

# **The struggle to belong**

***Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.***

Amsterdam, 7-9 July 2011

## **Guilt behind the Gate: White South Africans & The Experience of Gated Living in post-apartheid South Africa**

Jacob R. Boersema

Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR)  
University of Amsterdam  
J.r.boersema@uva.nl/ Jacobboersema@yahoo.com

Paper presented at the International RC21 conference 2011  
Session: nr. 7 Gated Communities

## 1.1 Introduction

This paper addresses the question of how living in a gated community is experienced by white Afrikaans women in South Africa. In the literature on neoliberal urban development, gating as a new development is often critically examined because of its associated with issues such as privatization, fear of crime, racism, and the continuity of white economic privilege (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Caldeira 2000; Low 2003). But do these different issues connect? And if so: how? That is often left unclear in the literature. Authors that have focused on such questions often use psychoanalytic theories to explain the strong emotions involved in gating. But what kind of new emotional landscape do gated communities create? Do such communities contribute to a fear of crime and fear of the racial other, and if so, how? These are the questions I will address in this paper and first explore in this theoretical introduction.

The phenomenon of gated communities has been extensively debated in the United States and more recently also in such countries as China, Brazil, and Turkey (Duncan and Duncan 2001; Duncan and Duncan 2004; Genis 2007; Glasze, Webster and Frantz 2006; Soja 2000; Wu and Webber 2004). Researchers have variously emphasized the legal, economic, architectural and life-style aspects of this trend.<sup>1</sup> Gated communities are often presented as the summon of neoliberal urban development and the trend of privatization and securitization. By definition, they are founded on a territorial, material basis that privatizes landscape through various mechanisms of appropriation and exclusion, private (including institutional) ownership, and local legislation (Low 2001).

Since the abolishment of apartheid the gating of streets and communities has also exploded in South Africa. In the South African context, gating is also often discussed in critical terms: it would symbolize the failure of racial integration and the continuity of white racism and white privilege after apartheid. Like in the rest of the world, security estates have emerged driven by complex forces that have to do with security concerns, real estate values, the financing of real estate, a search for community and identity, and the integration of living and well-being, including sport facilities and nature areas. The trend has been documented in most major cities like Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, and has even been compared between cities (Ballard 2002; Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell 2002; Besteman 2008; Jürgens and Gnad 2002; Lemanski, Landman and Durlington 2008). Surprisingly, maybe, the political capital Pretoria, the location of Golden Sun Estate, has been left unexamined. Moreover, few of these studies have actually addressed what it is like to live in a gated community.

## 1.2 The Experience of Gated Living

The choice to live in a gated community for white residents is often depicted as an emotional one. Fear of crime and fear of otherness would play a large role in the life and residential choices of residents. In her study of gated communities in America, anthropologist Setha Low focuses specifically on the relationships between gating and emotions (Low 2001; 2008; 2003). Low even speaks of a new 'structure of feeling' created by these urban developments (Low 2008). In her detailed anthropological work, she dissects the different emotional concerns mostly white residents have about crime,

community, and the desire for safety in America. One way she discovered in which white residents assuage their anxieties about race and crime is by policing the ‘niceness’ of other residents. The norm of ‘niceness’ is a generic descriptor white residents use for what is judged as normal appearance and behavior. Low connects the construction of ‘niceness’ to whiteness and contrast it to the ‘fear of others.’ Norms in the social environment, she writes, “*act to naturalize the cultural preferences and codes of white privilege*” and assuage the anxieties of white middle class.

In her analysis of the different emotions residents experience, Low uses a psychoanalytic framework to explain the experience of living in gated communities. She builds on a small tradition in urban geography that has pioneered psychoanalytic accounts of the experience of space (Sennett 2008; Sibley 1995). South African researchers have also written in a psychoanalytic register. Bremner, for instance, in her explanation of the phenomenon of gating argues that the impact of crime on the psyche of white South Africans has the effect that (Bremner 2004):

Ambiguities are eliminated, new boundaries created and new social identities and certainties constructed (...) Crime provides a generative symbolism with which to talk about contemporary experiences perceived as alien, threatening, chaotic or bad – a black majority government , deteriorating social services, dysfunctional traffic lights, a disloyal domestic worker etc. Through the experience of crime, uncomfortable processes of social change are coded and defensive mechanisms and projections against them mobilized. Terror becomes the trope through which the transition is lived and made sense of.”

Bremner argues that the criminal offers a new imaginary through which to establish continuity between the certainties of the past, the uncertainties of the present and the unknown-ness of the future. The wall of the gated community is the central figure of the new political order (Bremner 2004).

Theoretically, both Low and Bremner rely on the work of psychoanalyst Klein to explain what they see as the contradictory values embodied by gated communities and the dominance of ‘terror’ in the experience of whites.<sup>ii</sup> They argue that racial anxieties and racialized fears about crime are so dominant among white residents that they have to rely on ‘code’ to speak about their emotional experiences. In other words, that gating and fear of crime really stand in for something else: racism. This is also the view of Lemanski. In a series of studies, mostly in and around Cape Town, Lemanski researched the residential strategies and social experience of crime among whites (Lemanski 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c). She shows how white residents in gated communities often mix fears of crime with broader fears regarding the future of their western lifestyles in the new South Africa. Most whites, at least from 2003, did no longer feel safe in their residential area. In her research, Lemanski endorses the view that discourses on crime among whites are an acceptable discourse that serves as a code or pretext for talk about racist fears and ‘the other.’

In their approach, Low, Bremner, and Lemanski suggest that gated estates still function as historic urban communities with close social relationships, and that white residents have to talk in code to keep other groups/races out. Although it is misguided to suggest racism is not present, the question is do white elites really need such ‘racial coding’ to

assert their power? And consequently, do we need psychoanalytical theories to explain the emotional landscape of gated communities? I argue that if we are to understand how the new cultural landscape of neoliberal urbanism in South Africa is created and relates to the emotional experience of living, crime and race, we first have to ask ourselves how economic elites relate to gating: what does it do for them?

### **1.3 Explaining Experience: Aestheticization, Emotions and Community**

Gated communities have been, at least initially, an upper class and elite phenomenon in South Africa and elsewhere. It is thus a development closely linked to the politics of space by the affluent. As Harvey notes, elites are generally economically self-sufficient; they do not need to command space through continuous appropriation and neither do they need street-level interpersonal relations and neighborhood networks in order to meet their basic needs. Instead, their common interests and concerns generally revolve around a need to maintain the standards and property value of the built environment through a shared commitment to common conceptions of taste, aesthetic appreciation, and symbolic and cultural capital (1985: 262). Aestheticization thus becomes the preferred management technique of elites and this goes hand in hand with social exclusion and the management of class. As the rich try to simultaneously enhance, naturalize and conceal class privilege, aestheticization plays an important role in depoliticizing class relations (Harvey 2004).

Duncan and Duncan beautifully illustrate how this operates in practice (Duncan and Duncan 2001; 2004). In their study of the aesthetic attitudes of residents in a semi-rural suburb of New York they show the intimate relationship between landscapes, social identity, and exclusion. They show the important (new) role of aesthetic discourses in supporting class interests. Discourses of romantic ideology, localism, anti-urbanism, and anti-modernism mediate for residents the active role landscapes plays “*in the performance of elite social identities and the framing of social life and values within a community.*” (Duncan and Duncan 2001) People’s aesthetic dispositions are related to ideology in that they refer to “*the unarticulated, unmediated, and naturalized pleasure one takes in the concrete materiality of things in themselves*” (Duncan and Duncan 2001). Particularly among the elite, landscapes and aesthetic dispositions are markers of identity. As such, they provoke sincere emotions which inadvertently act to naturalize class privileges and tastes.<sup>iii</sup>

If we translate their findings to the study of private gated communities, we find that what matters for the experience of living to elites is not so much social relationships but rather privacy, access and flexible associations of friendships and lifestyle (Blokland-Potters 2003).<sup>iv</sup> Moreover, the ‘imagined’ communities exist through shared memories of the past (images that often do not include minorities). Gated communities are not defined by the social interactions within the community but by the emotional involvement of residents. American philosopher Margaret Kohn argues that communities are formed by individuals that identify with a particular location. Such groups, she writes, are “*sustained by perceived similarities in lifestyle and absence of conflict... reinforced by similar patterns of consumption and cultural cues rather than shared activities and practices*” (Kohn 2004). For Kohn, the aesthetic experience of living in a neighborhood

becomes the basis of collective identity and belonging, as the irreconcilable social antagonisms that pervade modern life are avoided. The effects of this aestheticization and privatization are multiple: to enhance the aesthetic experience of those groups deemed deserving; the use of space gets restricted to prevent the sight and proximity of (racial) others; the presence and speech of strangers becomes defined as an inconvenience; the rights are removed of the undeserving and unwashed.

A central place for aestheticization in the analysis of the experience of living in gated communities suggests that elites do not need to speak in (racial) code to assert their (racial) power or (racial) hegemony. Gated community should be understood as the institutionalization and bureaucratization of taste. The myth that such communities are built around the sensuous, passionate, apparently autonomous subjective experience of individuals - be it related to fear, terror or hate of the other – should be punctured. What is more, according to the aesthetic logic it is not social relationships that matter for community but the aesthetic imagination of belonging: the emotional experiences of residents that are rooted in the historic and aesthetic conception of community. In contrast to psychoanalytic accounts, such an approach suggests that ‘coding’ is not necessary to mask racism for white residents, just as racism is no longer necessary for exclusion or domination. The connection between neoliberalism and aestheticization foregrounds choice and consumption, which makes redundant the continuation of the more virulent racialized politics of the past.<sup>v</sup>

A short note on the methods of this study: as Dupuis and Thorns argue, most studies of home and living tend to be formalistic in their analysis rather than being based around first-hand accounts of people’s actual lived experiences (Dupuis 1998). This study takes a different approach. In the case study of Golden Sun presented below, my focus is on the meaning of gated living for white Afrikaans female residents and how it reshapes their experiences of crime, race, and community. The study is based on three months of residence in the community and participatory observations, and over forty interviews with residents, employees and the management staff.<sup>vi</sup> From the many interviews I did, I focus on the women in this paper because I found them particularly articulate about their aesthetic concerns and few of them showed racism in the traditional sense. Before I analyze the discourses of the women, I first discuss the governance of the community.

### **1.3 Three Views of Golden Sun Estate**

Golden Sun is one of the oldest and most prestigious security estates in Pretoria. With little more than a thousand households today, and six thousand inhabitants in 2010, it has become a small city by itself. Originally, the estate was built in 1990 at the eastern fringes of Pretoria as a life-style community around a gold course. Since then, however, it has expanded to more than triples its size. The last ten years the East rand of Pretoria has experienced an explosion in urban developments; the area has attracted other gated communities and a lot of commercial development. Today, Golden Sun is no longer an isolated security estate but part of a large conglomerate of prestigious (and less prestigious) estates supported by shopping malls, fitness centers, schools, and (mega-) churches. Golden Sun, nevertheless, has remained a unique status. A major national newspaper selected it as the safest community in Pretoria, which has translated in a

steady rise in real estate prices (and the absence of any drop in real estate prices in the 2008/2009 economic crisis). The status of the estate is further upheld by an influx of international residents, whose employers often demand gated housing for insurance reasons.<sup>vii</sup> Indeed, today the estate is no longer an isolated island but rather the prestigious centre of a new urban edge city, with its own mini-government.

### ***A Private Community***

The defining feature of living an estate like Golden Sun is that it is a private community. Golden Sun is governed by the Home Owners Association (HOA), a section 21 company that functions as an intermediate between neighbors and the municipality. It is a legal form that provides great powers to the elected body, the board of trustees. To be elected to any of the five positions, you need to have property on the estate.<sup>viii</sup> The board is voted in every two years. Since the estate was build, the association has taken over more and more the tasks traditionally performed by the municipality. It operates its own security force, provides various urban services like road development and urban landscaping, and features different amenities like a golf course, tennis courts, a club house and an enclosed natural area. As one resident characterized the development: *'we bought a piece of exclusivity and security and now we run and govern it.'* The estate is in continuous battle about service delivery with the municipality of Kungwini, the rural municipality of just 56.000 inhabitants in which the estate is administratively located. As a remedy, the HOA is pushing to be integrated as a separate municipality with Pretoria, which would allow them to set their own taxes and provide services. In essence, Golden Sun would become its own private city.

The major difference between living in a gated community and a non-gated suburb is that a residence in an estate is bought as a 'package deal:' by buying into an estate, the home-owners purchases a 'different way of living.' This is evident from the words of the General Manager of HOA Golden Sun. He says:

When people buy into an estate they are given a sales pitch. They are sold a dream. It is something that we often look at or I certainly look at. What is it that attracts them to a place like Golden Sun? They want safety. This place is very much safer than outside the boundary walls of Golden Sun. The aesthetics: they want to be in an environment or an estate that has a good look and feel to it. It must look the part. They want the green areas. They want the kids to be able to run around and have place to play. And then the estate harmony: the estate must work well. Things that should happen must happen. It must happen with the minimum of hassle. It must just be done in such a way that there is harmony on the estate. And that harmony could be peace and quiet, noise, that type of thing. People want to be able to sit at home and relax. Those three things together, I think, give people the majority of reasons to live in an estate.

As the General Manager shows, Golden Sun plays into trends of securitization, aestheticization and a renewed focus on community harmony. Note how the manger presents living in the estate as a dream - an image - to people and how he emphasizes the importance of aesthetics and the absence of conflict. But how does this operate in practice?

### *A Security community*

The dominant institutional logic that regulates everyday life in Golden Sun is that of security. Because of the size of the estate and the affluence of its inhabitants Golden Sun has a relative large budget for security measures in comparison to other, smaller estates. It has an incredible extensive apparatus that not only protects the estate 24-hours a day from outsiders coming in, but equally is active “*looking, checking, monitoring and policing what is happening inside the estate,*” as the General Manager put it. The control of the in and outflow of traffic is the most important part of securitization. At the gate there is a strict separation between residents on the one hand, and non-residents, visitors, workers and employees on the other hand. Although in principle everybody receives a security check, non-residents and particularly workers and employees have to go through a much more extensive procedure to enter the estate, including an identity documentation check.<sup>ix</sup> In 2009 the estate implemented a biometric system based on fingerprints linked to a database of all inhabitants, workers and company employees working on the estate. In 2010, visitors were also included in the database.

The emphasis on the control of the inside of the estate is legitimized by the security management by research that would show that many crimes in estates are committed with help from insiders: people working inside the estate. Therefore domestic workers are discouraged to live together with their families, or even bring them inside the estate. They must make appointments for visitors while they are not allowed to open the gate by themselves; their employers have to do that for them. Domestic workers, gardeners and people working on the golf club have to wear a uniform while walking on the estate and also wear a photo identification badge on their suit. The security regime has become stricter over time. In the past, when the houses of the different phases were being constructed, construction workers could still enjoy a break on the golf-course. Today, workers are no longer allowed to leave the building site. Since 2008, the estate has also arranged transport for domestics, so they no longer walk on the estate going from the gate to their respective homes.

The HOA is nevertheless very proud of their security system. They like to describe it as ‘well-known’ and ‘respected,’ as the vice-president of the HOA puts it: “*crime does not exist, that is the beauty of this place.*”<sup>x</sup> Security, however, is achieved at a high price - a price that is mostly paid by the many (black) workers that are employed to support the luxurious, secure and ordered existence of Golden Sun’ residents. It is not surprising that most domestic workers experience living in Golden Sun as extremely restricted. As one woman says who works as domestic:

In the community of Golden Sun everything is strict. It is not easy like the townships in Mamelodie that is your place. No one is going to control you there. But in Golden Sun, they can say to you: you mustn’t do this, you mustn’t do that. (...) You mustn’t drive the golf car if you don’t have a license. That is what I don’t like. You can’t bring a lot of people to come to visit you without contacting other people. You are allowed no more than three or four visitors at a time. You can’t come here and ask: can I go to... They say: no. Only one or two is ok. Or you have to come with a car.

Life in Golden Sun for domestics is extremely restricted and they are considerable more controlled in their movement and social life than outside of an estate. The chairman of the HOA says that Golden Sun respects the rights of people “*like any other company.*” But inside Golden Sun, all movements of people apart from residents is seen as a possible risk to security. The General Manager says:

You must understand: the more people walking around the higher the risk profile becomes. (...) And that is an ongoing challenge because it is a big estate. We try, where possible, to reduce the number of people walking around, because it becomes a risk issue. Especially like domestics, friends of domestics, etcetera. We just put procedures in place now that they cannot walk on the estate. They got to be fetched by the homeowner and taken back by the homeowner, because they don't live on the estate. Once they are in the gate they can be anywhere. At the end of the day we are not prepared to compromise security for something that might be a relatively small item which is in absolute isolation.

Screening measures for ‘non-desirables’ are legitimized and justified by saying that they are all ‘for the greater good’ because it would make the community a ‘safer place for everybody.’ The activities of non-residents, their social relationships, are solely looked at through the lens of ‘risk profiles’ and ‘security concerns.’ Indeed, this ‘everybody’ refers mostly to the inhabitants and private homeowners in the estate, all other people simply become a risky nuisance to be monitored, restricted, and made invisible.

### ***An Aesthetic Community***

If the security apparatus is the backbone of the estate, the aesthetic appearance is its public face. Strict regulations assure that the estate exude beauty and community order. Rules are regulated by the aesthetic committee. These regulations include the control over the private estate spaces but also the maintenance of the appearance of green areas and parks in Golden Sun.<sup>xi</sup> The committee is led by the environment trustee.<sup>xii</sup> She says:

To make sure the environment looks - how should I call it - friendly, we do all these physical things to the houses, streets and the surroundings, because there is a psychological surrounding too, namely the feeling you get when you come inside. The people inside Golden Sun create themselves the social surrounding in which they interact. And from the beginning they have made an effort to say that people are important. (...) This makes it for everybody of Golden Sun a very nice estate. You see, in an estate it is very much about whether we care. We care about Golden Sun right up till the gates. We don't worry too much about what is going on outside. But we fix our own roads, all those years, even though this isn't our job. Because in the rules it says that every owner has to look after the roads. And this is where I say: there we have the psychological network in place to keep the roads clean, because it is for the whole of Golden Sun. People are part of their environment. (...)

Estate living, for the trustee, is about ‘whether you care.’ It is important for her that residents care about Golden Sun ‘right up till the gates.’ The concern for the surroundings and the community is thus turned inwards. She acknowledges residents don't worry too much about what is ‘going on outside.’ It is here where the trustee also links aesthetics to order and security. It is her belief that the aesthetic appearance of the estate symbolizes the care people take in their surrounding; the idea that physical surrounding influences behavior. For her, the aesthetic appearance is almost a stand in for community harmony. How, then, do the residents think about Golden Sun? How do they describe the estate and its residential community?

## 1.4 Golden Sun is like ‘a small farmer village’

The white Afrikaans women living in Golden Sun are very positive about the community. They praise not only the security of the estate but also social, aesthetic and moral aspects of the community. Socially, the estate is seen as a community with a great ‘family feeling.’ Golden Sun is depicted as a ‘*klein boere gemeenskap*,’ or a small farmers’ village, where everybody lives ‘together’ and ‘in harmony.’ Lucinda Williams is one of the Afrikaans women who describe the estate as a community where ‘everybody knows everybody’ and who feels the community feeling is just ‘incredible. She says:

Here, from the beginning, it was a great community. From the beginning I said: there is no other place I want to stay. This is genuinely a great place to stay. I remember that my neighbor came over and invited me to join the bible study group. And the next week I did join the group and met other women. And so I learned to get to know the community. I got to know very quickly everybody in the vicinity.

Lucinda Williams moved to Golden Sun when it was still being developed, a group that specifically mentions the small but close-knit community in the estate. Her positive assessment of community life is very common among Afrikaans women; they all feel Golden Sun resembles image of the old, small Afrikaans communities they remember from their past. Most of the women say they predominantly socialize with Afrikaans people, who they know through the different clubs, the schools or the churches.

Aesthetically, the women describe the community as having a ‘countryside feel’; they say the estate feels like you live ‘outside of the city.’ The estate has a very ‘nice and warm’ atmosphere and feels ‘a little like paradise.’ Although they describe the community as cozy, they praise the sense of space inside the estate. They feel a lot of ‘freedom of movement’ because there is a lot of ‘open space’ and ‘no walls and fences’ (houses have no fences around their plots). The golf course also gives a sense of open space and they like that you can walk around it in the evening. The estate to them has an ‘open feel.’ More importantly, the women feel the estate exudes a sense of order and beauty. The women say they love the organized and clean look of the estate, and how all everything functions.

There is also a moral undertone to the community narrative of the women. They describe the community as one where ‘everybody knows everybody’ and ‘nobody locks the door.’ Golden Sun, the women say, is a place where people ‘still greet each other,’ where ‘kids can play in the streets’ and ‘neighbors show up in the middle of the night’ if your child is sick, as one woman said: “*you can borrow some sugar or walk over and drink a glass of wine.*” In the estate people still have ‘respect for each other’ and ‘care about each other.’ It is a place of ‘dignity’ and ‘respect.’ In other words, as another woman said, ‘an ideal place to live.’ Of course, it is hard to say whether such statements have any base in reality but what is important is the image of Golden Sun as a moral community, and - more importantly - where it is contrasted with.

Because the romantic image of Golden Sun as a small and cozy village finds its mirror image in the negative depictions of the world outside Golden Sun; a world that is described as ‘chaotic,’ ‘dangerous’ and ‘wild.’ Ingrid Le Roux says:

If I come in at the gate I open my window because it feels good. I can drive with my windows open because I know the Golden Sun environment feels for me safer than outside the gate. When I come in, the people of Golden Sun will open the gate, and you don't have to close your car anymore. But if you drive out of the gate, you close your car and you close all your windows. Like it is a war outside, that is how you drive out.

As Le Roux makes evident, the outside the estate is more and more seen as a 'warzone' in comparison with the 'people environment' inside the estate. Indeed, much of the positive image of the estate is mirrored by the negative image of post-apartheid South Africa. It is community versus anomie; beauty versus ugliness; order versus chaos; and safety versus danger. And while the community is negatively contrasted post-apartheid South Africa, it is positively related to apartheid. Most women describe their feelings in relation to their experiences growing up during apartheid and say they want to give their children the 'same experience' as they had. Indeed, this positive connections makes one women remark that the community of Golden Sun is like 'the old Afrikaner culture.'

Talk of 'a small farmer village' has thus a distinct cultural nostalgic air. It suggests that these descriptions and representations of Golden Sun by the Afrikaner women are cultural and racial specific. This becomes further evident if a black woman expresses what attracts her in living in Golden Sun. She is equally attached to Golden Sun and appreciative of the 'community feeling' of the estate. But she voices her vision in a distinctly different language. Gigi Nkruma says:

I like the lifestyle. I would not want to live anywhere else. I feel comfortable. I am happy around the area. And I feel like part of owning it. When I am sitting at the club and looking at the view. I love it. Feels to me like I am part of everything (...) I for instance feel that the club is for the people that live in the club. That is the kind of feeling I have. When I am driving inside I feel pride (...) like I am now at home (...) I think it is because I love the place. Here you feel you own part of the golf course. You can go there anytime. (...) I love the quite, safe, beautiful and lovely. I love the gardens.

Nkruma talks of 'ownership' and 'lifestyle' as important aspects of her relationship to the community. Note how the idea of 'owning the place' for Nkruma contributes to her feeling of pride and being at home and comfortable. She also likes the community feel of the estate and its aesthetics. But she does not (and cannot) refer back to an idealistic past, which for her is non-existent. Instead, she frames her feelings of home and belonging in a consumerist language of lifestyle and ownership. There are no positive references to the (apartheid) past nor signs of the vocabulary of ideal community life among the Afrikaner women.

### **1.5 But it also feels like living in a bubble**

But as much as the community is depicted by the Afrikaans women in these idealistic terms, there are equally concerns that there is something surreal about living in the estate. The women describe Golden Sun as an 'island' and a 'holiday resort' and that they live like 'an ostrich with its head in the sand.' Certainly, they have the feeling that the estate is not like the 'real world' and that the estate is just 'too idealistic.' This uncanny feeling is related to the gap they experience between the in- and the outside world; a gap they try

to bridge in their talk but there often remains a tension. This contrast or tension between the inside and the outside world is first of all marked by a difference of cleanness and dirt. Outside the estate, the city for these women is experienced as 'dirty,' 'uncared for,' and 'chaotic.' Inside, things are perceived as 'clean,' 'well taking care off,' and 'beautiful.' But the tension is even more produced by all the security measures: the walls around the estate and the security patrols assure a strict separation between in and outside the community. They seem to produce a different habitué for people; a difference in reality that is lived as two different worlds: One world, the outside world, in which they have to be constantly aware and on the look out - a world where they feel 'unsafe,' 'tense,' 'worried' and 'stressed.' Inside, there is another world, in which they feel 'safe,' 'free,' 'relaxed,' and 'unencumbered'; a world in which they can 'breathe life.'

Many women describe a feeling of freedom and carelessness they have when the drive into the estate, the moment they can 'open the windows and relax.' Outside the estate, they say, they live in a permanent 'psychosomatic stress' condition, as one woman put it. If they get into their car and drive outside, they feel scared, haunted and nervous. They feel their 'life is threatened.' The positive difference is often contributed to the fact that Golden Sun has rules, and rules that are actually enforced. By implication, it is suggested that outside the estate rules are absent or lax enforced. Most women are aware that this situation is not normal and struggle to make sense of it. What should be seen as normal? Hannie Smith says:

Golden Sun is Lala Land. It is a Zulu expression which means to sleep. Staying in Golden Sun feels unreal; it feels unreal because it is not really how it is in South Africa. That we don't have a fence, that we don't close the door and that the children still ride their bikes in the streets. Nobody steals his bike. Nobody jabs him with a knife because of his cell phone. The rest of South Africa is like Johannesburg. Golden Sun is like how it in reality should be. The rest of South Africa is unnatural but Golden Sun is not like it is outside. We have a bubble, we stay in a bubble. We think it is very safe inside here.

Women like Smith obviously wrestle with what should be normal: the perceived violence outside the estate or the artificial peacefulness inside? Smith sees Golden Sun as an abnormal place. But at the same, she does claim the safety of the estate as the new normal. Golden Sun is said to be the 'real' normal, whereas the crime outside has reached 'abnormal' levels. The necessity of security is so used as a legitimization for living in her bubble.

## **1.6 Race is not an issue in the estate**

Many women express positive sentiments about race relations in the estate, and the possibility for gated communities to (re)install hope for a successful diverse society.<sup>xiii</sup> Marilee Du Plesis says:

This is for me the closest thing a person can get to an ideal place to live. This is beautiful and peaceful. This is safe. This gives one a feeling of contentment. For me, here, it feels as if all kinds of different people are together. Not just black but also Indians from Asia. Here, all the people that represent South Africa are together. And because there is respect for each other, this works well.

Du Plesis obviously derives a positive sense of moral community from the estate. Not only is the estate beautiful and peaceful to her, she also trumpets the diversity of people the estate encompasses. For her, the estate represents the closest thing to an ideal South African community. Most women, like Du Plesis, say that there is nothing wrong with the blacks living on the estate. Marilee Du Plesis continues:

Race relations are great. They are completely normal. I don't think there is a problem there. The type of people that lives around here; they all have a certain standard. To live in the estate you need to be able to maintain a certain standard. So I think it does not matter what class you are or what color you are. So black... For me, this is normal. It does not bug me. This is actually amazing to see how much money some blacks have. They have a lot of money. They are, I think... the richest in the estate. I think these are people who have the most status. For me, it is like the whites have gone through this whole development cycle. First, they wanted to be rich, they wanted to earn a lot and prove they have the money, and now the circle is half completed. Now, it is just: 'I want to live and live nicely.' But I think blacks are still under pressure to first say: 'you know I want money.' I just want to point out they don't feel they have to choose to say: 'I want to stay here because it is nice.' It is still about status."

Du Plesis is clearly not a racist. She says that her daughter even has a black boyfriend and that she has no problems with blacks living in Golden Sun. She speaks positively of blacks who live inside the estate. They have 'a certain standard' and in general are perceived as 'very nice.' Other women alternatively call the blacks at the estate 'cultivated' and 'educated.' To Du Plesis, it is encouraging to see the economic progress (at least some) blacks have made and how much money they are able to earn. Nevertheless, Du Plesis does naturalize that it is normal for whites 'to live nicely' in Golden Sun, convenient and enjoyable, while for blacks it is portrayed as a status investment.

### **1.7 It is security that is the problem**

Most women moved to the estate for security reasons. They say they experienced a rapid increase in crime after the year 2000; many experienced several incidents first hand and had family or friends victimized by burglaries, assaults, and car high jacking. The stories they tell about crime and assaults are numerous and disturbing in their details. Most women believe that crime today is still very bad, as Antjie Kruger says:

We moved here for security. They burgled the house of my best friend three weeks ago and she does not live in a security complex. But they were tight up, on the bed, while they were asleep at 3 am in the morning. We stopped our car at a traffic light and then somebody smashed the window while the children were in the car. That wasn't good. My son Sander his first words were 'man hits.' He was only 12 months old when he said 'man' and then he said 'man hits window broken.' Ach... I could tell you many atrocious stories. And these are violent people. It is the violence that accompanies the crimes which is really bad.

Kruger first hand experiences with crime are numerous. There seems little reason to dismiss her claims or to suggest her fears are unfounded. But what are the consequences of such fears once living inside the estate? How does it influence life inside the estate? This comes into clearer view when the women talk about the workers who are employed on the estate. Talk about construction workers, the gardeners, the house maids, and the many other servants is almost always accompanied by concerns about crime and security.

For instance, when Hannie Smith talks about the working conditions of the gardener, she says:

There is a good check-up and I am really quick to call security. So, any person has to keep their eyes open but they are checked really good so I am really not scared. Of course there will be times that you see a taxi driving and then I call security and then they immediately react. (...) The security is always a point of concern. I think if a person does not call them, they don't know what bothers us. So you have to call for even small things, because often small things can become big things.

Smith's first worry is safety whenever she talks about the workers in the estate. Security concerns take precedence over everything else. She suggests that if you do not stay vigilant, security will weaken. Living in the estate for her seems only to increase concerns over security: the possible unreliability of workers poses a constant threat to their care and crime-free world. Fear of crime and fear of blacks thus become intimately linked inside the estate; they almost become synonymous. Ironically, the black workers still have to be relied upon for most services. For the security estate to operate as a privileged fantasy world, white residents cannot live without their support. Ingrid Le Roux says:

If I drive into the gate, this is a feeling of upliftment. You come in; it is like you are at the front door of your house. It is the same feeling. It is not that you feel bad on the other side of the door. But I have to say, yes, I love South Africa. I am friends with every newspaper man from whom I buy the paper. What I want to say is: I know there are people that don't even open their window to talk to someone, but I do, I talk to them, and for me this is a feeling of... This is a thing I have to do. They say a person has six senses in South Africa, you have one more. A person develops a feeling of what is safe and what is unsafe (...) in Golden Sun my bag can lie anywhere. This does not matter. But you don't do this in South Africa. You don't do that. You don't carry around this big jewelry when you walk in the middle of town. This is just how it is.

Golden Sun makes Matthews obviously feel good. As she puts it: it has become synonymous with home. But she is concerned about how that makes her look. Does this imply she does not like South Africa anymore? Or that she does not care about black people? The concerns can be read in between the lines: a constant tension to not be seen as a racist. That is why she emphasizes that she still feels good outside of the estate. She is not too scared of crime to have interracial interactions. She says she still talks to black workers as if to show: she is not scared of black people because of crime. Indeed, she works hard to disentangle the fear of crime from race. But the fear still seeps back in, as we see at the end. Her lament about South Africa makes clear her posturing hardly lessens the anxiety experienced outside the gate. Moreover, if for white Afrikaans women like Smith the promise of good race relations in post-apartheid South Africa has narrowed to being friendly to black newspaper sellers, indeed little progress has been made.

## 1.8 Conclusion

Golden Sun is at the forefront of new urban developments in South Africa. What started as a life-style community with a golf course has turned into a sprawling, exclusive, private security city. It is a community governed by the logic of privatization, securitization and aestheticization. But a place like Golden Sun is not simply inhabited;

people construct it as a practical activity. The women depict the community as an effort for the restoration of community life. They take a lot of pride in their community. The restoration of community is achieved first and foremost aesthetically. What the estate presents (and represents) to the women is a sense of aesthetic and moral order. Ironically, it is this order that symbolizes a sense of hope that the dream of a multicultural South Africa is actually possible.

The stories of the women foreground show that it is certainly not only the absence of crime that explains the attractiveness of the estate. Nor does it do justice to the experience living there. Rather, it is the aesthetic symbolism that most effectively mixes and addresses the women's concerns about community, security, and belonging. More than anything, the spotless, beautiful estate, with its order and uniform aesthetic standards become symbols of stability and decency. Aesthetics are thus not only used to soften the public face of the security apparatus (a logical thought), but pride in the orderly appearance actively contributes to the diminishing of worries over security, order and chaos. Concerns over security and aesthetics - fear and beauty - so actively reinforce each other. Indeed, what makes the discourse on aesthetics so influential is that it is purportedly driven by care for the community and the surrounding. The aesthetic beauty of the estate also provides a positive mirror to the security discourse that is driven by fear. But it is the drive for security that is self-perpetuating: its logic calls for ever stricter segregation and tighter control; any concern about race or the racialized nature of life inside the estate is overridden as it reaches deeper and deeper inside the lives of the workers on the estate.

The liberal women central in this paper perfectly exemplify the limited role racism plays (or the figure of the black criminal) for sustaining the image of the ideal community. In fact, many of women take an active anti-racist stance. Rather, the women of Golden Sun define and defend their place and identity in South African society in the face of the growing threat to their way of life and achievements posed by their physical and social proximity to crime and the poverty of the townships. In the worldview of the women, the chaos in post-apartheid South Africa takes a multitude of forms: crime, disrepair, and dirt. The positive self-image of the community is negatively contrasted with that of post-apartheid South Africa, while it is positively linked to their experiences during apartheid. And yet the orderly image of their community is fragile; they know they live inside a privatized bubble. Golden Sun is a place that protects them from the forces of social change, the threat of decay, disorder, and crime. It establishes continuity with the past where most experience a rupture in other areas in life. Black newcomers are welcomed – or at least tolerated – as long as they join the fight against the chaos at their doorstep.

## Literature

- Ballard, Richard. 2002. "Desegregating Minds: White Identities and Urban Change in the New South Africa." Pp. 304 in *Geography Department*. Swansea: University of Wales.
- Beall, J, O Crankshaw, and S Parnell. 2002. *Uniting a divided city: governance and social exclusion in Johannesburg*. London: Earthscan Publications.
- Besteman, CL. 2008. *Transforming Cape Town*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Blakely, EJ, and MG Snyder. 1997. *Fortress America: gated communities in the United States*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Blokland-Potters, T. 2003. *Urban bonds: social relationships in an inner city neighbourhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bremner, Lindsay. 2004. "Bounded spaces: demographic anxieties in post-apartheid Johannesburg." *Social Identities* 10:455-468.
- Caldeira, TPR. 2000. *City of walls: crime, segregation, and citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Duncan, James S., and Nancy G. Duncan. 2001. "The Aestheticization of the Politics of Landscape Preservation." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91:387-409.
- Duncan, JS, and N Duncan. 2004. *Landscapes of privilege: the politics of the aesthetic in an American suburb*. New York: Routledge.
- Dupuis, Ann, Thorns, David C. 1998. "Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security." *The Sociological Review* 46:24-47.
- Genis, Serife. 2007. "Producing Elite Localities: The Rise of Gated Communities in Istanbul." *Urban Studies* 44:771-798.
- Glasze, G, C Webster, and K Frantz. 2006. *Private cities: global and local perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Harvey, D. 2004. *The condition of postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jürgens, U, and M Gnad. 2002. "Gated communities in South Africa - experiences from Johannesburg." *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 29:337-353.
- Kohn, Margaret. 2004. *Brave new neighborhoods: the privatization of public space*. New York: Routledge.
- Lemanski, Charlotte. 2004. "A new apartheid? The spatial implications of fear of crime in Cape Town, South Africa." *Environment and Urbanization* 16:101-112.
- . 2006a. "Spaces of Exclusivity or Connection? Linkages between a Gated Community and its Poorer Neighbour in a Cape Town Master Plan Development." *Urban Studies* 43:397-420.
- . 2006b. "Residential responses to fear (of crime plus) in two Cape Town suburbs: implications for the post-apartheid city." *Journal of International Development* 18:787-802.
- . 2006c. "The impact of residential desegregation on social integration: Evidence from a South African neighbourhood." *Geoforum* 37:417-435.

- Lemanski, Charlotte, Karina Landman, and Matthew Durlington. 2008. "Divergent and Similar Experiences of 'Gating' in South Africa: Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town." Pp. 133-158 in *Urban Forum*: Springer Netherlands.
- Low, Setha M. 2001. "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear." *American Anthropologist* 103:45-58.
- . 2008. "Fortification of Residential Neighbourhoods and the New Emotions of Home." *Housing, Theory and Society* 25:47-65.
- Low, SM. 2003. *Behind the gates: life, security, and the pursuit of happiness in fortress America*. New York: Routledge.
- Sennett, R. 2008. *The uses of disorder: personal identity and city life*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sibley, D. 1995. *Geographies of exclusion: society and difference in the West*. London: Routledge.
- Soja, EW. 2000. *Postmetropolis: critical studies of cities and regions*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wu, Fulong, and Klaire Webber. 2004. "The rise of "foreign gated communities" in Beijing: between economic globalization and local institutions." *Cities* 21:203-213.

---

i Scholars have pointed at supply-side factors to explain their emergence, like financial benefits for developers, builders and municipalities that would drive the success. To municipalities, for instance, they are attractive because they transfer the debt liability, building of infrastructure, and provision of services to private corporations, while at the same time municipality collects property taxes from residents. Other academics focused on demand-side factors, like home buyers' preferences, new life styles and fear of crime. Researchers also noted how such communities bundle very different goods and how housing, community, security and amenities were marketed and sold as a 'way of living.' Social critics focused on the new means of regulation and controlling resident and non-resident behavior through subtle and not so subtle mechanisms as security measures, house type and taste culture.

ii Bremner builds on Klein's psychoanalytic concept of terror (linked with the work of Achille Mbembe) to explore the link between race, crime and privatization of space in Johannesburg. Klein argues that terror is something inherent to the human condition. It is a nameless anxiety, a fundamental vulnerability, a basic, existential fear of imminent catastrophe. In our attempts to escape this terror, we visit it upon the Other- the Jew, the Negro, the foreigner, the female, who all share one essential quality – 'the quality of Otherness, of being not me.'

Setha Low argues that gated communities incorporate conflicting values. She writes: "one explanation for the gated community's popularity is that it materially and metaphorically incorporates otherwise conflicting, and in some cases polarizes, social values that make up the moral terrain of middle-class life. (...) the gated community's symbolic power rests on its ability to order personal and social experience" These 'conflicting and polarizing' values are explained through reference to the psychoanalytic relational theory of Klein and the process of splitting. Low writes: "Dualistic thinking is a form of social splitting used to cope with anxiety and fear. It oversimplifies and dichotomizes cultural definitions and social expectations to differentiate the self from the other." In Low's study, this differentiation happens between whites or Anglos and "Mexicans," whites and illegal immigrants, and whites from "ethnic others." She argues that splitting is a necessary way to deal with conflicting feelings and anxiety about social status. (Low, Setha M. 2001. "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear." *American Anthropologist* 103:45-58.)

iii Duncan and Duncan in their study show the negative consequences of seemingly innocent aesthetic norms on conflicts between the large Latino communities that find employment in the wealthy suburb but have to reside in the neighboring communities.

iv Blokland argues, rethinking the study of communities in the Dutch context, that for too long communities were equated with social relationships. Communities should be seen through the prism of

---

relations, institutions, identity, and (symbolic imagination). Her research suggests that neighborhood relationship only distinguish themselves from other social relations by physical proximity and not social characteristic. Physical proximity is an unreliable indicator to predict the potential of social identification (1998,13). Neighborhood does not equal community, she says. Social communities make use of locations to varying degrees.

v Duncan and Duncan write: “Most residents we spoke to said that they don’t care who their neighbors are as long as the rural ambience of the town doesn’t change. This is not so much a tolerance of social difference as it is a belief that a properly controlled landscape gives the illusion of sound homogenous place, and, as ever, it is the look that matters.” Page 62 in Duncan, JS, and N Duncan. 2004. *Landscapes of privilege: the politics of the aesthetic in an American suburb*. New York: Routledge.

vi Other studies were ethnographic, like Setha’s excellent book *Behind the Gates*, but no researcher actually lived inside the gate. With Low I do share a similar fascination in how people make sense of their experiences and emotions, and how these thoughts and feelings ultimately have moral consequences.

vii The number of foreigners that either own or rent properties is estimated at around 20 per cent.

viii The HOA is a Section 22 Non Profit Company, which, simple put, means that all levies and fees need to be reinvested in the estate. On the board there is a chairman, vice-chairman, security trustee, financial trustee and environment trustee. Being a trustee on the board used to be a voluntary job but since early 2000 trustees are paid a monthly fee. The trustee supervises different committees, like the ‘security committee,’ ‘levy determining committee,’ ‘aesthetics committee,’ ‘the environment committee’ and also the ‘social responsibility committee’ and the ‘estate agents committee.’

ix Although the security company is not allowed to prevent anybody to go into their residents, they can, in such cases, make a ‘citizens arrest.’ The police are then called in to the arrest. Security personal even receives a special training at Home Affairs on identity documentation. As the security manger said: “there is a fine line between access control and control of movement.”

x For instance, in 2009, the estate had 25 burglary incidents, which all were solved and 54 people in total were arrested,

xi There are rules and restrictions for the type of materials, the height of walls, the plot size and the wall surrounding the golf course. Apart from rules pertaining to the architecture of buildings, there are various other regulations. They deal with such diverse issues as building and house maintenance, house selling practices, garden and roads maintenance but also with pet animal rules. Residents can complain to the committee about violations of the rules or other disputes with their neighbors, and the committee deals with these matters. Matters are further complicated because of the golf course and a game park on the estate. Particularly the golf course is a source of community friction, as only forty percent uses the golf course for golfing, while other residents enjoy the course as a recreational area. The body that regulates aesthetic regulation is the environment committee.

xii This committee has only recently, in 2010, obtained a legal status. Before, the municipality ultimately decided on building plans and licenses, and many residents who got a negative advice were able to continue their plans through obtaining licenses from the municipality.

xiii Race is a difficult topic in Golden Sun to do research on. Many blacks living in the estate refused an interview. The HOA refused to provide data and names on inhabitants. And many people were reluctant to talk about any racial conflict on the estate. Nevertheless, while I was there, there was a case of a golfer who had hit a golf caddy. Unfortunately, there are no statistics of the inhabitants of Golden Sun and there are no numbers of black people living in the estate. Nevertheless, their numbers are increasing, most people of the HOA and real estate agents say. In the past, real estate agents say, blacks would not be allowed to buy a house, even when the offered more than a white buyer, but this has changed. The HOA has no control over the real estate agents, and who is working where, as long as the agencies stick to the rules of the HOA. But until recently, the real estate agencies still seemed firmly in white, mostly Afrikaans hands. There are thirty agencies working in the estate which employ a total of eighty agents. Of those eighty agents only three are black.