

Gated Communities (GCs): A Physical Pattern of Social Segregation

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KEYWORDS Jordan. Al Andalusia, Social Segregation. Gated Communities. Families

ABSTRACT Gated Communities are becoming of a great significance in Jordan recently, particularly in the high-income areas of Amman. Al-Andalusia is the first Gated Community project in Jordan, which appeared for the purpose of creating a fully enclosed service compound for some specific Jordanian families and other categories of people classes. The present study discusses the theoretical background that affected the project design to evaluate the designers' intentions in revealing the social interaction between the community residents. The study also investigates the reasons behind residents' preference of living in a Gated Community. The results show that fear of crime and security factor are the most significant parameters affecting people's choice. Qualitative research methods, such as questionnaires and interviews will be used for both; residents of Al Andalusia and those who live in non-gated neighborhoods. The study suggests that Gated Community (GCs) concept is influenced by the resident's desire for security, class segregation, and a modern private atmosphere. It is also noted that the conditions of the surrounding urban area is an important factor affecting the GCs development. Hence, the increasing in crime rates, unhealthy settlements, urban congestion, growing squatter habitations and the lack of facilities are major reasons affecting the existence of GCs. As concluded from the observations GCs are becoming the symbol of social segregation (between insiders and outsiders), because of its gates, perimeter fences and security guards. All these elements that act like barriers, are usually erected to keep outsiders out, which seems to effectively segregate the rich from the poor families.

INTRODUCTION

Carvalho et al. describe gated communities as "Large and small neighborhoods ... that choose '... to surround themselves with walls or fences and use security gates to control access'" (Carvalho et al. 1997). Urban critic Mike Davis called them "walled off communities", where developers "have decided to enclose the entire community in security fencing" (Davis 1990: 246-47). In real estate market they use the terms "residential compounds", and "housing compound or complexes to refer to the concept of Gated Community (Mahgoub and Khalfani 2012).

While Helsley and Strange, in a modeling study of crime and gated communities labeled them as '... walled residential developments that attempt to provide safe environments by denying access to the general public' (Helsley 1998: 81).

Early gated communities in the United States tended to be for specific homogeneous population groups, such as urban elites and the retirees (Townhend 2002). As well as specialized recreation communities that offer different types of leisure activities. It is known that gated commu-

nities have been creating a sense of community; however, some pieces of research have indicated that gated communities can either enhance or reduce the community spirit within an urban context, as it isolates a specific area from its surrounding and creates zones of restricted access within the urban existence.

The gated-community model is overtly socially fragmentary and easily practicable; and, it is now dominating the securitization and marketization discourse about urban public spaces through nuance emphasize on urban settlement planning. The fashionable gated-community principle emerged originally as a special form of urban special planning to differentiate amongst communities in terms of lifestyle, prestige and security zones (Tanulku 2012; Pacione 2013).

Despite the outpouring of literature and research on the subject, mainly from North America and more recently from Western Europe, since the early 1990, there is an ample evidence to suggest that the phenomenon can also be linked to older ancient patterns of enclosure found globally. Recognition of this other 'strand' or notion enclosure derived from more traditional housing and residence practices in the world should

equally inform the debate about the epistemology and nature of the Gating phenomenon. This is important as the incorporation of 'gated communities', in one form or another, has a great influence on the planning process, design 'codes' and design guidelines in most contemporary urban areas, at both suburban and inner-city level.

In Jordan, Taameer Jordan holdings, a real estate developer established in 2005 has set out a vision for building a haven of luxurious living units and a lifestyle synonymous with modernity and highly comfort buildings. One example is the Andalucia Project, which is a residential district that covers an area of nearly 800,000 square meters, located 20 km south the capital city Amman. The project carried the name of the former Muslim kingdom in Al-Andalus (modern Andalusia) in Spain.

The interiors of the villas provide tenants with a heaven of warmth, charm, and a private family atmosphere. The elegant furniture combines modernity and classicality through using materials and colors that are soft and delightful at the same time. The beauty of each villa is crowned with well planted gardens and soft fountains. Modernity and particularity are sought in the villas that are constructed using top quality building materials and lavish finishing.

Objectives

This paper seeks to provide some evidences of the impact of gated communities on segregation patterns within the metropolitan region of Amman, introducing how gated communities physical design and separation produces social exclusion, as they are considered by the developers as homogeneous social environments on the small scale and a detached environment from the surrounding on the larger scale.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on two levels: first, analysis of the physical and design characteristics of al Andalucia, in addition to addressing the social impact of the physical characteristics on the resident's social life. Second, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed using 70 samples for both, residents living inside Al-Andalusia, and people who live in the surrounding area, to answer the main questions related to gated communities and social segregation.

Physical and Design Analysis

The first question that rises here is: Does Al-Andalusia has the characteristics of the built environment that afford interaction?

Functional Distance and Functional Centrality

Functional distance between units (buildings in urban and suburban areas, rooms in buildings) and the Functional centrality of the commonly used facilities (entrance ways in buildings, corridors and lounges in business offices) are major predictors of the interaction patterns of people who inhabit residential areas or who work in business organizations and institutions (Fig. 1). In Figure 1 the functional distance is expressed by time circle with a radius that represents a journey of five minutes on feet and one minute by car. It is concluded that all residents can meet through their daily journeys because of the small functional distance which in turn enhances the social interaction between the residents.

One of the important variables in establishing the functional centrality of places is whether or not these places are on the paths of everyday activity patterns. The use of these spaces is determined by their distinctive design; the existence of seating arrangements that offer rest and comfortable gathering spaces for residents increases the effectiveness of these open spaces. In addition such places should be group or semi-public territories with symbolic barriers that demarcate them (Fig. 2), (Zeisel 1981).

In Al-Andalusia, recreational area is a functional centrality area that acts as the heart of the project, including the common facilities that the residents need. The area is located on the main paths of movement of many people leaving and entering the project, in addition to the fact that there is one entrance and one exit only and both are at the same point near the central area, which in turn will lead to better social interaction because the daily movement pattern in this path will give the chance for residents to see each other and communicate.

Socio-petal and Socio-fugal Space

The use of the terms socio-petal and socio-fugal in planning to describe spaces that "bring"

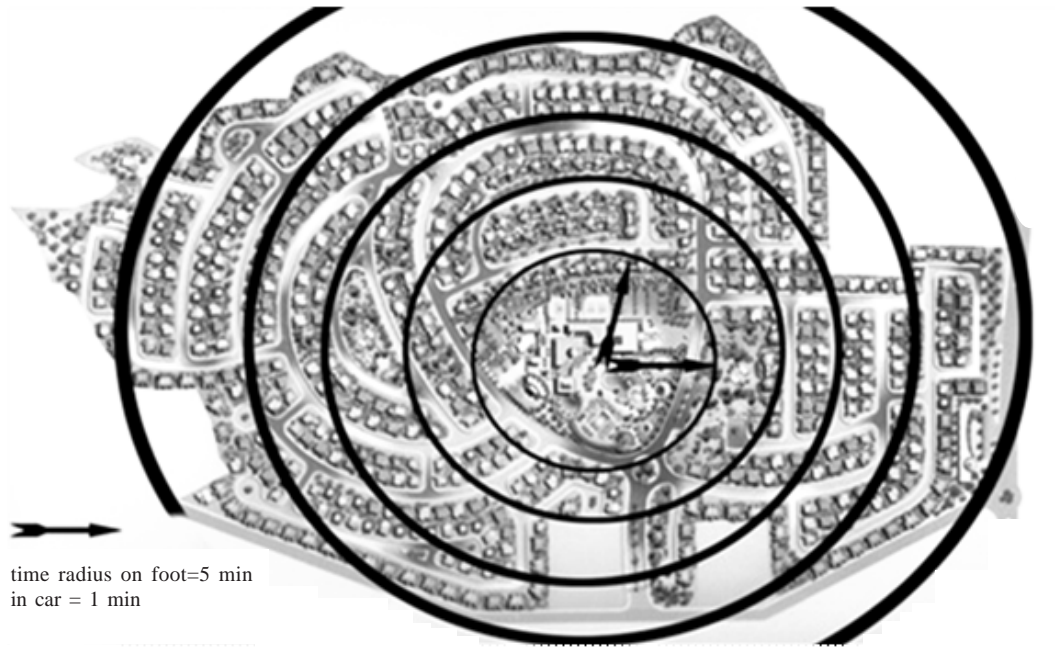


Fig. 1. Al-Andalucia functional distance expressed by time

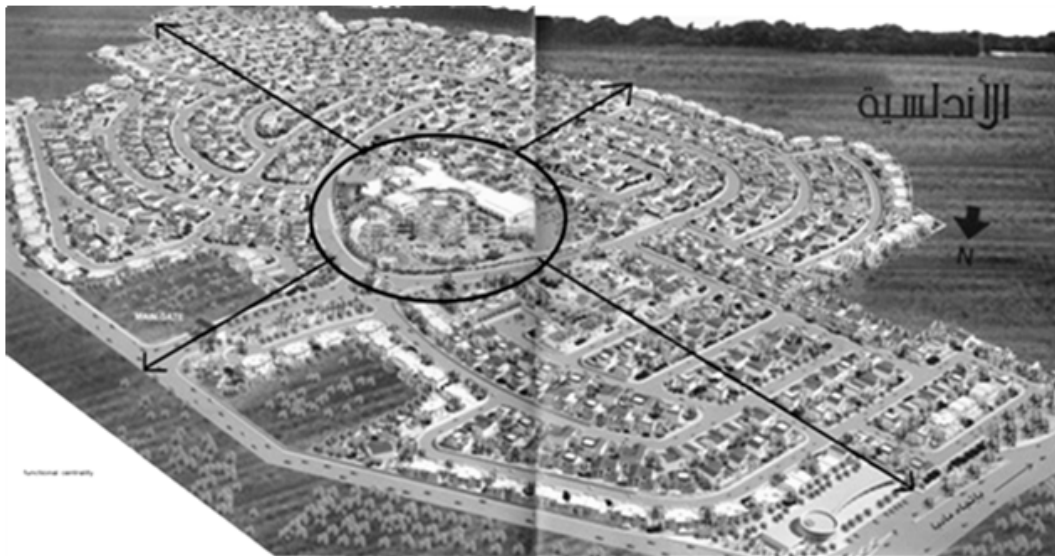


Fig. 2. Al-Andalucia recreational area in the center of the residential compound

people together and “force” them apart was introduced by Humphrey Osmond (1966), socio-petal layouts are those in which face-to-face contact, particularly eye contact, is easy to maintain and seating arrangements are separated at a socio-consultive distance (Argyle and Dean 1965). Socio-fugal layouts are those in which it is easy to avoid interactions, for example Back-to-back benches are a kind of a socio-fugal layout. These terms have been applied to the site plan layouts, the plans include public or quasi-public places where people easily meet which are referred to as socio-petal ones, and those in which there are no gathering places which are considered as socio-fugal.

Lawton (1975) says that there must be a predisposition for such behavior and the setting must be where people want to be, he also adds that the clusters at such places where there is much activity to watch in preference to places that readily afford face to face interaction. Private open space promotes neighboring, and neighborhood interaction provides a suitable socializing situation for children (Fig. 3) (Porteous 1977).

Cul-de-sac

There is also supporting evidence that people who live in a cul-de-sac interact more and know each other better than people who live in through streets, but this is not necessarily some-

thing that the residents see (Michelson, 1971). This leads to the fact that street type does not seem to be the crucial variable either (Fig. 4).

Width of Streets

The number of houses, width and length of streets, the amount of traffic flowing down a street, and the way houses face the street all seem to be important factors, as traffic increases, interaction patterns increase which in turn affects the social pattern of the community (Fig. 5) (Appleyard and Lintel 1972).

Homogeneity of Residents

When population is not homogeneous in character, the variance can lead to negative contact between people, especially if they do not have enough privacy (Kuper 1953). When a working-class family lives in a middle-class area, the family can find itself socially isolated rather than integrated in the area (Michelson 1976). A plenty of residential areas design -as well as some apartment buildings and even office-buildings design-, is based on the assumption that when the affordances for meeting, walking together, and using common facilities are part of the everyday life, the interaction levels between people will be higher. While this idea may seem axiomatic, it should be treated with caution because it can lead to a



Fig. 3. The arrangement of the blocks and the clustering encourages the socio-petal space which enhances the social interaction



Fig. 4. The figure shows some gathering clusters as cul-de-sac which increases the level of social interaction. It also supports the idea of safety and security



Fig. 5. The streets are wide enough to walk, meet, run and even to park, in addition to low traffic flow of cars, which leads to more interaction

number of erroneous conclusions about the design and the location of specific facilities (Fig.6).

Homogeneity of Residents Created “Group Space”

“Group Space” is defined as a collectively inhabited and socio culturally controlled physi-

cal setting. Social-dynamic processes such as group territorialities, group conflicts, social regulations of space-use, the formation of group of identity, and differentiation of public, semi public, and private space were situated in environmental contexts (Kuper 1953).

Sommer (1969) recognizes the function of “group territoriality”, which is used in most em-

pirical studies using to focus on how individuals vis-à-vis other people around, through maintaining and managing spatial “buffer zones” for the sake of personal privacy and control of the setting.

The notion of “Group space” in contrast to personal space is proposed as areas occupied and regulated by a particular social group at varying levels such as family, class members, user-groups, and community members. Through this notion, the dynamics of the Group X place transaction, such as strengthening the group membership and collective place identity by sharing space, will be investigated (Fig.7).

The techniques of the buffer zones applied varied from trees, walls, high density green area to tall apartments. These buffer zones protect the group space from conflict and increase safety to the group area.

Social Analysis

Questionnaire Analysis

Questions paused in this paper include; can gated communities be considered as a reason of the polarization and hierarchal leveling in the

society, What are the reasons for choosing Gated Communities to live in, and what is the opinion of the high-income and low-income groups of this phenomenon? A sample of 25 residents in al Andalusia Project (the limited number of the people inside al Andalusia is related to the fact that some parts of the project are still under construction) and 45 non-residents of the project were selected for the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire are summarized in a diagram: Do you agree that Gated Communities separate (polarize) specific category of people and encourage the apartheid? (Fig. 8). While the answers to the questions related to the main reasons for choosing gated communities to live in was given in Table 1.

As noticed from the questionnaire results the main reason for choosing to live in a Gated Com-

Table 1: Results of the questionnaire related to the main reasons for choosing gated communities to live in

Amenities and tranquility	30.00%
Security and maintain property values	66.67%
Other reasons	3.33%



Fig. 6. The recreational area is located in the center of the project; the designer was aware of this point and located all the facilities as a cluster in the middle of the project

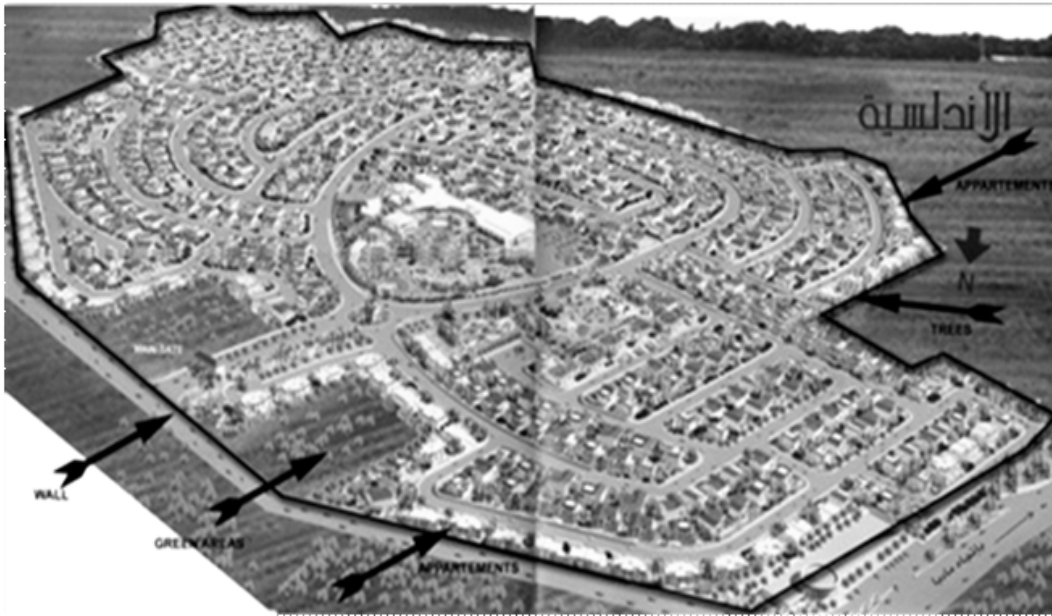


Fig. 7. Al-Andalucia walling system

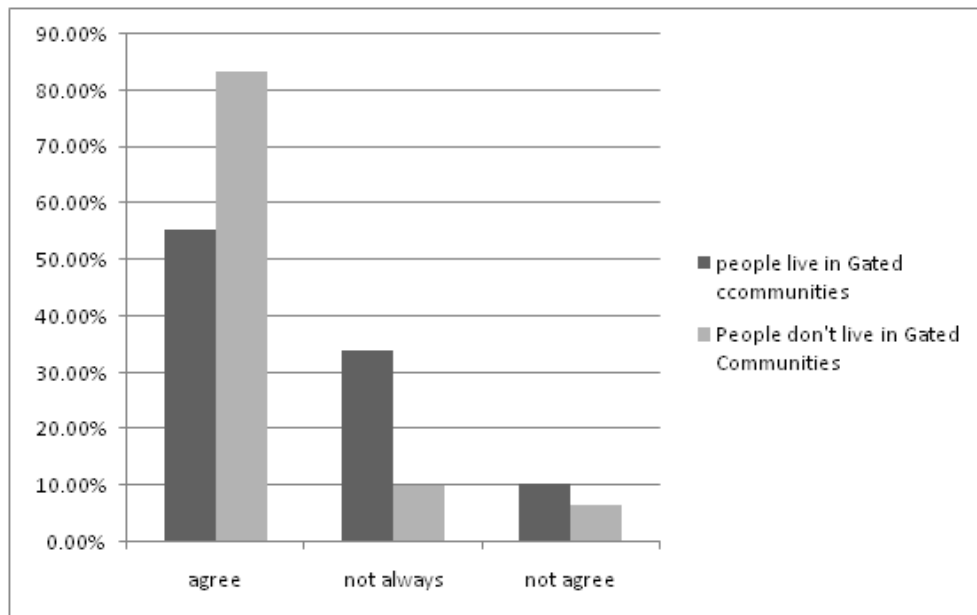


Fig. 8. Results of the questionnaire if people agree that gated communities separate (polarize) specific category of people

munity is security. The desire for gated communities is in part a reflection of growing concerns about crime in urban areas, this in turn may contribute to the physical and social segregation within cities. The other reason is the need of finding a calm peaceful area that isolates the residents from the surrounding confusing urban context. However, the physical segregation will lead to the social segregation on the long term between the dwellers of the residential compound and people who live outside. The physical segregation even excludes the passer-by the area, which in turn has negative effects on the urban cohesion.

Inside Al-Andalucia Project, streets were designed to act as a public gathering spaces, wide windows and terraces; in addition, short or transparent walls to enhance the social interaction between the residents. Architects, landscapers and urban designers have the ability to design environments that are rich in opportunities for personal interactions of various types, when the social system supports the use of these environments; their affordances are likely to be used in their predicted manner.

Interactions are the basis for the formation and continued existence of social organization. Gated Communities are homogeneous territories that differ from their neighbors especially in socio-economic status. The architect(s) of the project tried in their design to encourage the social interaction and due to previous theories they succeeded in achieving it on the Gated Community level. Besides, the question is: will they really succeed after the real experience of the residents? Further, how will they deal with people from outside their community?

CONCLUSION

The present study suggested that Gated Community concept is influenced by the desire for security, class segregation, and a modern and more private atmosphere for living. It was also noted that the conditions of the surrounding urban area affects the GC development. Hence, the increasing in crime rates, unhealthy settlements, urban congestion, growing squatter habitations and the lack of facilities are major reasons affecting the existence of GCs. It was concluded from the observations that GCs are becoming the symbol of social segregation (between insiders and outsiders), because of its

gates, perimeter fences and security guards. All these elements that act like barriers, are usually erected to keep outsiders out, which seems to effectively segregate the rich from the poor families. The existence of central facility like the recreational area was a good node to attract residents and offered a good opportunity to let people meet and socialize in a well-designed public space.

The study also argued that the gated-community model supports social fragmentation, exclusion and affects the population structure. In the case of Jordan, gated-community planning would perpetuate social and spatial fragmentation, displacement, Inequity in urban areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous study could be a valid reference for the planners and the architects to consider the social issue during the process of planning and designing of the city. The segregation in the urban context is about separation, a separation of people as well as a separation of activities and functions; it is very difficult to understand such separateness without considering space as shaped and structured by built form. Even the spaces at the building level- such as apartment buildings, situations, vacation resorts, communal lounges, should be taken into consideration to enhance the social interaction between the residents.

To enhance the social interaction between people inside the residential compound and people who live in the surrounding context, a comprehensive model should be created to choose the best location for the Gated Community within the urban context to decrease the negative effect of that walled community on the larger development plan, for example a walled compound that is located near a university to provide safe comfortable environment for students and does not have negative effects on the community fabric.

LIMITATIONS

1. Al-Andalucia residential compound and the surrounding area are inhabited by a few numbers of people, which in turn affects the results of the questionnaire due to the limited number of answers.

2. The absence of Specialized Planning Policies in Jordan for gated communities and their relation to the overall development Plan.

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