With reference to a place close to home, Choon-Piew Pow writes about gated communities, which can be thought about in terms of areas or housing estates that are strictly regulated and controlled from the outside world. These spaces are usually marked out by physical boundaries such as fences and walls. Pow’s article focuses on the case study of Sentosa Cove, an area that is significantly located away from the hustle and bustle of Singapore’s city.

**SUMMARY**

As an elite enclave in Singapore, Pow examines how Sentosa Cove is an important focal point in the global context as it is a space highly attractive to rich expatriates. He focuses on gated communities as places where local and transnational processes converge to reproduce “wealth, privilege and exclusion”. These communities should not be viewed only as being situated in the local context, but also considering the links it has to global ideologies and structures. Such extravagant spaces are where elites establish their consumption, leisure and social activities as it represents a form of prestige and upholds their social status. Some expatriates have even gone a step further with attempts to design their homes similar to the styles back home, in order to create a sense of familiarity.

However, aside from the glittering gold, residents also acknowledged the downsides of living on an isolated island. These elites have limited access to resources like schools or medical facilities and have to travel a distance just to buy basic necessities. Citing other authors such as Sassen and Brenner, Pow also raises the issue of gated communities possibly reproducing exclusion and marginality with its obvious physical and social demarcations.

**CRUCIAL POINTS**

The first take-away point would be that gated communities like Sentosa Cove, are crucial spaces where transnational as well as local elites organize their consumption patterns and activities, reproducing an exclusive lifestyle.

Secondly, these rich foreign expatriates tap on the advantage of Singapore being a “tax haven”, which is a huge factor in pushing them to purchase the multi-million dollar property on Sentosa Cove. This is precisely the aim of the Singaporean government, who uses low tax rates to attract high net-worth individuals. Not surprisingly though, most of the expatriates rarely reside in these houses they bought and only use it as holiday homes.
Lastly, the author identifies the paradox for individuals living in Sentosa Cove. As much as living away from the main city can bring about peacefulness and comfort, it is also a space of loneliness and inconvenience.

**ANALYSIS**

The prevalence of inequality in Singapore is an issue that I have been always interested in, thus explaining why I chose this article. As much as the Singapore government does recognize low-income citizens and extends policies to aid them, at the heart of Singapore’s urban planning is very much the aim to appear like a well-developed city-state; a highly urbanized and cosmopolitan country. Iconic places like Marina Bay Sands, Esplanade and even Orchard Road in general are highlights of the Singapore cityscape and represents the city as a place of wealth, power and elitism.

There are no doubt benefits to place making, especially since Singapore is regarded as an international financial and business hub. However, this ideology of making spaces appear appealing and urbanized has brought about consequences, for the low-income and underprivileged in particular.

Take a look at this picture of a housing estate in Singapore:

![Image of housing estate](Image credits: Property Guru Singapore)

This building resembles the everyday ordinary HDB flats one can see everywhere. However, these are actually one of the few rental flats for low-income families. Such rental units were set aside by the Singaporean government to aid those who cannot afford housing, and rental fees are subsidized to about $100-$200 a month. One can argue that at least these families still have a roof over their head and “blending” them in by placing them in such ordinary looking HDB flats may reduce marginalization.
However, blending also masks the reality in Singapore. By aiming to make Singapore appear attractive to foreigners, it obscures real issues of poverty and the prevalent widening income gap. Nobody would believe that people living in buildings as shown above are actually struggling to make ends meet.

**Critique**

As Sentosa Cove is on a separate island, it is usually “out of sight out of mind” among Singaporeans since we do not actually see the property on a regular basis. Though the aim of Pow’s article was to analyze global elite urbanism in Singapore, one consideration is to bring the analysis closer, thus being able to consider the effects these high value properties has in the local context. He can consider gated communities such as Bukit Timah and Newton, which are also sites popular among some expatriates. These are the gated communities in Singapore that are generally more accessible, thus having greater effects on the locals, especially if he wishes to explore the idea of exclusion and contestation.