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Guarding inequality

Ajudhiya, Saiesh

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Abstract

South Africa has undergone a number of social and geographical changes since the end of apartheid. This has drastically changed urban spaces, where we have seen the proliferation of Gated Communities (GCs). These spaces have come to signify how inequality has evolved from being an issue exclusively bound to race to one that now occurs within races and between classes. Therefore, in order to better understand inequality the current study considered the individuals who occupy spaces of privilege, but are not necessarily part of those spaces – such as security guards. It attempts to provide descriptions of inequality, moving away from a traditional macro-economic understanding.

This is done through a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with security guards from GCs. The analysis outlines the descriptions given by the security guards on their experience of working at GCs. Four superordinate themes were derived: Professionalism; Education and Knowledge; Commodification of Life; and Violence. From these themes it is clear that we cannot only interpret inequality from an income perspective as there are a number of psychosocial factors that are integrated into the construct of inequality.