

# 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