

## ABSTRACT

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South Africa has seen a number of profound structural, social and political changes since the end of apartheid. One of the most profound changes to the urban landscape has been the proliferation of different forms of housing. These include the growth of gated communities. These forms of housing developments date back to the 1800s in America (Hook and Vrdoljak, 2002:2) and have been part of the urban landscape in South Africa since the apartheid era. However, in the post-apartheid context, these housing developments have seen a rapid growth that reflect and complicate various processes in South Africa. Gated communities are seen as a reaction to the perceptions about the rising crime rate (Landman, 2002); citizens are attracted to these formations because they offer a greater sense of security. Populations that are attracted to these communities are largely seen as white and middle class in nature (Lemanski, 2004). These communities are thus seen as spaces that create a physical barrier between residents and the surrounding areas in an attempt to secure the safety of said residents. The physical barriers are seen to have a number of impacts on the manner in which residents thus begin to relate to surrounding areas. The literature on gated communities places emphasis on the fact that these physical barriers produce social exclusion in the sense that residents are not only purposefully excluding themselves from surrounding areas, but restricted access also socially excludes populations from surrounding areas from enjoying services located within these gated communities. The physical basis of social exclusion is reinforced by the perceived social homogeneity of residents. This social homogeneity is reinforced by a sense of community that regulates and governs social norms and behaviours within these communities. Governing bodies of gated communities are seen as playing an instrumental role in the creation and maintenance of these forms of social behaviour, by enforcing rules and regulations that uphold certain values. Furthermore, the literature on gated communities indicates that these urban formations also have several negative consequences for the developmental goals of integrated development. This study makes use of case studies to explore some of the key issues identified in the literature on gated communities. In depth interviews with residents of gated communities indicate that the process of social exclusion is far more variable and complex than proposed in the broader literature. This is particularly true in terms of how residents identify with other residents. The complicated nature of these social dynamics extends to the relationship between residents and governing bodies, as well as residents and the surrounding areas. These findings suggest that gated communities may not serve to negatively affect developmental goals in the manner proposed in the broader literature on this phenomenon.