls would be open and shared by all citizens of a locality.’ (Blakely and Snyder 1997: 2).

The way in which gated communities manage to remain independent or segregated from the rest of society is not uniform. To understand these differences, one has to think in terms of a continuum. For example, Den Hartog (2004) makes a distinction between gated communities by placing them at the end of two scales, which reflect the degree of independence and accessibility respectively. Accessibility can be seen as continuum from separation towards exclusion and isolation. In this sequence, they reflect an increasing form of non-accessibility. Such a continuum can also help to better understand the broad range of physical constructions that already possess the characteristics of gated communities.

Gated communities also include the concept of ‘community’. They involve a community that encompasses a shared territory (defining the boundaries of the community), shared values (defining identity and commonality), shared public realm (common ground for interaction), shared support structures (mutual aid and association) and shared destiny (mechanism to protect or guide the future) (Blakely and Snyder 1997: 33). These enclaves can be seen as a response to middle and upper-middle class desires for community and intimacy. Moreover, they facilitate avoidance, separation and surveillance (Low 2001: 48).

According to Blakely and Snyder (1997), gated communities theoretically have the potential for the creation of a strong local community. A gated community brings people together on basis of common interests, which might enable and facilitate the formation of a local pseudo-government and mechanisms for direct democracy, participation and communication. However, it is dubious whether one can actually speak of a community. The term ‘community’ is often used as a marketing tool by private developers, who aim to re-establish an idealised small town community with *Gemeinschaft*-like characteristics, where everyone knows and cares about each other. Gated communities offer residents the certainty that neighbours will behave according the prevalent norms and indeed may possibly even have signed contracts that delineate the bounds of acceptable behaviour. Here, one cannot speak of a community with shared values for only the norms are shared. Moreover, the communal part is often substituted by a control mechanism (e.g. Blakely and Snyder 1997; Oude Ophuis 2001).

Table 1 A comparison of differences between gated communities in the USA and Europe

	USA	Europe
Gated communities	Widespread	Not widespread, slowly growing
Welfare state	<i>Liberal welfare state</i> - Limited government responsibility - Relatively Low taxes - Self help - More differentiation and extreme stratification	<i>Social-democratic or conservative welfare state</i> - more government responsibility - higher taxes - restricted self-help - combat stratification
Polarisation/ segregation	High Inequality comes from market	Growing Inequality comes from redistribution and the market
Social mobility	High	Relatively low
Role of (private) property	Free market Focus on home ownership Social housing 2% of housing stock	Free markets and public agencies In the Netherlands 40% social housing
Historical sensibility	<i>Frontier mentality</i> , Innovations to more controlled residential environments	Greater historical sensibility towards space
Typology	1 lifestyle communities 2 elite or prestige communities 3 security zone communities	1 elite style communities 2 recreational communities 3 urban security zones

Source: Blakely and Snyder (1997); Aalbers (2003).

Aalbers (2003) has compared the growth of gated communities in the USA and Europe. He has thus sought explanations for the difference of type and scale of gated communities in the USA and European countries by focusing on the following factors: the kind of welfare state, social mobility, polarisation in society and historical sensibility. It appears that gated communities are more common in countries with a liberal welfare state, such as the USA, where the government largely avoids the provision and financing of collective amenities. In the United States, income differences are relatively large and are generally reflected in greater social tensions and high crime rates. There are, therefore, more gated communities than in the conservative, corporatist or socialist welfare states, which can be found in the European Union (Aalbers 2003: 9).

As far as Europe is concerned, it is uncertain whether the rise of gated communities may be attributed to the declining role of many governments, a declining welfare state, the privatisation of public sector organisations and public space. Nevertheless, urban and regional developments trends originating in the USA, such as sub-urbanisation, sprawl, factory outlet stores and other peripheral large-scale retail establishments, have now reached European countries. In addition, socio-spatial divisions - gated communities and Common Interest Developments (CID) - for the affluent and, on the other hand, the ghetto-like neighbourhoods that first appeared in the USA could later be found in European countries (e.g. Aalbers 2003: 20; Kesteloot 2005: 138; Musterd and Ostendorf 1998; Musterd and Ostendorf 2005: 172-173; UNCHS 2001: 37).

The rise of gated communities as 'good' neighbourhoods in which to settle has also been accompanied by the 'hyperghettoisation' of many black neighbourhoods (Wilson 1997). The residents of gated communities as well as those of the (hyper)ghetto 'are excluded from mainstream social, cultural and economic life – they are walled out literally and metaphorical.' (Aalbers 2003: 8). Even so, there is far less segregation between different income groups in European cities than in American ones (e.g. Aalbers 2003: 8).

Social mobility is valued quite differently in the USA and Europe. In the USA, moving to a better neighbourhood is valued positively. Americans tend to move to a better neighbourhood, when it promises a better value for their property in the future and thus more security for their retirement. If gated communities offer this possibility, or when people believe they will do so, gated communities become a popular place to settle. Moving home is here linked with opportunities for getting a better habitat and future, but in European countries

it is not. Europeans try to adjust their homes to their circumstances and a high grade of social mobility is seen as an outcome of the development of more disadvantaged, unstable and fragmented sections of society (Cameron and Field 2000: 828).

The role of private property is different in the USA and European countries. Until the 1970s, the possession of property was a requirement to be able to vote in local elections in the USA. This made home ownership important, but it is also, just as in many European cities, assumed that home ownership stabilises neighbourhoods. Home ownership is regarded as being ideologically important. It serves as a kind of retirement insurance, but for this purpose the property value should be at least insured. The possession of one's own house is not easy, if possible at all, for the less fortunate. In the USA, the policies of the federal government and private banks have rendered homeownership difficult or even impossible for many Americans because many (mostly black) neighbourhoods have become redlined. This means that people who wish to settle in a owner-occupied house are excluded from mortgages. It is the risk of becoming redlined that makes a community more stable, which would lead to stable or even rising housing values. In the USA, 'good' and 'bad' neighbourhoods differ more than those in Europe. That is why people tend to avoid being stuck in a 'bad' neighbourhood (Aalbers 2003: 7-8).

In the Netherlands, the housing market is currently undergoing the process of privatisation, which has resulted in less social housing, an increasing share of homeownership and trends towards social rental housing estates. This may lead to greater concentrations of the deprived in certain areas. In this regard, economic deprivation can lead to physical deprivation, but also the other way around. This results in further segregation and polarisation (Aalbers 2003: 8; Van Kempen and Priemus 2002). Segregation is also '*the cause of and caused by* the rise of gated communities. By allowing some part of society to exclude itself spatially, social fragmentation processes will begin to show fault lines and social inequality will in effect become social exclusion.' The difference is between those who are excluded and those who have the power to exclude (Aalbers 2003: 15).

The USA and Europe do not share the same historical sensibilities. In the USA, a frontier mentality still dominates. Many European cities encompass historical older sites, which goes together with a greater sensitivity towards space. In historic Europe, systems of walls and class division have already existed for a very long time. These walls were originally instruments of the rich to protect themselves from the local 'poor' dwellers (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Sennett 2005: 121).



Blakely and Snyder (1997) classify gated communities in the USA as lifestyle communities, elite or prestige communities and security zone communities. The lifestyle and elite communities were among the first gated communities in the USA, which were followed by elite or prestige communities and security zone communities.

Firstly, lifestyle communities - such as retirement resorts, golf and leisure communities - guarantee safety and the exclusion of undesirables. Within the walled enclave one can find leisure activities and amenities for the included residents. Security measures are applied to control and to a lesser extent to protect against criminals in the outside world. Such gated communities make it possible to live together with like-minded people, who share common interests. It is a lifestyle, which can be bought.

Secondly, in elite or prestige communities the status aspect is very important. To enable the elite to live according to their status, this kind of gated community offers an environment, where uncertain and disturbing factors are excluded and stability dominates.

Thirdly, in security zone communities, the main driving force behind their establishment and management is the fear of crime and outsiders. Moreover, personal belongings are protected against crime, which gives the inhabitants of such communities some sense of control. Subtypes are the city perch, suburban perch and barricade perch. The barricade perch is not a fully gated community (Blakely and Snyder 1997).

Aalbers (2003) produced a different classification for European countries and the Netherlands in particular; elite lifestyle communities, recreational communities and urban security zones.

Firstly, the elite lifestyle communities can be subdivided in golf communities where one can live (economic elite with a specific lifestyle), country estates (economic capital is required for exclusive environment, small scale) and fortified or castle-like buildings. Elite communities can be found more frequently in Southern Europe than in Northern Europe.

Secondly, recreational communities were originally only targeted at the middle and working class, but nowadays they include all classes. The houses are often designed by the people themselves, the government or architects. These areas are meant for temporarily habitation, but many are inhabited the whole year round. Dutch recreational communities, tend to be inhabited by (former) residents of predominantly white low-income urban neighbourhoods.

The Dutch recreational communities are heavily tied to the structure of the housing markets. The popularity of these gated communities can be seen as an outcome of the friction between demand and supply in the housing market, approved building codes and aesthetic

codes in the regular housing market. In Southern European countries, more recreational communities have been established, where Northern Europeans come to enjoy the sun. These communities are based on elite standards according to Southern standards and middle class standards for those from Northern Europe.

Thirdly, in urban security zones alleyways are shut down and neighbourhood patrols established. The local government is pressurised in to take physical measures to prevent crime, establish rules for effective rubbish disposal and to slow down the traffic in the streets (Aalbers 2003: 10-19).

### **3. Gated communities and their way of life**

In gated communities, similar kinds of people live together. This is a form of voluntary exclusion, similar to the people who withdraw from public institutions such as schools and health services. This differs from the involuntary exclusion of the poor, who are unable to benefit from the opportunities offered by mainstream society (Giddens 1998: 103).

The gates have a double function; they include 'look-alikes' and exclude those who are different. The gates have a function of social inclusion and social exclusion, but living in a gated community differs from being excluded from other sections of society. The excluded have no other choice or lack the means required to be included. In gated communities, the residents have chosen to exclude themselves from other parts of society (Aalbers 2003: 2). In such a way residents are able 'to overlook and neglect unpredictability, immorality and insecurity.' (Bislev 2004: 291). The possibility of encountering a genuine stranger and facing a genuine cultural challenge is highly minimised. Such 'strangers' cannot be removed or escaped completely because they are necessary for the provision of services to the gated communities. However, residents tend to eliminate strangers both physically and culturally as much as possible (Bauman 2001: 57). Although gated communities offer the escape and protection from all that people fear, even the gates can generate an increased feeling of a lack of security. This again demands more protective measures (Low 2001: 55).

Those living in gated communities often are the affluent. The most prominent type of residents are part of an international business and culture industry elite. Their lifestyle appears to be similar all over the globe. They have long working hours and must often regularly relocate. They have a cosmopolitan identity characterised by uniform pastimes and cosmopolitan meeting places, which distinguishes them from the locals (Atkinson and Flint 2003: 11; Bauman 2001: 57). This global elite values togetherness as well as the sameness of casual acquaintances. The established weak ties with people similar to themselves offers the

possibility of unproblematic encounters and leads to the segregation of the successful from rest of society. Members of this elite do not necessarily have a permanent physical or topographical address, but they have an email address or a mobile phone number instead. These globalists are *exterritorial* and only accept 'the inescapable (and occasionally pleasurable) companies of maitres d'hôtels, room-maids and waiters' as being part of their community free zone (Bauman 2001: 54-57).

The world of this global elite is characterised by separate worlds, isolated communities and social islands. Not many make use of local shops or leisure facilities in adjacent neighbourhoods. This can be explained by an analysis of the working patterns of the residents of gated communities. Moreover, relationships with adjacent neighbourhoods are fragile, reflected in low or no visits to local shops and service providers. When services were available on site, it meant that there was even less reason to leave the gated enclave. Their life is cut-off from the wider community. In other words, these global businessmen are segregated in many ways, such as their shopping, leisure, schooling and home life and their daily patterns of movement between these areas. Shopping malls, skywalks and policed pedestrian malls mirror this form of social separation (UNCHS 2001: 37).

'The 'cosmopolitan' lifestyle of the new secessionists is not meant for mass imitation, and the new secessionists is not meant for mass imitation, and the 'cosmopolitans' are not the apostles of a new and better life model and not a avant-garde of an advancing army. What their lifestyle celebrates is the irrelevance of place, a condition most conspicuously beyond the reach of ordinary folks, of the 'natives' tied fast to the ground and (in case they try to disregard the shackles) likely to meet in the 'big wide world out there' sullen and unfriendly immigration officers rather than invitingly hotel receptionists. The message of the 'cosmopolitan' way of being is simple and blunt: it does not matter *where* we are, what matters is that *we* are there.' (Bauman 2001: 56)

It is not only those who belong to the trans-national elite who live in gated communities. Gated communities also serve the middle classes who also have a more or less privatised lifestyle. Their way of life can be reflected in the way in which they approach neighbours. Many residents of gated communities go to work and return home in the evenings. This does not offer much time to interact with neighbours or those living nearby in the same the enclave. When services are available inside the enclave, residents tend to stay away from adjacent areas. Their repeated daily patterns of movements for work, shopping,

leisure, schooling and home life are separated from the wider community (Atkinson and Flint 2003: 11-12). Moreover, it is primarily women who stay within the enclave, because they often do not have paid employment. Low (2001: 55) describes this as a new pattern of gendering space.

In order to link the gated enclave with spaces for work, shopping, leisure, schooling and home life, residents are enormously dependent on their cars. In this respect, Atkinson and Flint (2003: 13) refer to bubbling, which is 'the orchestrated management of perceived risk spaces and social contact in moving around the public realm.' Bubbling, in combination with a great wealth and surveillance and transportation technologies facilitates 'almost withdrawal from the public sphere regardless of residential location' (Atkinson and Flint 2003: 13).

The description above does not fit all residents of gated communities. Oude Ophuis (2001) overcomes this problem by distinguishing types of residents on basis of their social relations in three gated neighbourhoods in Almere, a newly constructed Dutch city: nostalgics, idealists, rationalists and indifferent. Firstly, the nostalgics are those who strive for a real community on basis how things used to be. They try to establish a *Gemeinschaft*-like community, which is only in an imaginary state. For example, mutual help among neighbours is expected. Idealists, the second type, strive for a real community on basis of functional social ties (e.g. taking care of the neighbours plants or pets and keeping reserve keys) and affective social ties (e.g. friends and acquaintances). Thirdly, the rationalists feel a moral responsibility for the collective space, but have chosen a gated neighbourhood due to its prestige and privacy. They do not mind paying for services and amenities as long as they do not have to do too much for the collective. Their aim is to organise privacy collectively. The last group encompasses the indifferent, who are disinterested in the public space and any sense of community. They often impose their free-rider behaviour on other groups and some even refuse to pay for collective services and amenities.

To understand the changing lifestyle of urbanites, Sennett links the dynamics of many contemporary cities with the rise of post-Fordism, which is characterised by transformation in the production processes and its related institutions and bureaucracies. This enables a flexible use of people's labour. The transformation can be seen as a result of the revolt against Fordism, including the Weberian triangle of the rational machine bureaucracy with top-down command and control and fixed function work. Organisations become delayed and specific tasks and flexible operational teams compete with each other within the same organisation. In this way, corporations become more flexible, which enables them to respond quickly to changing circumstances both in the market and within the organisation within which they are

employed. These developments are accompanied by the decreasing role of the state and an increasing one for the market (Kesteloot 2005: 130-131; Sennett 2005: 113-115).

The shift from Fordism to post-Fordism in the workplace has also had an impact on urban citizens. Both flexible work and being temporarily employed in an organisation do not offer possibilities of developing trust relations. Trust only develops when people interact and know each other for a longer period. It is the short-term task of working in changing teams, which work under great pressure and encourage people to avoid becoming too greatly involved. Why should they invest in developing trust relations, because they will soon be leaving? This lack of engagement of workers in flexible industries and businesses goes in hand in hand with a low level of organisation among labourers and membership of labour unions (Sennett 2005: 115-116). It has also an impact on the nature of the city. When the organisational and bureaucratic forms in society change, the experience of time and space changes also. These changes are ‘expressed in geographical impermanence, the effects of impermanence on standardization in the public realm, and conflicts between work and family, office and home.’ (Sennett 2005: 118).

Flexibility and indifference among urbanites becomes manifest in three ways. Firstly, a physical attachment to the city has diminished. The limited availability of permanent work forces many urbanites to look for flexible work elsewhere, which could be even in other cities. This was already common for high-ranking workers. Previously, these executives moved around as much as today, but it was in a quite different way. They remained within the groove of a company, which defined their “place” and the nature of their lives independent of where it was on the globe. Today, elite zones have gentrified; a development that has gone hand in hand with the rise of sleek restaurants and specialised services. These elite zones have substituted the company as the anchor and the new elite has become far more devoted to their lifestyle(s) than their jobs (Sennett 2005: 116).

Secondly, the urban environment standardises, which is reflected in, for instance, the standardisation of public consumption. Across the whole world, one can find shops that are selling exactly the same kind of stuff in the same kind of places (Sennett 2005: 116-117). Gentrification has become more or less standardised, which indicates that urban areas often refrain from setting alterity stimuli. ‘No longer is the urban *flâneur* someone who can discover – at least in the new public realm – the strange, the unexpected, or the arousing. (...) Equally, the accumulation of shared history (and so of collective memory) diminishes in these neutral public spaces.’ (Sennett 2005: 117).

Thirdly, the relations between the family and urban work have changed. Flexible work, often accompanied with high levels of pressure, tends to disrupt family life. Children are faced with latchkey childhoods. The family, as well as work, demands a lot of people. In order to cope with these demands, many withdraw from the civic realm (Sennett 2005: 118).

The promise of community life is a good marketing tool, but many inhabitants of gated communities do not specifically choose a community life. In gated enclaves where a transnational elite is settled, they tend to live in a kind of bubble or community-free zone. Here, residents are obliged to follow strict rules and regulations on what to and what not to do, which demands conformity (Bauman 2001: 57).

For residents in gated communities, membership of a homeowner association is compulsory. They are required to pay a monthly fee and must obey to the rules of these associations. Their boards behave like private residential governments and employ services, which normally belong to the local government or province (e.g. 'police protection, waste collection, street maintenance, snow removal, landscaping and lighting'). Restrictions concerning property and codes of conduct are often rigid and even repressive. When these rules are transgressed, people are fined and liens may even be attached to their house. The rules can go so far that the daily lives of gated enclaves will to a large extent be regulated. Examples of such rules in American gated communities are

- spouses were banned below a certain age, pets above a certain weight or children
- a grandmother was fined for kissing a friend goodbye at her front door
- a family was prohibited from using their back door because they had to pass an unsightly path
- children were forbidden to play with metal tools, because only wooden ones were allowed
- residents were fined for displaying election signs (overruled by the Supreme Court)

To control such rules, measures can be taken, which may conflict with notions of democratic society, as is described below.

'Appeals are heard by boards whose members may be the very same people who report the alleged violations; a blending of prosecutor and judge unacceptable in democratic society. Although the US constitution protects individuals against state action, the court views homeowner associations as voluntary, private organizations. In this vacuum, they seek to eradicate any behaviour that might conceivably pose a threat to property values, and they have become regulatory nightmares.' (UNCHS 2001: 37).

Residents of gated communities appear to adapt the rules and do not choose to move (cf. Aalbers 2003: 19). Coercion has supplemented social control mechanism to a very large degree or even completely. This development questions whether the communitarian ideal of local interaction and mutual help with like-minded residents is available at all (Atkinson and Flint 2003: 11-12).

When people possess sufficient funds to be able to pay for a habitat where they can keep 'their distance from the 'messy intimacy' of ordinary city life', this is only a community in name (Bauman 2001: 54). In such settlements, strong ties among residents are seldom developed. Residents of gated enclaves mainly employ what Granovetter (1973) has called 'weak ties', because they provide them indirect access to important social goods (labour, income and education).

Nevertheless, there still appears to be a sense of belonging to or identification with the gated community. Mutual relations linked with a specific identity in a social-cultural setting establish a sense of 'community' in combination with physical measures, which lead to borders between us and they. Residents identify themselves with a social form, which is influenced by internal and external forces. Here, inclusion of the like-minded goes together with the exclusion of others. In other words, '[e]xclusion and cohesion are not opposite but complementary realities' (Vranken 2005: 261). In this respect, Blakely and Snyder (1997: 153) have illustrated how gated communities tend to be racially exclusive in the American context. Having gained some insight in the lifestyle of residents in gated enclaves, the focus will now shift to the consequences of this lifestyle for the dynamics of cities and their urban governance.

#### **4. Sustainability versus urban segregation**

The creation of a sustainable city is a complex phenomenon. The architects of cities did far more than just representing

'the existing economic and political conditions of their times. They sought to interpret and so to transmute the material conditions of the political economy through the expressive medium of walls and windows, volumes and perspectives – an art that concentrates on details, compounded specific discoveries about space into an urban whole.' (Sennett 2005: 121).

A city, just like a society, not only requires diversity to function properly, but also some cohesion. When urbanites are bound together through networks, social, cultural and economic capital are fostered in their neighbourhood and/or city. Networks bring people together with a common objective, such as living in a sustainable safe city (Vranken 2005: 272), where the joint use of public space plays an important role. However, the deterioration of the urban public sphere of today is rooted in the aim for multiple encounters to be limited, which is based on the fear of desirable and undesirable confrontations and unexpected confrontations, a lack of order, violence and criminality (Brunt 1996: 119-120). These developments may lead to segregation between different income groups. Those who can afford to will withdraw from society by living in gated communities and the experience the related bubbling with respect to specific institutions, shops, workplaces, schools and entertainment areas. In this way, they secede from public contact and exclude others from their socio-economic privileges (e.g. Atkinson and Flint 2003: 15; Blakely and Snyder 1997: 3). Many expressions of individualisation of urban life, consumers of goods (shopping malls), services (cultural events) overtake “citizens” as the main users of the city (Vranken 2005: 256-257). In other words, public space is degraded because an increasing number of people consider its use to be purely instrumental. Moreover, those who are able to pay for alternatives may even refrain from this instrumental use altogether. These single-minded spaces lack value of their own and tend to deteriorate as a result of technological advances, fashion changes and the exodus of the affluent. These characteristics differ from the open-minded space, which enabled encounters that can lead to mutual respect, political solidarity and civil discourse. However, once people become more privileged, they tend to move from place to place more quickly and, when possible, from door to door. As a consequence, less time is spent in the public space (Walzer 1995: 324-325).

The declining role of the state as regards having a say with respect to the use of public spaces goes together with the shift from the delivery of welfare to the delivery of services. Apart from the state, development roles for cities are also ascribed to private sector enterprises, non-governmental organisations, individuals and organised persons in civil society. These actors are expected to play a role alone or in a specific combination in the playing field of urban governance. Urban governance encompasses a ‘complex set of values, norms, processes and institutions by which cities are managed. Good governance works towards making cities more efficient, equitable, safer and sustainable’ (Taylor 1999: 1). At the roots of urban governance is the notion of New Public Management. According to this concept, the role of the state has changed from being a provider of welfare to a provider of



services. Furthermore, the state should also aim to satisfy its customers. New Public Management should lead to a public sector, which listens to its citizens and takes their views seriously. In addition, the state has to reach its fixed goals efficiently with as few resources as possible. For this purpose, a balanced cost-benefit analysis is required. Finally, to facilitate cooperation among the stakeholders, a flexible autonomous organisational structure in combination with indirect modes of government, decentralisation and governance through networks is required (Bislev 2004: 286-287). In fact, urban governance involves participatory decision making, co-production and co-management in which actors, such as the state, local governments, economic and social actors, community-based organisations, and the media, take part (Environment & Urbanization 2000; Taylor 1999: 1).

In urban governance, many stakeholders, can be involved in changing configurations. This leads to broad ranges of customs and private processes, which are not imposed by a single state authority. In other words, do-it-yourself governance contributes to polycentric law (Johnson 1999: 12), where in name of security, many exceptions can be made to general norms for ethics and politics (Bislev 2004). However, little attention is paid to the risks of contested authority and dominance by some sections of society who try to adjust the governance to their own interests (e.g. Pugh 1997: ix-xi). Participation of citizens is encouraged, but this can also lead to segregation. People tend to move into the private sphere to escape economic and political pressures. It is a challenge within the framework of urban governance to create ‘complexity and mutual attachment in a city that tends to difference rather than alterity, a city in which people withdraw behind the walls of difference.’ (Sennett 2005: 121). Here, it is often assumed that citizen participation is ‘cost effective: with participation, local people do more; projects cost less; and achievements are more sustainable.’ (Chambers 1998: xiii-xiv). Such employment of individual initiatives is very much part of the so-called do-it-yourself attitude. Gated communities provide a good example of do-it-yourself governance, as illustrated below

‘Citizens seek the security of gated communities to escape crime and urban decay; in these communities they choose self-governance as an alternative to pressuring government bureaucrats and politicians to improve declining public infrastructure.’ (Johnson 1999: 12)

On the policy level, there is a growing political awareness that the exclusion of specific groups from society harms ‘social cohesion, economic performance, and the

democratic legitimacy of many cities.’ Social and spatial disparities in a city are reflected in, for example, social unrest and occasional rioting (Vranken 2005: 255). However, social cohesion is required for the reproduction (‘sustainability’) of any urban system, including the neighbourhood (Vranken 2005: 260).

In the contemporary city, the influence of organic solidarity is huge and is also expected to rise. However, organic solidarity does not hold society together. For this purpose, top-down initiatives are employed such as social security, the redistribution of increased welfare or guarantee of minimum living standards. This seems paradoxical.. The role of the state declines, while today there is a ‘growing call for more state intervention for non-material matters such as public safety or the safeguarding of central values. This can take place by protective measures (social protection, social services) and repressive ones (policing through social and physical control systems)’ (Vranken 2005: 258-259).

The degree of exclusion and segregation differs among cities. This depends on the income levels and income distribution within the city, but also the type of welfare state, including the housing and spatial policies (e.g. Musterd and Ostendorf 1998). There is an inherent spatial dimension in many forms of social exclusion. The costs of segregation are the highest for the poorer sections of society, with the danger of establishing countercultures such a culture of poverty (see, for example, Wilson 1997). The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion will be dealt with below.

‘Increased social inequality and social division will result in social inclusion of one part of society and social exclusion of another part. The excluded will lose the opportunities, means, and finally the ability to participate in society, which will be expressed by a lack of labor market participation, moderate school participation, a weak position in the housing market, low or extreme-wing political participation, and few signs of socio-cultural integration. The divisions will be reflected in spatial patterns.’ (Musterd and Ostendorf 2005: 172-173).

Initiatives are taken to counteract spatial segregation, but these initiatives focus mainly on low-income neighbourhoods. Here, it is expected that the poorer sections of society will benefit from socially mixing with the middle classes. Urban policies tend to focus on creating sustainability through promoting social cohesion, cultural creativity and economic dynamism at city level. Moreover, the creation of a social mix at the neighbourhood level or public spaces and environments could enable social contact, mutual tolerance and political

engagement (e.g. Atkinson and Flint 2003: 14; Vranken 2005: 255). However, the picture becomes very different when it concerns the elite, which seems to exclude itself from society.

Gated communities as well as urban policy promote the city as a place for the middle classes to live. However, residents of gated enclaves refrain from using public spaces and unsafe or violent streets. In this way, they became private citizens, but citizenship also implies public participation. However, the economic elite tends to avoid the public realm. They want to enjoy the benefits of the city, but to avoid taking any responsibility for it (Sennett 2005: 118-119). This corresponds with the suburban population, which often consumes the pleasurable aspects of the city without paying for it sufficiently, if at all (cf. Martinotti 2005). Giddens (1996) uses the term 'disembedding' as a trait of such radical modernity to describe the phenomenon whereby an economic elite operates in the city and creates a regime of power without responsibility thus avoiding the urban political realm. Disembedding is 'the "lifting out" of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space. In this regard, many urbanites lose full control over own initiatives and actions.

The segregation and fragmentation in the city damages mutual solidarity and social cohesion. Many elements of a *Gemeinschaft*-like society collapse and disappear: such as common value patterns, traditional socialising institutions and mechanisms of social control (cultural) and neighbourhood and traditional social classes (structural). Neighbourhoods have been ascribed the role of integrators and their disappearance is harmful to social cohesion. The reference group theory already taught us that 'people do not only integrate into society as individuals but also through the smaller collectives they participate in.' (Vranken 2005 257).

'Love of the ghetto, especially the middle-class ghetto, denies the person a chance to enrich his perceptions, his experience, and learn that most valuable of all human lessons, the ability to call the established conditions of his life into question.' (Sennett 1995: 227)

The crucial question is whether an increasing fragmentation hinders social cohesion and solidarity, or would it enable the identification with more 'modern' levels of social life such as the city and the nation state (Vranken 2005: 257).

In contrast to growing investments in enclaves for the rich, less finance is channelled to the poorer areas of cities in the North, such as Afro-American and blue collar neighbourhoods in the USA. They have to face low or even underinvestment by infrastructure

providers and a low quality of services such as communication facilities, formal financial, insurance and retailing services (UNCHS 2001: 10).

Responsibilities related to citizenship are threatened by different factors. Firstly, the transnational elite in particular, but also probably a growing number of the urban middle class, who must cope with the conflicting demands of family and work. Secondly, this elite is increasingly absent from civic enterprises such as hospital, libraries, universities and schools. Thirdly, these people are involved in the global economy and are not rooted in a particular cities. They tend to maintain their life in bubbles, which can be found in global cities. This isolation renders them independent of the dynamic and control mechanisms in the cities. Fourthly, civic indifference can also be found at the top of global corporations. These corporations take little civic responsibility for their urban environment. This is strengthened by their threat of absence and departure, which makes this avoidance of responsibility even easier. Cities face difficulties in tapping resources from these corporations, because they lack political mechanisms to can encourage or force corporations to contribute to the privileges that they enjoy in there. ‘[T]he dialectics of flexibility and indifference pose three new dilemmas for cities; a dilemma of citizenship; of arousal in the public realm, because the impermanence/ standardization connection leaves people indifferent to public places, and, finally, the dilemma of sheer, durable attachment to the city.’ (Sennett 2005: 119-120).

The growth of gated communities is accompanied by the danger that their residents will have a declining sense of civil responsibility to larger society. They have established their own homeowner associations and have organised and paid for their own services themselves. There are even examples of residents of such communities who have organised themselves to request tax refunds from the local and state government (UNCHS 2001: 37).

What could be the way out? Sennett (2005: 121) proposes the repair of ‘the collectivity of space, while Vranken (2005: 259-261) focuses on the development of new kinds of ‘mechanic’ solidarity as being supplementary to ‘organic’ solidarity. Although, there is a growing demand for top-down initiatives to create cultural links between networks with declining grassroots solidarity, informal exchange and mutual trust, gated communities escape the central planning ‘radars’ that aim to create sustainable, integrated and diverse communities (for the UK see Atkinson and Flint 2003: 14).

## **Conclusions**

Stakeholders from the public and private sector and civil society are expected to cooperate under the umbrella of urban governance. Citizens are encouraged to employ their own

initiatives. This is exactly what residents in gated communities do. They can afford to separate themselves from the outside world by means of a hard enclosure. Within their own enclave these residents tend to live in a bubble with its own system of governance, which enables them to escape the 'unsafe' external world. Once these upper and middle class residents are 'fenced' in against insecurity, their sense of a lack of safety tends to grow. These residents are caught in a paradox between individualism and criminality. Intensifying feelings of insecurity and lack of safety helps the private sector by creating a market for security technology and guards.

The side effect of this hard closure in gated communities is that the residents tend to become socio-culturally segregated. They miss the contact and interaction between those who are different, which is requisite for a sustainable cosmopolitan environment. An isolated identity will be formed, which may conflict with the other urban cosmopolitan identities. The world outside the gated enclave is perceived as alien, unpredictable and considered unsafe.

As the number of residents in gated communities grows, there will be an increasing chance that urban policymakers and urban government bureaucrats will also come to live in such enclaves. When they lack insight into urban dynamics where different race and income groups are involved, it will strengthen their belief in their own middle and higher-class standards. It is probable that if these standards are incorporated into the urban policies, they will be juxtaposed with the dynamics of the other sections of society, such as low-income and ethnic groups. Within the framework of urban governance, the do-it yourself attitude (fencing, self-governance) fits well, but carries the danger of segregating cities. In addition, the powerful stakeholders tend to have the greatest influence in the arena of urban governance. One may question whether this will indeed lead to a democratic society, where all urban citizens can find their way and have their voices heard.

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