Gated Communities: (Ne)Gating Community Development?

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GATED COMMUNITIES: (NE)GATING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?
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Abstract

Gated Communities are becoming increasingly common across England, yet very little is known about the impact these developments have upon the residents of the wider community or those within the confines of the gates. This paper draws on empirical research carried out in a gated community in the north of England and explores community values and social ties amongst the gated residents in addition to their legal rights and responsibilities contained in their lease. The data suggests that gated residents' rights and responsibilities are, by and large, confined to legalities and management functions within the development and do not extend to a commitment to enhance social networks either within the development or in the adjacent wider community. The paper concludes that this form of living with a strong legal regime, close monitoring of behaviour and weakening of social ties inevitably has far reaching implications for community cohesion.

The growth of gated communities

The growth of gated communities (GCs) in the USA has been well-documented (see, for example, Blakely and Snyder, 1997). However, there is little available information about the growth of gated communities in the UK. A national survey of all English planning authorities to be published later this year should provide some information about the extent and location of gated communities in this country (Atkinson et al, 2003 forthcoming). We also have some information about the potential demand for gated communities on this side of the Atlantic. In 2002, a survey company carried out a telephone survey of a random sample of 1001 respondents throughout the UK, on behalf of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. (Live Strategy, 2002).

The sample was stratified for region, gender, age and income. However, the sampling procedure did not pre-screen for respondents who already lived in gated communities nor were respondents asked if they lived in gated communities. As a result it is unclear whether, and to what extent, the views of existing gated community residents have been captured and the extent to which this affects the findings. Respondents were sensitised to the issue of GCs and were read a definition[1], which had been written by the RICS, at the outset of the interview. Although the telephone survey was a random sample of 1001 respondents, when the sample is reduced to specific analytical groups, the number of respondents in some of these groups is small and, therefore, it is difficult to generalise from these findings. An outline of these findings is included here in order to highlight the ways in which gated communities are perceived in the UK and to provide a context for the subsequent discussions in this paper.

Respondents were asked firstly if they thought gated communities were a good thing. A number of significant regional and demographic differences were found. For instance, those in favour of GCs were more likely to be younger respondents with 65% (56) of 18-24 years old having this view compared to 44% (88) of those aged 65+. The trend (with the exception of the 55-64 age group) was declining favourability with increased age. Once again with the exception of the 55-64 age group, increased age also gave rise to greater levels of uncertainty about GCs with 11% (23) of 65+ unsure about whether GCs were a good thing compared to 2% (2) of 18-24 year olds. In terms of tenure there was little difference between the responses of outright owner occupiers and owner occupiers with a mortgage with 47% (147) and 46% (202) respectively in favour of GCs. Respondents renting their homes from the 'council' and from 'someone else' also expressed similar levels of favourability with 61% (74) and 60% (59) respectively. It is notable that renters were more in favour of GCs than home owners. In terms of income, there was a tendency for respondents with an income under £25,000 to view GCs as favourable, and 63% (69) of respondents with an income under £10,000 were in favour of GCs. These findings may indicate that those living in lower-income areas, and who may therefore experience more crime and anti-social behaviour, are more attracted to the perceived high security offered by gated communities.

Regional responses for England were divided into government regions whilst those for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were not disaggregated. Responses from

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[1] The definition used: '*There is a trend towards the building of GCs in which a residential development is divided from its surrounding neighbourhoods by walls or fencing. Typically a single management company runs the development. Services and open spaces within the gated area are exclusively for residents with outsiders denied entry without permission*'.

Northern Ireland revealed the highest level of favourability at 54% (14), 49% (45) of Scottish respondents were in favour and 48% (24) of respondents in Wales. Regional responses in England revealed a number of variations. Respondents from the North were most in favour of GCs with 68% (30) expressing this view followed by 57% (67) from the North West, compared to 38% (32) in Yorkshire and Humberside who were least in favour. Responses from Greater London and the South East revealed 52% (57) and 44% (61) respectively in favour and those in the East Midlands and West Midlands 53% (38) and 45% (41) respectively.

50% of all respondents said that GCs were a good thing and were in favour of them. However, in the second stage of the survey only 34% (345) respondents agreed with the statement that living in a GC appealed to them personally. Again, age was a significant factor in terms of appeal value with GCs appealing more to younger respondents. The appeal of GCs decreased as age increased, with the exception of the 55-64 age group. 49% (42) of 18-24 year olds compared with 28% (56) of respondents aged 65+ agreed that living in a GC appealed to them. Similar trends to those described above with owner occupiers and renters were revealed with renters strongly attracted to GC living. 30% (92) of outright owners and 32% (140) of owners with a mortgage agreed that living in a GC appealed to them, whilst 48% (58) of respondents renting from the 'council' and 48% (47) renting from 'someone else' found GCs appealing. Similarly, respondents with income under £10,000 found the idea of living in a GC most appealing with 45% (49) expressing this view.

In the third stage, all of the 34% (345) respondents who found the idea of living in a GC appealing were asked about which aspects they found most important. Overall, the most important aspect for respondents was 'greater security' with 72% (249) expressing this view. For younger people this was of even greater importance with 76% (32) of those aged 18-24 and 77% (46) of those aged 25-34 citing 'greater security'. Similarly a regional analysis reveals that 'greater security' is of overriding importance for 83% of respondents in both the North and North West (15 and 40). 17% (60) of the 345 respondents cited 'peace and quiet' as the most appealing aspect of GCs, 6% (21) cited 'living with people of similar background', 1% (3) cited 'greater status/prestige' and 1% (3) 'privacy'.

It is noteworthy that the idea of actually *living* in a GC was less appealing than the general attitude expressed toward such developments. In the fourth stage of the survey, the 61% (614) respondents who did not find the idea of living in a GC appealing were asked why this was the case. The responses were particularly illuminating for the context of this paper. 52% (317) stated that they 'would not want to live behind walls or fencing', 50% (305) interestingly said they 'would rather be part of a community', and 19% (114) said it would be 'too dull'. However, the apparent popularity of GCs with young people may point towards greater demand in future.

'Community' and the neighbourhood

The idea of a gated community resonates with many current theories and policy concerns about neighbourhood and community. Commentators who support gated communities argue that residents feel a sense of community and neighbourliness, derived from the legal and physical form of the development. A GC is physically bounded, the residents are self-managing, and there are legal restrictions on their

behaviour and use of their properties. The neighbourhood level of governance, together with residents' responsibility for their own community and the use of enforceable legal contracts, could even be seen as a prototype or ideal form. It might be expected that such conditions would lead to an increase in social capital, a rather nebulous concept which has been defined as comprising three main components: Networks [neighbours], Norms [reciprocity, due care of property, challenging strangers] and Sanctions [recognition and respect, versus gossip and social exclusion] (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2002, p11).

In their discussion of participation and community development, Chavis and Wandersman (1990) review previous research literature and conclude that a sense of community is strongly linked to social control of the neighbourhood. However, their research points up two contradictory forces. They find that in 'problem neighbourhoods', difficult issues can serve as a motivator to collective action and participation. In 'nice neighbourhoods', the more safe and secure residents feel, the more likely they are to interact and feel a sense of community. This sense is also an incentive to participate – but in what? Without an external problem to motivate residents, there may be no spur to collective action.

Government policy has for some years encouraged the participation of social tenants in the management of their estates. We want to distinguish participation as tenants from the current government policies encouraging participation by residents in regeneration initiatives. Tenant participation provides a more exact analogy to the self-management by gated community residents of their own housing. The professional property managers employed in gated communities to collect the service charges and deal with residents' complaints, perform a similar role to the housing officer in a socially rented development. A "very shallow consensus" exists amongst politicians of different political parties and housing managers "that some form of involvement of tenants in the management of council housing leads to better housing management." (Cairncross et al, 1997, p46). Tenant Participation Compacts mark the apotheosis of this change in emphasis - from 'exit' in the 1980s and early 1990s, encouraged by central government as a way of taking over ownership or management, to 'voice' in Blair's government, as development of long-term partnerships. (Cole et al, 2000).

The literature on tenant participation could provide some insights into the effects of self-governance on residents and their neighbourhoods, but most of it focuses on analysing the development of tenant participation from struggle to mainstream, or setting out measures which landlords must take to make it effective. Very little has been written about tenants' active participation, and why they participate. Birchall's work is the exception here, and he develops an interesting comparison between the individualist approach to participation, based on rewards, which was developed by Homans in the late 1950s, with a communitarian motivation theory based on Sorokin's work. (Birchall, 1997).

The first point to note is that the process of self-governance by residents can be misinterpreted. The Cloverhall Tenants management co-operative in Rochdale was described by Birchall (1997, 198) as "outstandingly successful". Yet individual residents interviewed by different researchers expressed a rather different view: "*people want a co-op but they aren't prepared to put in the time.*" A few active tenants did most of the work which caused resentment both amongst the committee members and "a degree of resentment amongst those outside the committee that a small group are in control of the

co-op." But "tenants were pretty united in seeing the council as "the main enemy" and consequently potential splits amongst the tenant group were not viewed as a central concern." (Dickson and Robertson, 1993, 94, 98). This is a good example of the problems ignored by adherents of social capital – that residents are often motivated by a perceived external threat, and this can mask the fact that a small group has taken control.

Cole et al found much the same picture in their study of tenant participation in the social rented sector (2000). There was general apathy: "*Most tenants say: 'why should I get involved, I pay my rent and that's it*" (Tenant Participation Manager, urban authority) until residents were motivated and united by a common problem: '*Tenants only want the right to manage when the service is abysma*l". (Tenant Participation Officer, rural authority). Another common feature was the issue of who among the tenants was prepared to get involved. Virtually the same comment was made by a housing officer from a rural authority, and by a Housing Manager in a London Borough where 50% of households are BME: "*It was the same old faces who were nearly all over 60, retired and white*". There was suspicion about why tenant activists were prepared to give up their time: "*Certain tenants may get into a 'power thing', you need to be aware of their motives*"." (Housing Officer, rural authority).

In the owner-occupied sector, residents are not usually expected to participate in managing their neighbourhood. GCs are one exception, and residents of blocks of flats held on long leasehold can also take on the right to manage. Successive legislation over the years has enabled leaseholders to take on responsibility for managing their own block of flats, and to collectively enfranchise (buy out the freeholder's interest). Some respondents to the 1998 DETR study of leaseholders (Cole et al, 1998) expressed views that indicated their motivation: *"We just wanted the work done in a reasonable way. ... I have no desire to be a partner of (other residents)."* The study found that the overwhelming reason for pursuing leasehold enfranchisement was the behavior of the freeholder or the managing agent, in other words an external problem as in the social rented sector. Once having enfranchised, some residents found their problems did not come to an end. In one block of twenty four flats, the leaseholders enfranchised through a resident management company. Five residents were on the board of this company, although two did not attend. In the words of one board member:
> '*Two very wealthy people ... decided that the whole objective was to spend money and to fix up the building and weren't concerned about reasonable costs. ... Sometimes there were three or four against one, sometimes there were three against two. But you knew that you had no hope."* (resident interviewed for research into Leasehold Valuation Tribunals, see Blandy et al, 2001).

The pattern of a small, powerful group acting in an undemocratic way (described by Sorokin as an oligarchy: Birchall, 1997) can be seen across tenures, from co-operatives to enfranchised residents' management companies. The relationship between self-managing neighborhoods and sense of community is adversely affected by the way this can operate in practice. It is also clear from this brief review that a primary motivation for community participation is dissatisfaction, or an external problem to resolve, and that a major problem is that an unrepresentative group may take control.

Lessons from America

Self-governance of the predominantly owner-occupied neighbourhood is very common in the States. About one in six Americans, roughly 50 million residents, lives in a community governed by a homeowners association. About 20 million homes, of 106 million in the country, are governed by an association. (Rich, 2003). Homeowners associations collect dues from residents to pay for maintenance of roads and landscaping. The boards, composed of elected volunteers, can fine residents who break the rules and, in some cases, foreclose on homeowners who cannot afford the monthly dues. Rather surprisingly, in a systematic review carried out of empirically-based research, it was found that every study concluded that community involvement and interaction with neighbours in districts governed by associations was low (Blandy et al, 2003).

Barton and Silverman's survey of Californian residents' associations was carried out in 1987, and was the only study which specifically addressed the communal social life in association-run neighbourhoods. Their survey of presidents of association boards showed that 27 per cent respondents reported that their association held at least one social event every year, at which around a quarter of residents attended. However, a survey which goes only to the presidents of residents' associations, rather than to the residents themselves, is likely to produce a biased result on the issue of governance. In terms of participation in internal governance, the survey showed that 23% of associations in California had difficulties in filling seats on the board, and in 19% one board member did all the work. Fewer than 1% of members had ever served on a committee or the board itself, and only 11% of members had contributed to the association in a voluntary capacity (Barton and Silverman, 1987).

Alexander conducted interviews with a small number of residents in association-run, middle class neighbourhoods. His study found that residents did not expect "a more zealously formed community" merely because the neighbourhood was run by a residents' association. Most assumed that the association's role was limited to physical maintenance of the environment. (Alexander, 1994). Alexander found that over three-quarters of the interviewees in his study attached little importance to the association; it was neither an incentive nor an inducement, but irrelevant to their decision to purchase. A majority of the residents interviewed in Alexander's study had never attended a meeting, and did not know who was on the board, nor the issues facing the association. Most expected to remain uninvolved, but could imagine becoming active if conditions deteriorated. Most of those interviewed already felt some dissatisfaction with the board, for a variety of reasons.

Blakely and Snyder (1997) focused on gated communities, rather than the more general type of association-run neighbourhood. They categorized GCs into three types: Lifestyle, Prestige and Security Zone, and found that community life is organised according to their different regimes. For instance, in Lifestyle GCs, interaction centres around recreation and the sense of community that exists is based on common interests and income levels rather than strong links between neighbours. However, this type of interaction appears adequate for residents. Participation rates vary and there are problems associated with keeping volunteer residents interested and involved. In Prestige GCs lack of community involvement was cited as a problem and residents tended to have little time or inclination to be neighbourly. Self-government was fraught with complaints and divisiveness. Internal disputes were a problem; there was a lack of

participation which caused some residents' committees to disband. One respondent characterised the level of involvement among most residents in Prestige Communities as 'active disinterest', and they were generally reluctant to become involved with their neighbours. Many of the neighbourhoods formed into Security Zone GCs had known real community involvement in the past, but were are fighting to retain or to regain it. The residents claimed that there was more neighbourliness than on a real street but there were conflicts regarding, for example, parking and pet ownership. There were disputes, and committees sometimes ceased to exist owing to lack of participation, although residents in Security Zone GCs were more actively motivated by the threat of crime than residents in the other two types.

It is clear from much of the literature on American association-governed neighbourhoods that disputes over covenant enforcement are common (see for example, McKenzie, 1994; Rich, 2003). Two studies confirm that most residents are not initially concerned by these covenants (known as CCRs in America – covenants, conditions and restrictions). The survey by Silverman et al in 1989 found that only 27% of resale purchasers had read them and then only when accused of breaching one or more covenant. Less than 10% of Alexander's sample had read the CCRs before their purchase. Yet material written by legal scholars is characterised by footnotes citing literally dozens of reported court cases. Even allowing for American litigiousness, it seems that self-governance by residents' associations can be fraught with disagreement.

The only quantitative data on this aspect of gated communities is from Barton and Silverman's survey which was carried out in 1987: 41% of associations suffered from major problems with rule violations, and 44% of board presidents had been personally harassed, threatened with litigation or actually sued by a member in the previous year when enforcing CCRs. This situation caused 30% of presidents surveyed to say they would not contemplate buying in a residents' association development again.

These figures may over-represent the problem, as it is likely that those who have experienced such unpleasant problems when volunteering their time and expertise to the board, would feel more motivated to complete the questionnaire. However, the main conclusion from these studies is that a legal form which requires residents to collectively manage their community appears to be no guarantee of their active participation. It seems this may partly stem from lack of awareness when buying into a residents' association. In America, the number of internal disputes seems high, and those who take on voluntary positions in the management of gated communities are caught in the crossfire.

The paper now turns to an examination of the sense of community in one particular gated community. The research findings will be explored against the background of theoretical writing and data on community as social capital, tenant participation, and the experience of American homeowners' associations.

Nether Edge – the area and the gated community

The empirical data on which this paper is based comes from a small-scale study, funded by the British Academy, of a gated community in Sheffield. The gated community is located in Nether Edge, an affluent area not far from the city centre characterized by

tree-lined roads and distinguished Victorian architecture. This district is on the frontier between the wealthy south-west sector of Sheffield and the more deprived areas to the east and north; the adjoining district of Sharrow is far less affluent and is one of the most racially mixed areas of Sheffield.

The gated development, also (confusingly) named Nether Edge by the developer of the sire, was the first of its kind in the city. The site of 4.22 hectares (10.43 acres) came up for sale when the National Health Trust concluded that a hospital was surplus to requirements. The original building on the site was a workhouse built in 1841 to provide basic accommodation and subsistence for the destitute poor, in exchange for their labour. The site also accommodated two smallpox wards and a block for 'imbeciles', and later became an infirmary, then a general hospital. The older buildings and the surrounding stone wall were listed as Grade 2 for their architectural and historical importance, thus requiring Listed Building Consent before any alteration or demolition.

The development company Gleesons invested £30m in the purchase and conversion of the site to an exclusive residential development. The occupancy is high density, with some nicely laid out communal garden areas in the centre. The existing listed buildings have been converted to apartments and town houses, and new properties comprising both houses and apartments are being built, to make 180 dwellings in all. About half of these are newbuild, including some very high-tech apartments, terraced and detached houses. It also includes leisure facilities and a swimming pool which are open only to residents. The surrounding wall has been retained, and has now become *the* distinguishing feature of the development. There are three access roads, all of which have electronically controlled gates. There are extensive CCTV cameras installed around the development, set up so that, for example, if anyone enters through a pedestrian access gate their movements through the site will be automatically tracked by a camera. Once the development of the site has been completed a security guard will be on duty during working hours, and overnight a control centre will take over responsibility for security.

Research methods

Permission was obtained from the developer to contact purchasers as they moved in to their new homes at the development. The research took place over sixteen months, from July 2001 to October 2002. The development is still not complete, so all the new residents were moving in to a building site. The sales agents for the development had an office onsite, and agreed to distribute questionnaires to new residents. We have to assume that they did this, as nothing to the contrary was reported, except that questionnaires were not delivered to five apartments which the sales agents knew had been purchased for rental by an investor. These five have not been included in the total. Twenty-three completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 38%, if we assume that sixty questionnaires were delivered.

The questionnaire was designed to establish the purchasers' motivation for moving to this gated community. Respondents were asked to state how important a range of six factors were, and invited to contribute up to three further factors. They were further asked about how they envisaged neighbourly relations in the community developing. The questionnaire also addressed the legal framework; how important residents felt the covenants to be in restricting their use of their own property, and in ensuring all residents

keep to the terms of the lease. Ten respondents to the questionnaire indicated their willingness to be interviewed, and eight interviews (including two where both adult residents were present) were carried out between December 2001 and November 2002. At the time of interview, the residents had been living in the gated community for an average of six months. We were therefore able to compare each resident's original motivation for purchase with their experience of living there, and to probe further about how the community was developing in practice. Although the development was not yet self-managed, the interviews also covered residents' views of how any tensions between neighbours might be resolved, and whether the interviewee would be prepared to get involved in the management of the gated community.

The results have to be interpreted in the awareness that residents who completed and returned the questionnaire may not be representative of the residents as a whole. Being prepared to taking the time to participate in research may indicate a certain public-spiritedness. In the context of being 'pioneers' of a new form of housing, it may also appeal to people willing to reflect on their experiences. The same caveat applies, but more so, to the interviewees who were self-selected. It is notable that half of the interviewees were with respondents to the first five questionnaires returned. We could therefore posit that the results of both stages of the research may be skewed towards representing the more 'community-minded' residents. Several interviewees mentioned that there seemed a lot of young couples among the residents moving in to the gated community. If that is so, a small proportion of them completed the questionnaires! Tables 1 and 2 below provide details of household composition and of the ages of the households of those residents who completed the questionnaire. Table 3 shows the types of property on site, of those who completed the questionnaire, and of those who took part in an interview.

Table 1. Household composition of respondents to the questionnaire - numbers of adults and children (nb. only 22 responses received)

1 adult	2
2 adults	14
2 adults 1 child	1
2 adults 2 children	3
2 adults 3 children	1
2 adults 4 children	1

Table 2. Age of adults in each household (nb. only 22 responses received)

Single person households		*Two adult households*		*Households with children*	
1 female 18-39	1	2 adults 18-39	5		
		2 adults, 1 18-39, 1 40-59	1	2 adults, 1 30-39, 1 40-49, with children	2
1 female 40-59	1	2 adults 40-59	4	2 adults 40-59 with children	4
		2 adults, 1 50-59, 1 60+	1		
		2 adults 60+	3		
% of Total	8.7%		69.8%		26.1%

Table 3: Types of property: by questionnaires distributed and returned, and by interview

	2 bed apt.	3 bed apt.	3 bed house	4 bed house	5 bed house	TOTAL
Questionnaires distributed	15	18	12	11	4	60
Questionnaires returned	7	2	5	7	2	23
Interviews	2	0	3	3	0	8
Interviews as percentage of questionnaires distributed	13%	0%	25%	27%	0%	13%

The interviewees covered the whole age range, but out of the eight households taking part in interviews, six were over forty. One of these households comprised a single woman. Two households included children, one with four children under fourteen, and one with an older teenager. Among the eight interviewee households, only one lived in a newbuild dwelling. This must be compared with the fifteen newbuild properties out of sixty dwellings originally provided with questionnaires. Thus the interviews were with older people, living in houses rather than apartments, and in converted dwellings rather than newbuild, and the findings from the interviews must be interpreted in this light.

Community and neighbourliness

In the questionnaire residents were asked about their reasons for moving into Nether Edge. Residents were asked to rank on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being most important and 5 the least important, their reasons for moving into Nether Edge. These responses are summarized below in Table 4. As can be seen, the most important motivating factors were security systems and maintenance of property values, with good leisure facilities also important. Moving into a community was also important for 12 residents, however this must be contrasted with the total of 10 responses of residents who were neutral or did not regard the community aspects as important. Another factor listed for residents to prioritise was 'proximity to school', which we hoped might shed some light on how local schools were viewed by households with children, and those planning a family in the near future. However, only the six households with children gave this factor any importance at all (although it emerged in interview that the children went to private schools which were outside the area). The final factor listed was 'proximity to job' which again has to be discounted because of the number of retired households. Other reasons volunteered by residents for moving into the GC were 'easy access to city centre', 'a quiet pleasant neighbourhood', 'ease of maintenance', 'investment potential', and the attractive design of the dwellings and of the development as a whole. Taken together, the responses to the valid categories give a picture of the primary motivation of households for purchasing a property at Nether Edge, at the point when they had just moved into the development.

Table 4 : Purchasers' reasons for moving to the development, in order of importance (n = 23)

Reasons for moving (not mutually exclusive)	*Very important*	*Important*	*Total of first two columns*	*Neutral*	*Not important*	*Not important at all*
Property values	69.6% (16)	17.4% (4)	*87% (20)*	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	0% (0)
Security features	26.1% (6)	43.5% (10)	*69.6% (16)*	26.1% (6)	4.3% (1)	0% (0)
Leisure facilities	21.7% (5)	39.1% (9)	*60.8% (14)*	26.2% (6)	8.7% (2)	4.3% (1)
Moving into a Community	34.8% (8)	17.4% (4)	*52.2% (12)*	21.7% (5)	13% (3)	8.7% (2)

The interviews shed more light on the reasons for the preferences expressed in the questionnaire responses, and also reflected the interviewee's experience, thus far, of living in the gated community. As might be expected, the priority reasons for moving reflected each household's personal circumstances, although taken as a whole the priorities of the interviewee group of residents was fairly representative of all 23 households who completed questionnaires. Property values was also top of the list overall, followed by security. In interview a male respondent, whose household consisted of a couple in their thirties and was therefore probably representative of the majority of the gated community residents, explained that it was hard to disentangle the different factors:

> *"when you're buying somewhere new, then yeah I definitely expect to have, you know, to have a decent specification of security system. ... it was just a kind of, add-on factor that … you know, would add to the whole package, sort of, further on down the line hopefully make it easier to sell on."* (B5)

One family with four children placed all factors (apart from proximity to job) as equally, and very, important in their questionnaire response. It became apparent during the interview that the female respondent's reasons for moving to a gated community were directly related to the fact that her husband worked in London, and that she was on her own with the children during the week:

"…the fact that you're behind the gate - which makes you feel that little bit more secure. ...a lot of the time I'm by myself. So the security thing is more sort of important. And I'm not worried then about going out and leaving one of the older children here. " (C3).

This household, and another household consisting of a single female, both considered the leisure facilities and 'moving into a community' very important. Clearly, for these particular households the gated community would mean less isolation, and an opportunity to have contact with neighbours when using the leisure facilities.

In the questionnaires residents were asked to indicate how they envisaged 'neighbourliness' developing at the Nether Edge gated community. Table 5 presents the results of this question.

Table 5 : Questionnaire responses: expectations of neighbourliness (n = 23)

	Very likely, or likely	*Neutral*	*Not likely, or not likely at all*
More contact with neighbours than in an ordinary street	73.9% (17)	21.7% (5)	4.3% (1)
Will make friends through use of the leisure facilities	52.1% (12)	47.8% (11)	0% (0)
Will make friends with other families through our children playing together	17.4% (4)	13% (3)	56.5% (13)

Of the interviewee group of residents, one household (a retired couple) considered it very likely that the gated community would prove much more neighbourly than an ordinary street, five households thought they would have more contact, and two were neutral in their expectations. When interviewed, this group of eight households proved to have very differing and subtle views on the concept of 'community' and 'neighbourliness'.

We attempted to probe for ideas about community which rested on having like-minded, similar neighbours. One interviewee, a single female in her fifties explained that she felt happy in the community because *"people that are moving in are people that look after properties",* When asked to expand on this assumption she replied*,*

> *"Well, I feel very safe … my neighbours are very nice .. they're caring and it's, it's a nice place to bring people to..."*

However, she explained that her contact with neighbours occurred mainly because:

> *"we all park our cars … sort of like next to each other so you meet people getting out of their cars."*

When asked about how neighbourliness was manifested she replied,

> *"People just say hello as you are going past. I don't want to live in everybody's pockets, I just thought it would be a nice atmosphere…"* (F4).

A range of other responses emerged from the interviews about preferences and the potential effects of living within the confines of a gated development. This interviewee was female, in her twenties, from a two person household with no children :

> *"Everybody keeps themselves to themselves and just gets on with it, which in a way I prefer."* (A1)

This rather negative view of community and neighbourliness was echoed by a female interviewee, from a household of two adults in their fifties with one teenager, who said

> *"If we found we were getting on top of other people we would move."* (D10).

A different perspective was provided by a retired male interviewee, from a household of two adults, who in the questionnaire had anticipated much more contact than in an ordinary street. In interview the respondent expanded on his views in this rather nostalgic comparison:

> *"we're quite cheek by jowl here, it's almost like living in terraced houses, back to the old days in Sheffield, and it's all very close."* (E12).

In interviews with two of the eight households, reservations were expressed about the security features, with which they felt uncomfortable:

> *"Well, it's just ... I think people should be able to walk around here like we walk round everybody else's streets"* (H2).

The other couple went so far as to disassociate themselves from the gated community:

> *"I don't see us being part of the community of this development ... for me, one of the attractions is actually living on the very edge of it."* (G22)

Both these couples, in their forties and fifties without children, were more attracted to the architectural features of the development and to its situation in the Nether Edge area, rather than to the fact of it being gated and self-managing.

Legal framework

The similarities between the legal frameworks for gated communities and for social rented developments have already been noted. There is a view that tying residents into a tight legal agreement about acceptable behaviour can enhance feelings of community, and we wanted to explore this further. The legal documents for the Nether Edge gated community were provided by the lawyer for the developer. They are drawn up as a 200 year three party lease between the developer, the leaseholders and the management company. All residents acquire a share of the management company when they purchase their lease, and each purchaser was asked to sign forms indicating their willingness to stand for the position of director and secretary of the company. The sheer complexity of the legal documents, including a 23 page lease with seven schedules, would be enough to overwhelm most purchasers, and indeed in interviews most had a very hazy idea of the legal framework.

When the last plot is sold, the freehold will be offered to the management company. The developer retains a 'golden share' in this company for the first year of its operation, and appoints the professional property management company which will carry out grounds maintenance and run the leisure facilities. The rights of the individual owners are restricted through the use of covenants in the lease, which can be enforced by other individual residents or the residents' management company on their behalf. The covenants aim to control the occupiers' use of the property in a way which seems at odds with our expectations of the freedom enjoyed by owner-occupiers. The lease forbids children to play in any communal areas except the designated play area, and the use of leisure facilities is restricted to those who permanently reside in the development, which clearly envisages a very self-contained community.

Other clauses in the Nether Edge lease include:
- o To clean all the interior and exterior surfaces of the windows of the Premises at least once in every four weeks;
- o Not to use the Premises for any illegal immoral or improper purpose and not to do nor allow to remain on the premises anything which may be or may become or cause a nuisance annoyance disturbance or annoyance to the landlord or the tenants;
- o Not to use or permit to be used in the Premises any musical instrument loud speaker radio or electric mechanical or other instrument or practise or permit any singing in the Premises so as to cause annoyance to other occupiers or between the hours of 11.00pm and 8.00am so as to be audible outside the Premises;

- Not to permit any laundry or other article to be hung or spread anywhere outside the Premises;
- Not to place any pots or other articles on any exterior window sill of the Premises.

These covenants can be seen as an example of the move towards very specific and detailed social control through legal enforcement measures. However, the prohibitions seem more characteristic of social rented landlords' tenancy agreements, such as Oldham's which runs to twenty-nine pages (Malik, 1998), designed to make it crystal clear exactly what types of anti-social behaviour are not acceptable. It is interesting to see how reminiscent some of the Nether Edge clauses are of local authority agreements of this type, and also of those prior to the 1980 Housing Act. Research which was conducted shortly after the 1980 legislation came into force concluded that tenancy agreements included fewer petty restrictions, but that 42% of agreements

"still tended to emphasise prohibitions on tenants such as long lists of 'the tenant shall not... ', including this example from Worthing:
- *The tenant shall not expose washing to the public view from the balcony or any other part of flats."* (Kay et al, 1985, 45-46).

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to say how important the covenants in the lease were, firstly in restricting their own use of the property, and secondly in ensuring that all residents kept to the covenants in the lease. Table 6 makes it clear that a majority felt that the second aspect was important, while most residents did not accord any importance to the fact that their own behaviour would be restricted.

Table 6 : Purchasers' view of the leasehold covenants (n = 23)

	Very important, or important	*Neutral*	*Not important, or not important at all*
Importance in restricting use of own property	30.4% (7)	30.4% (7)	39.1% (9)
Importance in ensuring all residents comply with the terms of the lease	78.2% (18)	21.7% (5)	0% (0)

The eight interviewee households also reflected these views. Most were completely indifferent to the fact that their use of their own property was restricted, except for two households: one of these had been through the lease with a fine tooth comb, and had negotiated various changes (such as being able to erect a rotary dryer in the garden), and the other household had initially been sent the wrong type of lease. Two of the interviewee households were indifferent to the fact that the same restrictions would ensure all other residents kept to the terms of the lease, but the majority felt this was very important. In the interviews, most residents were able to list some of the covenants which they had signed up to, but the impression given was that they did not have a thorough knowledge of the detailed provisions. Two interviewees felt that having the covenants was a 'positive' feature of the community, because it ensured uniformity of the look of the development, and conformity to acceptable behavioural standards.

Once the residents' management company has been established, it will be responsible for enforcement of the covenants. We were therefore interested in the views of residents about how they envisaged the management company being run, and whether they would be prepared to take part. Just over half the interviewees were confused about the difference between the residents' management company, and the professional management company appointed by the developer which had already started on maintenance work around the site. We asked the interviewees how they would deal with a neighbour who was clearly in breach of their covenants. This was a typical response, from an interviewee who had already had to sort out a dispute over common garden areas with a neighbour:

> *"Well, we dealt with it by having a conversation really, as you would anyway. But I think anything major […] then I think again that would be for the management committee. […] we're not sure about, any of us, how that will materialise. We're assuming it will be facilitated somehow."* (C3)

We also interviewed the developer on the issue of management companies and residents' associations. His views, based on previous experience of similar developments to Nether Edge, were quite remarkable in their reflection of the same themes as those which emerge from research into tenant participation:

> *"... we (the developers) are always a very positive, uniting, force - in the negative. ... But, I just think communities just form. There'll be those who don't care, there'll be those who care as long as somebody else does it, and ... there's always one or two who always wanted their opportunity to be a local politician. And being the chairman of the residents' association is 'it' for them. ... there's probably some common aspect that makes these people want to be what they are.*
> *"... you tend to watch how it's beginning to form, and then we cultivate the right people to lead it, which is in our best interests, but hopefully in the residents' best interests. ... There are not that many things you should, in a well-run development, that you should get passionate about."*

He further reflected on the way that the layout of the gated community might affect the development of community feeling, and therefore the management by residents:

> *"the way the accesses work, I'm wondering if we'll have four distinct communities, or whether we will have one community. … At the moment they'll unify behind "we're in the refurbished apartments, and we were the first in", then we'll get the new-build people unifying behind "We'll we're the New-Build people", and I can see the [name of large refurbished block] residents unifying behind "We're in one big distinct building". But, then throw in the leisure opening and of course, that should have a different input, because of course then you'll get the "well I am sporty" or "I'm not sporty" and that may just mix it up enough to blend them."*

Most of the resident interviewees had not appreciated that they would be called upon to manage the community themselves when the last plot was sold, until this was explained to them in the course of the interview. The household consisting of a retired couple indicated on their questionnaire response that they thought 'management of the estate' would be very likely to bring a sense of community. Another respondent anticipated that neighbourliness would be enhanced by being 'part of the [gated community] residents' association'. These well-informed respondents were the exception. However, although

some residents said that time constraints would prevent them getting involved, more than half were prepared to consider giving some time to the management of the community:

> *"To be honest, I don't think it's unreasonable to do a couple of hours every month, just getting people to give their opinions first and then obviously put them into the meeting."* (A1)

Very much in line with tenant participation literature, and the developer's own experience, some interviewees were motivated to get involved by disputes that had already emerged:

> *"It is something that I would probably consider because there are certain things that people have suggested (speed bumps) that I think are totally unreasonable so I want to make sure that those people aren't the ones that are going on (to the committee)."* (A1).

Relationship with the wider community of Nether Edge

So far we have not been able to carry out interviews with local residents who live close to but not inside the gated community. This would be necessary to get a real flavour of how the gated community has affected the surrounding neighbourhood, and how those outside the gates view their new neighbours. However, the development of the gated community in Nether Edge has attracted a great deal of attention, not least from the pre-existing, thriving Nether Edge Neighbourhood Group (NENG). The pages of the group's newsletter EDGE indicate that tensions may be developing between those inside and those outside the gates, and in this section of the paper we draw on interviews with the gated community residents, and articles and letters in EDGE to further explore these tensions.

In many ways the wider neighbourhood of Nether Edge sounds like the ideal community, held together by plenty of social capital. For example, NENG was founded in 1973:

> *'with the purpose of preserving and fostering the amenities of the area. … We publish 'EDGE' nine times a year. Membership is by voluntary subscription. … Our Planning Group examines every planning application affecting our area … From its earliest beginnings there has been a luncheon club for the housebound, which provides a midday meal and conversation every Monday, made possible by a team of volunteer cooks and drivers.'* (EDGE, December 2001)

Residents of Nether Edge (the district) have used the pages of EDGE to express and share their reactions to the gated community as it was planned, marketed, and built:

> *"I was very surprised and saddened to see [in the developers' brochure] the huge concentration it had on providing those who bought properties on the development with 'security'. … If ghettos are created, in the end the likelihood of social disorder is, in my view, greater."* (Letter, October 2001)

> *"What appalled me about the brochure were repeated references to SECURITY. Has no-one told Gleesons and their prospective purchasers that Nether Edge is already a safe and pleasant place to live? The notion that strangers equal trouble is not only mistaken but also deeply offensive."* (Article, October 2001)

The debate about the problems posed by having a gated community in the area are still ongoing and reflect a 'them and us' attitude, with little indication of a reconciliation between the residents within and outside of the GC. One interviewee referred to some graffiti:

> "just on a wall, some idiot had daubed, 'This way to the middle class ghetto'. […] I mean even old neighbours of ours down there said, "Oh, are you going to that ghetto?" sort of thing." (E12)

Residents in the wider neighbourhood have expressed concern that those within the GC are withdrawing from their community, to the detriment of community spirit:

> "I went to look around [the gated community], open-minded, with perhaps a view to one day… but came away very depressed with this ghetto feeling – a total isolation from real life and ordinary people." (Letter, December 2001/January 2002)

> "By shutting themselves in, and thereby excluding us local 'undesirables', they have failed to realize that life in Nether Edge is also about people; about sharing and caring; about the rich variety of culture in our local community, the inclusion of those who have different values and beliefs. Inclusion will not make life more insecure, exactly the reverse." (Letter, May/June 2003).

> "I feel the residents [of the gated community] cannot call themselves Nether Edgers, as one of the joys of living here is the mix of people." (Letter, May/June 2003).

At least one resident of the gated community is a member of NENG and has written in EDGE to put forward a more balanced view of the new development:

> "I know that some people feel that EDGE is too negative… I am pleased that my family is able to play a part in encouraging the sympathetic restoration and preservation of interesting old buildings, by choosing to buy a property here [in the gated community]". (Editorial, March/April 2003).

This was followed up by responses from two local residents in the following issue of EDGE:

> "I can now only read of the renovations inside the boundary wall. The real heart of Nether Edge is denied to me and all the residents of Nether Edge."
> "When we pass by the complex with its 'quieter, cleaner and safer for children' roads, we are shut out by pairs of tightly shut gates. […] I am delighted that residents of the Nether Edge development might wish to take part in the local community. You will find the world outside your gates is a relatively safe one, full of friendly people too." (Letters, May/June, 2003)

In the interviews we asked whether the respondent household would join NENG. One household's completed questionnaire stated that they anticipated '*contact with the wider Nether Edge community*' would increase the sense of neighbourliness. Interestingly, the two households which were identified as feeling uncomfortable with the security features of the gated community, were both very positive about becoming members. However, the hostility of some local people had of course been noticed by the gated community residents:

> "I've had the little Newsletter thing through which I thought was quite interesting

because they spend the whole article saying how it was like Colditz, even though now they've been up having a good snoop round, which I thought, well… I don't really want to be part of them if that's what they think." (A1)

Another said:

"I probably would get the newsletter just to find out what's going on, … but we're not really sort of joiners of things… I can't imagine getting together to discuss dog-pooh and things." (G22).

Conclusions

This paper has considered the impact GCs have upon the residents of the wider community and those within the confines of the gates. A striking feature of the data presented here is that residents within the confines of the GC regard their rights and responsibilities as confined to the legalities and management functions of the development, with only a few residents committed to enhancing social networks within the development or within the adjacent community. This paper has suggested that this form of living with a strong legal regime and close monitoring of behaviour and the weakening of social ties inevitably has far reaching implications for community cohesion, and not least, the antagonism that has been created between the residents within and outside resulting in the development of a 'them and us' mentality. GCs are likely to grow in number in England and their impact, as documented here, is far reaching bringing about a change in the ways in which the wider community is regarded and perceived with insular living becoming more attractive to many people.

The empirical data used in this paper is from a small scale study, but nevertheless it highlights the need for further research to inform policy and to consider the sustainability and the longer term effects of GCs upon social networks and community values.

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