The double function of the gate
Social inclusion and exclusion in gated communities and security zones

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Silver Creek Country Club, a gated golf course community in California © Brian Rose (www.brianrose.com). Published in De Rooij, 2000
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Abstract

The EUREX course has dealt with three issues: the spatial impact of ongoing transformation processes, the role of housing, and social exclusion. This paper argues that the spatial impact of ongoing transformation processes leads to a (new) transformation in housing supply in European countries. One of the consequences is the rise of gated communities. Both the community aspect and the gate aspect are questioned. The author asserts that the gate serves a double function of social inclusion and social exclusion. Starting from American literature the paper questions the applicability of the American perspective on Europe. After making up Dutch examples of gated communities, the paper discusses the social conditions for the rise of gated communities in Europe.

Introduction

A gated community is – very easily put – a community surrounded by a fence and provided with a fence for entrance. In the many so-called gated communities in the United States it is not so easy as it seems; the community aspect, as well as the gate aspect is questionable. Aside, from these questions, the ‘newness’ of the concept is questionable. Blakely & Snyder (1997a, p. 85) use the following definition: “gated communities are residential areas with restricted access such that normally public spaces have been privatised.” In the middle ages many people, especially Europeans lived in a gated community – we just used to call them ‘cities’ back then. They were shelters or safe havens from ‘strange’ people. Nowadays, most American cities are not so safe anymore, but the citizens are still searching for a safe haven were unwanted elements are excluded. Many choose to live in the newly erected structures we have become familiar with under the name of gated communities. Recently, Europeans started to discuss gated communities as well (in the Netherlands for example: Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 1996; Brunt, 1996, Brandt, 1998; Van der Wouden, 1999; Beun et al, 1999; Gabrielsson, 2000; De Rooij, 2000; Oude Ophuis, 2001; Van der Boomen, 2001; Aalbers, 2001b; Huisman, 2001; Den
Boer, 2001). The questions are always: what is the potential for the rise of gated communities in the Netherlands?; and, is it a good or a bad thing? I would like to add a few questions: are gated communities excluding people? Who exclude and who are excluded? Do all gated communities exclude in the same way? Could it be the case that some gated communities can be considered ‘unwanted developments’, while this may not be the case for all gated communities?

The American legacy

According to Davis (1992) fear and safety have become obsessions to many Americans. New housing projects close to cities like Los Angeles are – above all – reviewed on the protection against crime and assaults they provide its residents. From the sixties on, many Americans fled the (central) cities. Many urban neighbourhoods were abandoned and redlined, and crime was rising. This promoted a further move out of these neighbourhoods. Crime, after all, found her way to the suburbs as well. People tried to protect their families, but it seems they mainly tried to protect the value of their houses. The first gates were erected in already existing neighbourhoods, when it turned out housebreaking alarms and neighbourhood patrols could not solve the rising crime and declining housing values. These were not the first real gated communities: they were never designed that way, there are often quite small (usually consisting of just one block on one street) and the walling and gating measures were taken on an ad hoc basis.

Though the image of the gated communities is one in which a high solid wall is interrupted by a single gate, which is heavily guarded, most walls are not that solid, are interrupted by various gates, or are not even completely walled. Moreover, most are not guarded by private enterprises. Most of the gated communities use keypad systems, a much smaller part is operated by guards, e.g. 14 percent in San Antonio and 5 percent in Houston (Harris & Evans, 1999).

The first gated communities were retirement settlements in southern Florida and California, where those over a specified age could take refuge from increasingly violent urban areas. Some find it ironic that so many residents feel threatened while crime statistics are trending downward. Others point out that there is no evidence that gated communities are any more crime-free than surrounding areas. However perception is what counts, and residents of gated communities feel safer. As the Thomas theorema says ‘situations are defined as real if they are real in their consequences’. The fear of rising crime leads to an increase in the popularity of gated communities. It is however not sure that crime rates are lower in gated communities than in surrounding areas. Moreover, if crime occurs in a gated community it may take police and

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1 “Almost 90 percent of Americans think crime is getting worse. (...) More than two-thirds of the [residents of gated communities] believed there was less crime in their developments than in the surrounding areas. Of these, a full 80 percent attributed the difference to the gates” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999, p. 125-126).
emergency services longer to get to the residence because of the gates. The walls and gates provide a reduction in automobile traffic. There is the added benefit of making the neighbourhood safer for children at play and those who walk the streets.

Gated communities are to be found in all parts of the world. The subject has been given most attention in the United States, where the highest valuations estimate that nowadays more than 32 million Americans (12 percent) live in a gated community – a number which is still rising. The ‘safe’ controlled environment is in popular demand for many real estate agents and private developers who offer their properties in model homes or at their offices, while websites provide curious and potential clients with more information than most European real estate agents and private developers do on site visits. An advantage for developers is the higher price gated communities often generate.

Within a gated community the mix of residents pursued it often hardly a mix: homogeneity is the right word – also in respect to the design of most of the developments. Some gated communities are focussed on families, others on busy double income couples or on senior citizens. Specialisation on a central theme is also common. Most well known are the golf communities.

New homes in over 40 percent of planned developments are gated in the West, the South and the southeastern parts of the United States (Blakely & Snyder, 1999). Gated communities are often associated with prestigious high-cost housing, although they are not limited to upscale developments. One-third of the gated communities are luxury developments for the upper and upper-middle class, another one-third are retirement oriented and the remainder is mostly for the middle class, although there are a growing number of working-class gated communities (Blakely & Snyder, 1999).

De Rooij (2000) sees the gate as a marketing instrument: the gate is the metaphor for safety and exclusiveness. Gated communities not only have to be free of crime, but also have to keep housing values up. A problem might be that most gated communities are hardly flexible and very static. They can get ‘out of style’ which can lead to soaring real estate values.

Gated communities, defended neighbourhoods and security zones

In the American literature gated communities are distinguished from defended neighbourhoods. A defended neighbourhood is characterised by similar buildings and strict borders. For this purpose a defended neighbourhood has been given a name and an identity, usually already in the (pre-) development stage. Most defended neighbourhoods are socially and culturally homogeneous.

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2 In Brazil for instance, gated communities are known as condomínios fechados.
A gated community features the same characteristics as a defended neighbourhood, but is also gated and walled, frequently with a central guarded entrance. Within a defended neighbourhood road and other signs as well as a (closed) video circuit often suggest it’s a private property, while this is not the case. The cameras and signs are meant to make outsiders clear they don’t belong here. Most gated communities not only make this known at the entrance, but also within the gates. While gated communities have legal authority to withhold access to outsiders, defended neighbourhoods don’t have this authority. The legal aspect is important in relation to another aspect. ‘Open’ space (with the exception of private gardens) within a defended neighbourhood should be considered ‘public space’, while all space within a gated community should be considered ‘private’. The private entity responsible for maintenance of the ‘open’ space is the homeowner association. But public space thus becomes privatised or parochialised and accessibility is a major issue, because public space is broken down.

The authors of the book *Fortress America*, Blakely & Snyder (1997a; 1997b; 1999) distinguish three types of gated communities: lifestyle communities, elite or prestige communities and security zone communities. These three types all reflect to varying degrees four social dimensions or values (see table 1).

In the lifestyle communities, gates guarantee safety and exclusion of those who are not wanted inside the walls. Inside these walls leisure activities and amenities are there to please the included. The most well known examples of lifestyle communities are retirement resorts, the golf and leisure communities and the suburban new town. The security measures attempt more to establish control than to protect against criminals. The lifestyle community did not so much come about from a negative push, but more out of the wish to be amongst like-minded and share common interests like golf. Or, as one of the residents says: “It’s a different lifestyle, and I bought the lifestyle” (Blakely & Snyder, 1997a, p. 92).

The role of status is very important in the prestige communities where the gates are a symbol of economic and social status and of ‘doing well’. Prestige developments do not offer any recreational amenities. They include neighbourhoods for the rich and famous and for economic top-fifth and executives. Prestige communities were, just like retirement communities, among the first gated communities in the United States. Everything is directed to the exclusion of uncertainty and disturbing factors – in others words: stability is the key word. The purpose is to create a socially and physically sound environment to guarantee the economic and social status the residents of these communities have worked for.
Private builders and developers, and homeowner associations do not only develop gated communities, large multinationals like the Disney Corporation take a stake in the development as well. Close to Disney Land in Florida, the Disney Corporation develops a prestige lifestyle community named **Celebration City**. The corporation does the design and the rules as well as the operation and the maintenance of this settlement. In 1996 the first residents got in. Last year the city had almost 20,000 inhabitants. The houses in Celebration are carried out in six different neo-classical styles and are very popular: there were 5000 serious respondents to the first 300 houses. Usually, the first part of a new development is the most difficult sell. The whole city has a new/old bias that is supposed to bring the residents back to the idyll of *small-town America*. The houses and Market Street are on the other hand supplied with all comforts of the 21st century.

Together with Disney World, Celebration City employs over 30,000 people, but it has a status on its own within Florida. It holds no responsibilities towards local government, because the State of Florida enacted an act in 1967 which exempted all property owned by the Disney Corporation from normal procedures, making it an autonomous entity. This means Disney can make out its own taxes its own building regulations and is exempted from local as well as county taxes and legislation.

A third type of gated community is the **security zone community**, where the fear of crime and outsiders in the foremost motivation for defensive fortifications. These fortifications and barriers are supposed to protect personal belongings against crime. Barricades are meant to give the residents a sense of control of their neighbourhood back. The city perch, the suburban perch and the barricade perch are examples of security zones communities. “Barricade perches are not fully gated communities; they are not completely walled or fenced and all entrances are not secured with gates. (…) The barricades create a suburban cul-de-sac pattern out of the city grid” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999, p. 43-44). They are called perches, because it was not the developers who built the gates but the residents. These security zones were not built as gated communities, but have become fortified after the original development stage. Here, the gated community is not erected by a developer, but by a group of residents who already live in the neighbourhood. Security zones are to be found at all income levels and in all areas.

Seagate in New York City is a security zone for the upper-middle class. **Seagate** is bordered by water on three sides and is the western part of the Coney Island peninsula. It is part of the borough of Brooklyn. Bordering by the Atlantic, but on a subway distance from Manhattan, this would in theory be a splendid and popular location. In fact, Coney Island was a very popular neighbourhood and was well known for its beaches and its pleasure island fun fair. Times changed, but Coney
Island eventually didn’t. The number of visitors dwindled and the adjacent neighbourhoods lost population. Behind the beach, buildings were cleared and vacant lots were used for building huge, monotone public housing projects. As a consequence Coney Island lost more of its original middle class population, even more visitors and above all its good name. In theory, this was still a popular location. But crime and decay made it a very unpopular one. Excluding these elements, but using its qualities, the gated community of Seagate was erected. Approximately 40 blocks of apartment buildings, detached housing and large country houses were enclosed while the public housing projects nearby were excluded by one single guarded gate. Cardrivers need identification to get in. Pedestrians can get in without showing identification. Only late night they need to show some identification.

On the low end, there are security zones that try to keep out drug dealing, prostitution, and drive-by shootings. Following Marcuse (1997) we could see this type of security zone as defending survival, while most of the other types are protecting privileges and amenities. People in these types of settlements are more often excluded, than they exclude others. They don’t exclude others so much by choice, but by lack of choice. Blocking off some streets and alleys, and installing fencing makes it harder to drive into the area or to make a quick getaway. By means of excluding – or better, by means of trying to exclude – they are trying to survive. Because they are excluded socially, economically and physically they have no choice to exclude themselves from the only things of which they are not excluded: drug dealing and crime. The excluded groups often respond by imposing boundaries on even weaker groups, which results in so-called ‘dual’ closure² (Parkin, 1974; Vranken, 2001)

Security zones and many other gated communities are designed with the use of defensible space techniques. Defensible space techniques are not only used for the development of gated communities. On the contrary, proponents of this approach see it as an alternative to gated communities. It is not to be ignored however, that many gated communities employ the principles of defensible space.

The defensible space approach (Newman, 1972) relies on a bundle of techniques, such as appropriately placed fencing, that define spaces in a manner that discourages criminal activity for both the individual buildings and whole neighbourhoods. Newman’s fundamental assumption is that most criminals behave with some rationality, selecting for their crimes locations they will believe will offer high rewards but very low risk of getting caught. Outside spaces become more defensible if they are clearly demarcated, are easily observable, have good lighting and are

² The Dutch translation of ‘social exclusion’ and ‘social closure’ is both ‘sociale uitsluiting’.
removed of visual borders. Single-family houses are most defensible, because building entrances and outside spaces are used and controlled by only one household; that is, they are ‘private’. Apartment buildings have semi-public spaces which are more easily accessible if the number of apartments served by one entrance is higher because more apartments means more ‘no-man’s land’ (Newman, 1972; Cisneros, 1996).

This approach has had considerable success in several public housing projects (Cisneros, 1996). There is little doubt that visible evidence of decay can start the downward spiral. On the other hand, can physical improvements lessen residents’ fear, increase their involvement, and actually reduce crime? According to Newman (1972) and Cisneros (1996) there is evidence that they can. In the **Five Oaks** neighbourhood in Dayton, Ohio, property values had declined, crime had increased and many homeowners wanted to move, but found them unable to find buyers at an acceptable price. Many properties were converted to rentals. The neighbourhood went further down when drug dealers and prostitutes (serving a higher income clientele) entered the neighbourhood. Newman was asked for advice and proposed a barricade porch by closing streets to through traffic. The streets were not completely shut off: openings at the gates would permit free access to pedestrians and automobiles could still drive through the portals, because they were not locked. With financial aid of the City the plan was implemented in the fall of 1992. Between 1992 and 1993 non-violent crime fell by 24 percent and violent crime by 50 percent; internal traffic declined by 65 percent and accidents by 40 percent. The average price of a house increased by 15 percent (Newman, 1992; Cisneros, 1996). The communicating vessel theory (if crime goes down in one place, it has to go up in another) turned out to be invalid in this case: crime rates in adjacent neighbourhoods were also declining. The improvement of Five Oaks was a catalyst for near-by neighbourhoods. Cisneros (1996) responds to the criticism that defensible space simply moves the problem around spatially by stating that this is by itself a benefit.

A danger is that the criminal element may not leave. A perimeter fence around a project could actually make matters worse for residents when drug dealings and gangs control the internal turf, because the fence only consolidates that control. As Newman (1972; 1992) has emphasised, fences should break up and allocate spaces internally, not wall off a development from its surrounding environment.

Another danger is that low- and moderate-income households are priced out of security zones, because real estate price might be increasing. The challenge is to exclude no one economically and physically, but criminals. Five Oaks seems to have reached that goal; there are no barriers to pedestrians and no high, solid walls.
The development of gated communities shows only one side of the medal. The rise of gated communities goes hand in hand with the hyperghettoisation of many black neighbourhoods. Blakely & Snyder’s *Fortress America* and Massey & Denton’s *American Apartheid* (1993) describe two extremes of the same processes, of the same society. Put very simply: the people who live in *Fortress America* are socially excluding by their physic and social walls, while the people who live in the ghetto’s of *American Apartheid* are excluded from mainstream social, cultural and economic live – they are walled out literally and metaphorical.

The first two sections of this paper were limited to gated communities in the United States. We can not simply suppose the American situation and American examples are representative for the European case. “The basic argument (…) is that the European urban system is different from the American, that the appreciation of an urban culture never has finished, and that the local states are strongly regulated” (Häußermann, 2001, p. 8). The next two sections of this paper will focus mainly on the Dutch case and more broadly on the European case. This section will highlight some important differences that give potential for the rise of gated communities on both sides of the Atlantic. The next section will focus on some examples of gated communities in the Netherlands.

The European societies are very different from the American society. Very basically, there is the difference between the very liberal welfare state in the United States and the more social-democratic and conservative welfare states in most of Europe. This has some very important consequences for the housing markets in these countries. Often the focus on homeownership in the United States is seen as a major difference, but quantitative the difference in modal split between the social and the private rental market is bigger. Social housing in the United States consists of two percent of the housing stock; this is forty percent in the Netherlands. Partly as a consequence public housing in the United States is stigmatised. Public housing is seen as the last possibility and once someone lives in public housing it is hard to get out. The motto is up and out and this not only cites to the housing itself but also to the whole situation the residents of public housing find themselves in. Unemployment rates are high and the reliance on public assistance is big. Often Housing Authorities are not only housing people but are also a welfare institution who have to help their residents to get up – and thus get out (Aalbers, 2001a).

Although the difference between social rented and private rented housing might be the biggest one statistically, we should not underestimate the importance of homeownership in the United States:

For most American families, buying a home is the largest, most important, most expensive, and most complicated financial transaction they will make. Owning one’s own home is a critical rung on the ladder
to the American Dream, but a lack of information and the relatively limited availability of affordable housing options still prevent many families from purchasing their own home. Several programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are devoted to enabling Americans to achieve the dream of homeownership. (HUD, 2000, p. 31)

Up until the 1970’s there were a lot of places in the US were you could not vote a local election if you owned no property. The pressure in favour of home-ownership is very strong in the US. The number one cliché in American life is that home-ownership stabilises neighbourhoods (Aalbers, 2001a). During his first presidency (1993-1996) Clinton launched the National Homeownership Strategy, a program that should make the construction of 8 million new homeownership units possible. Since Bush has taken over, a lot has changed, but the federal government is still promoting homeownership. Most Americans believe in the positive functions of homeownership. This is becomes very clearly when listening to former-president Clinton:

If we really want all our communities to be revitalised again, we not only have to create opportunities for poor people, we have to make the environment so that the middle-class people will want to live in them again, and that the poor and the middle class will live side by side, as they did in the neighbourhoods when I grew up. (...) Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. (HUD, 1996, p. 1-2)

Because homeownership is ideologically very important and it serves as a retirement insurance as well, maintaining property values is very important. If people believe gated communities will insure property values, gated communities will be in popular demand. According to Strassmann (2001) both American researchers and residents see moving to a better neighbourhood as the major indication of social mobility. European researchers and citizens have less sense of reflecting social mobility by neighbourhood choice. Americans move more than Europeans – almost twice as many times as the Dutch (Strassmann, 2001). In the United States housing mobility and high turnover are seen as positive, while Europeans often try to adapt their house to their circumstances, and high turnover is associated with the development of “more disadvantaged, unstable and fragmented communities” (Cameron & Field, 2001, p. 828).

Europeans have a greater sense of historical sensibility towards space than the Americans (Van der Wouden, 1999). The frontier mentality still lives in the United States: “In the unsettled, unsettling environment of Edge City, great wealth may be acquired, but without a sense that the place has community or even a centre, but much less a soul” (Garreau, 1991, p. 14). The gated community is just a new innovation in a long historical trend to ever more controlled, ever more privatised residential environments.
Fishman (1987) sees the renewed linkage of work and residence as the basic principle in the structure of ‘new’ urban patterns. The classic suburbanisation has separated work and residence into distinct environments, but the ‘new’ urban settlements (or technoburbs, as Fishman calls them) often contain both work and residence within a single decentralised environment. Many fear that those ‘new’ settlements, like gated communities cannot generate diversity, because “culture is necessarily reduced to a lowest common denominator, the crass conformity of which will act as a barrier to individualism and freedom” (Fishman, 1987, p. 201). The suburbanisation is fed by anti-urban sentiments. The public urban life is deliberately kept out of people’s lives. According to Lofland (1998, p. 172) it is “reasonable to hypothesise that the antiurbanism that created the privatistic built environment and life-style (...) is now itself fed by that very privatism.”

We have to face the fact that the American housing market is shaped by the free market processes first, while in the Netherlands market forces are suspended by government agencies: “In many instances, cities are the product of property systems dominated by a market regime, private ownership of land and buildings and a non-interventionist ethic. In the Dutch case, the reverse is true” (Dieleman & Hamnett, 1994, p. 362).

In the United States private property is very important. But federal government and private banks’ policy have made homeownership impossible for many Americans, because they have redlined – excluded from mortgages – many (mostly black) neighbourhoods for many years. This seems like a paradox, but the very risk of being redlined makes stable communities – in which prices will hopefully not sink – so important. Because differences between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ neighbourhoods in the United States are so much bigger than in Europe, people want to make sure they don’t get stuck in a ‘bad’ neighbourhood. The worst neighbourhoods become ghetto’s. Ghettoisation is partly the result of “redlining by banks and insurance companies, zoning, panic peddling by real estate agents, and the creation of massive public housing projects in low-income areas” (Wilson, 1996, p. 24).

Wilson’s middle-ground concept of social isolation describes the interaction between culture and structure. The socially isolated are deprived from means and resources to participate optimally in mainstream life. They lack access to institutions and networks and the knowledge with would be able to give them access (Wilson, 1996; Kasinitz, 2000). Kasinitz claims that Wilson’s notion of social isolation implicates that a large share of the ghetto residents doesn’t have the abilities or the will to live up to the norms of society. Because of their increasing social isolation they will also be less able to share the norms of the mainstream:

Wilson seeks to differentiate social isolation from a culture of poverty, arguing that structural factors are causal and cultural ones are reactive. Yet, both are presumed to play a role in the perception of poverty. (…) My experience in Red Hook suggests that both processes – isolation and integration – are going on at the same time. Indeed, they reinforce each other. (Kasinitz, 2000, p. 269)
Fortunately, there is no situation to be found in the Netherlands that comes close to the American black ghetto. The concentrations of both poor people and ethnic minorities are relatively low (Musterd, 2001). In 1995 only in a quarter of the four largest cities the share of ethnic minorities had mounted to at least 30 percent (Tesser et al, 1995). But, since 1995 concentrations have increased. Relative segregation did not increase, but the absolute number of ethnic minorities is rising much faster than the number of ‘ethnic Dutch’. As a consequence, the number of neighbourhoods with a share of at least 50 percent ethnic minorities is growing. Within twenty years, the city of Amsterdam will be a majority-minority city: the number of all ethnic minorities taken together will be higher than the number of the ‘ethnic Dutch’. This is only an extrapolation of current trends. It is not sure if and when the ‘ethnic Dutch’ will decide to flee the city and hide in their enclaves.

In the meantime the structure of the housing market is changing as well. Privatisation of social housing, an increased share of homeownership and market rents on some social rented estates may lead to larger concentrations of the deprived, who in turn will get more deprived. If economic deprivation can lead to physical deprivation, physical deprivation feeds on the economic deprivation. Polarisation is thus not to be ruled out.

The type of welfare state is an important condition for the impact of gated communities in a country. Gated communities seem to arise mainly in countries where government is hardly assigned to collective amenities (both in supply and financial aid). Partly as a consequence, income differentiation is relatively large in such countries. More social tension and higher crime rates usually attend this. The relative number of gated communities is larger in liberal welfare states like the United States than in more conservative, corporatist or socialist welfare states as within the European Union. In underdeveloped countries and in countries with a colonial past that feature a small, but very rich upper class, gated communities are also very common.

On the one hand, the limited government responsibility in the United States gives people a reason to take care of their own amenities; on the other hand, the more extended responsibility of European governments throws up a barrier for people to organise their own amenities. Because government agencies provide amenities, Europeans pay more tax and the incentives for providing amenities yourself are smaller. If Europeans provide their own amenities, they will have to pay for the supply twice: once through the taxes and once for their own provision.

Van Engelsdorp-Gastelaars (1996) sees the importance of homeownership, the existence of large social differentiation and the fragmentation of government as the main conditions for the rise of gated communities. Since the importance (both numerically and culturally) of homeownership is rising in most European countries, European societies are socially and culturally becoming more
and more pluriform, and government responsibilities are shifting both to higher and lower levels of governance as well as to semi-public and private actors. The conditions for the rise of gated communities are positively shifting.

**Dutch examples**

Brandt (1998) analysed the housing supply and demand of the Dutch elite and came to the conclusion that for reasons of desired safety, exclusiveness and – less important – a sense of community, the demand for gated communities is rising. In the Netherlands there are no completely fortified neighbourhoods. On a smaller scale, a lot of gated communities are to be found. I have put the Dutch examples in three categories: elite lifestyle communities, recreational communities and urban security zones (see Table 2). I have tried to please the different examples in the gated community model of Blakely & Snyder (1997a; 1999), but the fault lines between the different types of gated communities turned out to be different. This may indicate gated communities in the Netherlands are fundamentally different for those in the United States. We have to be careful with this conclusion, since both Blakely & Snyder’s and my typology are based on analytically ideal-typically classification grounds of the authors’ impression and not on a analytically value-free classification.

**Elite communities** in the Netherlands seem to go hand in hand with lifestyle communities. A few gated communities with golf courses are to be found. In the new town of Lelystad for example, it is possible – if you have the financial possibilities – to live in a golf community. The word ‘gated community’ – or a Dutch equivalent is hardly ever mentioned. I found one exception in which the phrase ‘gated community’ is literally (that is, in English) used, while the rest of the text Dutch. This considers a plan for a small gated community in country estate style called Meer en Berg (Lake and Hill).\(^5\) Besides the golf course communities, country estate communities are the big things in elite communities. Where in the golf course communities people have to belong to the economic elite to be part of a lifestyle community, in the country estate communities economic capital is necessary for an exclusive environment. The country estate communities are by definition small of scale. A newly built neighbourhood in the middle-sized city of Den Bosch will feature a couple real castles with tens of homes and apartments each. The neighbourhood consists of several gated communities grouped together. Usually the fencing of apartment buildings is not considered in the gated community literature. These settlements are excluded from analysis since they are seen as one complex, one building of

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\(^5\) “Daarnaast is er in de randbossage tegen de sportvelden nog een besloten woonvereniging getekend met een collectieve buitenruimte (gated community).”

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which security measures are taken at a lower level. If we include apartment buildings in our analysis we will see that the trend of fortifying also takes its grip here. Especially apartment buildings on the high end of the market are fortified and fenced more heavily than they were when they were erected, and often, newly erected buildings are more fortified as well. Moreover, the residents of the building are more and more not only protecting the building itself, but also its surroundings. The economic elite in the city is as able as those in the new towns to exclude others of their amenities, whether it is a golf course or a swimming pool.

Recreational communities can be found in large numbers all over the Netherlands. Strikingly, the first gated communities in the Netherlands were not as much targeted at the rich, but at the middle and even the lower classes. Many allotment garden associations have heavily fenced their properties. A number of allotment gardens are not only used for cultivation of vegetables but also for spending part of the year. Often, the rules of garden allotments association are very strict. People who don’t live up to the rules have a bigger chance of being shut out of an allotment garden association than they are of being shut out of social housing.

Most of the recreational gated communities in the Netherlands are to be found in bungalow parks, trailer parks, summerhouse parks and the like. All of these settlements are meant for temporarily inhibition, but many are inhabited the year round. These recreational communities are to be found at all income levels and in many places. They are inhabited by people who are unable to find a regular home, by urbanites who have left the city, by people who sold their house or terminated their lease and moved into their second home which became their first home, and by people who seek a place where they can easily re-adapt their home. The last group usually has had enough of the many building, construction and aesthetic rules regular homes are subject to. The first group – people who are to find a regular house – are usually young local people who are put on a long waiting list for social housing and are unable to buy a house since many fortunate urbanites have raised real estate prices in their region. People at the beginning of their housing careers are usually hit hardest by tension on the housing market. This not only includes young adults, but also divorced people, immigrants and people who are faced with income drops.

Port Zélande is one of the most well known recreational communities in the Netherlands – it has almost become archetypal. Recently a television documentary showed how residents of this community are masking themselves and their children for the outside world. An eight-year-old child had never seen traffic lights.\(^6\) It is questionable how some of these over protected children will do once they are adults and relatively autonomous in society. Port Zélande is not an exception. Hundreds, if not thousands, of these settlements are to be found. The level of fencing is differing:
some communities are completely fenced and have only one gate. Keys or plastic cards provide entrance. Barriers are usually put up for cars, not for bikes and pedestrians. These recreational communities are sometimes equipped with amenities like swimming pools or tennis courts. This is not necessarily the case. The presence of these amenities can be the foremost reason living in a recreational community. More people chose it because of its relatively cheap location on the countryside or because it is not a row house or an apartment. They usually say that they chose it to live ‘near nature’ or ‘out of the city’, and only indicate that they chose a recreational community over a regular house because of the price differences. The fear of crime and decay are also mentioned quite frequently. Some people refer to the ‘people’s architecture’; in recreational communities the architecture of the buildings is decided by the people and not by architects or government rules. Not only are the buildings ‘not as ugly’ as those in regular settlements, building codes are not enforced as strictly and leave more room for personal needs and personal taste. On the low end of the recreational communities people often refer to the community aspect of their community. Sometimes the sense of community in the ‘old’ urban neighbourhood is considered lost, but reviving in a recreational community.

Elite and recreational communities are mostly found in or near new towns and on the countryside, security zones, on the other hand, are mostly found in urban areas. More settlements nowadays are fenced. Urban security zones were not built as gated communities, but have become gated communities when residents decided to gate or fence their surroundings. Often, the perceived level of crime or nuisance is the prime reason for fencing or gating. In the urban renewal areas in the inner city of Amsterdam residential, retail, office, manufacturing functions were often mixed at a low level. In the same way, the borders between public and private space were sometimes left vague. The designers paid no attention to the fact that a modern city sometimes needs sharp borders between public and private spaces. After a couple of years semi-public spaces like open hallways were fenced and equipped with barbed wire. With this measure, the open character of the architecture was lost.

Another example of the forting up in urban areas is the shutting off of alleys in parts of the inner city of Amsterdam. In 1994 Brunt (1996) counted the alleys which were fenced or gated in the red light district of Amsterdam. About half of the alleys were gated or fenced and accessible only to residents with a key. Part of the unclosed alleys couldn’t be closed since they cover the entrances to shops and bawdyhouses, which need a flow of pedestrians. The last seven years the number of

7 In the post war neighbourhood Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, one apartment building can be found where a big man with a big dog guards. Only residents and announced guest are allowed to pass the guard. (Unfortunately, the guards are not very fond of photographers.) The Bijlmermeer is a high crime area and the residents of the guarded building perceive less crime and have less fear.
closed alleys has risen. In most cases, gating a public road or even an alley is not permitted. Therefore, people must gain possession of the streets within the community. This not only requires cooperation between residents, but also between the residents and the City. Brunt (1996) suggests the City has been very easy with permits allowing the shut off of alleys. People try to exclude prostitutes, drug users, drug dealers, bums and other undesirables from their direct surroundings, but exclude others as well. Brunt (1996) opposes this trend, because, (1) the accessibility and the public character of the area decreases, and (2) safety becomes a status symbol in this way.

Not only gated communities are trying to shut outsiders out; many people are collectively defending their neighbourhoods. Sometimes neighbourhood patrols are set up, in other cases local government is lobbied for measures to prevent crime, slow down traffic are shut of streets. Many post war neighbourhoods already feature many cul-de-sacs and some neighbourhoods are one big dead end. Some dead end street structures give access to more than a thousand homes (e.g. in the new towns of Lelystad, Maasssenbroek and Wijchen). A lot of residents not only put ‘forbidden’ sites on the streets they live on, but are also able to close down small streets. This happens in different sorts of neighbourhoods: in rural areas, city centres detached housing districts, and apartment building neighbourhoods. It happens in upper class, middle class, lower class and mixed neighbourhoods. The scale is often a lot smaller than its American counterparts, but the trend is there. The walling is often there; sometimes a gate is the only thing missing. On a more abstract level of analysis we could say many communities are gated but not in a physical way.

Local community or mini-state?

A lot of private developers use gated communities to recreate the idealised small town where everyone knows and cares about each other. Although the goal is often said to be re-establishing a sense of genuine mutual community, the means they use are sometimes far less communal than controlling. On the one hand, the collective aspect is not always the first consideration when buying a home in a gated community; the house within the gated community might be the most important thing (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Oude Ophuis, 2001). On the other hand, the word ‘community’ is often used as a marketing tool. Residents of gated settlements in general didn’t choose for the community aspect in the first place, but many have considered it as a positive side of the gated developments. Of course, there were quite a lot of residents who chose for a gated community in the first place because of the community aspect. In the Netherlands, the residents of some recreational communities, which are mainly inhabited by (former) residents of a white old lower class neighbourhood, are a good example of this. They claim to have found their old neighbourhood community back in their gated community. In the American and European literature there is a vivid discussion which is know as the ‘community lost or community saved?’
Suttles (1972) argued that the idea of the decline of community was based on a ‘golden age’ that had never existed. Others thought it was not community lost but community transformed. But what is the potential for community in gated communities?

In theory, they would be an excellent vehicle for strong local communities. They have an institutional structure that serves as a pseudo-government and a mechanism for participation and communication. In this sense, gated communities are a form of direct democracy, a means of local control and self-determination that can bring neighbours together in common interest. In reality this ideal is seldom met. (Blakely & Snyder, 1999)

A gated community can provide its own services under the homeowner association. Because associations can enforce deed restrictions, controls on what homeowners are allowed to do with their homes can be much stricter than government land-use regulations. Many people like the clean, quality appearance that strict controls create, but others may chafe at the restrictions on what they can do with their property (Harris & Evans, 1999). McKenzie (1994) gives various examples of extreme rules. An elderly couple was no longer allowed to have their grandchildren over because they made too much noise, a female resident was ordered to get rid of her dog because its weight more than the permitted 30 pounds, and a sixty year old man was forced to divorce his fifty-four year old wife since she was too young according to the rules of the homeowner association. The striking thing is that all these residents chose to adapt the rules, rather than move out of the gated community. Foucault (1977) would say discipline in effect becomes self-discipline. The residents of gated communities choose ‘rule and order’ over freedom (De Rooij, 2000). McKenzie (1994) claims gated communities don’t shape a community, because its residents withdraw and hide within their enclaves. Gated communities are not in line with the ‘community’ aspect, because a community by definition consists of a heterogeneous social composition, while most gated communities are very homogeneous in income, interests, and lifestyle. This results in a “micro-division of developments into separate subdivisions according to housing type; the existence of a structure for self-government, for communication, and for institutional cohesion in the form of the homeowner association; and a degree of economic interdependence resulting from shared ownership of common areas and facilities” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999, p. 129). A lot of residents of gated communities are satisfied and they identify with their walled residence, but participation and ‘a sense of belonging there’, are often low. Often, there is only a one-way – passive – involvement. Gated communities are governed by legal contract, not by social contact (Blakely & Snyder, 1999).

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8 See, for example, vol. 25, no. 2 of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (June 2001) or Suttles, 1972.
Oude Ophuis (2001) focused his research on social contact in three defended neighbourhoods in Almere, a Dutch new town. He distinguishes four types of residents: nostalgists, idealists, rationalists and the indifferent. The first two groups strive for a ‘real’ community on the basis of ‘how it used to be’ (nostalgists) or on functional and affective social ties (idealists). The rationalists feel a moral responsibility for collective space, but have chosen for a defended neighbourhood because of the prestige it provides, and more often for the privacy it gives. The indifferent are disinterested in collective space and a sense of community. They often impose free-riders problems on the other groups. Some of the indifferent refuse to pay for collective services and amenities, while many rationalists don’t mind paying as long as they don’t have to involve themselves with too much work for the collective. As Oude Ophuis put it, especially the rationalists are interested in organising their privacy in a collective way.

Gated communities are no better or worse than society as a whole in producing a strong sense of community (Blakely & Snyder, 1999). Summing up, gated communities may also come with a lot of disadvantages for its residents:

- It takes more time for police and emergency service to get into the neighbourhood.
- Social inclusion not only leads to exclusion of others, but sometimes also to exclusion of those who where included.
- Costs of maintenance of the collective space.
- Double tax.
- Strict rules enforced by a majority of the homeowners.
- Residents have a lot of obligations, but little privileges.
- The board of homeowners associations consists of amateurs who have double responsibilities – towards themselves as individual residents and towards the collective.

In many gated communities the role of the board remains limited to the classical tasks of the State: providing safety against the outside world and forestall problems among residents. With the monitoring of the gates it has taken over another classical task of the State: the responsibility of ‘public’ spaces – or better, parochial spaces. Homeowner associations govern gated communities. There are some instances in the United States in which communities have incorporated themselves into small municipalities – something which is not possible in any of the European countries. In California and some other Americans states, homeowner associations not only create their own social mix (or lack of it), but their own local government as well: the residents are no longer citizens, but shareholders of a private community: ‘buy your own government’. In the United States we can witness a process which is for the time being not possible in Europe; gated communities are hollowing out local government. Some residents of gated communities stopped paying taxes because they don’t see themselves as part of the local community anymore – they
have become their own local government. The difference with regular local governments is that these can’t shut people out. In this manner, gated communities are becoming the city-states – or better, enclave states – of the future:

In areas where gated communities are the norm, not the exception, this perspective has the potential for severe impacts on the common welfare. (…) Exclusionary segmentation imposes social costs on those left outside; it reduces the number of public spaces that all can share, and thus the contacts people from different socio-economic groups might otherwise have with each other. (Blakely & Snyder, 1997a, p. 95)

Gated communities, by eliminating social contact, threaten the social contract that is on the basis of every society.

**The socially excluding and the socially excluded**

The concept of social exclusion is broader than the concept of poverty because poverty mainly looks at the material side of social ties. Social exclusion is also a more dynamic concept than poverty: social exclusion is a process, poverty a condition (Murie, 2001). Poverty is a special case of social exclusion: an accumulation of different forms of social exclusion: “The fact that poverty must by its very nature concern a network of exclusion distinguishes it from other instances of social exclusion such as homelessness, discrimination, inaccessibility, or institutional confinement” (Vranken, 2001, p. 9).

In the housing field we can distinguish two sorts of social exclusion: **exclusion through housing and exclusion from housing** (e.g. Cameron & Field, 2000, p. 829): “Exclusion through housing suggests a focus not on the lack of access to adequate housing but on the role of housing or, of housing neighbourhood as a causal factor in the generation of other forms of social exclusion, especially from the labour market and from civil society.” Exclusion from housing can lead to exclusion through housing. People not only encounter constraints to housing, but because of their deprived housing situation they can also be socially excluded from other fields of society. People who are effectively excluded from society and have no means to exclude others will be deprived in various ways. It is often a self-perpetuating process. The exclusion by gated communities leads to segregation: “Segregation and increasing spatial inequality are mutual self-perpetuating processes because status and cultural identity of urban areas are determined by the composition of people living there. Spatial differentiation leads to segregation at the same time as segregation is creating spatial differences” (Skifter Andersen, 2001, p. 6).

The power of place used to be based on relationship, the new power of place is based on property ownership (Blakely & Snyder, 1999). In relation to gated communities we must distinguish between those who are included and those who are excluded. As a consequence the owner
occupied housing market is not a seamless market but a highly segmented one. (Lee & Murie, 1999): “Divisions within the home ownership sector and fragmentation have begun to be more apparent. (…) the failures of the welfare state are as likely to lead to exclusion in the private sector as in the public sector” (Lee & Murie, 1999, p. 637). Saunders (1984) argues for the importance of the division between those who possess their own means of consumption and those who depend upon state provided facilities: “the main division arising out of the process of consumption is that between those who satisfy their main consumption needs through personal ownership (e.g. through home ownership, personal means of transportation, private medical insurance and private schooling) and those who rely on collective provision through the state” (Saunders, 1984, p. 208). Saunders asserts that home ownership provides the basis for a specific class formation distinct from that of owners of capital and non-property owners. “Home ownership could provide the basis for distinct social classes, separate from the classes formed in the world of production and labour markets. (…) [Saunders claimed that] ‘consumption cleavages’ could be more important than the traditional bases of social classes” (Hamnett, 1999, p. 14).

Not the gate by itself, but the social exclusion it provokes is the reason why more and more people have grown to see the rise of gated communities as a bad one. “Gated communities go further in several respects than other means of exclusion. They create physical barriers to access. They also privatise community space, not merely individual space” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999, p. 8). In this respect, gates function as a symbol of the inequalities between the power that controls the gates and those excluded by them (Marcuse, 1997).

Boundaries determine membership: someone must be inside and someone outside. (…) Exclusion helps define shared territory by separating community members from outsiders. (…) With gates and walls, they can exclude not only undesirable new residents, but even casual passers-by and the people from the neighbourhood next door. Gates are a visible sign of exclusion, an even stronger signal to those who already see themselves as excluded from the larger mainstream social milieu. (Blakely & Snyder, 1999, p. 1, 44 and 153)

On the individual level, people pursue their preferences, but are confronted with constraints. Many are confronted by income constraints, but some are also confronted by limited choice possibilities (race and other discriminatory restrictions; gatekeepers; lack of information, social and cultural capital); they have the least purchasing power (not only economically). On the collective level, this dialectic of preferences and constraints may lead to processes of social exclusion, segregation and the rise of gated communities. Both economic capital and an advanced social position ‘buy’ the power to pursue preferences at the cost of others. By excluding themselves, they cut off possibilities for others. In effect, they are
not so much excluding themselves economically, relationally or socially as they are excluding others. The people inhabiting gated communities have socially, relationally and spatially excluded themselves – and thus others – by choosing to live exclusively. In this sense ‘social exclusion’ and ‘exclusive’ describe the same process. But the residents of gated communities are not deprived of economic, social and cultural capital. Quite the contrary, they exclude themselves by the means of their (economic) capital. They are not excluded from dominant institutions or the centres of society; and they are (literally) the gatekeepers. They’re not subject to ghettoisation. On the contrary, they are both subject and object of privatisation by creating their own (or having companies creating their) privatopia.

Social exclusion has two ends. Some people have the power to exclude whereas others are the powerless victims. The socially excluded are the ‘rest of society' in the case of ‘gated communities', whereas in case of ghetto's its inhabitants are, because the excluding force is 'the rest of society'. It is an excellent example of "dual closure". Indeed, the power to exclude themselves spatially is the power to exclude others in many other ways. Exclusiveness is only possible for the socially included. Having the possibility to exclude oneself is very different from being excluded by lack of choice or by lack of possibilities.

Social inequality (or social fragmentation) is both the cause of and caused by the rise of gated communities. By allowing some part of society to exclude itself spatially, social fragmentation processes will begin to show fault lines and social inequality will in effect become social exclusion.

This view might seem inconsistent with the fact that not only the economic elite is excluding, but we also have to face that part of the middle and lower classes want to exclude themselves because they don’t want to be excluded. The most important distinction is not between the socially included and the socially excluded, but between those who have the power to exclude, and those who are excluded. People who are on the wrong side of the fault line are thus excluded – grammatically a passive voice. People on the right side of the fault line are thus excluding – grammatically an active voice.

There is nothing wrong with protecting your individual belongings or your collective amenities like golf courses or swimming pools. This should, however, not lead to privatisation of public space, public life and public government. The social contract is threatened by the elimination of the public out of space, life and government, Indeed – paraphrasing Blakely & Snyder again –

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9 The preceding fifteen lines are based on the EUREX-chat with professor Vranken.
10 For a clarification of the concepts, see Vranken, 2001.
gated communities, by eliminating social contact, threaten the social contract that is on the basis of every society.  

**What’s next for Europe?**

Race, income, class and opportunities and constraints on the housing market are closely correlated. “Today, the walls, the physical walls of division, are inside the city rather than around it – or, more accurately, within the metropolitan area, which is an economically integrated whole but internally divided” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 106). Hence, America’s most famous planner, Norman Krumholz, has warned several times of the potential for the balkanisation of cities. Will they remain a community or a civic association, or will they become a collection of enclaves that is inevitable to fall apart? Will the European states fall apart in the same time they are unionising?

The potential for more differentiation, more extreme stratification is there, but in Europe the potential to fight these forces is also there. Indeed, governments are losing their grip; globalisation is changing states as well as people, but this does not have to mean states are not capable of anything anymore. Both their major role in the economy and in securing the incomes of their residents and the services they use, make the different levels of government a major player on local and national levels.

Social problems cannot be walled out as long as the problems as well as those hiding from them are part of the same society. The question is are they (still) part of the same society? They are both part of the same nation, but more and more nations are seen as the addition of several societies. Are the residents of gated communities excluding others – and themselves – of mainstream society? Can a minority exclude a majority? On the basis of the coercion theory on dominant and dominated social groups by Dahrendorf (1959; 1993) we could certainly say ‘yes’. Indeed, small groups – if dominant – have the ability to shut out others because they “are entrusted with a right to exercise control over other positions in order to ensure effective coercion” (Dahrendorf, 1993, p. 299). The powerful have isolated more than they have included (Marcuse, 1997).

Blakely & Snyder also found residents of gated communities who feared and avoided society outside of their walls. They preferred to stay on the including side of the gate, but were sometimes locked in that gate by themselves and were cut off social life; they were excluded as well. Or, as Marcuse (1997, p. 104) defines this situation: “those who oppress are themselves limited by their oppression, those that imprison are themselves imprisoned, that power dehumanises those that exercise it as well as those against whom it is exercised.”

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11 Note that the ‘social exclusion’ section of this paper has the same conclusion as the ‘Local community or mini-state?’ section.
Is the claim for safety not legitimate? If rich people can guard a private house, why wouldn’t the middle class be allowed to do this collectively? Living behind a fence is nothing new. The only difference is that the fence is put around a larger number of houses. There is a very clear quest for more identity and more secured settlements. For the same reason, the number of living accommodations with shared basic facilities based on the same lifestyle is rising as well. It is reasonable that residents of a golf course community or residents of a recreational community with a swimming pool want to exclude non-residents. Why should developers be unable to design a neighbourhood in which all residents are obliged to take good care of their garden, or design a neighbourhood where a management company takes care of all open spaces including private gardens?

Of course we should be careful that this does not go along with too strong a separation of the have’s and the have-not’s. Gated communities on the one hand and no-go areas on the other hand are not a desirable development. New developments and the restructuring of old developments should be done with consideration for people’s desires. If they fear intruders, design a neighbourhood according to defensible space techniques (Newman, 1972). If people are priced out of the regular market, built more affordable housing in the long run and accept the permanent inhabitation of recreational communities that are meant for temporal use. If people choose a gated community because of its low building code enforcement, indicate areas where people can build and adapt buildings to their own taste. Government can do many things to slow down the fortifying up trend. The withdrawal of many people into excluding communities must be forestalled. Crime must be fought and it should be made difficult for homeowner associations and private enterprises to privatise public space.

On the other hand, government should pay more attention to the people who are unable to exclude others and who are often living in the neighbourhoods with the highest levels of crime. The levels of inequality and the levels of spatial segregation seem to be much lower in European countries, compared to the United States (Musterd, 2001). If we want to keep it that way, European governments should be alert, especially in vulnerable neighbourhoods. No resident should be trapped in its neighbourhood.

The Dutch classification of gated communities used in this paper probably fits the European situation better than the American classification of Blakely & Snyder (1997a; 1999). Elite communities will be found in all European countries; in most countries probably more than in the Netherlands. Again, the structure of the welfare state structures the rise of gated communities. In southern Europe there will probably be more elite communities than in northern Europe. Recreational communities will be different. The rise of recreational communities in the Netherlands is heavily tied to the structure of the housing markets. The popularity of these
communities depends primarily on constraints in supply and price as well as constraints through building codes and aesthetic rules in the regular housing market. This doesn’t lead to the conclusion that there will be less recreational communities in other European countries. In many southern European countries there are many of these settlements. Northern Europeans looking for sun, often sea, and arguably lower taxes inhabit many of these recreational communities. Where these communities in northern Europe are seen as recreational, they may be seen as elite communities in the poorer regions of southern Europe. Indeed, while these may often be middle class communities according to northern European standards; according to southern European standards these settlements will only be accessible for the affluent.

The urban security zone is a completely different type of gated community. Urban security communities will be found in many European countries. Shut-off alleyways and barrier streets can be seen across Europe. Of course, the type of welfare state matters as well. But in this case, local circumstances are more important. Here, the (fear of) crime is most important. Local conditions and local enforcement are very important. Residents of the inner city of Amsterdam might feel more reason to shut off alleys because the nuisance of drug use is more persistent and police enforcement rather mild.

The rise of gated communities is not an isolated phenomenon. People are fortifying and privatizing in other respects as well. It remains to be seen if there is a clear link between the withdrawal of many European governments to a smaller welfare state, the privatization of public companies and public space, and the rise of gated communities. Within the field we see more American trends entering Europe. Suburbanization and sprawl have taken almost American proportions in some European regions (notably Antwerp in Belgium) and we have seen more factory outlet stores and other big malls outside the cities in recent years. The more harsh attitude towards the real estate-less – that is, the homeless and other marginally housed – and the marginalisation of the social rented housing stock can also be seen as trends in this respect.

A society, just like a city, needs diversity to be able to function properly. Government is to a basic extent responsible for the functioning of society. It not only supplies its residents with amenities and services; it also structures society for the private market. Both private actors and residents are free to move and do as long as they remain with the framework that is constructed by the government. Government in return, should take residents and private actors seriously. This not only means freedom of choice for the well off, but also making sure that some don’t develop at the expense of others. Governments should exclude some developments to make sure people are not socially excluded.
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