

# Social Differentiation Within and Outside the Gated Community of Tierra Grande, Lawaan, Talisay City, Cebu

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## Introduction

Tierra Grande is a residential community located in the hilly portion of Talisay City in the province of Cebu, Philippines. Different parts of Tierra Grande belong to at least three barangays, namely Lawaan 1, Lawaan 3 and Maghaway. It was developed in 1993 by Communities Philippines, Inc. which operates under the Camella and Palmera Homes company based in Manila. This company was founded by Senator Manuel Villar in 1975, which concentrated in mass housing projects, first in Manila and later expanded to other parts of the country. With a total land area of 28 hectares, Tierra Grande has grown since 1993 to a population of around 1,500 households. The community is divided into three phases, with Phase 3 having four sub-phases. Different housemodels and structures characterize each phase. Tierra Grande has several neighboring communities – a farmers' community in Maghaway, several “squatters” communities at the periphery of Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3B, and an old subdivision.

This paper shall focus on social differentiation within and outside the Tierra Grande gated community. It shall discuss the characteristics of different groups; physical, symbolic and cultural boundaries; and perceptions of people on these social differences.

## Social Differentiation in Gated Communities

Social differentiation is all about class and status distinctions. What distinguishes one class from another? Prestige is an important element to consider as it provides the basis of perceptions on status. According to Gerth and Mills in *The Status Sphere*, the prestige of the middle strata considers more important the occupation and educational aspects rather than descent and property. Insofar as occupation determines the level of income and different styles of life require different income levels, occupation limits the style of life. (Gerth & Mills, 1995, p. 135)

Higher prestige levels are placed on people employed in occupations requiring more mental activity and which pay more. White-collar employees enjoy a middle prestige place as compared to wage-workers (lower prestige) and entrepreneurs (higher prestige). In Metro Cebu as in other parts of the Philippines, such is also true. Cebuanos place a higher prestige on those occupying managerial positions, doctors and lawyers as compared to rank and file employees such as clerks and office personnel. Even if you have the same or even a higher income than these people (as in the case of Overseas Filipino Workers and seamen), you are still accorded a lower status than them. This is based on the amount of cultural capital that is outside economic capital. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, includes level of education, aesthetic taste for the arts, etc.

Based on Jager's paper, *Class Definition and the Esthetics of Gentrification*, the middle class, on the one hand, defends itself against pressures from the dominant classes and on the other hand, demarcates itself from the lower orders. In the case of Victoriana, which is the focus of his paper, Jager says architectural form not only fixes a social position but also in part conveys and sanctions a social rise. A change in social position is symbolized through a change in housing. (Jager, 1986, p. 80) This statement is quite relevant in my present study on social differentiation in Tierra Grande, a

gated community in Talisay City, Cebu, since house models are one of the primary bases of such differentiation. The consumption pattern of house models by the middle class produce class differences. Class differentiation is based upon a refinement of consumption of objects, such as housing. Social differences are no longer simply based on possession but on being seen to have or perhaps in being stylish. (Jager, 1986, p. 89) This is apparent in the marketing strategies of Communities Philippines, Inc., the developer of Tierra Grande —the more “classy” subdivisions such as Aziendas Milan, Firenze and Venezia (located further up Tierra Grande) are marketed with an Italian theme under the Crown Asia brand name (targeting the higher income groups); while “ordinary” subdivisions such as Tierra Grande are marketed as to its environment and affordability under the Camella Homes brand name symbolizing mass housing (for the middle and lower income groups). According to Crown Asia’s marketing head, it is more prestigious to live in these “themed subdivisions” rather than in the “ordinary” ones.

This discussion may be linked to Bourdieu’s three-zone model of cultural tastes. According to Bourdieu the working class is less able than the middle or upper classes to adopt a specifically aesthetic point of view upon objects whose constitution and definition involves an aesthetic judgment. This aesthetic sense is the product of conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence. It unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others. The petite bourgeoisie is condemned to differentiate themselves sharply from those immediately below them in the class system. (Jenkins, 1992, p. 139) This differentiation is more marked in the construction of boundaries. As Caldeira points out in her article *Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation*, the proliferation of fortified enclaves has created a new model of spatial segregation. Fortified enclaves are privatized, enclosed and monitored spaces of residence, consumption, leisure and work. (Caldeira, 1996, p. 303) With rigidly constructed boundaries, residents from all social groups have a sense of exclusion and restriction. This makes social differences more rigidly perceived emphasizing inequality and distance. Defensible architecture and planning may only promote conflict instead of preventing it by making clear the extension of social inequalities and the lack of commonalities. (Caldeira, 1996, p. 325). In the case of Tierra Grande, the developer initially had this explicit boundary construction in mind to segregate Tierra Grande residents from those outside. However, as outsiders asserted their rights to access by destroying the fences, the developer did not assert its policy. A certain sense of fear of people from outside prevail among residents, as cited by many of my respondents from the different phases. But, no one has really asserted to enforce the supposed architectural boundary. It seems that the residents have learned to coexist peacefully with those outside communities. One factor which has made it difficult to enclose the subdivision as a whole, is its size of 28 hectares, as stated by the CPI representative interviewed. This difficulty in securing Tierra Grande has been CPI’s basis for constructing smaller subdivisions in other parts of Metro Cebu. But why the preoccupation of being segregated from the outside communities? Jager states that the stigmatization of slums and their contents necessitates the social demarcation and distinction of class through the establishment of social boundaries for determining insiders from outsiders. (Jager, 1986, p. 84)

Tierra Grande is composed of mostly migrants who are now working in Metro Cebu. As discussed by Marcuse and van Kempen in *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order*, migration for reasons of job-seeking are frequent. Migration increases the demand for housing. A case in point is Metro Cebu which is considered second in terms of urbanization and development to Metro Manila. People from various municipalities of Cebu as well as provinces in Visayas and Mindanao flock to Cebu to find jobs. As one of my informants said, Cebu is a booming city and it provides more opportunities for development (personal, work or business) as compared to other provinces. This, he said is the reason why he transferred from Misamis City. Even people from Manila come to Cebu to escape the traffic, pollution and congestion of the big city. With these developments, housing projects have been on the rise since the early 90’s to accommodate migrants. Tierra Grande is one of the pioneers of such mass housing developments. Most housing projects have been developed in

places far from the center of commercial and industrial activity. The choice of such areas, according to the CPI representative interviewed, was based on the view/scenery, the cost of the land and the serenity of the place. A home away from the “hustles and bustles” of city life is what they are marketing. Using Marcuse and van Kempen’s new spatial order, Tierra Grande could be considered part of the suburbs, where the typical picture includes owner-occupied single-family houses with “decent homeownership people”, gardens, nice places for children to play, quiet and safety. The residential function is far more important. These are usually inhabited by the middle class family households with incomes sufficient to pay market prices for their dwellings. (*Marcuse & van Kempen, 2000, p. 14*) As one of the sales brokers I interviewed said, people in Tierra Grande surely have sufficient incomes as it is a major criteria in approving the application. Based on interviews with residents, factors that motivated them to move to this place was the environment – quiet, no pollution, safe for children – as compared to neighborhoods in the city center (either subdivisions or squatter communities). Most have lived in these other environments and longed for a place of their own with an ideal environment, that is also affordable.

Such gated communities, as McLaughlin and Muncie point out, have attracted those who wanted to distance themselves from the city, desired a socially homogenous and ordered environment and were willing to pay for separate private services and amenities (*McLaughlin and Muncie, 1999, p. 117*). Communitarian-type arguments stress the positive aspects of gated communities. First, walls and gates can bind residents together, producing a spatial consciousness and new forms of highly localized “small town” politics of place and common purpose. This is true in Tierra Grande as residents have a common identity of being “*taga-Camella*”(resident of Tierra Grande). Second, they provide residents with a sense of self-determination – they control and manage their neighborhood. This is done mostly through homeowners associations. However, the Homeowners Association in Tierra Grande, though, is not very popular among residents because of mismanagement by previous administrations. Participation in activities of the homeowners association is very minimal and residents do not even pay their monthly dues. The more active, more popular and well-participated association in the subdivision is the Tierra Grande Catholic Community. Third, the gated community is a safe haven wherein residents interact with those whom they can assume to be like-minded in safe “open” spaces. Tierra Grande residents consider themselves as having relatively the same statuses. My respondents said they are comfortable in dealing with fellow “*taga-Camella*”. In Tierra Grande such spaces include the basketball court, multi-purpose center, the roads, and clubhouse which are supposedly for residents’ use only. However this has not been strictly enforced as outsiders have gained access to such facilities especially the roads and basketball court. Nevertheless there is still some form of understood restrictions on the use of such spaces primarily for residents. And lastly, the walls of gated communities ensure that residents feel secure in their homes. (*McLaughlin and Muncie, 1999, p. 117*) This is also not the case in Tierra Grande as it has many access points going to outside communities, as discussed earlier in this paper. In short, the proliferation of gated communities is a manifestation of social differentiation through the use of spatial as well as symbolic boundaries.

## **Tierra Grande Inside and Out**

Tierra Grande is one of the ten residential subdivisions developed by Communities Philippines, Inc. It is grouped together with five other subdivisions targeting the so-called “class C”. According to CPI’s marketing head in Cebu, class C means those earning a sufficient salary including those locally employed, small businessmen, and Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The basic criteria for approval of any housing loan is the income level which should be three times as much as the amount of the monthly amortization. This criteria automatically excludes those with no or low incomes.

There are different house models in Tierra Grande in its several phases. These models have been designed by their Manila-based Planning and Technical Design Department. The concepts are

based on library and internet research as well as trips abroad to ensure a realistic presentation of the theme and make it more attractive to buyers. There are townhouses, countryhomes (box type with aguas roof), single detached units and rowhouses. Prices of such vary depending on the house model. Row houses are the lowest-priced as it is a plain 21-square meter house with a regular lot area of 40 square meters. It has no ceiling, no finishing and no bedrooms. The monthly amortization is P1300 through PAGIBIG (Home Development Mortgage Fund) payable for 25 years. This is quite an affordable amount for rank-and-file employees in the government and private sectors. In contrast, house models for phases 1, 2, 3B and 3D, although they vary on the exterior design, are mostly single detached units with 2 bedrooms, finishing and ceiling. The floor area is only 32 square meters on the average with a lot area of at least 80 square meters up to 200 square meters. The lot area provides enough space to expand the original unit. These units are more expensive than the rowhouses. Thus this has attracted those with higher incomes such as managers, businessmen, OFWs and seamen.

Tierra Grande has its own water system managed by the developer, drainage system, a road network and several facilities and amenities including a multi-purpose hall alternately used as chapel, a basketball court, tennis court, parks and playgrounds, and a clubhouse with two swimming pools. As to security, the developer hired security guards assigned at the entrance gate and those in charge of roving the whole subdivision. A perimeter fence of wood and barbed wire have also been placed by the developer in all open access areas of Tierra Grande. This fence has been destroyed by the residents of outside communities. Since some responsibilities of the developer have already been turned over to the homeowners' association including security, guards have no longer been hired. The homeowners' association lacks funds to be able to maintain such, according to its former president. But, according to him, they have an alternative security arrangement which he termed as "secret eyes" where they have civilian agents living in different parts of the subdivision who report any irregularities to the president and to the police.

As cited by Marcuse and van Kempen, the spatial order of cities is characterized by the concentration within cities of a new urban poverty on one hand and of specialized "high level" internationally connected business activities on the other and with increasing spatial divisions not only between each of them but also among segments of the middle class in between. (*Marcuse & Van Kempen, 2000, p. 3*) This hypothesis may not totally be the picture of Metro Cebu, but to a certain extent there is some truth to this. In the case of Tierra Grande, urban poverty is apparent in the communities lying outside its physical boundaries. As regards the segments within the middle class or those residing within Tierra Grande, this can be seen in the different phases.

Let us first take a look at the differentiation of the inside from the outside. Even as residents of Sitios Didos and Cadicay and Barangay Maghaway utilize the Tierra Grande road network as access going to their homes, certain boundaries are apparent. An official of Crown Asia said that the developer has constructed a perimeter fence to separate the subdivision from the nearby communities but that the residents of the "squatter" communities have destroyed them to gain access. Furthermore, Brgy. Maghaway cannot be fenced off since Tierra Grande's main road is a provincial road leading to this barangay and other mountain barangays. When I surveyed the area, I found at least five access points to such peripheral communities. The developer tried to create a physical boundary in the form of a barbed-wire fence, to protect the residents and constrain outsiders.

These so-called "squatters" communities are congested as houses are built side by side with only small passageways in between. Most houses are made of light or semi-concrete materials. The size of the houses are smaller, although they may have the same floor area as original Tierra Grande house models. Sitio Didos, according to one resident interviewed, is composed of mostly relatives having a common ancestor who owns the lot. She insisted that they are not squatters but rather they were original settlers of this place. "*Wa pa ang Camella, naa na mi diri*" (we have been living here even

before Tierra Grande was built), they said. Although some residents have just recently moved in, they were their relatives. The term “squatter”, she said is being used by Tierra Grande residents who look down on them because of their poverty. She said they may be poor but they are not squatters. My interviews with several residents confirmed this perception of the residents of Didos. The use of the term “squatter” may have been used by Tierra Grande residents to distinguish or differentiate themselves from the outside poor community. Most of the Didos residents have found employment in Tierra Grande as laundry women, house helpers or construction workers.

Adjacent to Didos is another community composed of relocated squatters from Cebu City, who were either victims of fire or demolition. This community has been labelled by Tierra Grande residents as the escape route of thieves. It is not certain whether the thieves are residing there or not. Didos residents decry that they are being lumped together with this community’s reputation and identity when in fact they are different. Tierra Grande residents would often call both communities as Didos. Another such community composed of relocated squatters from Cebu City is located in a portion of Brgy. Maghaway. According to a Maghaway resident, this community is from Barangay Kamagayan in Cebu City which is notorious for prostitution and drugs. She was worried about the moving in of these people in their barangay as it has influenced the youth in shabu use. She said there were also prostitutes who have continued their trade locally. Some Tierra Grande residents were also worried about this, especially because these people use the same road and thus cannot be fenced out. These two communities are likewise congested and composed of small houses. The labels attached to these communities, who are composed of migrants from slum areas in Cebu City, may have also been used by both Tierra Grande residents and original settlers of Didos and Maghaway to differentiate themselves from these people. This illustrates what Bourdieu said that the working class is also differentiated internally. The original settlers differentiated themselves from the relocated squatters in Maghaway and Didos as they do not want to be identified with the negative labels placed on these people.

On the other side of Tierra Grande, is Sitio Cadicay. The place is congested and consists of small houses. The place is notorious for some of its residents are known drug pushers and criminals in the area. There was a time in 1997 when a little girl from Tierra Grande was raped by a teenager from Cadicay in one of the parks. This incident has made Tierra Grande residents wary of this community as it poses a “threat” to the peacefulness and security of the subdivision. In terms of relationship within such outsider communities, it is quite observable that they know each other either by name or by face. Some of the residents in these communities have found employment in Tierra Grande households. Others vend food, fruits, vegetables, clothing and other items which they sell to Tierra Grande residents. Tierra Grande has become a source of income for these outside communities, according to one resident of Cadicay interviewed. It has also been a good source of scrap food for the pigs they are fattening.

Further up is Brgy. Maghaway, a farmers’ community. They have houses made of light materials but the area is not as congested as there are several fruit trees and other plants in between. Their primary source of livelihood is farming. But since Tierra Grande was constructed, it has provided them an additional source of income from vending the fruits and vegetables they harvest. Most residents of Maghaway are original settlers whose ancestors have lived there all their lives. The community is accessible using the main road of Tierra Grande which is a municipal road. In the past, the marker that one has reached the end of the subdivision and entered Maghaway is the cemented road which ends up to Tierra Grande’s last block of houses. But now that the cemented road has been extended, the type of houses would be the signal that one is already outside Tierra Grande.

Residents of these communities when asked would say they are “poor” and the Tierra Grande people are well-off since they have jobs that provide higher incomes. Tierra Grande residents also consider themselves better-off than the people in the outside communities as they do

not have regular jobs. Based on these statements it is clear that class differentiation is made on the basis of occupation and income. In terms of relating with people from the outside, some Tierra Grande residents said they do not know anyone from these places. Others, who have acquaintances from these communities say that they relate normally, but with a certain level of caution as they are not familiar with these people. However, there is one other community adjacent to Tierra Grande but is considered as having a higher status. This is Seaview Subdivision which is an old subdivision (circa 1970s). Tierra Grande residents believe that residents of Seaview are well-off as they are the ones who were able to purchase subdivision lots at a time when it was not yet that popular. They are a distinct few who at the time had the income to pay for the high price of subdivision lots.

But generally, the term “outside community” as used in this paper would refer to the communities considered of lower status. Caldeira states that when some people are denied access to certain areas and when different groups are not supposed to interact in public space, there is lack of equality and freedom for social life. (*Caldeira, 1996, p. 325*) To a certain extent, such notion is true in Tierra Grande. Even as outsiders have free access to the subdivision, either for work or leisure, there is still some form of restriction based on how insiders behave towards them. A case in point is that of the 16-year old boy from Tierra Grande who fell in love with a 15-year old girl from Didos. The boy’s parents disapproved of the relationship, while the girl’s parents welcomed such a development. In fact the boy decided to live in the girl’s house. As the story goes, the boy’s parents did not want their son to marry a girl from the squatters area. Another reason was that he has not finished schooling and thus lacks the cultural as well as economic capital necessary to maintain his status. This is related to distinguishing the middle class from those occupying a lower status. As Caldeira puts it, segregated cities foster inequality and the sense that different groups belong to separate universes. When boundaries are crossed, there is aggression, fear and a feeling of unprotectedness. (*Caldeira, 1996, p. 325*)

Let us now look into the inside of Tierra Grande. If these people are generally better-off than the outside community, is there further status differentiation within? As I mentioned earlier in this paper, Tierra Grande is subdivided into different phases. Phase 3C is composed of rowhouses; while Phases 1, 2, 3B and 3D consists mostly of single detached houses. Phase 3A and a portion of Phase 2 is composed of duplex type houses. The house models themselves, according to the CPI’s marketing head, are geared towards different market segments. Phases 1, 2 and 3B were developed first, targetting the “middle income” group mostly from the government as well as the private sector. As most buyers were employees, they availed of a loan from either the Government Security Insurance System (GSIS), Social Security System (SSS) or PAGIBIG Fund wherein the monthly amortization would be deducted from their monthly salary for a period of 15 to 25 years. Aside from employees, the more expensive units (those with bigger lots) attracted higher income middle class people including OFWs, managers and seamen. Most of them availed of an in-house loan payable within a shorter period of time and with larger monthly amortizations. To attract the lower income group of the middle class and as part of any developer’s mandate, the so-called socialized housing was developed in Phase 3C with quite a number of units (12 blocks with 25 units per block on the average). Ordinary rank and file employees were mostly the ones who availed of such. Phase 3D was the last to be developed, going back to single detached models but this time with a new exterior design. The target market was the same as Phases 1, 2 and 3B. But because the cost of the units at this time (1996-1997) was higher, most who availed were those with higher positions as well as OFWs.

As gleaned from the above discussion, there is differentiation within Tierra Grande. The more pronounced is between Phase 3C and the other Phases. This was pointed out by respondents residing in Phase 3C. They said they had a lower status compared to the residents of other phases based on the price of units and house model. Most said it was what they could afford based on their income. It was also observed that people in this phase seldom have cars. For those who have, it is

more on multicab type as compared to the residents of other phases who have Revos, adventures, L-300 vans and the like. Space is also one of the bases mentioned. Streets in Phase 3C are smaller, houses and lots are smaller and thus the neighborhood is more congested. Thus it is observable that there are more people in Phase 3C than in the other phases. On the other hand, more people here know each other either by name or by face. More micro-level businesses have sprouted and survived in this area including four eateries, several sari-sari stores, a banana cue stand, internet and computer gaming stations, and bakeries. In this phase, although there may be some who have made improvements on their units, most have been content with just extending a bit at the front and securing the back with a wall/fence. Still others have not made any improvements on their units, for lack of budget.

In contrast, in Phase 2, seldom do you see the original house model. Most residents have renovated and extended their units utilizing the bigger lot area that they have. There are big two-story houses in Phase 2. Fences, gates and walls are also higher. Walking through this phase, I seldom saw people outside their houses. All seemed quiet and serene. I had a hard time finding someone to interview. They were also more cautious when I knocked on their gates. Based on my interviews, most of the residents here only know their next-door neighbors. The relationship is also more as acquaintances as they only see each other when going out for work in the morning. Exceptions would be those who are active in religious activities. More people in this phase have cars. Most of them are managers, businessmen, OFWs and seamen, although there are also ordinary employees residing in this phase. Roads are also wider and houses are further apart as they have bigger lot areas.

Phases 3B and 3D are somewhat similar to Phase 2 in its physical characteristics. People residing in these phases also have similarities with those in Phase 2. However, since 3B is located separate from the other phases, a sense of camaraderie has been developed among the residents, similar to the relationships of people in Phase 3C. To a certain extent 3B has differentiated itself from the other phases. In the past, they had their own association that took care of garbage problems, security and youth development activities for their phase.

Phase 3A is located somewhere in the middle both physically and socially. This is where the duplex type houses are with a floor area of 25 square meters and a lot area of 60 square meters. Most people here are ordinary rank and file employees just like those in Phase 3C. In terms of status, they are quite similar to Phase 3C residents.

As we can see, the differentiation between Phases 1, 2, 3B and 3D is very thin; and the differentiation between 3C and 3A is also thin. However, the differentiation between these two groups are clear. The higher income people and those occupying higher positions are in the first group; while those with lesser income and lower positions are in the second group. In terms of social relationships within the group, the second group's residents are more cohesive than those in the first group. This is evidenced in the number of people they know from the same group and the frequency of their interaction with each other.

According to Bourdieu, the petite bourgeoisie is even more internally differentiated. (*Jenkins, 1992, p. 144*). The closer together class fractions are, the sharper is likely to be the boundary between them in terms of its symbolization. (*Jenkins, 1992, p. 143*) Although Tierra Grande is composed of middle class people and are internally differentiated, boundaries between them are not that sharp. Bourdieu's statement seems not to be applicable to this case, as Tierra Grande residents themselves find it hard to make distinctions among them. Symbolizations are not that pronounced, although these may be evident in the interior designs of their housing units. Bourdieu further states that new intellectuals are inventing an art of living which provides them with the gratifications and prestige of the intellectual at the least cost. Economic constraints produce an adaptive response distinguished

by the relative absence of aesthetic choice-making. (Jenkins, 1992, p. 145) This is illustrated in the case of Phase 3C residents who seldom make major renovations on their units. As residents put it, they do not have the budget to do so. The few 3C residents who have done renovations on their units are accorded a higher prestige as it is assumed that they are better-off since they can afford to make renovations. The extent by which renovations are made is one of the bases for such bestowal of prestige as well as distinctions within the group.

### **Spatial and Symbolic Boundaries in Tierra Grande**

Tierra Grande is differentiated from the outside communities because of their occupation and the spatial differentiation. Tierra Grande however is further segregated into two general groups based on the income level. First group consists of phases 1, 2, 3B and 3D; the other group consists of 3A and 3C. These are further segregated based on cultural capital. Boundaries are physical, symbolic as well as the more obvious boundary are the walls and fences (within and outside) and the house models within the subdivision. Other symbolic boundaries within are the type of fences/gates, water tanks, airconditioners, and cars. The first group have higher fences and gates, more have their own water tanks, airconditioners are conspicuous and they own cars. There are some residents in the second group, however, that also possess such but not as many as those in the first group. To symbolize further segregation within each group, seamen tend to place an anchor symbol on their gates/fences. This differentiates them from ordinary local employees. There is even one house in Phase 2 that looks like a ship. Two-story houses also symbolically segregate those who have higher incomes from those with less. A mini-grocery store might also put one in a status above the others as you are perceived as having more wealth to be able to put up such an investment. The type of car also further differentiates those who own cars (considered to be of higher status). Symbolizing lower status are the hanging of laundry on the streets which is common in phase 3C for lack of space. Another is the parking of cars on the streets which is also common in phase 3C since they do not have enough space for a garage. Fighting cocks are also being raised by phase 3C residents. Drinking, gambling and illegal cockfights are also common in phase 3C.

However, this differentiation within Tierra Grande has been perceived more by residents in Phase 3C as they compared their status with that of the other phases. From my interviews, the residents from the phases of the first group at first said that there is no differentiation from one phase to another and that all have relatively the same status. When prodded to make distinctions, the prominent answer was on the size of the houses and lots especially in 3C that are smaller compared to those in the other phases. One significant comment I overheard made by a resident of Phase 1 was that *"morag mag squatter sa Phase 3C"* (Phase 3C is just like a squatters area). This comment drew the ire of some residents of Phase 3C as they do not want to be identified with or likened to squatters.

Within the subdivision, there are also real squatters – those living in vacant housing units who neither own nor rent it. Some are quite obvious as they do not have any water connection, electricity, proper windows/doors/comfort rooms. Some of them are relatives of some residents, others are from the outside communities. Tierra Grande residents consider them as a threat to the security of the subdivision, but no one has made any move to remove them from the place they are staying in.

Other residents who are considered as partly an outsider but also partly an insider are those who are renting. They are more accepted by homeowner-residents, as they have relatively the same level of economic and cultural capital. The only difference is that they do not own the housing unit they are living in, but they are paying rent for their stay.

Another group living in the Tierra Grande households, but are also considered partly outsiders and partly insiders by residents, are the house helpers. These people tend to group together

for support mechanisms. They gather for camaraderie, tsismis, and other forms of interactions. Residents consider them as having a lower status. The statement, “Morag maid og itsura”, is evidence of this distinction. There are even times that they are being put under suspicion of theft. One resident said “*di ta mo-kumpanyansa*” (we should still be on guard) because we do not really know them or where they came from. The common notion is that people from the outside tend to relate or interact with these people to gain access to the inside. This may be the case because they identify themselves with those from the outside communities as they have relatively the same lower class status. This creates another possible threat to the security of residents in Tierra Grande. The residents of Tierra Grande are mostly from the middle class. And as Jager puts it, they are bent on distinguishing themselves from the lower class while at the same time remaining autonomous from the upper classes.

### **Gated Communities as Enclaves of the Middle Class**

McLaughlin and Muncie, quoting Newman stated that the purpose of gated communities is to create secure urban environments that enhance territoriality by subdividing neighborhoods into semi-private “zones of influence” to discourage outsiders and to encourage residents to identify with and defend their areas. (*McLaughlin & Muncie, 1999, p. 119*) One of the bases may be that local police cannot cover the whole barangay in terms of security. In the case of Tierra Grande, although there are regular roving teams of barangay tanods; the residents have formed their own “*bantay babay*” (home security) surveillance teams doing roving operations to prevent theft and other crimes.

Another purpose is to increase natural surveillance and the number of eyes on public spaces by positioning windows so that residents could survey the exterior and interior public areas of their environment. (*McLaughlin & Muncie, 1999, p. 119*) This is related to the first point that the residents themselves are the ones securing their area. This may be related to Tierra Grande’s strategy of deploying the so-called “secret eyes” residing in Tierra Grande, in lieu of hiring outsiders as security guards.

The third purpose is to improve the image of the immediate environment by redesigning residential buildings to avoid the stigma of low cost public housing. (*McLaughlin & Muncie, 1999, p. 119*) The area where Tierra Grande is located was, according to original settlers of Maghaway and Didos, “*kalibunan*” (wilderness). They said it was very dark and dreary with only very few people residing there. There were a lot of fruit trees and tall cogon grasses. Because of this, it became a dumping ground of “salvage” (summary execution) victims both by the military and the New People’s Army (NPA). Thus it earned a label as “the killing fields” of Talisay in the 80’s. Since Tierra Grande was built in the early 90’s up to now, the environment has changed a lot. They are no longer afraid to pass through the area and they have even been provided additional income because of the residents of Tierra Grande. Its construction has also changed the landscape of the mountainous portions of Talisay.

Another purpose of the gated community is to enhance residents’ safety by placing new housing projects within “safe” parts of the city. The developer of Tierra Grande stated that one of their basis for choosing the location of their subdivisions is the peacefulness and serenity of the place. This was also one of the primary motivations of most residents in choosing to live in Tierra Grande.

On the other hand, there are some disadvantages of the gated community. First, it generates a less balanced view of trust and risk and fewer opportunities to cross boundaries. (*McLaughlin & Muncie, 1999, p. 122*) This has been discussed earlier in the relationships of insiders with outsiders, as well as the perceptions of the insiders of the outsiders. As mentioned, some homeowners are wary of the outsiders and view them as a form of threat to the security of residents. Another point is that it allows property developers and security agencies to play of people’s fears in order to sell them a

false sense of security. Indeed this has been one of the selling points of most housing projects including Tierra Grande. Security is also one of the primary motivations for most residents in choosing to live in a gated community. It is an assurance of being segregated and protected from the outside. “Building walls” then can both enhance public confidence and also generate chronic levels of anxiety, lower levels of trust in different or defensive social encounters. (McLaughlin & Muncie, 1999, p. 135)

## Summary

In sum, social differentiation of Tierra Grande from outside communities is manifested first by the physical and architectural boundaries such as the perimeter fence constructed by the developer, the fences and gates of individual households and the type of materials for housing. Aside from these, there are other security measures that ensure that the outside is segregated from the inside. The so-called “secret eyes” of the homeowners’ association and the security guards previously hired by the developer are the ones responsible to ensure this segregation. Behavior of insiders towards outsiders also form a sort of boundary. The relationship of cordiality but with a certain amount of caution generates an implied boundary that “we are insiders while you are outsiders”. Certain restrictions on the use of facilities and amenities of Tierra Grande is also another boundary set by the homeowners association. Furthermore, the labels attached to specific communities that are at the periphery of Tierra Grande create a distinction of the different communities as compared to the insiders of the subdivision. Generally, Tierra Grande homeowners see themselves as relatively well-off compared to the residents of these outside communities. The residents of outside communities also see themselves as lower in status compared to the residents in Tierra Grande on the basis of their income and occupation. But to a certain extent, there is a reciprocal relationship established wherein the Tierra Grande residents have a source of house helpers, laundry women, drivers and construction workers; and the outside communities gain income from providing their services to the residents, vending, and transportation services such as habal-habal and tricycle driving. However, as compared to residents of a neighboring subdivision, Seaview Subdivision which is older (circa 1970s), Tierra Grande residents consider themselves of lower status than them. According to the residents, these are “*mga datu*” (rich people) who have lived in a subdivision ever since the time when subdivisions were not that many. This means they could afford the high price of property during the 70s.

On the other hand, homeowners of Tierra Grande do not only distinguish themselves from those outsiders that are literally on the outside of the community, they also differentiate themselves from outsiders who are actually inside the community, such as house helpers and residents who are renting housing units. The differentiation between homeowners and renters is thin, as in terms of occupation and income they are relatively of the same status. The only difference is on the ownership of the property they are staying in. It is ironic that the homeowners’ association was formerly headed by a non-homeowner who was only renting a house in Phase 1. Differentiation of residents from their house helpers who usually come from lower income families in the provinces is quite pronounced. Residents although treating house helpers as part of the household, still maintain a certain degree of distinction. House helpers are considered of lower status than the residents. As such, they establish relationships and interact among themselves as well as with those living on the outside of Tierra Grande. A common sight are house helpers gathered together for some *tsismis* and small talk. Another is house helpers and construction workers or habal-habal drivers dating on a Saturday night or Sunday afternoon. This relationship and interaction with outsiders have made some residents wary of the possible threat to their security within the subdivision. It is said that thieves would most likely befriend the house helper first to gain their trust and confidence and thus gain access to the house.

Differentiation is not only that of the inside from the outside. Within the Tierra Grande community, there is further differentiation even as generally all residents belong to the middle class

of society. This differentiation is apparent between the different phases. Architectural boundaries include house models, size of lots and houses, extent of renovation of the housing units, and the gates/fences constructed. Higher income phases are phases 1, 2, 3B and 3D while lower income phases are 3A and 3C. Symbolic boundaries likewise make the distinctions between and within these two groups. These include ownership of cars, air conditioners and water tanks. Likewise the designs on the exterior and interior of the houses would also symbolically represent this further differentiation. The type of car owned also further differentiates people within these groups. There may be those belonging to 3C that are considered better-off than their neighbors and who may be at the same level of those from phase 2 who are considered of lower status than their neighbors.

There is group segmentation in this case -- the bigger group is the area in Talisay City composed of three barangays of Lawaan 1, Lawaan 2 and Maghaway, as the focus of this study. This is divided into two branches – the inside of Tierra Grande and the outside. The outside group is further subdivided into Didos, Maghaway, Cadicay and Seaview Subdivision. Each of these outside groups could still be further divided – Maghaway into two, the original settlers and the relocated squatters. Same with Didos. The inside group is also further divided into two – the higher income phases and the lower income phases. Further segregation of the two groups could be done. This social segmentation and differentiation is based on differences in status and perceptions of residents on their status.

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