



# **The Impact of Gated Communities on Social fabric: Choices and Changes in The Spatial Form of Sub-Urban Districts The Greater Cairo Region**

A Dissertation

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Submitted to the Post Graduate Studies Faculty of  
Ain Shams University

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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Districts’**

**A dissertation  
submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements of**

**Ph.D. DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE**

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## **Statement**

This Thesis is submitted to Ain Shams University – Faculty of Engineering – Department of Architecture for the degree of Ph.D in Architecture.

The work included in this thesis was carried out by the author in the Department of architecture – Faculty of Engineering – Ain Shams University, from October 2008 to December 2011.

No part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree or a qualification at any other university or institution.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Impact of Gated Communities on Social fabric:  
Choices and Changes in The Spatial Form of Sub-Urban Districts,  
The Greater Cairo Region  
By: Rana T. Al Matarneh

In the last decades, a new style of privately governed urban residential developments, known as “gated communities” (GCs), has been proliferating worldwide, influencing the evolution of metropolitan areas in terms of their socio-spatial forms and structures. Its most distinctive characteristics are walls and gates that enclose -throughout perimeter- the residential areas, separating housing and streets from urban dynamics; and particular attention should be placed in its controlled access, preventing free transit non-residents. This massive privatization of local government functions has reshaped the spatial, social, economic, and political appearance and organizational structure of the urban setting. This trend is not a passing fashion but an institutional transformation reflecting the ideological shift toward privatism characteristic of the neoliberal consensus. Specifically, the GCs revolution is driven by three main forces. Developers pursue higher density in order to maintain profits despite rising land costs. Local governments seek growth and increased tax revenues with minimal public expenditure. And many middle and upper class home-buyers, fearful of crime and disenchanted with government, are in search of a privatized utopia -- offering security, status, a homogenous population, and managerial private government. This transformation resembles the construction of a physical, social, and institutional premium, or sanctified wall, around the affluent portions of an increasingly divided society.

Specialists from diverse and often contradicting perspectives have interpreted this phenomenon. One interpretation puts emphasis in the internal

dynamics, highlighting apparent advantages or inconveniences that affect their inhabitants. The other interpretation is oriented towards the external dynamics; their impact on urban and social environment. This study suggests clear frameworks for comprehensive empirical investigations that are needed for providing an interdisciplinary perspective. The research focuses on a comprehensive methodology: first, highlighting three different approaches to the analysis of urban fragmentation (social, spatial and institutional); this will be eventually achieved by the means of quantitative and qualitative multi-level spatial scales used in the analysis of the distribution of social groups, residential patterns and dynamics, income patterns, the preferences and resources of individual households, the pattern of socio-economic residential differentiation in terms of income, occupational status, and level of education, in a single gated neighbourhoods and morphological typologies of GCs).

These patterns employ quantitative data and methods, primarily index calculation. Accordingly, a set of gated and non-gated suburban neighbourhoods will be cross compared according to the major neighbourhood morphological components in order to reveal the differences and similarities in their socio-spatial morphology or in another sense the change and continuity in their urban structure and social fabric. Meanwhile, the ideas and logics underpinning the changes will be accounted. It is of great concern to evaluate people's welfare in these communities. This is not easy since different mechanisms, qualifying and quantifying ULQ must be devised. Every process of planning and management is aimed at improving lifestyle, and regional urban services (RUS) that fulfil socio-economical needs such as education, housing, entertainment, safety, and environment in order to live and work in harmony.

Second, outlining a framework for interdisciplinary analysis. In the latter part, the research illustrates the connections that may be made between the analyses. Moreover, links between the morphological changes and the

broad social process will be discussed in light of the research findings. This research will take a closer look at gated communities and its potential impact on urban sustainability in the future (in the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt context). Recognizing that urban sustainability is one of the goals for urban planning and management, all urban development should be considered in relation to the dimensions of urban sustainability. Within this framework, the appropriateness of gated communities as a type of development for the urban future needs to be carefully considered.

Finally, this study is designed to go deeper into some operative and conceptual aspects with the aim of improving several components of the model, mainly the indicators of Quality Opinion on Urban Services and Facilities (ULQous). This research focuses on recent changes in urban landscapes and urban structures related to new forms of space appropriation and production both for residence and consumption. In brief, results show the survey done on satisfaction levels of needs and claims from different groups of the population associated with the zone. The research concludes that “Gated communities” has the potential to radically transform and reshape the socio-spatial urban fabric. It is a strong and influential urban type, which has the potential to influence the juxta-positioning of the urban rich and poor, social and economic opportunity and the decision-making process of both national and local governments. It could have a dramatic impact on the long-term sustainability of cities.



*To my family, and to my son, Rousal Ghawi*

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