

GATED LIVING IN THE CONTEXT OF KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

Housing in groups of people with political, ethnic and/or religious commonalities has been a traditional trend. With increase in population and city sizes a later development to this has been restricted access to housing areas and gated security in existing as well as new housing schemes. Today, the concept of gated communities is marketed as ideal housing projects by developers as well as government associations and well received by various communities and income groups in the city of Karachi.

The paper gives an overview of the evolution toward gated living, identifying an evolving morphological typology of (community) housing from the premise of security. Based on the hypothesis that the physical urban form is a manifestation of the social grouping and organization, the two are described for each of the typology. The level of security and controlled access to these housing are also described. Later, the major reasons responsible for increase in gating are identified, marking an evolution in the social mindset. This developing trend of gated living is being supported by the market and the state through policies and planning. The conclusion sums up the social impact of increased physical gating on the city and its people, summing up the challenges for future city planning.

The research methodology employed includes; review of international literature on gated communities, analysis of local city data such as; census data, crime reports and socio-economic profiles and interviews with urban planners and residents of housing schemes. The debate on gated communities in our context was triggered by research on existing housing projects undertaken by the 3rd year architecture students for the course 'Housing and Community Development' taught at the Department of Architecture and Planning, NED UET. Some of the case examples mentioned in the paper are also taken from these student works.

The paper seeks to answer some of the following questions: What are the possible reasons for the rising trend of gated housing in the city of Karachi? What are the physical and social implications of gated housing on its context? If this trend continues, what would it imply for the future?

1. INTRODUCTION

International references define typical gated communities to be entirely surrounded by physical walls with gates, and sometimes restricted entry with guards or other means of access control. (Landman et al 2002; Quintal, Thompson: 2007; Low: 2001; Alvarez: 2005; Csefalvay: 2009; Sabatini et al 2007). While the discourse on gated communities mostly refers to posh upper income housing schemes that provide exclusive privatised security and high class amenities, the following paper expands its scope to include community housing patterns with diverse ways of secure, controlled access. Public access to housing here includes physical access as well as access for acquiring living status within (ownership or rental). Community housing in South Asia, centre around cultural norms, the relationship between public and private spaces being a defining factor in the planning and orientation of community and individual housing. Community living as it is, provides for a certain measure of social security where people know one another or follow common cultural rituals while common cultural amenities within allow for interaction and exchange of views on issues and opinions.

In the case of Karachi city which is the subject of this paper, earlier, community housing was bounded by implied edges, surrounded by main roads, circulation alleys and open spaces, and not walls, a relatively recent addition to this has been physical gating of existing communities. Various factors are responsible for a growing need felt for provision of further physical security to community housing besides the traditional walling of individual premises. These are described in later

sections in the paper. If anything, these individual residence boundary walls have gone up even higher, or have been finished with jagged broken glass or barbed wire with the intent of providing greater security.

Besides the extensive gating of existing housing throughout the city, new gated residential schemes are an upcoming fashion. Apartment housing, another type of gated housing has been an increasing trend over the past three decades. Naval, army and air-force housing schemes from the past have set an example of the measure of exclusivity, security and standard of living that can be offered in gated housing. The opening up of some of these schemes for public ownership and living and the rising dominance of builder driven market dynamics in real estate have opened options for the possibility and planning of such housing schemes for all middle to upper income target groups in the city.

2. EVOLUTION OF A MORPHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY IN COMMUNITY HOUSING WITH RESPECT TO SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL SECURITY

2.1 Traditional community living / Pre-British housing

Traditionally, housing communities in the subcontinent including cities in India and Bangladesh were implied segregated residential zones where homogenous communities sharing ethnic, social, religious, trade and caste related ties resided together. Differences in income and status were not apparent as resource sharing, interdependence on ones clan and caste were supreme concerns. The boundaries of privacy, segregation and spatial planning were intertwined and respected. The street was a shared space amongst the various houses and residents; the market place and public open space the domain of the male population. The mohalla (neighbourhood) thus formed was the planning unit, multiples of which sprang up along; historic traditional routes, market places and production zones. Mixed land use and medium density were the norms which degraded over time as population grew and environmental factors worsened.

The urban morphology of the 18th century fortified Karachi city is an example of such a context where a heterogeneous society resided. (Figure 1: Old City, Karachi). The city within was a mixed land use set up, almost the scale of a neighbourhood today, with the street acting as a public interface. The walled city provided protection to its markets, goods and resident merchant population. The fortification disappeared but the implied boundaries are made obvious due to change in density, extension of certain land use into the immediate surrounding areas. After British conquest in



Figure-1: Fortified Area - Old City, Karachi. The black shows the previously fortified area of Karachi while the light grey shows the plots and buildings in the British and post British development.

Source: Architectural Heritage Support Programme, Dawood College of Engineering and Technology, Karachi Historical Quarters Revitalization and Rehabilitation Project, 1999.

1839, the native city was largely restricted to housing for the local population, small and medium scale trading activity and other attributes of local land use. Administration and other spaces shifted to the British quarters along Saddar bazaar and adjoining areas.

Homogenous ethnic groupings have also prevailed in the city historically, informally around the main city as well as in the suburban Karachi city, an example of which is the traditional Baloch Compound Housing. Physical proximity allows them to practice their culture and religious vicissitudes freely and independently. Their get togethers, communal activities as well as other aspects important to their public and private way of life are planned for. Naagman Village is a small settlement of Balochis that is over 150 years old. Present in the vicinity of Liaquatabad area in Karachi today, it consists of around 200 houses. Like many other Balochi settlements along Lyari and Malir River, the inhabitants of Naagman Village were farmers and fishermen in the beginning. The settlement has an inorganic layout (Figure 2). People live in compound housing whereby houses of the same family cluster together around an open space, with a single entry/exit point, forming a small *gated* community within. Their religious amenities exist within the village.



Figure-2: Nagmaan Village - Morphology of a traditional community housing type in its context.

Moreover, an informal security check exists at entry / exit streets of the area with young men always sitting socializing and playing games at such strategic locations.

After independence the surrounding areas of the village were occupied by Urdu speaking ethnicities. Although there has never been any physical boundary of the area, yet the urban fabric of Naagman Village has remained intact. (Figure 2) Although there is no restriction to sell property to other ethnicities and no restrictions for other ethnicities to come and live in the area, but the ethnic demography has never changed. Besides the physical contrast between the two adjoining areas, there is also a sharp contrast in terms of life style and political affiliation of the social groupings within and outside the village.

The main characteristic of such traditional community housing is that it is clan or ethnicity based and is planned informally by the clan. It is usually high density, yet public and private areas are clearly distinguished. Informal means of security and control exists through fewer exit points, and positioning of public areas at or near exits where there is a visual informal vigilance in place. In a small community where all residents know one another, strangers are clearly identified.

2.2 British planning and its impact on post British housing

The late 19th century saw Karachi's development as a British urban centre. The British developed the city to expand its outreach and utilize its strategic location in South Asia. The



Figure-3: Post British housing morphology showing house surrounded by boundary wall, segregated landuse and use of road as transportation connectors.

Source: Survey of Pakistan, part of Karachi Map 1998.

British planning aimed to address the larger regional objectives in city planning, improving connectivity and enforcing modern planning principles. The architecture of the city developed to include public monuments and spaces with public commercial and institutional buildings creating a public interface with adjoining urban areas, including streets and squares, giving representation. With colonization came the modernist grid and segregated land use planning. This was not adopted by the native areas and population till after mid 20th century. The mixed land use housing (residential plus commercial) units were replaced by individual housing plots with boundary walls, the vehicle driven road replaced the street and markets and public places were transformed into parks and playgrounds. The boundaries of the *mohallas* stretched to area plans and schemes. This led to low density arrangements with redefined public and private domains, relatively isolated walking spaces (streets) and increased distances.

The local and the British areas hence developed distinctly differently in terms of urban form determined by bigger individual plot sizes, building relation to street, density, mixed versus segregated land use, changing the use of the neighbourhood and the street (Figure 3) The boundary wall around larger plots of land was introduced by the British to offer security from locals and privacy to the semi-public /semi-private living areas of British residences (Lari: 2001). The trend for individual gated plots was carried forward by the elite of the city forming areas which have implied boundaries and public access limits.

After independence, as the population of the city increased by 2 ½ times, the British planning was taken on and expanded further where the boundary wall of the individual residential premises was maintained. In the 1950s, when the city master plans were initiated and formalised housing development started, new cooperatives¹ formed by government employees schemes were formed and given subsidized land and infrastructure support. (Figure 3) These cooperatives were not gated and followed the modernised planning principles of centralised amenities, parks and segregated land use.

With an immense change in demographic status, lack of implementation of a city plan, the shifting of the federal capital from Karachi to Islamabad, instances of gated housing emerged in the 1960s of minorities and defence employees. Ownership and living here was strictly for a restricted group of people. Examples include Cyrus Gate (housing for Parsis) and Ameenabad, housing community of Ismaili Muslims. Ameenabad (1965) is an example of a gated housing community of Ismaili Muslims. Planned on a modernist grid, Ameenabad is a housing of approx. 200 houses. A central belt of common amenities is planned to be at a walking distance from all houses. Besides restricted physical access, buying and selling of real estate is controlled and allowed only to people of the same belief. The residents use markets and facilities from neighbouring areas as well. (Figure 4)

2.3 Apartment housing

The post colonial industrializing societies of the 1970's like Karachi in Pakistan faced immense population increase, coupled with an increased fragmentation caused by globalization and neoliberal policies. This shifted the emphasis on developing commercial zones, shopping malls, parking plazas, apartment housing and new CBDs.

In the late 1970s, flat sites were introduced by the Karachi Development Authority.² These were plots of size 5000 sq. yards each where the mid rise (4 – 6 storeys) (walk up) apartment buildings were allowed, with the idea to allow higher density residential areas. Plots were given at subsidized rates to developers to promote apartment housing (Hasan 2002). These were sold off to developers who planned and marketed the apartments to middle to upper income user group. These flat sites developed as gated residential schemes. Maymar Arcade, built in 1985 is an example of this.



Figure-4: Ameenabad (1965) - Gated community housing planned on a modernist grid, with a central belt of common amenities.

Designated as a flat site, it was sold to Maymar Builders and Developers to build and sell out the apartments. The vicinity area was planned for similar development and consists largely of apartments of G+4 or less around it. Amenities are planned at an area level by the KDA, providing requisite parking and common infrastructure facilities along with a common central open space within. (Figure 5)

A social change had also begun to take place. The table-1 shows that over the years, there has been an increase in the literate population of the city; the urban married population in the prime age bracket had declined. This along with an increase in the number of nuclear families have led to more than one earning members in the family and a greater number of working women (Hasan 2008a). Apartment living for the middle and upper income bracket, which are also gated, supported this social change. With the ground floor of most apartment buildings being used for parking, circulation and common amenities, the premise becomes feasible only with gated security. Policy support and social change have both played a major role in increasing popularity of the apartment as a housing type.

1 Cooperatives are groups of people who come together to plan and reside in a housing area together.

2 Master planning and development agency in Karachi uptill the last decade.



Figure-5: Maymar Arcade (1979) - Walk up apartments (G+4) on flat site as gated housing, with area planning of amenities done by KDA. The google image shows other such gated apartments built in the surrounding area, the smaller buildings are bungalows that were present in the area before.

Table-1: Social Change, Karachi

	1981	1998	2010 (projected)*
Total population	5,437,984	9,856,530	15,500,000
Urban Married population between 15 and 24 years of age	24.04 %	18.19 %	14.06 %
Total literate population 10 years and above	55.04 %	67.42 %	76.16 %

* Projected by Author

Source: Survey of Pakistan, Census Reports. Hasan, Arif. 2006. The Scale and causes of urban chane in Pakistan, Ushba Publishing, Karachi.

3. GATING OF EXISTING COMMUNITY HOUSING AND NEW GATED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The following section describes the prominent social and political factors that have led to increased physical divisioning / gating throughout the city. This includes gating of existing community housing as well as new gated housing developments.

3.1 The changing role of the government from a Provider to a Developer

By 2010, there has been a large shift in the role of the state / government from that of a welfare state provider capacity

and perception to a market supporting developer. Some of the first gated housing were built for retired defence (army, airforce and naval) officers housing colonies. These were strictly gated and exclusive in terms of the services and infrastructure provided within. Ownership of property in such areas was initially only for the designated retired officers. In the late 1980s, things started to change. The existing housing colonies started to open up to outsiders, accepting them first for rentals and eventually for ownership. The Defence Housing Authority established itself as an independent real estate developer, the scale of development undertaken by them has today become enormous. This is focused toward an elite clientele, the marketing based on providing exclusivity.

Three cases looked at in this section are Independent Bungalows for Overseas Pakistanis (1979), a low rise gated housing scheme on 541 acres of land; Maymar Arcade (1985), a mid rise housing (G+4) built on about 1.2 acre plot and Askari IV (1997), a combination of low and mid rise housing on 120 acres of land. The three cases span different time periods. It is hence interesting to note the evolution in the role played by the relevant government department in relation to the developer. In the first case, Overseas Pakistani Bungalows was proposed and planned by the Karachi Development Authority as an exclusive housing overseas nationals to ensure certain economic returns from it that were to be utilized in the development and planning of the city. The case of Maymar Arcade has been described in the previous section, whereby the site along with other similar sites in the area, was sold off to developers to build and sell out apartments, by the KDA providing for amenities at an area level. Lastly, Askari Housing schemes (I, II and III) built by the Defence Housing Authority were initially meant only for the retired defence personnel families. However, Askari-IV opened up ownership out to outsiders. The defence authority had by this time established its role as a market developer.

In the first case, the government acted with an established concern and authority for city planning. It planned and executed the project itself. In the second, the role of the private sector developer is determined by the city planning authority with the need felt to increase residential density in a controlled fashion, planning for amenities for all. Now foreseeing the limits of the government planning body, a partnership is determined with the private developer with conditions and plans laid out by KDA. The last case, by contrast is a witness to the changing role of the government toward becoming a market developer itself. Security concerns at Askari IV today described in a later section are a witness to this. The government's support to the developer mindset is today leading to an increase in the number of gated housing schemes in the city.

The prominent stakeholders involved in the demand and supply of gated housing schemes can be summarized as follows:

- Demand: Ethnic communities, cooperatives, Navy/Army/Air Force Personnel, upper income bracket;

Table-2: Three Gated Housing Cases Compared.

Housing	Year	Total Area	Total Number of Housing			Average Unit Size	Population Density	Amenities	Supply Stakeholder
			G+1	Apartments	Total				
Independent Bungalows for Overseas Pakistanis	1979	541 acres	400	--	400	300 square yards	4.44 person / acre	14 parks, 1 playfield, 1 swimming pool, 2 mosques, madrasa, school, community hall, post office	KDA
Maymar Arcade	1985	10000 sq. yards	--	80 (8 blocks)	80	1531 sq. ft.	77.44 person / acre	Parking, central open space, common infrastructural facilities like underground tank.	Developer + KDA
Askari - IV	1997	120 acres	240	1160	1400	2400 sq.ft (apartment), 500 sq.yd (single unit house)	70 person / acre	A market place, mosque, 3 parks, basketball court, parking	DHA as Developer

- Supply: Government departments including Master Planning department, Defence Housing Authority, real estate builders and developers.

The recent master plans of 2000 and 2020 are evidence of the changing role of the government and its policies in planning. The Karachi Master Plan 2000 introduced special sites in the plan. These are larger plots of land that could be developed for multi-family residential uses along with commercial, institutional and public land use. These sites are intended for gated housing.³ This is also carried on further in Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020, which allocated areas along the major highways, in particular the Northern Bypass for a stretch of up to 3 km on either side for such development (MPGO: 2008).

3.2 Crime and civic unrest leading to insecurity and social divide

Increasing crime levels in the city has been a major reason for increasing desire and demand for gated housing. As a consequence, over the last decade, large existing residential areas of the city have been gated. Barriers have been put

across numerous tertiary lanes, restricting access and implanting security guards at the limited entry/exit points. The community living so characteristic of the city is now allowing the city to turn into controlled gated neighbourhoods. These gated areas range from middle to upper income group residential areas.

Cyrus Gate is an example of a high income Parsi Colony gated over time. Built in the 1980s, the site for the housing was planned to consist of the residential area in half of the site while the other half was left as open space for religious and amenity purpose. With the Afghan war, Afghan refugees came to settle in the adjacent area and started encroaching on the open amenity space. To protect their space, the colony was made gated and more houses were built on the periphery of the other half site, to protect the sanctity of their open space. This case is a classic example of a minority community needing to confine itself to allow practice of their rituals in peace and security offered by the gating. (Figure 6)

The lower income bracket also house in groups. Lack of adequate planning for housing and infrastructure by the state and political will has led to the formation of these groups



Figure-6: Cyrus Gate (1962) - Gated Housing of Parsi. The peripheral housing along the large pen amenity space is apparent from the image. The landuse / planning of the surrounding area has changed since.

3 Interview with Dr. Noman Ahmed, Planner, October 2010

based on representation political, religious or ethnic whereby they are able to lobby and network to acquire related services. This housing is not gated usually, however, there may be other forms of checks and informal security. The case of Nagmaan Village described earlier is an example. The association of political factions with ethnic groupings providing formal and informal housing as a means of gaining vote bank has also added strength to cohesion and introversion of low income neighbourhoods with respect to their physical and social context, these being important characteristics of gated community housing (Hasan: 2010). Although such neighbourhoods do not have physical boundary, however, the edges of where they start can be clearly distinguished in experience of space as well as in an aerial image showing the urban morphology of area.

Due to a lack of accountability of the political process and chaotic unreliable law and order situation, private (formal and informal) security measures are taken up by existing community housing. Year wise crime bar charts from the CPLC⁴ show the crime rates in the city (including kidnappings, arson and theft including vehicle thefts and murder/killings) have gone up particularly from 2007-2009 (Figure 7a). Between 2006 and 2007, vehicle thefts, murder / killings and incidents of cell phone thefts have gone up by 47 percent, 24 percent and 83 percent respectively. (CPLC website) In addition, incidents of bomb explosion and terrorist attacks have gone up in the city. 801 persons died as a result of terrorist attacks in 2009 as opposed to 278 in 2006 (CPLC: website; Hasan: 2007). Politically related Civic strife claimed another 95 lives and injured 295 persons in 2007. More than 1,000 vehicles were torched in these conflicts. Although they are recorded, these figures can only be taken as a basic approximation as the actual number of cases that remain unreported are difficult to estimate (CPLC website). These growing crime rate figures are an important factor for the increasing gating and security witnessed in the city.

Spatial crime analysis (Figure 7b) carried out by the CPLC mark the most criminally volatile areas to be the areas under the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Jamshed Town, PECHS and residential areas along Shahrah e Faisal and Gulshan e Iqbal. These are predominantly high income or high middle income residential areas. This points toward the possibility that crime has a direct relationship to the widening social divisions and the gap between the rich and the poor. (Hasan: 2010) The following section elaborates

further on the indicators of inequality among the income based social strata in the city.

3.3 Inequality status and mindset

Gated communities are characteristic of societies with vast income disparities. (Minton:2002; Hasan: Interview 2010) Examples include Malaysia, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and cities in South Africa. Growing income disparities cause the rich and the poor of the city to share mistrust and fear for each other, manifested in the estranged social relations, increasing levels of insecurity and gated living, reflected in the physical urban elements like higher walls, impermeable gates, deteriorating urban infrastructure, disappearing urban spaces. Besides this, factors like the withdrawal of the state, land being dealt as a commodity in the open market, projects versus planning and the association of political factions with ethnic groupings providing formal and informal housing as a means of gaining vote bank has added strength to gated living (Hasan: 2010). This section summarizes some of the prominent evidences that are an indication of developing disparities in Karachi city.

Marked contrast in physical appearance and state of infrastructure between developed and adjoining less developed residential areas of the city make obvious the existence of parallel urban living and operating systems within. There is a major physical distinction between the upper to middle income areas and the low income areas of the city. This is apparent in the planning of the area, the process of acquiring house, the density of the area including household size, floor space per household, number of persons per room, state of infrastructure, availability and maintenance of water, electricity, gas, sewerage connections as well as level of solid waste management. (Hasan, Sadiq: 1994) There is a clear contrast in the physical housing conditions and access to utilities between the two. Informal processes exist for low income area housing and infrastructure acquisition and up-gradation, enabled only through excessive lobbying and networking. The obvious distinction in the process and physical state of the two income housing is an evidence of marked separation and inequality between the two.

The introduction of market driven projects from 1990 onwards aim to cater to the desires of a small percentage of the rich of the city. Examples of some of these projects

4 The CPLC – Citizens Police Liaison Committee is a non-governmental organization (partially funded by the Sindh Government, but most funds come from the business community) working to assist law enforcement, which maintains crime statistics as well as a criminal database.

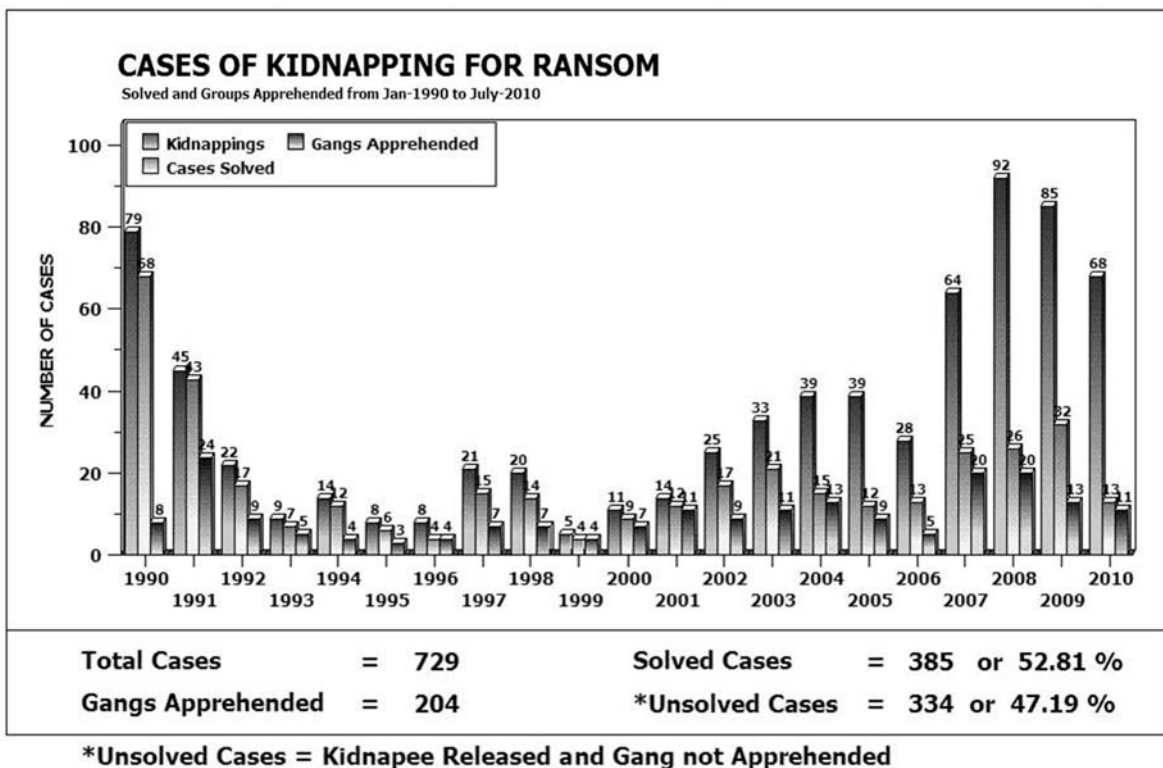
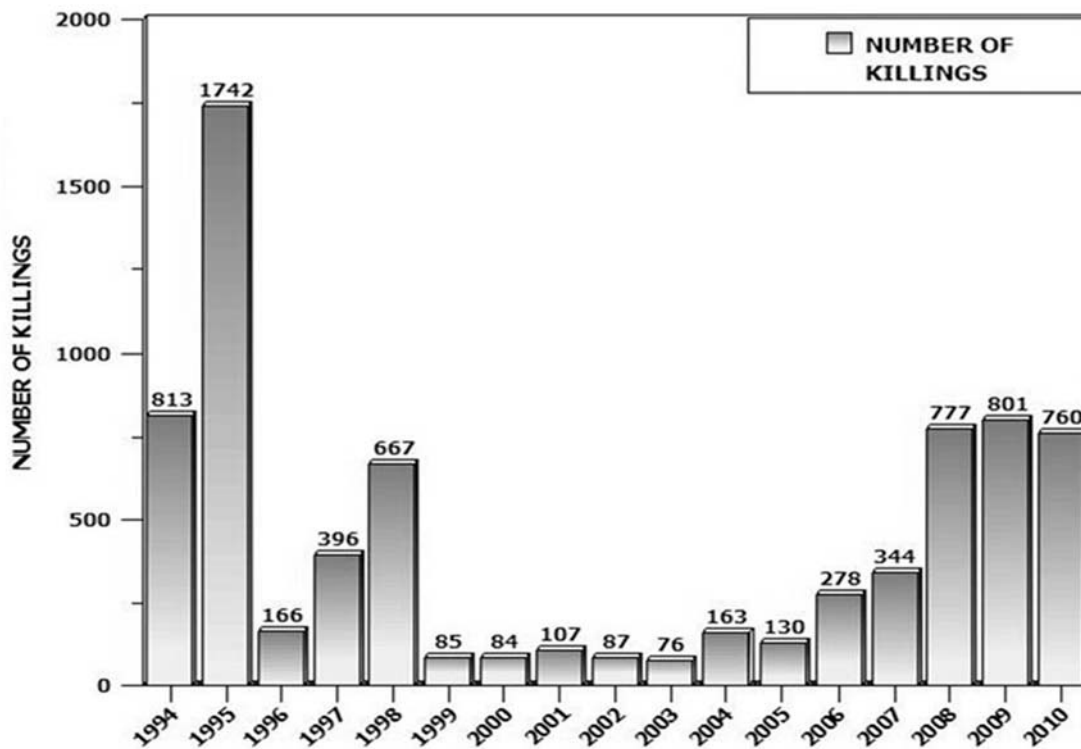


Figure-7a: Barcharts showing crime rates over the years.
Source: Citizens Police Liaison Committee: www.cplc.org.pk

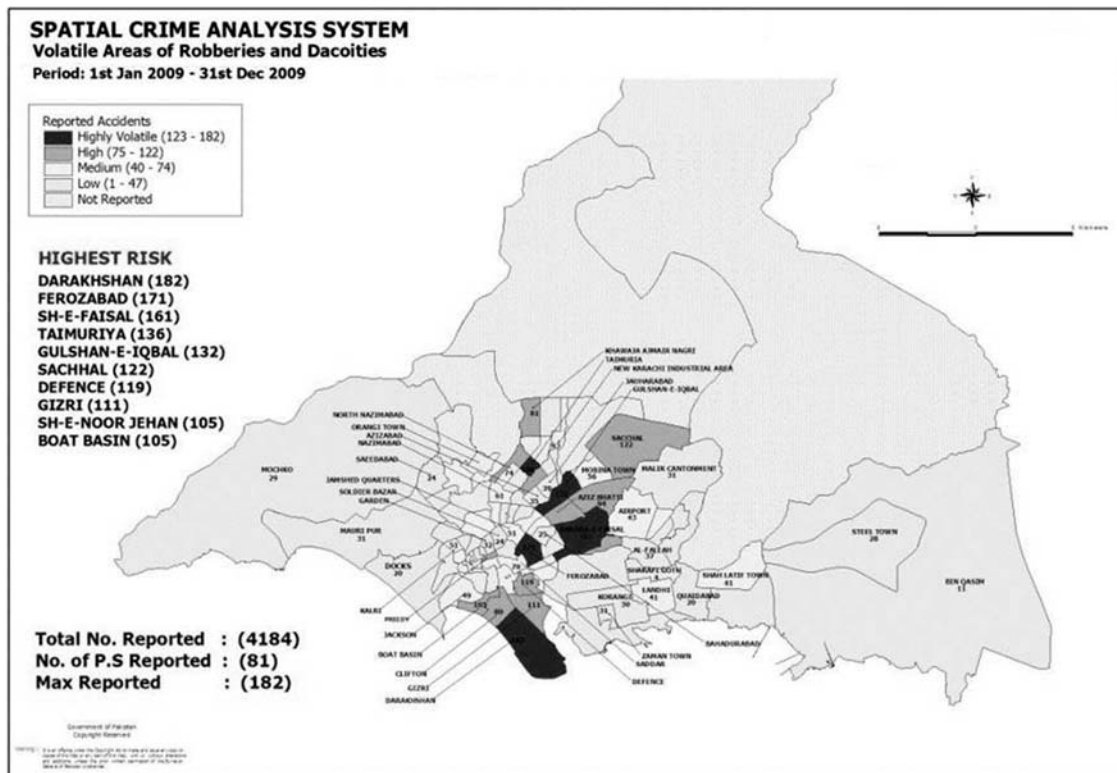


Figure-7b: City mapping of crime - marking volatile areas.
 Source: www.cplc.org.pk

introduced over the past years are those in particular along the coastal stretch, many of them aiming to privatize the beach. Some of these were incessantly opposed by various interest groups. Other examples include infrastructure projects supported by real estate developers that induce evictions of low income settlements, both legal and illegal. These are an indicator of growing inequality status and mindset in the city

The presence of a growing informal sector in the city is another important indicator in this respect. The total formally employed population of the city with respect to the total population declined from 48 percent in 1951 to 33.43 percent in 1981 to 27.98 percent in 1998 (Census reports; Hasan: 2006). These figures show a decline in formal employment and its availability in the city. In his publication of *The scale and causes of urban change*, Arif Hasan (2006) concludes, 'Given political and civic conflict, investment (in trade and manufacturing industrial sector) is unlikely to take place, as a result, unemployment will increase and the informal sector will grow further to fill the gap.' The increase in the informal sector, its lack of adaptability in the formal sector and incongruent links with the formal sector, its general

acceptability as a norm in the city life all create a lawless environment. All these are indicators of growing social inequality in the city, depicted in the developing physical divisioning in the city.

3.4 Market driven gated housing

Market driven and state supported mechanisms today support real estate ventures for the upper income group offering investment and speculation possibilities. With little investment taking place in the manufacturing and industrial sector, large cash flows are directed toward real estate investment, allowing land prices to hike enormously at potentially important locations. The following section describes a couple of examples of upper income gated housing outlining the market demand and supply factors for these. Recent examples of such housing include Creek City, Creek Marina, DHA Phase 9, Naval colony. Three relatively older cases mentioned in the previous sections were Independent Bungalows for Overseas Pakistanis, Maymar Arcade and Askari IV. These were planned to be gated. The table-2 gives a comparison of the size, density and typology of housing within each of these. The site for the entire residential area

is physically surrounded by walls on all sides with gates and restricted entry with guards. The size of the settlement varies among these only from 2.5 acres to 2750 acres. Housing within may include either or both apartment blocks and the bungalow of size from 200 to 600 sq.yard.

Such projects are marketed on the basis of exclusivity and security. A rosy image of secluded, safe and elite modern housing is created, offering amenities at times to add to this, promoting a mindset of gated living. With security being a prime factor, interviews with residents of gated housing revealed that the measure of satisfaction regarding level of security within was described to be simple things like: it was completely safe for women of the house to go for a walk in the neighbourhood even at a very late hour; or that it was safe for the car to be unlocked outside the house; or it was safe for children to play outside with minimum supervision.

The second important factor catered to in modern gated housing is provision of open spaces where women, children and the elderly can interact, play or socialize, in essence creating a 'safe' neighbourhood.

Independent Bungalows for Overseas Pakistanis is an example successful in achieving this through planning. Blocks of 20 housing plots each surround an open space, the planning thereby creating a hierarchy of semi public and public open spaces and adding to the creation of 'neighbourhoods'; 5 basic design conventions together characterize a good neighbourhood. These include 1) an identifiable center / heart; 2) walkable distances and size; 3) mix of landuse and housing types for greater choices in living; 4) integrated network of walkable streets; 5) special sites for civic purposes. (Farr 2007) (Figure 8). By comparison, Askari IV uses up most of its open spaces for circulation. With large housing sizes, the built up density seems high, open spaces occur mostly as negative spaces and are not well integrated with the housing. New blocks have been added to increase population density of area, however, these are built in the available open spaces, leaving only a few of them. (Figure 9)

The acceptance of outsiders for ownership is a cause of concern for the families of retired defence personnel. Repeated cases of robberies here are testament to the fact that there is no guarantee of complete security even within gated housing. The security factor has been a reason for some families to also move out of Askari-IV. Adhoc planning of newer blocks in amenity areas and planning amenity areas in the periphery or as negative spaces rather than as

central elements play a role in negating sense of community in the area.

Like mindedness of people living in a neighbourhood is preferred by most people looking for house. This is offered through commonality of culture, ethnicity or income bracket. The traditional model of community housing still carries provision for a mixed income group residing together. By comparison, in the market driven gated housing, while there may be variation in type and size of housing available, the overall cost range is usually very high, with the addition of privatised security and amenities. Ownership and living status in both cases can be acquired only if one fulfils the criteria for it. In the former, this is based on common culture, belief or ethnicity while in the latter, it is income based. This leads to an inevitable division of the city into the two major groupings.

The following section weighs the pros and cons of gated communities, suggesting the social impact of a large physical increment in gated neighbourhoods, outlining the challenges for future city planning.

4. PHYSICAL URBAN FORM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Secured, controlled, gated living was an alternative trend for minorities and dignitaries. Today, this has become a popular and developing way of life in Karachi city. As a mega city and an economic hub, Karachi city has witnessed economic and political struggles and social divides, along with increase in crime rates and insecurity. National geo political concerns like the threat of terrorist bomb attacks, chaotic law and order situation and lack of social justice have further added to physical and social insecurities in the city.

There has consequently been an evolution of bounded living in the city. A large proportion of the city housing now consists of controlled (gated) neighbourhoods, which can be broadly classified into two prominent types of social grouping; traditional community grouping on the basis of political, ethnic or religious identity and, a relatively recently formed grouping on the basis of income and status. The social grouping in the city is reinforced through the physical divisioning.

Currently large areas of existing housing (planned at an area level by KDA) have been gated. While barriers and added privatized security aim to check on anybody 'suspicious' from entering the residential territory, nevertheless, the physical planning of existing area remains integrated with

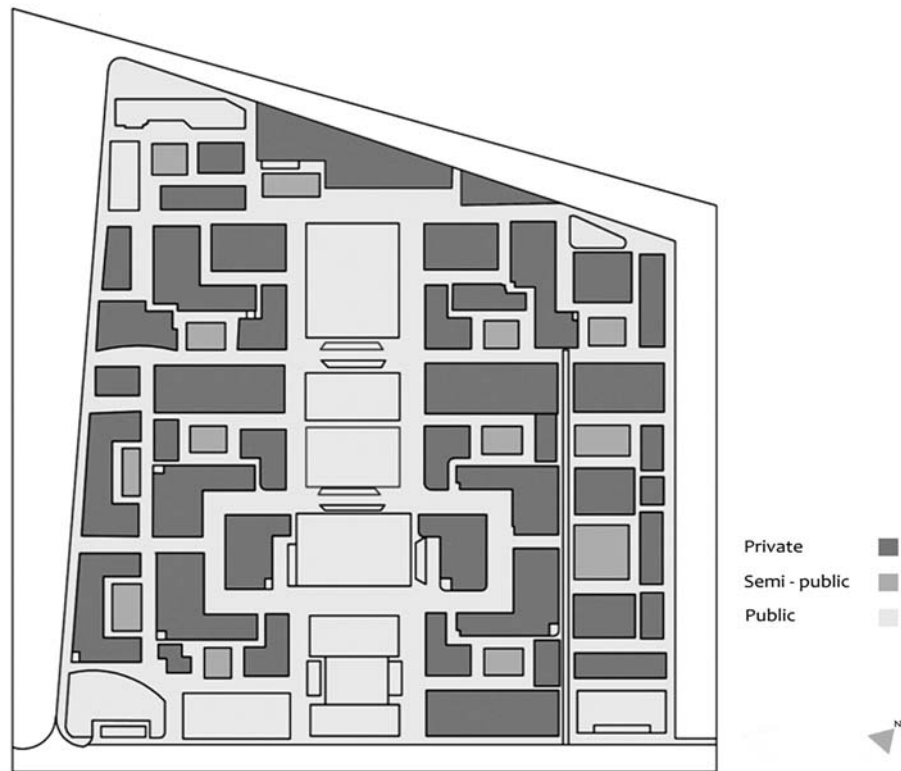


Figure-8: Independent Bungalows for Overseas Pakistanis 1998: An example of good planning of gated housing to create 'neighbourhood'.
Source: Student research project for Housing and Community Development Course, 3rd Year Architecture and Planning, 2010.

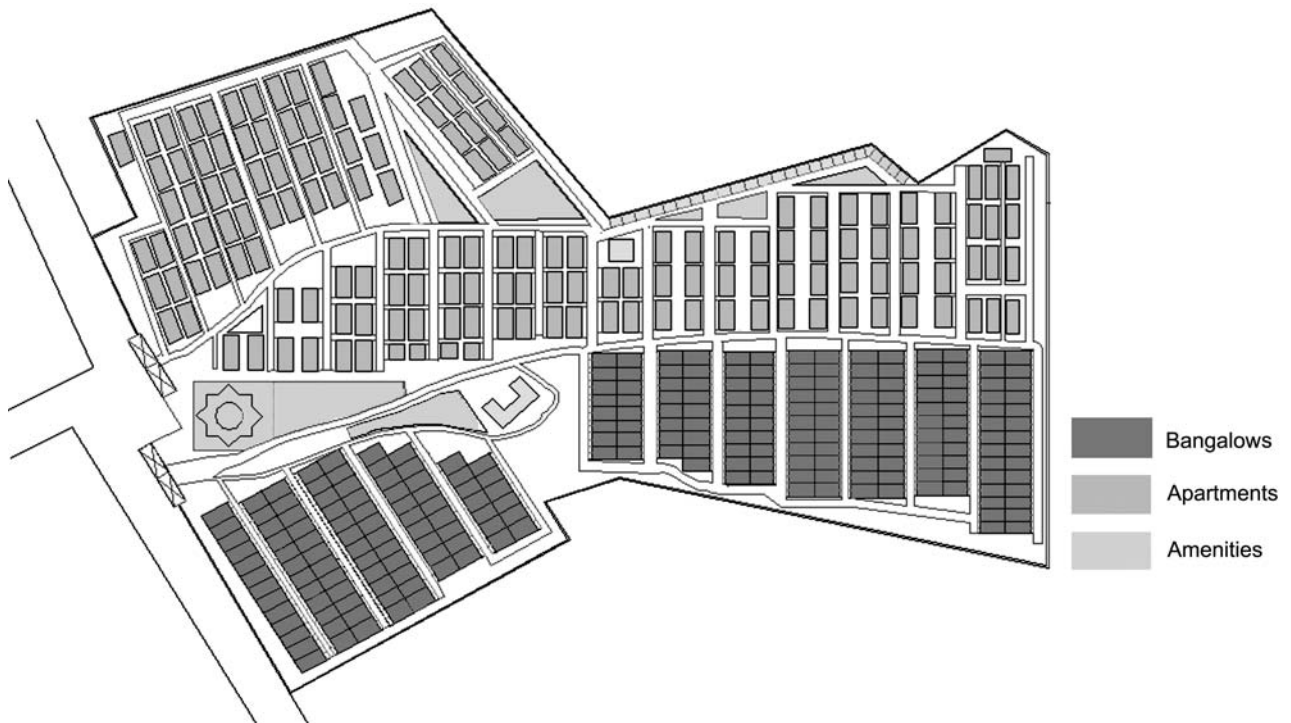


Figure-9: Plan of Askari IV - Gated housing built by DHA, 1997.
Source: Student research project for Housing and Community Development Course, 3rd Year Architecture and Planning, 2010.

its context, unlike in the case of market driven or designed gated housing. Low barriers (3' ft high) allow pedestrians to walk through in and out of the neighbourhood. This keeps the area from complete physical and social isolation from its context.

The trend of gated communities is much more in other cities of the world where the inequality scales are much wider (UNDP:2002, 2005; Landman et al 2002; Alvarez: 2005; Sabatini et al 2007) relative to Karachi (Pakistan). However, growing insecurities contribute to a growing desire felt for its need in Karachi city, subsequently supported by recent policies and plans. Hence, we are heading in a similar direction.

With growing crime rates and insecurity, market driven gated housing (surrounded by walls and restricted entry) will continue to be in demand and grow in numbers as is reflected in latest plans and suburban housing projects along highways. This is because gated communities provide for a secure living environment, keeping up with the desires or vision for living a certain lifestyle following religious and/or cultural rituals, maintaining a sense of community. For such physical separation, this sense of community and ownership remains in a limited domain, that of the housing itself only and not beyond. With the advent of increased mobile networking (accessibility to packages for cheap internet usage, sms and international calling) and consequent accessibility to various networks, in addition to living gated lives, the psychological impact of this entire living is that people live in bubbles. Gated living promotes gated mindedness, where people are just aware of their limited circles of life, when actually there is so much more to the city beyond. The users of gated communities and others who wish to live in them believe that they are a necessity, as feeling secure and insecure affects immensely the life that one lives.

Hence while gated housing addresses the demand of safety, security and segregation from the unknown to some extent at the micro level, but on the macro level, it isolates the community from its surroundings. The streets around gated areas change in character and become less socially interactive spaces. Ownership of the gated residents to these streets becomes less. Gated communities are physically and socially cut off from their context and contribute to spatial fragmentation in urban areas, reflecting social divisions in society. (Landman et al: 2002; Quintal, Thompson: 2007; Low: 2001; Alvarez: 2005; Csefalvay: 2009; Sabatini et al 2007)

In contrast to the original cultural context, where mixed land use gave vitality as well as security to area, keeping it largely a multi class area, there is a marked segregation of rich area and poor area. The interdependence of the rich and the poor is nevertheless inevitable and there exist alongside many elite gated housing areas, colonies of poor that service them in various ways.

While social change can direct change in physical urban form, this physical change requires assessment and evaluation with the intent of developing people friendly, equitable and harmonious cities. This is because imbalanced physical changes can cause social dilemmas unfathomed.

Increasing gated communities promote a social mindset, especially among the younger generations, where the contrast between the exclusive and the deprived is offset, giving shoulder to lack of tolerance and / or respect of *the other*, outside similar gated housing.

“Gated communities are paradoxical. They are marketed as close-knit communities while effectively reducing the interaction between neighbours. Internally, they are hotbeds of volunteerism, yet they may reduce civic engagement in the larger community.” (Lang and Danielson 1997 in Low 2001)

Therein lies the major challenge for the future city planning. Whether the crime rates and civic unrest reduce or increase, the important question that arises is how city planning can promote the perception and acceptance (tolerance) of the city as a multi class, multi ethnic city. If gated communities continue to increase, what policies / spatial strategies can nevertheless promote an equitable and just society.

5. CONCLUSION

Gated living as a trend cannot be reversed by the simple identification of its adverse social implications. The state will have to ensure security and crime controls for communities to feel comfortable and choose non gated environments. Multi class economic and social policies will have to be adopted to ensure equality and sharing of resources and space highlighting the mutual benefits the rich and the poor will draw from living in homogenous schemes. Vehicular controls have to be ensured for streets to become safe for residents, especially children, mixed land use which does not surpass and become encroachment has to be encouraged and controlled, medium rise density has to be enforced for effective neighbourhood plans which promote safe, hygienic

and socially controlled living. Literal gated communities are not necessarily safer, therefore, engagement of communities in plan making, execution and operation and maintenance can play a significant role for schemes to be owned and implied neighbourhood boundaries to be safeguarded. As more and more neighbourhoods in large cities will be formed by heterogeneous communities, plans and planners need to address the social planning issues as much as the spatial ones, leading to harmonious cities.

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