

The walls of Gated Communities in Brazil and Turkey: Security, Separation or Status

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ABSTRACT

Gated communities are common types of housing estates found in many countries. They are based on strictly controlled access of people. Houses, and at times high-rise apartment blocks, are built behind a common wall, along private internal streets. Both in Brazil and in Turkey these types of residential neighborhoods can be found mainly on the outskirts of large urban areas. This paper investigates the reasons for the increase of such residential areas, in relation to the two countries urban problems. In Brazil the dominant reason for the proliferation of gated communities, found in the literature and in advertisement of such estates, is security, in view of the countries *high crime rates*. In Turkey the main reason for a family to choose to live in such residential areas is *status and privacy*. Although Brazil and Turkey have very different cultural backgrounds, in both countries gated communities are increasingly popular. The attraction of these so-called communities must therefore be analyzed. Are people more vulnerable in large mega-cities? Also, the impact on urban prospects as a whole must be discussed. Socio-cultural and psychological concepts such as *territoriality, security, privacy*, which can be represented by a pattern of behavior of an individual or group, as based on control of space, are thus touched on in the paper. Conclusions confirm that the reasons for preferences for gated communities are *the feeling of belonging to a special place, fear of crime and a sense security* and determine decision making of families in their homeownership choices.

INTRODUCTION

Gated communities are common types of housing estates found in many countries around the world. They are based on strictly controlled access of people, through confining walls, gates and guards. Houses, and at times high-rise apartment blocks, are built behind a common wall along private internal streets.

Gated communities first emerged in the United States of America (USA) in the 1970s. Political and economical transformations increased mobility of capital and the marginalization of the labor force in the USA. This in turn caused important changes in cities (LOW, 2003). All these changes influenced the creation of middle class residential areas far from the city center (HARVEY, 1989). Also, because of the increase of violent crimes in public areas of inner cities, fear of crime became one of the primary parameter for middle class families to choose their place of residence, and according to Harvey (1989), influenced the formation of a fortress society at the periphery of cities. As a result the number of gated communities, which spread to the rest of the world in the 1980s, has rapidly increased, especially in developing countries in recent years.

Both in Brazil and in Turkey the closed types of residential neighborhoods have increased in numbers in the last 20 to 30 years. They can be found mainly on the outskirts of large urban areas. In Brazil they are called *Loteamento* or *Condomínio Fechado* and attract mainly upper middle class families, although in Brazil construction companies have recently expanded the market for such housing solutions to lower middle classes. In Turkey gated communities which are called *Kapalı / Kapılı siteler*, cater to the upper middle and high-income classes. These new residential patterns have become more prominent since the 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s in both countries.

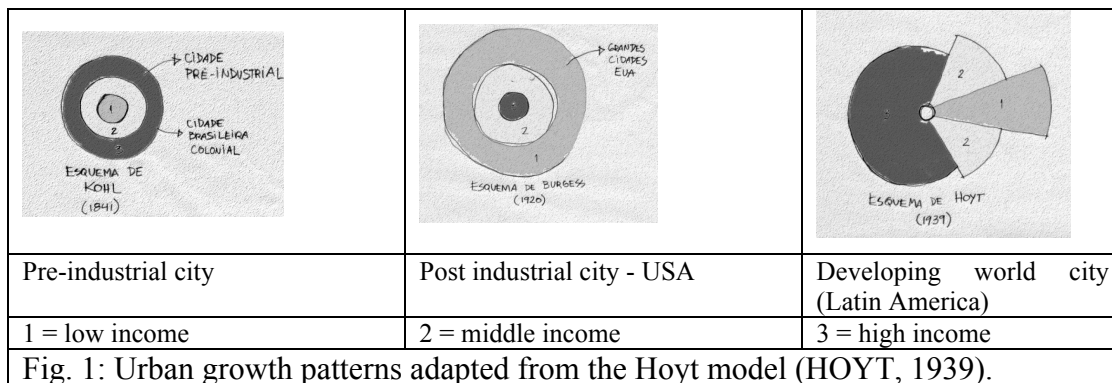
During the last three decades, especially in big cities, socio-cultural and urban identities have been undergoing radical transformations. Globalization, internationalization and the rapid flow of information, as is the case in most of the world, have played a significant role in changing the city and its people (TURGUT YILDIZ & İNALHAN, 2007). The multi-dimensional outcomes of this transformation have manifested themselves through the peculiarities of activity patterns, behavioral relationships, social and cultural norms, as well as new architectural and urban patterns. The processes of economic and social change that occur in both countries, Brazil and Turkey, require continuous re-definitions of urbanization and associated housing questions in the light of these changes. With this in mind, it is important to focus on similarities and differences found in the newly formed urban areas of gated communities. This paper discusses some of the reasons for the increase of such residential areas, in relation to the two countries' urban problems. Some comparisons are presented with examples from the region of the city of *Campinas* in the State of São Paulo in Brazil and in *Istanbul*, Turkey.

URBAN CHANGE AND GATED COMMUNITIES

In the past three decades, a remarkable growth of gated communities has been observed in almost all large cities around the world. While the initial gated communities appealed mainly to high-income groups, gated communities are currently built also for middle and upper-middle classes. Social segregation, real estate speculation and to some extent impositions of a middle class life style, combined with a dependence on the automobile have influenced most cities in the world, including the developing areas. Historic urban boundaries have been lost and sprawl is a common result. This causes a strain on urban infrastructure and services, creates traffic congestion, air pollution and affects energy consumption of typical residential areas. Urban sprawl can also be shown to have sparked segregation between different socio-economic groups, which in some cases has led to conflict.

Fear of crime, security issues in general, high living standards, isolation, privacy, exclusivity and predictability of real estate values can be considered the main triggering reasons for the development of gated communities in most countries (YÖNET & YIRMIBESOGLU, 2009; LUYMES, 1997; ATKINSON & FLINT, 2004). In Brazil all social classes have a tendency to wall themselves, especially in response to the feelings of vulnerability in a society with high crime rates. However, in Turkey, the location choice for many gated communities in areas with low crime rates and high social attachment can be considered a conflicting situation.

HOGAN & OJIMA (2008) emphasize that a portion of the population with higher incomes seeks a new lifestyle and the question of residence is no longer just a geographical condition, but also a question of the form of housing and lifestyle it inspires. CALDEIRA (2000) points out that this new pattern of spatial segregation creates social inequality in cities, which is gradually replacing the standard core-periphery dichotomy between rich and poor, as shown in Fig. 1..



Gated communities will lodge themselves on the edge of the expansion vectors of the city of the developing world and fragment the newly formed urban tissue. Gated communities also increase distances between urban centers, resulting in a disconnected urban landscape. According HOGAN & OJIMA (2008) one of the main factors contributing to this development model is the spatial mobility, with available access roads to answer to the

demands of daily commuting necessities. Often the gated developments are far from the city center and grow in opposite directions of the informal housing areas of the poor, as cities adopt new urban growth patterns.

The most important feature of gated communities is that they are 'gated', thus one cannot enter and exit freely without having to be a member of the so-called community or at least get access permission (LANDMAN, 2000). There are many definitions of gated communities and they differ from country to country. Some questions come to mind when analyzing the phenomenon of gated communities. *Why have some social classes opted for more physical isolation and what will be the new role of the city as a whole?* The use of public areas must be under new scrutiny. This restructuring of the city involves not only the multiplication of gated isolated developments, but also the construction of large facilities such as shopping malls, which further weaken the traditional centralized structure of towns. Does this phenomenon make cities obsolete? Also what is the impact of large isolated private land tracks, not accessible by the population at large?

GATED COMMUNITY EXAMPLES FROM TURKEY AND BRAZIL

Istanbul, as the largest city in Turkey and one of the great heritage cities of the world, has experienced rapid transformations in the last three decades. During the latest economic restructuring processes these transformations occurred through the interaction of politics, culture and economics, influenced and legitimized by the global city discourse. The central government and local authorities have also proposed various projects in an effort to make Istanbul a global city. With these projects, Istanbul's urban identities have been transformed radically and the city has been developing with intense heterogeneity, especially its urban housing sector. The debate at the end of the 1990s reached to a point that Istanbul was included in the 21st century debate of desirable cities or cities that count in the global economy debate such as New York, London or Paris.

In Istanbul gated communities can be defined as the new urban areas that are produced in the global restructuring process and consist of groups of users, who have similar social and economic background and consumption habits. The important issue in this definition is that this type of living environment represents new ways of living or lifestyles and patterns of consumption. Particularly after the earthquake in Istanbul, in 1999, not only urban areas on the periphery gained real estate value, but also near the inner-city land values rose and after 2000 these types of residential settlements have become affordable and desirable for middle-income groups.

In most countries the reason for a rise in gated communities is attributed to the rise in urban crime and the tensions between different social groups, however in Turkey these tendencies must be attributed to other causes. According to KURTULUŞ (2005b) the main reason for this tendency in the case of Istanbul is that the urban elite is trying to integrate into the global consumption culture by buying or building ostentatious new homes in exclusive areas. The local real estate companies have seized the potential of this market with developing prestigious neighborhoods, with guaranteed real estate values, inside secure and privileged settlements (YÖNET, 2009). The physical presence of these closed enclaves as a result has also had a global influence on a new metropolitan life-style of middle and upper income groups (ALTINOLUK & TURGUT, 2005).

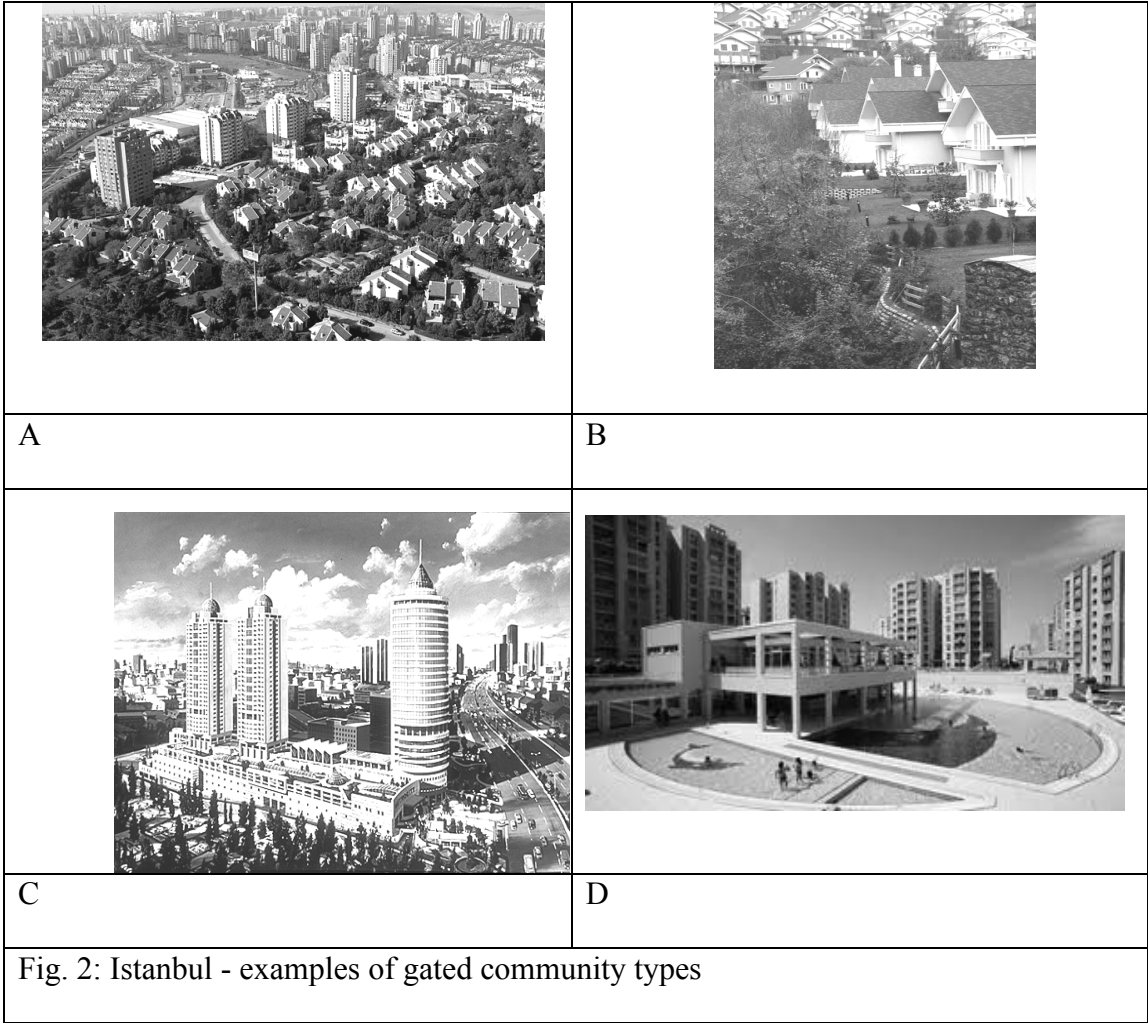
In Turkey and especially in Istanbul the development of these new housing patterns over the last thirty years in the city can be chronologically and spatially grouped in four types. *The distinction of these groups is based on observations and analysis of the advertisements in media, such as newspapers, internet sites, retail magazines as well as recent literature on the phenomenon which cite the main attractions of such urban developments (TURGUT YILDIZ & INALHAN, 2007).*

The garden cities – suburbia types (Fig. 2-A), were developed as new housing areas for middle and high-income groups located on the outskirts of the city. They are not totally gated; however they include privatized public areas and consist of various footprints of houses, villas and apartment buildings. The families who live in these worldwide booming settlements have moved to a privileged status by means of purchasing this lifestyle that their money can buy. Starting from 80's and intensifying in the 90's this newly planned suburban settlements are also supported by housing policies to solve the shortage of houses in Istanbul.

The luxurious villas housing settlements (Fig. 2-B) were strongly influenced the globalizing effect of the new economy. Istanbul quickly created a society of new businessmen and professionals and the new housing projects, which were born, are the direct result of rapid growth that the free market economy created after 1980. The new housing pattern can be recognized by "Country" or "City" added to the names of such developments. Key selling terms are "high security" and "ultra luxurious" designs. Most of these developments are at a distance from the city centre and their selling point is that one can live in the city of Istanbul, protected by security walls, far from urban filth, confusion, and noise. As a result, also showy consumption has become linked with being spatially separate from the rest of Istanbul society.

Multi-storey dwelling blocks near the business center started to develop in the 1990s, (Fig. 2-C). These residences were a type of living arrangement that spoke to the urban elite aware of living in the suburbia and villa housing projects. Now the urban young business elite sought the environment similar to a first-class hotel with a wide variety of services available. These developments attracted people who are always pressed for time, such as high-level professionals with high incomes, mostly those living alone. Most of these high-level managers may have a permanent home outside Istanbul but frequently come to the city for business reasons. The images and life concepts of these new residential settlements, built for

‘Yuppy’ (Young urban professional) upper income groups, and described and debated widely in the media were quickly spreading as well to other layers of society in relation to the form, preferences and expectations about the home and its residential area.



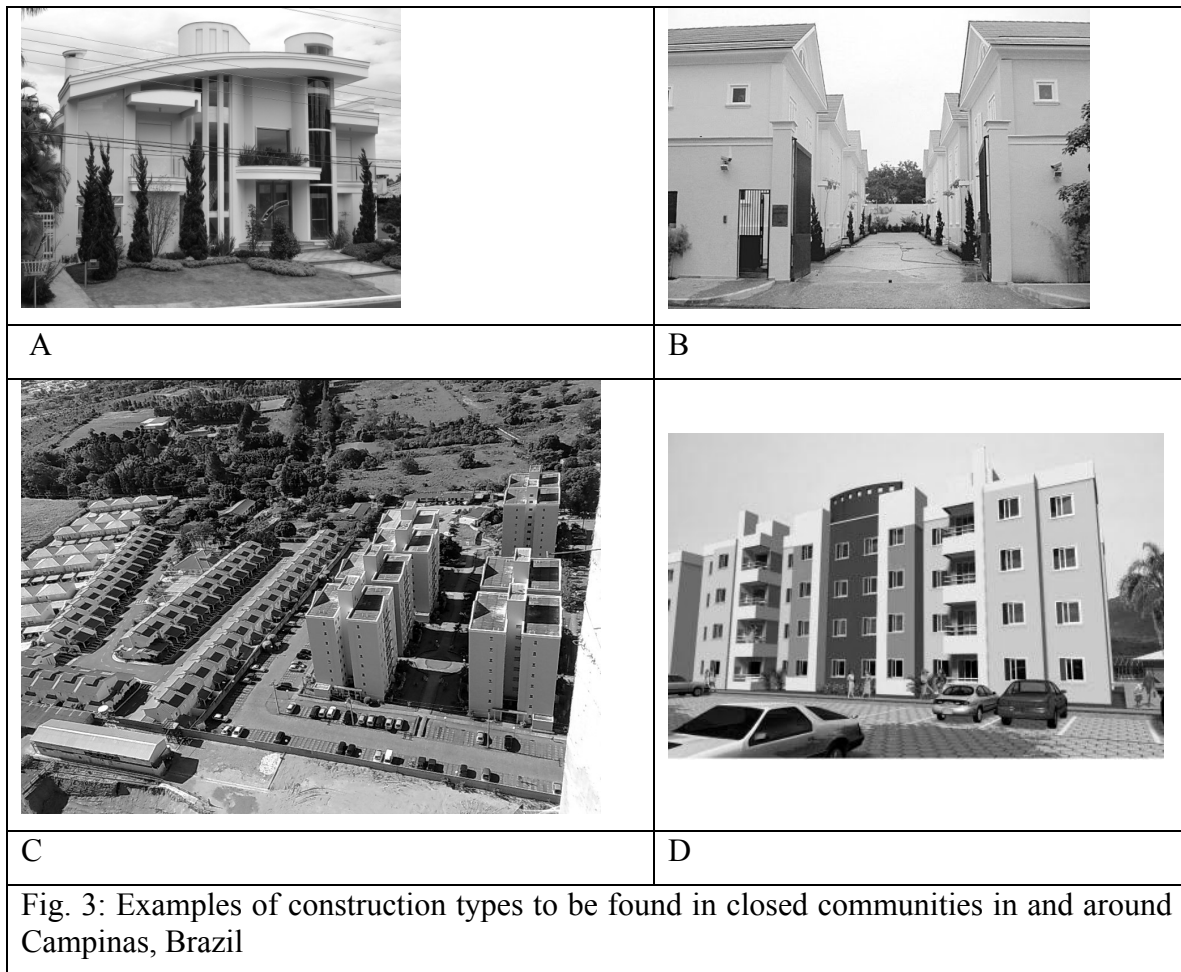
By 2000 Istanbul experienced marked urban segregation through an increase of *mixed inner city housing developments* (Fig. 2-D). The urban transformation process was becoming more significant through economic and social changes taking place. Different actors are involved with an unbalanced power relation in the market. Those were the times when rising middle and high-income groups were trying to integrate with the new global consumption culture and changed their life styles. To supply this demand these developments are produced with lower

costs (KURTULUŞ, 2005a). Particularly after the earthquake in Istanbul in 1999 not only the outer urban areas are developed, but also land near the inner city became of interest.

In Brazil, in the last thirty gated communities have found a market for middle and upper class families who seek a lifestyle which includes private leisure areas, protected by security walls, and far from urban confusion and noise. For the case of Brazil the city of Campinas is used as an example to show that not only the metropolitan areas of major cities are impacted by the gated community phenomenon, but smaller prosperous towns as well.

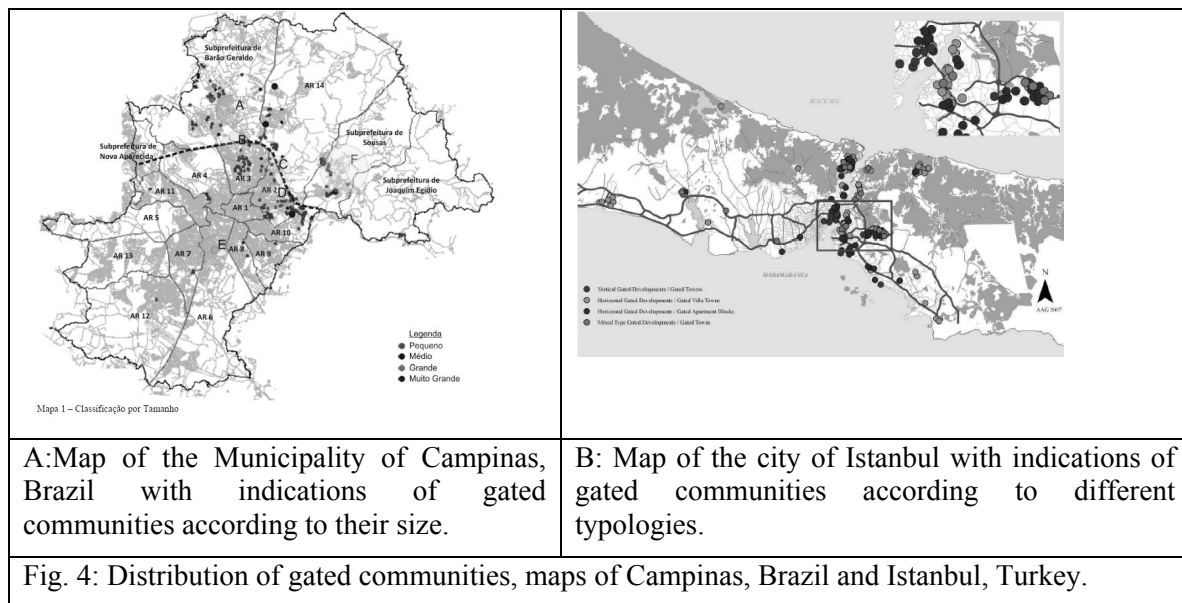
Campinas is a city of around one million inhabitants, about 100 km from São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil. The city's population has doubled in size from 1985 to 1995 and the region is comprised of several smaller towns with a total population of approximately three million inhabitants. The city is located on the tropic of Capricorn at an altitude of around 600 m above sea level.

Within most compounds of gated communities in Campinas, houses on individual lots and private gardens are built based on individual designs (Fig. 3-A). In Campinas several types of closed communities can be found, similar to those of Istanbul, the most prevalent being that of private villas on individual lots within a common compound and guarding wall. The developer provides urban infrastructure. Families belong to a condominium and pay a monthly fee for the maintenance of the common areas, guard service at the gates and other special amenities that may be offered. A condominium can be considered a form of collective organization of private space, not requiring urban services from the municipality, such as garbage collection or maintenance of infrastructure within its area, but only at its entrance gate. Thus, the access control can be legitimized with greater ease, and its closing walls, fences and watchtowers do not mean a priori, alienation of public land. On the whole these developments operate almost as autonomous towns, a microcosm of a different world to that found beyond the walls.



In later examples, most developers offer pre-built individual houses, terrace houses (Fig. 3-B) and in some cases apartment blocks of up to 20 floors are intermixed with low-rise constructions and individual houses with small private gardens (Fig. 3-C). Hired staff manages communal space. With every new development new features are added, such as fitness clubs, gourmet centers with special ovens and grill available for family gatherings, new toy and child play areas and some landscape features with fountains and tree-lined avenues. In the latest examples low-rise apartment blocks are built for lower-middle class families that apply the advantages of the new national government housing investments (Fig. 6-D).

The proliferation of gated communities can be illustrated on the maps of both Campinas in Brazil (A) and Istanbul in Turkey (B), shown in Fig. 4.



Discussion and Conclusion

Although the first gated communities in both Istanbul and Campinas were produced for the high-income group, recently the number of gated communities produced for middle-income group has increased. Middle-income groups are more sensitive about a *well-kept, clean and comfortable environment, the lifestyle in their housing complex, and the presence of activity areas*. On the other hand, high-income groups are more sensitive about *status and privacy*, or the feeling of belonging to a special place, thus separating oneself from the rest. This trend shows that gated communities determine a new and a current way of housing production in both cities.

The reasons for the preference for gated communities are mainly related to *a fear of crime and a need for security*. Families also seek an environment that is suitable to children with abundant services. Middle and high-income groups consider a guarantee of real-estate values important and rapid access to special public facilities is considered when buying a home. High quality urban infrastructure is a sought and homebuyers look for quiet areas devoid of

traffic. Privacy and setting oneself apart from the rest of the hustle and bustle of the city seem to be other significant parameters for families that chose to live in gated developments.

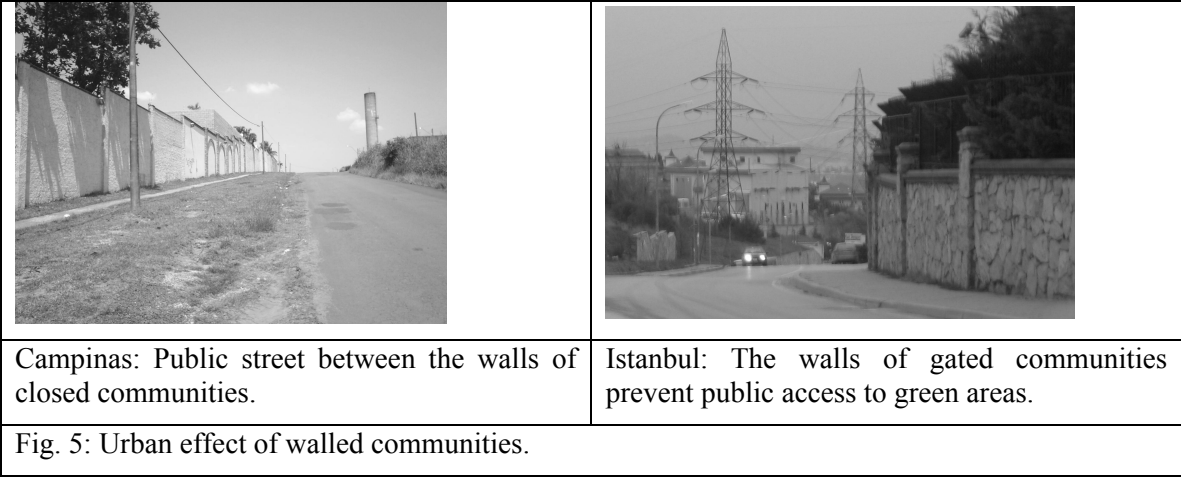
The relationship between the concept of security and housing is an ongoing concern. Human beings have always taken some physical precautions in relation to the places where they live, to feel secure and self-protected. In this context, “security” is one of the basic human needs. But security involves protection in general from natural hazards and from crime. Crime is an important societal problem and fear of crime is defined as the feeling of anxiety that emerges before the real crime takes place. The relationship between the cognition of risk or threat and the fear felt is important in defining the fear of crime and it is important to stress that higher levels of fear of crime are felt by women, elderly and disabled people, thus maybe the more vulnerable in society (COLQUHOUN, 2004).

Security seems to be the main attraction of gated developments in Brazil. The closed neighborhoods of wealthier families create what can be called a "security perimeter". Through the use of fences, perimeter walls sometimes softened by landscaping, and even some sort of trenches, reminding us of the mediaeval moats, small portions of the urban tissue are closed to public access. Of course the city continues to have its share of violence, but the residents feel that behind their protected walls they may escape the ills of the city, its filth and ugliness when at home. Also gated communities of the upper classes in Brazil have been shown not to be immune to robberies, some occurring from within, especially due to teenage drug problems. Residents in gated housing areas pass their time traveling from one, what are considered secure place to another, since shopping centers and even schools are also access controlled in many cities today.

But gated communities respond to other appeals as well. A quiet family life connected to nature is a sought. These appeals can be found in the New Urbanism of the 1990s. But in this case not represented by closed and gated communities, but by urban design based on the

integration of green areas, some mixed use development, medium densities and a return from the isolated suburb to a more urban street type of living (LUND, 2003).

Most advertisement pamphlets of gated communities aim to portray idyllic, soft sceneries integrated with nature. Security is mentioned, but not shown explicitly through the elements of control, the high perimeter walls topped with barbed wire, installation of surveillance cameras, armed guards overlooking the compound from strategic positions. This may be due to the hardness of these architectural elements in contrast to the romantic vision of a life style free of worries in a beautifully kept “Garden of Eden”. But the defensive architecture affects the urban landscape as seen in Fig. 5. Street canyons are created between the walls of such developments. An outside no-mans land is the result, with greater probability of crime due to little or no natural surveillance. These walls also fragment the urban tissue and interrupt traffic flows making urban planning more difficult.



Territoriality is expressed to an extreme by creating a visual prison camp of expensive mansions. Individual home owners inside the gated enclave, depending on community internal building codes, may in turn also build walls around their home separating their open space from neighbors. For privacy reasons high special visual shields may be built to prevent a neighbor looking into the pool area of an adjacent lot.

Territoriality is a concept of environmental psychology, which is represented by a pattern of behavior of an individual, or group that is based on control of physical space (GIFFORD, 2002). Placing marks in the built environment can identify territoriality. The control of space can be achieved through habitual occupation, some form of defense, personalization and mere marking. Psychological well-being, feelings of security and safety act on people's attitudes and the indicators of environmental psychology depend on the user's perception of space as territory (NEWMAN, 1972; WEKERLE & WHITZMAN, 1995; GIFFORD, 2002). Feelings of belonging, privacy, but also ones individuality are important (CARMONA, 2001; PUNTER & CARMONA, 1997; THOMAS, 2003).

In countries with high urban crime rates the feelings of security are often expressed through extreme territoriality attitudes. The control of space is considered vital for physical safety and prevention of crime. Fences, walls, and security bars are all signs of defense attitudes. The theoretical concepts of territoriality encompass the physical infringement of space through invasion and outline typical attitudes of defense. Signs are used especially for preventive defense, where fences are common architectural measures. Reactions to invasion attitudes are mainly behavioral and temporary, thus the physically striking out and letting a dog loose are typical attitudes (CROW, 1991; GIFFORD, 2002).

Private property is highly valued in most cultures, especially in countries where social rights exist formally, but are not as yet psychologically trusted. Attention is then given primarily towards built space rather than open space, since constructions are symbols of control. Studies on satisfaction with a residential neighborhood show that users, families of all classes will rate their housing quality as satisfactory when ownership is guaranteed and security provided.

Privacy is a control and autonomy behavior and the built environment plays a key role in facilitating privacy regulation. Users often will employ similar design expressions as found in territorial and security behavior, but for privacy visual and acoustic barriers are important

(GIFFORD, 2002). Lot walls help to create intimacy spaces and allow for solitude. Studies on the appeal of gated communities in Brazil show that the main reason of why families decide to live isolated in controlled environments is security, followed by the desire to be surrounded by a tranquil and quiet environment (LOPES & ORNSTEIN, 2010). The idea of setting oneself apart from the rest of the city and having neighbors of similar educational level and interests as your own family, though often mentioned as a reason for the increase in gated communities, was however not demonstrated in the same study of LOPES & ORNSTEIN (2010). Thus seeking status maybe a reason for acquiring a home in a closed community but is later not seen as a reason for continuing in the same neighborhood.

Conclusions about the discussions presented here touch on some of the essences of urban conditions and life as a community within a city. As emerging patterns of social and cultural changes new urban housing settlements the so called gated communities can be defined as examples of a residential site of *duality, fragments and polarity, social and spatial dialectics* which constitutes *social exclusion, spatial diversification, and sense of belonging*. Citizenship and being a city dweller, as the modern society's basis, is transformed by a different sense of belonging in the social exclusion process crystallized by the spatial diversification, and a spatial sense of belonging can only survive by excluding the others. This type of social exclusion and the resulting cultural fragmentation, can lead to an extinction of common elements that form urban identity and in effect gradually may lead to a loss of identity. In summary, because of spatial segregations the urban social environment is being fragmented and there is a risk of losing vital public spaces as a consequence of the privatization urban space in gated communities.

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