



Welfare, crime and society

Gated communities: surveillance and security

VOICE OVER COMMENTARY

Gated living presents a range of dilemmas. It can and does provide a greater sense of safety and security. However, gated living, and the surveillance that accompanies this, does not necessarily increase social stability or decrease social divisions.

SHIRLEY

It's not my first choice to stay in estates, you know, I don't want to feel like we've moved from, from the community, not at all. I mean I'd love to have a more integrated community and I do realise that I mean it isn't fair reflection of society at all where we stay here, but as Sheena said, I mean you want to feel safe, you know, and that's why. I mean, maybe I am living in a little bubble here but it's my bubble and it's my reality, you know.

SHEENA

I think it is our right to feel safe. But at what cost? And it's a pity that we have, that some of us are fortunate to be able to afford it, have had the option of this to be able to do it. They need to address issues of unemployment and poverty.

VOICE OVER COMMENTARY

While the residents can feel safer living in gated communities, the wider issues of crime and security remain.

CLIFFORD SITTONGA

I don't think they have experienced a decrease of crime as a result of gated communities, because the fact of the matter is there is crime everywhere, and there is no way, irrespective of whatever sources you deploy, that you can have an isolated area within a bigger area that is infested with crime.

BARBARA SOUTHWORTH

We believe that surveillance, activity, being able to have eyes on a street is a far more effective way of dealing with crime than, than gates and booms and signing in and security. I mean there's nothing to prevent – especially in these very large developments, we've got a thousand units or something – there's nothing to prevent your neighbour or your neighbour's friend or someone down the road being the burglar, being the criminal.

I think that there is a growing awareness of the negative impacts of gated communities, so. It will be very difficult constitutionally to say absolutely no, but I think the management of these and the scale and the design is, is really hard, needs to be resolved.

VOICE OVER COMMENTARY

For people, for policy-makers, for urban planners and for politicians, the debates about gated communities are likely to continue. Increasingly, constant and ever more sophisticated surveillance techniques are central to the processes of securing residential spaces. Gated living explicitly and visibly creates and reinforces boundaries between populations and in doing so may actually heighten senses of difference, threat and precariousness. Gated living does not necessarily mean that wider social fears are diminished and it raises questions as to the possibility of achieving more relaxed and integrated social relations.