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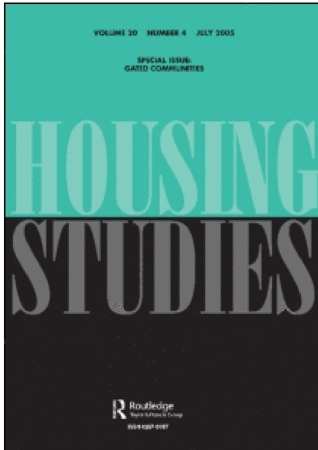

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Gated Communities as Club Goods: Segregation or Social Cohesion?

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ABSTRACT *Gated communities are normally presented in highly negative terms, based on the common assumption that they are a major factor in the intensification of social segregation. In contrast to received wisdom, this paper argues that the theory of club goods can be used to understand gating as a response to both real and perceived issues of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It is suggested that gating can help to foster social cohesion in an area or neighbourhood by involving a wide spectrum of communities and income groups to create management vehicles which can: reduce crime, protect parked vehicles, increase safety and enhance the local environment by preventing unsolicited entry. Through two case studies, the paper explores how communities struggling with neighbourhood problems including crime are using gating as a way of improving their environment rather than abandoning poorer areas of the city to find a safer home in more residentially segregated affluent neighbourhoods. If housing and planning policy makers are to take seriously a commitment to resident democracy and local participation, such concerns should not be dismissed out of hand as examples of 'isolationism' or 'particularistic consumerist interests'.*

KEY WORDS: Gated communities, residential segregation, club goods

Introduction

The issue of gated communities raises important questions about the future forms of urban development. In much of the academic literature the proliferation of gating is treated as an indicator of increasing levels of social division; creating new barriers between rich and poor, and introducing 'cities of walls' (Brunn *et al.*, 2003; Caldeira, 2000; Sandercock, 2002; Scott, 2002). The standard perception of gated communities is that design and technological innovations serve to increase privatism and destroy traditional community ties of neighbourliness, community and cohesion (Gottdiener & Hutchison, 2000).

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The notion that gating exclusively benefits an elitist minority forms a deep-rooted belief in much of the literature. For example, Joseph Rykwert (2002) describes some of the recent additions to the Manhattan skyline (such as the Trump World Tower) as "vertical gated communities" offering "a commanding residence for the privileged few" (p. 218).

What is a gated community? An influential publication offers the following definition:

> Residential areas with restricted access in which normally public spaces are privatised. They are security developments with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration by non-residents. (Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p. 2)

Gating therefore involve an inevitable form of privacy and exclusivity. Moreover, the stereotypical view of gated communities is that they embody a form of dystopian living, behind which community ties are non-existent with neighbours discouraged from developing social interactions. In particular, they are seen to encourage affluent groups to increase their social distance from what is perceived as the 'other'. A common representation of gating is derived from Davis' (1990) *City of Quartz*, where the concept of 'Fortress America' encapsulates an increasing polarisation between rich and poor in cities such as Los Angeles. Davis contends that "we live in 'fortress cities' brutally divided between 'fortified cells' of affluent society and 'places of terror' where the police battle the criminalised poor" (p. 224). Davis' thesis is deliberately polemical, but nevertheless highly influential in constructing a negative image of the gated society. Hence:

> A pliant city government ... has collaborated in the massive privatisation of public space and the subsidisation of new, racist enclaves (benignly described as 'urban villages') ... a triumphalist gloss ... is laid over the brutalisation of inner-city neighbourhoods. (p. 227)

Although rarely described in such stark dichotomies—Davis refers, for example, to 'spatial apartheid' and a 'Berlin wall' separating 'publicly subsidised luxury' from a 'lifeworld' 'reclaimed by immigrants' (p. 230)—these fears have permeated the policies of inner-city local planning authorities. Central and local governments in the UK have therefore attempted to prevent a replication of the spatial polarisation of North American inner cities, by discouraging gated developments, restricting planning approval and encouraging neighbourhood renewal schemes based on more 'traditional' design layouts (ODPM, 2000).

Others argue that gating is a feature of the growth of 'global city regions' and the intensification of inequality and proximity which has accompanied urban growth and globalisation of the 'free market':

> Violence, or the fear of it, becomes a central preoccupation of the upper classes, pushing them towards forms of fortress settlement, gated high-rise communities surrounded by walls and guarded entries. (Scott, 2002, p. 25)

Gated communities are thus seen as a feature of growing importance in the development of residential segregation taking place within cities. Some writers suggest that gating is an overreaction to the real level of crime in an area compared to the perceived level of crime

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that results from local media coverage of crime incidents in the USA. This argument is part of the 'culture of fear' thesis put forward by Glassner (1999) suggesting that fear of crime is just one of a number of 'panics' (that also include deadly diseases, teenage lone mothers and African American males) propagated by local television news and current affairs programmes. An over-emphasis on individual cases results in unnecessary risk reduction responses to these events. Glassner argues that the underlying drives of many of the current problems of American cities, such as poverty and income inequality are neglected: "One of the paradoxes of a culture of fear is that serious problems remain widely ignored even though they give rise to precisely the dangers that the populace most abhors" (p. xviii).

The 'culture of fear' is explained as the result of people embracing 'improbable pronouncements' (his example being the response of many Americans to the broadcast of Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* in 1938). Glassner suggests that acceptance of these 'pronouncements' is the result of how they are delivered by 'professional narrators' and presented in news and current affairs programmes as 'statements of alarm', "poignant anecdotes in place of scientific evidence, the christening of isolated incidents as trends, depictions of entire categories of people as innately dangerous" (p. 208).

Many approaches to the phenomenon of gating suggest that it is a response to increasing social inequalities, status-seeking behaviour, and real or perceived fear of crime (Lindstrom & Bartling, 2003). References to the 'totalitarian semiotics' (Davis, 1990, p. 231) of urban design mark a deliberate attempt to deny the validity of certain forms of development per se. Consequently, rather than allowing local preferences to shape decision making (as is claimed by many such critics), such analyses presume that gating by definition is a form of design that should be rejected out of hand. Thus, heterogeneity is acceptable as long as it does not result in a denial of public space. Is this commitment to the public realm to be defended at all costs?

Club Goods and Gated Communities

An alternative approach to sociological and anthropological analyses of gated communities can be found in the economic literature on clubs. The notion of a 'club good' originates in the work of Buchanan (1965), who uses it to examine jointly consumed and excludable services. Buchanan argued that there is a type of good (the club good), which like private goods had excludable benefits but was allocated through groups. This allowed the club members the enjoyment of the benefit but was unlike the private good which is limited to the individual or shared by all in the case of the public good. The club good is neither a 'private' nor 'public' good in the traditional economic sense. Rather, it constitutes a hybrid in which a self-selecting community shares a range of benefits and reduces the costs of public good 'congestion' by the use of its pricing and membership requirements. Buchanan introduced the concept of a continuum of ownership and consumption possibilities which created a bridge between the purely public and the purely private goods that had formerly been the focus of discussion in the economic literature (see Samuelson, 1954; Tiebout, 1956).

Gated communities can be analysed in economic terms as a form of holding property rights developed through collective action of individuals for individual and mutual benefits. This makes gated communities different from private goods, such as a single dwelling owned by a person, and public goods, such as a public park, because while there

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is sharing of benefits (which is the definition of a public good) there is also ‘excludability’ of benefits (the definition of a private good). The hybrid quality of this good sharing has led to the concept of club economics being used to explain this type of commodity.

Chris Webster has extended the concept of club goods to the analysis of gated communities (2001, 2002). Webster was the first to point out that the Garden City plans of Ebenezer Howard were in reality plans to develop a private city as a club good (2001). The reconceptualisation of this concept of collective action to secure club goods was further developed and applied to gated communities across a range of different societies (Webster & Wu, 2001; Webster & Wai-Chung Lai, 2003). This work focuses on the management of property rights and uses the concept of ‘proprietary communities’ to delineate the nature of the gated community. The gated community development thus provides desired goods and services such as “security zones, lifestyle, retirement and prestigious communities” (Blakely & Snyder, 1997, pp. 38–45). In club economic terms gated communities are merely a recent example of the growth of privately owned collective goods such as shopping malls, business parks, timeshare apartments, golf and squash clubs.

Developing Webster’s argument, it is suggested that households are willing to purchase different forms of rights in securing their accommodation and communal service requirements. At the start of the 20th century, most households exercised rights associated with renting or long leasing a part of a property. During the second half of the 20th century, the trend was for more and more households to purchase the rights associated with the ownership of freeholds and entire properties. By the 21st century, we are witnessing the growth of gated communities because the additional rights and obligations of this desired and scarce good are now being priced competitively for more households. When purchased, these can enhance the traditional benefits associated with freehold or leasehold occupation. Therefore, gated communities offer a range of scarce goods, such as secure and guaranteed parking, enhanced security, common standards for property appearance and rules governing the use of managed communal areas.

Furthermore, whilst formerly associated with elite groups who could afford the luxury of these kinds of purchases, rising real incomes and the comparative fall in security and monitoring costs are bringing these goods within the budgets of middle-income households. In contrast to much academic commentary, recent research from the USA by Sanchez & Lang (2002) suggests that the view of gated communities as the preserve of the white high-income homeowner is exaggerated. Their analysis of the 2000 census (which included for the first time questions on gated communities) identified significant numbers of poorer white and ethnic minority renters who live in gated communities. They conclude that gating not only functions as a status symbol for the better off homeowners, but also provides a response to fear of crime and protection for lower-income renters.

In addition to its physical and environmental attributes, private communal areas, walls, gates and security patrols, the gated community constitutes a ‘territorial organisation’ of the community members’ property rights (Glasze, 2003; McKenzie, 1994). These can include homeowners associations (HOAs) or Common Interest Housing Developments (CIDs) (McKenzie, 2003). In principle, these organisations provide a vehicle of representative government in the management of community interests. Both Glasze and McKenzie have questioned how democratic and representative such associations are in practice. However, the additional merit good of being able to directly influence the management of a community is one of the key objectives of the UK government’s

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neighbourhood regeneration policy (DETR, 1998). Furthermore, the concept of choice has become an increasingly important aspect of housing service delivery (ODPM, 2000).

Whilst there are significant differences between the US and UK environments, a central preoccupation of policy debate has been a focus upon housing design, which has been long recognised as having a huge impact on the way in which public spaces are used and perceived. Newman (1972) and Coleman (1985) advocated 'territorialism' and making the public realm 'more defensible' in the interest of safety, long before gated communities became an issue of public policy in the UK. A primary motivating factor in the growth of the 'gated' community and the 'alley-gating' phenomenon in the UK, as in most other countries, has been the rise in both public concern and government concern about crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour (Garland, 2001). Some people, for example vagrants, drug users and gangs of young people are perceived as causing conflict within the public realm and often attempts are made to 'design them out' through the use of gates, CCTV cameras and other physical barriers (Raco, 2003). Often, however, this can also have the effect of closing off the space to the general public.

Other concerns linked to access to parking spaces in London and protection of vehicles have promoted a significant growth in gated developments. These concerns have also occurred at an important time in the development and falling costs of some types of security devices and their incorporation in the design of buildings. The gated option for individuals, property developers and social landlords is now cheaper and more feasible than ever before.

This issue is raised by the current alley gating programmes which have been developed using regeneration funding in areas as far apart as Manchester, Liverpool and Watford. Because of the evident support it has generated among local residents in poorer neighbourhoods (see Landman, 2003; Mumford & Power, 2002) the policy is currently to encourage alley gating. Thus, in July 2003, the government announced that local authorities would have the power to close rights of way in certain blighted areas in order to reduce the opportunity for criminal activity (DEFRA, 2003). While this may reduce burglar access to properties inside these gates, in many cases it will also prevent the continued use of these alleyways as safe pedestrian routes to local services.

Thus, while government policy rejects the gating of streets and the creation of gated communities (ODPM, 2000) it supports the gating of alleys (small streets) and the creation of gated areas, in many cases removing traditional rights of way, which planners argue should be one of the reasons to reject the creation of gated communities. This marks a contrast with other areas of government policy to open up rights, for example, in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).

This paradox is also reflected in other discussions on gated communities (for example RICS, 2002). The RICS report both expressed concern at the problem of social segregation and lack of planned growth of gated communities and concluded: "Policies to create greater balance should be directed towards new development, which increasingly includes gated communities, as well as the regeneration of blighted areas" (p. 6).

If security, exclusive use of communal services, the managed prevention of unsolicited calling and guaranteed parking are valued by community members, the key issue raised by gated communities is who can enjoy these benefits and are some households socially excluded from these benefits? This is not a new argument; it arose at the beginning of the 20th century when governments commenced providing rented housing as a merit good at below market price to selected households. The debate evolved in the 1980s to encompass

the additional promotion of owner occupation via the Right to Buy provisions of the 1980 Housing Act and the emergence of shared ownership and other mechanisms for promoting ownership among lower-income households.

The question today is whether or not gated communities can be regarded as a merit good with public subsidy offered to enhance the provision and enjoyment of that good and service. This argument is not hypothetical because in the UK the state subsidises gated and managed sheltered accommodation for older people as well as alley gating in areas of high crime.

Residential Segregation and Gated Communities in a UK Context

Social relations and social interactions within public housing space are fundamentally determined by the people who live there alongside a wider process of market and social housing allocation. In this respect, the locality and nature of housing is a major determinant of how connections between individuals and communities are formed and maintained. It is generally accepted that the distribution of residential units and their occupants is not a consequence of random events but the product of complex social, economic and political processes. One of the most significant results of these processes is that housing consumption patterns can result in segregated areas otherwise known as 'enclaves' (suggesting choice) or 'ghettos' (suggesting constraint).

Part of the difficulty is that segregation is a highly loaded term. As Smith (1989) acknowledges, "Segregation in its broadest sense refers to the organisation of all social life. It has to do with the conditions of interaction or avoidance, the construction of group identity and the structuring of social, economic and political life" (p. 14). Any process that increases residential segregation is therefore viewed with outright hostility by most commentators, following the Chicago School of spatial sociology, whereby positive behaviour and attitudes are generated by removing distance and increasing interaction (Miller & Brewer, 1984; Smith, 1989, p. 14).

The economic theory of 'collective action' and 'club goods' has also been applied to the concept of social exclusion in the work of Jordan (1996). The group and its selective membership criteria promote acting in a way not detrimental to the group interest, thus maximising the benefits to members while reducing or preventing benefits accruing to non-group members. Jordan provides the example of the UK National Health Service, which cannot provide customer services that higher-income groups seek and who therefore join health insurance schemes that screen out those with poor risk from membership, thus intensifying social exclusion in terms of access to health care linked to income and health inequalities. If applied to gated communities, Jordan's argument would view these as another type of club that creates a new form of spatial social exclusion.

However, as housing has never been viewed as a good to be supplied free at the point of access (in the same way as the NHS), it can be argued that the gated community functions as a merit good in which choice can play a crucial role; thus public subsidy can be applied to increase safety and security in regeneration areas.

There is a lack of empirical research examining the consequences of gated developments within a UK context. Far greater evidence exists on the impact of 'gated' communities within the US literature (for example, Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003). A systematic review of literature in the UK found little discussion of the implications of having developments where residents segregate themselves from the perceived threats of

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the outside world (Blandy *et al.*, 2003). Other studies have been commissioned which have argued that the growth of gating is a serious threat to community cohesion and urban sustainability through spatial and temporal segregation, in addition to conflicting with English urban cultural traditions (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003, p. 5). Whilst there is little specific guidance on gated developments, government policy places strong emphasis on social cohesion achieved through interaction and contact between different social and cultural groups (Home Office, 2001; ODPM, 2000). The general assumption appears to be that gated developments detract from these objectives.

Methodology

The research conducted for this paper consisted of case studies of two gated developments. The aim of the research was to understand how gated developments were perceived by residents in different environments and to provide qualitative empirical evidence about the impact of gated communities upon distinctive urban environments. This study originated in a wider research project on an outer London estate into neighbourhood profiling and neighbourhood renewal. The client of the project was not primarily interested in the gated community (see Manzi & Smith-Bowers, 2004). However, the authors considered this gated community raised important issues about reducing spatial segregation and the types of developments that should be provided on mixed tenure estates. A second 'gated community' was selected in inner London, which was in the process of development; this was also located in an area of multiple deprivation as defined by the ODPM index.

The research in outer London used interviews with residents of the estate, the chair of the residents' association of the gated community, local landlords and service providers, observation of forum events and community meetings. In the inner London development interviews were conducted with the managing agent of the estate, the security consultant, the planning officer and residents. The Outer London scheme was located within a mixed tenure estate and the other was designed as a private development (with additional social housing to be provided at a later stage). The former was a permanent gated settlement and the latter a temporary gated environment. The initial purpose of the interviews was to gather more detailed information about management issues, relationships in the neighbourhoods, local service delivery and priorities for improvement. A total of 20 interviews were conducted.

Case Study One: The Permanent Gated Community

The first development is a mixed tenure estate in outer London built in the first half of the 1990s. The estate, which comprises one-third of the ward population, is located in a neighbourhood ranked 634 out of 8414 on the Index of Deprivation (DETR, 2000). The estate is divided into a number of sub-sections. A wall with two electric gates to permit and restrict entry to residents and their guests separates the owners from the wider estate. This part of the development houses around 200 owner occupiers in the converted wing of a 19th century asylum. The remainder of the estate is situated outside the gated area and is semi-enclosed within the historic walled grounds of the 19th century asylum (but without gates). In this part of the estate about 600 units of social housing, shared ownership and private renting accommodation are located in different sub-developments. The estate can be described as a 'forted up' mixed tenure development inside two sets of walls.

These walls and gates were considered a key problem within this development in that the social housing estate is physically separated from the privately owned and gated community. One local authority officer expressed the difficulty in the following terms:

> It has a history as a psychiatric hospital ... I see it as the final bastion of stigmatisation. It reinforces the sense that it is still a madhouse; it is symbolic of care in the community. You put them in houses and put a wall around them. It conspires with a subliminal message ... You could believe that it is still a psychiatric hospital. You should not underestimate the symbolism of the physical. Walled cities in ancient times were fortresses to keep people in and out. The physical fabric is testimony to separateness. (Interview)

The estate was the largest RSL consortium development in the UK of the early 1990s and probably the only one to contain a gated community within its boundary. From its start the estate brought together many contemporary features of housing development, private ownership and leasing, shared ownership and social renting, RSL consortium development and a gated community (only local authority housing is absent from the landlord mix). In one sense the estate was a leading example of a mixed community development, in that it brought a range of income groups together in one neighbourhood rather than being segregated into different residential neighbourhoods.

However, the practicalities of mixing diverse social groups proved highly problematic. The development was not planned as a social housing scheme and much of the infrastructure planned did not materialise (Interview data). In addition, from the beginning there was a strong feeling of segregation between social housing residents on the one side and private owners and leaseholders on the other. As one private resident commented: "there was a real 'us and them' scenario" (Interview). This meant that owners and leaseholders did not see themselves as benefiting from the community facilities:

> I very rarely go to the ... shop. They can tell you by the car you drive or the way that you dress ... that you are not from the housing association flats. It is aggressive. (Interview)

A strong sense of conflict was generated between the different social groups on the estates. This was expressed in the following way by a leaseholder in one of the flats which was located on the estate but not within the gated community: "there is definitely a bad feeling towards the people living in these flats because we are owners. There is a definite class divide I think" (Interview).

The owner occupiers within the gated community also felt removed from much of the day-to-day activities on the estate. Because they did not share the experience of the majority of residents in the neighbourhood the scale of the social problems reported by other residents surprised them. For example, one owner occupier commented:

> I have been to a few of the resident meetings. We were absolutely horrified to hear what they were saying about prostitution and drug abuse. Residents said that they knew who was perpetrating these crimes but that they did not dare come forward to report them due to the fear of reprisals. I also heard that some of the neighbours did not come to the meeting as they were watching who was attending. It was felt that it was a 'grassing' situation. (Interview)

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In addition, the gated residents were aware of the class distinctions between those within and outside of the walled community and acknowledged that a high level of diplomacy was called for in making contributions to collective management.

> I am the only one who has gone to the . . . meetings. I am very careful about what I say. I know that a lot of them are on income support. For example if I talk about kids damaging our cars, I need to be diplomatic. You only have to compare the cars inside and outside. (Interview)

Despite the disparities in income and wealth, there appeared to be some co-operation between residents; in particular they felt they shared common goals in terms of improving their neighbourhood. Nevertheless, residents felt that the gated development was essential in preserving a sense of security and protection from the varied social problems occurring on the estate.

> A couple of people were mugged . . . when they were waiting for the gates to open. It was a prime opportunity as they had to get their swipe cards from their wallets. We used to have a code to enter the grounds but [the youths] knew the code. They are not stupid. I dread to think how much we are paying for the gates but they are a necessity. When they were broken (by the kids of course) cars were getting broken into. (Interview)

Despite the very serious social problems on the estate, voiced by residents and workers in the neighbourhood, owners generally felt happy and secure in their properties.

> I bought the flat at a very good price. I have never felt unsafe inside. I have installed a spy hole and extra window locks. For the first two years I lived on my own. The gates have done a lot to help. Personally I have never had problems that I wouldn't find on any London street but I tend not to walk around the estate. (Interview)

Such views illustrate how there can be reasonable levels of safety and security despite residents living within an area widely perceived as a high crime neighbourhood. Significantly, there appeared to be very different perceptions between those within the gated community (who were largely positive) and those living in leasehold flats that were integrated within the social housing estate. The latter appeared much more negative about their environment and reported much more serious instances of harassment, intimidation, victimisation and crime.

As argued above, the gated community is not normally identified as one of the aspects of a mixed community development in the statements of government and other interested parties. Rather it is commonly viewed as the opposite of a desirable social mix in urban living the government wishes to promote; gated communities challenge these aspirations given their target population of affluent households. However, the legal structure means that most are owned and managed collectively by the residents. This represents a further issue of collectivism versus individualism, given that one of the 'solutions' to the sustainable development of the estate was seen as the development of tenant management. Such trends represent what can be termed "an unusual blend of collectivism combined

with a retreat into privatised spaces" (Blandy *et al.*, 2003, p. 3). This demonstrates how the phenomenon of gating can be connected to club goods theories to illustrate new approaches to private and public service provision. As Webster (2001) maintains it is misleading to polarise debate into issues of public versus private institutions.

This case study suggests that one way to promote mixed tenure developments in areas of deprivation is to acknowledge community members' concerns for safety and security. The study suggests this can be done by developing gated sub-subsections in the neighbourhood.

Case Study Two: The 'Lifestyle' Temporary Gated Community

Owned by a large private sector property development company, this southeast London site was previously a derelict industrial estate. The development is located in one of the poorest wards in the country, ranked 468 out of 8414 on the Index of Deprivation (see DETR, 2000). The development is an example of the vision of the local authority to use culture and the arts as a driver to regenerate the area and bring higher-income households into the inner city. It also meets the objectives of the economic regeneration strategy of the borough to create accommodation for office workers. The estate manager explained the developer's objectives:

> The vision was to design a 'new concept for living'—a 'lifestyle' community. This encapsulates a total living environment comprising home and leisure facilities with 24-hour concierge service to care for residents' every requirement. (Interview)

The advertisements and marketing for the scheme present the development as a prestigious housing and living complex situated in what could be taken as an upmarket area. However, the immediate location is not the focus of the marketing of the estate. The main selling points of the area are the local rail station opposite the development and the lifestyle that was available inside the complex at affordable prices. The marketing focus was on the 'living experience', referring to modernist interiors and immediate surrounding exterior facilities such as a gym, landscaping and restaurant. It was presented in publicity material as "the development where you *can* have it all".

The development was targeted at a number of different groups. As an investment vehicle, it was marketed at overseas buyers who would gain rental income and capital gains from letting to young professionals working in the new 'City of London' situated at Canary Wharf. The development was also targeted at young families and thus incentives for first-time buyers were offered. The development comprised 50 per cent buyers and 50 per cent tenants. These units were seen as comparatively cheap in the London housing market. A single bedroom flat costs £160 000 and a flat could be rented for just under £1000 a month (at 2003 prices).

Planning requirements (so-called 'section 106' obligations) obliged the developer to provide 30 per cent affordable housing within the scheme. Consequently, in the last phase of the development three blocks of social rented housing were to be provided let by three housing associations. This part of the estate was expected to be ready for occupancy in December 2003. The estate manager explained that differential access to estate facilities would apply and that tension between the different groups might follow from the opening of the social housing blocks:

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> The residents of the housing association blocks will have access to some but not all of the developments facilities, [such as] the restaurant and coffee bar but not the gym or swimming pool . . . there will be a view that the housing association blocks may not be a welcome feature of the estate for the private residents. (Interview)

However, problems soon appeared in relation to maintaining the standards of the estate and the blocks: litter, security doors left open by a large number of absentee landlords and the turnover on the estate of private renters.

Security was one of the features of the estate and this included: CCTV cameras linked to a reception area, a concierge which would eventually be staffed 24 hours a day, site security patrol night checks, an emergency mobile number for residents, and access point fob keys for all resident blocks and the car parks. In addition to these features, residents were offered extra day and night security cover (although there would be an additional charge for this service). Residents were encouraged to establish a neighbourhood watch scheme and the estate manager attended regular liaison meetings with the local police.

The development included 'temporary' gates while development work was in progress. However, these gates, which had a robust and sculptured quality, did not give the impression of being temporary. The estate manager confirmed us that residents were happy with the gated entrance. Residents had also assumed these gates were a permanent feature of the development. However, the planning agreement required these gates to be dismantled and retractable bollards were installed in their place in 2003.

To the casual visitor (and many residents) the estate looked like a gated community with patrolling security and gated access staffed by security guards. In fact, it was intended to be a development that would have no gates but would only limit the public right of way to walking access. The development could be an example of what Low (2003) has called a 'faux-gated' community.

The gates became a major issue on the estate because of criminal incidents within the neighbourhood. The estate manager, the planning officer and local residents all identified crime and fear of crime as key reasons why the residents wanted the gates to stay. In letters to the council planning department and at a meeting with the planning officer, residents claimed that if the gates were removed and the public access footpath through the estate was reopened more residents would become victims of crime. Officers stated that overseas property owners had been contacting the council because their tenants were advising them about how dangerous the area was and that the gates they thought permanent were in fact only building site gates. The planning officer and the estate manager reported that sales were decreasing and that rents had adjusted downwards as a consequence of these security concerns.

The planning officer stated that gated community developments were a new issue for the planning team. Gates were previously allowed in the borough but these situations were described as entirely different in that developments were situated on private land with no public access. However, in similar developments gates had been disallowed despite petitions from residents. The planning officer stated that with reference to the current development:

> The developers erected gates without planning permission. Obviously some sort of makeshift security gate was required as expensive building materials were present on the site. However, these gates had a 'permanent' feel from the start. (Interview)

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The planning department agreed to retractable road bollards to control entry but an application would need to be submitted for the gates to become a permanent fixture. The request to gate a public parked area was refused and any replacement for the current temporary gates was thought likely to be vetoed.

The original planning brief stated that although there would be no provision for vehicular traffic, a public access route would be a feature of the development. Therefore keeping the gates in place was thought to be contrary to the spirit of the provisions in section 106. The council was keen to uphold this situation and any argument to the contrary, it was suggested, would have to be presented very convincingly. As discussed earlier, petitioning for gates goes against the current government advice on good urban design practice and mixed development guidelines. Additionally, the legal implications would need to be thoroughly assessed.

The planning officer advised that at a recent residents' association meeting the main concern was security, particularly "that the gates be a permanent feature as there have been a number of incidents ranging from vandalism to actual physical assault" (Interview). As one officer commented:

> Issues arose at the initial planning meeting for the scheme concerning the potential lack of integration into the wider . . . community from prospective residents. Several of these buyers have subsequently called claiming that they thought the estate was more exclusive than it actually is, and saying that tenants now wish to vacate their flats as they fear for their safety. (Interview)

The second major issue was access to a public garden located on the edge of the estate. Residents wished this to remain private as they were paying a service charge for its upkeep and maintenance and therefore felt it was inappropriate for non-residents to use (and possibly abuse) it. Furthermore, residents were concerned that if the community was to be open-access the council would not pay the bill for any vandalism or graffiti that might occur. As one estate resident noted, it was a private development and the council would have no liability for any damage. The planning officer stated at the meeting she was "concerned with the residents' exclusive attitude" (Interview). In turn, the residents were frustrated by what they perceived as an unsympathetic response to their anxieties.

This example illustrated the conflict between the planning department's responsibilities to protect 'rights of way' and promote 'permeability' (ease of movement in an area) and the desire of the residents to secure a safe environment in which to live. These gates had become a focal point around the management of higher income housing in an area of acute deprivation, with a high level of crime and fear of crime. What the example shows is that the battle to maintain gating represented an important area of conflict between residents and council staff and between principles of safety and security on the one side and those of community, neighbourhood and social cohesion on the other. However, a conceptualisation of gating as a club good can challenge the necessity to think in strict dimensions of public and private, allowing discussion to proceed at a less emotive level.

Conclusions

Gated communities via their costs of ownership and membership partition the population into 'beneficiaries' and 'non-beneficiaries'. However, gated communities provide one

example from a long tradition in clubbing together for increased individual benefits. Other examples include trade unions, friendly societies, squash and bridge clubs. All make a distinction between members and non-members to determine the allocation of benefits and costs.

The gated community represents a dilemma for policy makers between the concepts of segregation and security. If consumer choice points to the desirability of privacy and safety as priorities for residents, it becomes increasingly problematic for policy makers to deny the exercise of this choice. To suggest that residents be denied security merely based on an abstract notion of social cohesion could be construed as paternalism.

The view that the 'gated community increasingly seems a misnomer for a highly privatised mode of living' (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003) assumes a relationship between neighbourhood cohesion and community development, based on an idealised model of housing design. As society has become more fragmented and privacy is highly desired by residents, to see gating as the antithesis of social cohesion by reinforcing social and class divisions, producing new forms of segregation between rich and poor, ignores the much more complex relationships between individuals and their environments. The evidence from these two case studies suggests that whilst there is some validity in these arguments, they are too simplistic in capturing the complex choices that residents make in their attachment to urban neighbourhoods. Undoubtedly gated communities represent a choice to exclude others, but as a club good, they may also represent a more positive model of housing development.

In the case studies both the fear of crime and actual crime levels have either resulted in gates being erected or in the demand for temporary gates to be made permanent. The examples illustrate that developments help to reduce residential segregation in areas that otherwise would have accommodated either multi-deprived households exclusively or have been used for other purposes.

Research (Manzi & Smith-Bowers, 2004) on a housing estate with a large number of social landlords responsible for the communal services and facilities that tenants enjoyed, showed how ineffective local residents felt in influencing and getting a better service from their landlords. Institutions such as homeowners associations and Common Interest Housing Developments can provide useful models of self-managed, territorial organisation, in conjunction with other more traditional residents' associations. In one of the case studies the Home Owners Association had been able to secure the gating of the estate to reduce crime, to protect motor vehicles and to prevent unsolicited entry. Outside the gates, the consortium of landlords could offer no such service.

The theory of club goods illustrates an alternative model of conceptualising gated developments. By providing a hybrid model of property ownership and rights alongside a representation of new forms of territorial organisation, the theory can extend an understanding of the function of gated developments that provides a more detailed insight into this increasingly common phenomenon.

The process of collective ownership and management may serve to increase permeability as much as decrease it. The development of an active residents' association in both cases can provide an opportunity to develop links across tenure divides. The consequence may well be that such neighbourhoods are less segregated in socio-economic terms than would be the case if the gating were not available. By protecting property prices and offering opportunities for social mixing (albeit in limited terms) gating may present opportunities for urban renewal that are at present poorly understood.

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Rather than attempting to prevent the spread of such developments, policy makers need to come to terms with the spread of gated communities in less emotive language. They should consider how issues of segregation can be balanced against the need to develop consumer choice and potentially increase social cohesion by providing new forms of sustainable communities, instead of railing against privatism, isolationism and particular interests.

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