

## Abstract

It is widely recognised that security is performed by a multiplicity of actors, rather than purely the public police. Together they constitute 'networks' of security. These 'security networks' are often taken for granted as legitimate sovereign bodies within Johannesburg's wealthy suburbs. This research investigates the processes whereby these security networks come to be largely regarded as legitimate, which it does through case studies of two differently constituted suburban communities. It argues that firstly, the internal-network dynamics of co-operation and incorporation play an important role in legitimising the security networks. Secondly, the network is legitimised through how it responds to the needs of the 'community' and utilises existing community structures. Finally, keeping a flexible relationship with legal structures whilst maintaining the existing social order also plays a role in serving to legitimise the security networks.