Gated communities: social sustainability in contemporary and historical gated

developments, edited by Samer Bagaeen and Ola Uduku, Earthscan, www.earthscan.co.uk, 2010, xii+140 pp., \$92.34, ISBN 978-1-84407-519-5

An outpouring of literature on privatisation of public and residential realms has been a hallmark of the last two decades and, in particular, in relation to discourses of globalisation, neoliberalisation and commercialisation. Most of this literature focuses on assumed and actual impacts of privatisation on social sustainability with most authors having a strong bias for the negative aspects thereof. In this context Bagaeen and Uduku's book is a welcome, optimistic and positive contribution to the growing body of knowledge around gated residential developments.

The book covers a series of gated community case studies from around the world: China, The Middle East, France, Mexico, New Zealand, Argentina, Nigeria and South Africa. The stated aim of these case studies is to 'open up the question of gated communities' through conceptualising and historicising urban gating. To this end the tenor of the case studies is positive and constructive rather than lamenting the often cited negative aspects of gated, frequently privatised, residential developments: social polarisation, resource inequity and the negation of social responsibility and citizenship to name but a few. All the case studies are historically grounded to emphasise the cultural and social embeddedness of urban gating. In this respect, the book clearly locates urban gating in an historical context rather than presenting it as a late 20th early 21st century phenomenon.

The structure of the book is clear and logical and the chapter titles are unambiguous and relevant to the text that follows. The writing style is mostly engaging and easy to read and the book is well illustrated with images of urban gating. The first chapter establishes the historical framework that each of the subsequent case studies follows. There are no surprises here, Ebenezer Howard is mentioned as the 'Father' of privatopias and the ancient walled city is portrayed as a founding concept of gated communities. Given this significant basis the authors state (p. 6) that 'if every man's [sic] home is his castle, gated communities simply respond to this innate need.' The following chapter has been included as a polemic to this argument. Again the substance is not new, it is well written and a welcome, if somewhat familiar, argument against the contemporary gated community phenomenon. Sardar (p. 10) eloquently writes that gated communities are 'plutocratic ghettos of superior entitlement garnered from the inequalities of the economic system.' By this account gated communities are 'toxic' symbols of neoliberalism/capitalism and globalisation. Sardar then presents us with a way forward, the author argues for a process of 'trans modernity' to identify a way of life that is everything that the gated community apparently is not: inclusive, open, plural, diverse and equitable.

The following eight chapters comprise the case studies. Each case study follows a similar structure: a brief theoretical note, a historical account of urban gating as it relates to the specific city, town or country, an overview of specific gated communities and a conclusion. A theme of social sustainability is present throughout the case studies; however, I found it to be marginal and weak. What is interesting is the range of case studies included and the divergent reasons given for urban gating. Chapter Three focuses on the Middle East and argues that the critical issue lies in micro governance rather than in gated and walled residential developments that have a strong historical precedence. The author, Bagaeen, does suggest however that in the Middle East there are an increasing number of gated communities being marketed as global western commodities for the rich rather than as cultural and historical phenomena. Chapter Four takes us to China where the story of urban gating is similarly founded to that depicted in the previous chapter. China also has a historical precedence of urban gating and, similar to the Middle East, recent developments of this kind respond to and

reproduce global, western ideology. Chapters Five and Six relate a different story to date. Both case studies are in the troubled countries of Nigeria and South Africa where the impetus for gating is founded on risks relating to crime and personal safety. In Lagos in particular, urban gating is presented as a positive land-use pattern because it allows opportunities for local residents to establish sustainable practices, such as local food production and local water and energy provision; supplementing services that the government does or does not provide. In this case, as in the case of South Africa, urban gating facilitates social cohesion and sense of identity among residents within the gates.

Chapters Seven and Eight look at Argentina and Mexico respectively and Chapter Nine focuses on France. The penultimate chapter, Chapter Ten, is perhaps the closest to home, the authors, Dupis and Dixon look at urban gating in New Zealand. The case study illustrated suggests that most residents of gated communities did not move into the development because of the gates, but rather because of the location and built form. For most residents the existence of gates was something that was only appreciated post-occupancy. Interestingly, Dupis and Dixon note that New Zealand gated community developers base their model of development on Gold Coast gated communities in Australia.

The final chapter reiterates the findings of each case study and re-acknowledges the aim of the book (p. 132) 'to give alternative readings in order to enable us to use a different range of lenses to appreciate this [urban gating] global phenomenon ....' In summary, this book is a welcome addition to the body of knowledge around gated communities and contemporary patterns of residential development and governance. All the authors embed their case studies in a historical context, some more convincingly than others, and in doing so demonstrate a divergent, contextual and complex lineage of urban gating as a phenomenon. The editors' commitment and passion for this topic is clearly evident in the introduction and conclusion of the book, and in their selection of chapter contributors. I recommend this book to anyone interested in residential planning and the quest for social well-being, sustainability and justice.

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