# "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage": the institutional and communitarian possibilities of "gated communities"

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## Abstract

This paper examines the nature of the "community" in "gated communities" as a globalizing form of housing development; discusses factors for the enmity this form attracts; argues that the global trend in gating need not be socially destructive, as warned by critics; and suggests principles for shaping the governance of these communities with subsidiarity and solidarity in mind. It uses four case studies to demonstrate the applicability of these principles or otherwise.

> Although the economic exclusionary nature of such communities may restrict access, the varied housing designs and diverse architectural styles **(Pow, 2009)** offer visual compensation. Further, if key stakeholders – including residents and builders – are to have a say in the shaping of places, then the formation of gated communities represents one vision of a (*potentially*) sustainable community. **(Rogerson et al. 2010: p.516; Emphasis author's)**

## Introduction: the global trend in gating

The world has become increasingly "gated,"[1] a reality that has been predominantly explained in terms of safety and criticized for an anti-social mentality of exclusion that fosters insecurity.  Applied to a form of private housing called in planning parlance a "gated community," gating generally implies the presence of *physical* barriers and other security devices, such as digitized access controls, which prevent trespassing.  The aim of this paper is modest – tackling what has happened – the proliferation of a form of private development throughout the world that excludes the general public from "coming close to knock at the door".

A typical "gated community" is one with three distinct, but related, dimensions.  First, it physically consists of a number of housing units, each of which has its own private access, but shares some space and facilities, including gated access, with other units within a walled or ring-fenced real estate development on the ground level or on a podium deck.

Second, institutionally, all unit proprietors agree to observe rules, enforceable in a court of law, which govern the use of private and common areas and facilities.

Third, spatially, a gated community typically has a name that stands for the community that is not a street number, but rather of a "place".  "Place branding" **(Kerr and Oliver 2015)** and the naming and trademark protection of this name have a value added function (**Lai et al. 2014**) and are part of the due diligence of the property development project or marketing manager.  The built heritage history of a site should be a sign resource, of which the developer and residents can take advantage.

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[1] The countryside of the Czech Republic seems to be an exception.  See **Temelová, Novák, and Jíchová (2014)**.

The gated community is not only replicated, but also impacts local government.[2] In the U.S., its neighbourhood or public housing bodies tend to follow the governance of a gated community to form community associations **(Nelson 2006)** but, as **Moroni (2014)** pointed out, only 15% of all residential associations in U.S. are gated. This form of real estate product is often contested as an issue of consumer "sovereignty" in a quest for public goods (including security) in partnership or rivalry with the state **(Glasze et al. 2004)** or simply PR and marketing booble babble – as are most uses of the word 'community' from a cynical perspective that defines experience. The case of Hong Kong, with local open space well-provided by the state, but often underutilised, may reveal an ugly reality of the tie-in-sale, if not forced consumption, by developers of new condominiums that retain ownership of various club facilities as excuses for keeping high property management levies **(Lai 2014)**. **Stansky (2000)** illustrated the possibilities of the incorporation of a gated community in USA as a Hobbesian Leviathan: "A pamphlet prepared by the Nevada Department of Business and Industry, Real Estate Division, Rules for Homeowner's Associations, includes the following statement: It is important for prospective borrowers to understand the benefits and possible risks of belonging to a homeowner's association. This type of ownership and lifestyle may not be for everyone." **(2000: p.29)** The issue is no longer simply a matter of the degree and modes of access restriction under communal or private property rights but governance and civil liberty. Some corporations risk becoming local "stationary bandits," a term used by Mancur Olson. **(Yu et al 2007)**

For this form of development, a number of questions pertinent to planning theory and policy are pertinent. First, is this a real community? Second, why does it attract so much contentious discussion in which

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[2] In Hong Kong, the government, by default, perpetuates this by requiring developers to provide adequate local open spaces inside their developments and imposes lease conditions to ensure that residential and non-residential uses cannot share common spaces. This entails gating partly as a means to indicate exclusivity.

authors apparently do not share the same starting point? Third, how can such a community be institutionally designed to avoid the criticisms made against it? The next section deals with the first question.

## A gated community is a "keyword," a community in actual face-to-face contact

It is true that a certain degree of conflation of concepts is apparent in the planning literature when the authors have recalled that gated settlements have existed throughout history.[3] Some examples cited are fortified towns, walled monasteries, and so forth **(Wu 2005; Hogan et al. 2012)**. However, while towns can be gated, gating in itself does not create a town. Similarly, a community can be gated, but gating in itself does not produce a community in the true sense of the word.

What, then, is a community? Christian theologians and social thinkers have considered the triune God as a community of persons. **(Bracken 1974, 2002; Naughton 2006)** Most definitions for things here on earth include spatial proximity, territory, common interest[4] and common action. For instance, an old definition quoted in **Queen (1923)** reads, "A community consists of a group or company of people living fairly close together in a more or less compact, contiguous territory, who are coming to act together in the chief concerns of life" (p.375). Likewise, a more recent definition by **MacQueen et al. (2001)** reads, "A group of people with diverse characteristics who are united by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (p.1929). The additional elements in this definition are shared values and dispositions. Other definitions are more "liberal". One only requires a common identity: "A body of individuals who have a sense of common identity" **(Slack 1998: p.361)**. The definition of **Park (1925)** is

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[3] For a good discussion, see Chiodelli and Baglione **(2014)**.
[4] In the U.S., the gated community is classified as a kind of "common interest housing" **(McKenzie 2003)**.

interestingly modern, as it stresses institutions: "A community is not only a collection of people, but it is a collection of institutions" (p.674). **Park's (1925)** definition would cover the gated development in Sofia, which **Smigiel (2014)** rejected as communitarian on the grounds that "residents do not consider themselves members of a community" and "many residents are even not interested in having closer social relations with their neighbours as the large number of conflicts and disputes among neighbours have shown it" (p.191). **Smucker's (1960)** study on the definitions of the meaning of a community is highly interesting for he singled out the role of communities, among other roles, as "focal points of providing services" (p.274), which can be conveniently be used by those who stress the gated communities as providers of local shared goods.

The above sample of definitions accommodate a continuum of communities (which may or may not be shared accommodation space) ranging from a disorganized body of individuals, families, or groups on one extreme to a hierarchical association of individuals, families,[5] or groups (as in the case of a monastery or a student hostel) on the other. The commonality is that members of a community "live close together" – not necessarily in a geographical sense, but on social terms that not only convey a sense of belonging and shared/joint ownership, but also include sufficiently regular communication and even the sharing of life and basic values. Communication, formal or informal is a salient feature of any community. This 20$^\text{th}$ Century German (Jürgen Habermas) communicative dimension of a community *transcends* the 19$^\text{th}$ Century German (Ferdinand Tönnies) Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft distinction – between what is usually translated as "community" (i.e., a natural, kin,

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[5] Some hold that communities are not families, as membership in the former join them voluntarily. See for instance **Beauchamp (1989), Brown (2007), Burt (1991),** and **Galston (2007)**.

work, and place-based fellowship that includes personal social interactions and the roles, values, and beliefs based on such interactions) and "association" (i.e., a relationship defined and constrained by law alone in the form of indirect interactions, impersonal roles, formal values, and beliefs based on such interactions).  In other words, such relationships require no "natural/communal" bonds to sustain them, without which there could be no multinationals!

Fundamental to communication, informed by Raymond Williams' Keywords (1976), is the social phenomenon that the term, "gated community," IS a "keyword".  Yet, it is one that is seldom, if ever, used as the name for a development!  The expression has "signification" **(Williams 1976: p.21)**.  It is always used by outsiders, either scholars or commentators, be they friends or foes, and from a third party point of view.  It is rarely used by residents living inside the gated complex.  As succinctly put by Williams, keywords have significant binding and indicative value: "binding words in certain activities" and "indicative words in certain forms of thought" **(1976: p.15)**.

Furthermore, as **Williams (1976: p.76)** and **Harris (1989: p.12)** pointed out, the keyword, "community," "seems never to be used unfavourably." Indeed, **Wark (1999)**, as quoted in **Dudgeon et al. (2002)**, compared this term to "motherhood" and argued that (p.269) "Community is something of a 'motherhood' term in Australian political culture, conjuring up images of a small town life where everybody knows everybody and there's always someone special to lend a helping hand." Williams' keywords are also singular terms, but "gated community" is a compound one.  The representation of a "gated development" as a "gated community," rather than a "gated association" (which is more descriptive of the development when it was newly-occupied), has its own sign (hope?) values, which this paper hopes to develop further below.

While a gated development does not necessarily produce a community, a gated community, as characterized in the introduction, is a community

because its residents have, beyond their private dwellings, a specific well-insulated and delineated *common place* within which *face-to-face* (i.e., bodily, rather than virtual) communications can occur. A mere association *ex ante* based on an agreed-upon legal relationship, as specified in the incorporation document or deed of mutual covenant, may become, due to communicative interactions, a true community *ex post* or a place-based fellowship upon the formation of personal networks. "The Dunbar's Number" of 150 should be large enough to include some within sight next door along the wall as friends, thus perhaps advancing one step towards community building. This is so, as most communities, other than those based on strong religious beliefs, can only succeed through time, during which shared experiences are sufficient to act as the cement that binds individuals together. In this connection, normative policy recommendation (bearing in mind the title of this journal) calls for some policy recommendation "possibilities" on the "implications" planning scholars have sought to identify.

The potential communicative value of this type of community is greater than that of the average un-gated community in that the former pools people together within a well-defined physical space.

Surely, the above submission can be disputed by those who hold that a 'true' community is an organic, involuntary and emergent property of human propinquity that necessarily involves non-exclusive membership (i.e., it does not exclude because in some sense it cannot). That is, there can be no exclusion on grounds of conscious selection of desired/desirable traits (q.v. anti-discrimination laws). By implication, therefore, the gated community movement is necessarily restricted to a 'false/artificial' form of community precisely because it seeks to exclude what, in a 'true'' community cannot be excluded EXCEPT on the occasion of gross violation of communal norms – at which point arrest, trial, punishment from the slap on the wrist through, at the extreme of treason or sedition, physical exclusion via exile or death. In a sense what we have here, in the gated community movement and its critics is, at a

somewhat smaller-horizoned scale, a variant of the problem of secession. Their philosophical challenge is: how can any organized social entity survive if whole fractions of it, whenever and however they wish, can choose to cut themselves out/off from the 'parent' whole?

That leads on to the derivative possibility/probability that in normal usage 'community' entails the idea of a naturally emergent nexus of more or less integrated and interlinked sub-communities (q.v. **Edmund Burke's (1993)** arguments as to what a 'state' exists to nurture and protect). From an argument of that sort, there then is a further objection to the gated community, namely that its formal properties as derived from its creators intentions are corrosive of this more 'normal' community.

A response to this what we may call a naturalist or Burkean challenge is that the exercise of the freedom of association, particularized as subsidiarity in local provision of shared goods, needs to be balanced by an awareness of the values of solidarity, something which are elaborated in subsequent passages. More specific factors that bring the gated community under attack are discussed below.


**Factors of gated communities that attract criticism**

The gated community as a planning concept is contentious. Its vertical form and "bohemian terraces" have been posited as alternatives to suburban living in Australia (**Davison 2006**). **Flint (2006)** identified a UK gated community as a means by the well-to-do to segregate themselves. "The actions of affluent populations also undermine community cohesion. At the extreme, gated community and some homeowner developments use wealth requirements, covenants and restrictions on lifestyle to exclude the majority of the population from access, although explicit racial barriers are illegal" (p.179). Likewise, **Orton (2006)** argued (p.253):

Gated communities occupied by middle class people can be seen as separating their occupants from contact with different social groups, creating "havens of social withdrawal" and contributing to the creation of "time–space trajectories of segregation" (Atkinson and Flint, 2004, p.875).

**Whalen (1996)** connected the US gated communities with "Fortress capitalism-a system with declining fortunes for all but a minority who seek protection behind walled and gated communities-would be the unavoidable product of a return to laissez-faire." (p.161) **Kohn (2002)** assumed that it always "exacerbates existing inequalities" (p.296) in the U.S. **Berman (2013)**, in launching a pluralist defence against universalist values, passed a condescending categorical remark on this form of living: "…respond to such encounters with the Other by retreating to a gated community and trying to lead a hermetically-sealed existence" (p.673). **Strow and Strow (2013)** posited rich gated communities as the archetypal opposite to poor, large public housing projects when discussing the definition that a neighbourhood is a society. The characterisation by **Baires, De Freitas**, **and Pedrazzini (2003)** of gated communities in Spain was negative, as they:

…create a double dynamic of social exclusion on one hand and an enclosed sense of "community," on the other. The rise of the gated community is attributed primarily to post civil-war violence and the populations' perceptions thereof. Both gated communities and urban violence are people's reactions to global economic and social changes, resulting in the development of an urbanism of fear and in increasingly fragmented and socially divided cities.

A body of pejorative vocabulary against gated communities has been built up in academia. Some even call it a "punitive city," a "fitting exemplar of the segregative, security-oriented society" **(Lynch 2001: p.91)**, "city of fear" (**Low 2003**) or even "evil paradises" **(Davis and Monk 2008 eds. 2007)**. The gated community has a very poor representation in fiction **(Burke 2001)** and scholars who favour contractual communities make sure that these communities not to be treated as necessarily gated.[6] Empirical inquiry is useful for putting things in context. While **Thuillier (2012)** did not find gated communities helping suburban residents in Argentina, **McKenzie (2003)** did find a process of trickle-down occurring in the U.S.

> There was a time when CIDs were rare and primarily for the rich, but the past 30 years have seen this form of "trickle-down privatization" spread rapidly through much of the upper third of the income distribution (pp.205-206).

In USA, **Le Goix and Vesselinov (2013)** found that gated communities did not always de-stabilise property prices. **Addington and Rennison (2015)** found that gated communities, diverse in social terms, experienced fewer burglaries than non-gated developments.

Some empirical studies have been misleading. **Atkinson and Smith (2012: p.161)** asserted in the abstract of their paper that "studies continue to record high levels of fear in gated developments, and highly gendered risks of violence continue to be a part of the social reality of the segregated neighbourhood." Yet, their studies were limited to 50 news reports of murders committed inside gated communities without reference to those committed outside. They also admitted that "we are able to say little about the comparative geography of violence inside and

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[6] See, for instance, **Moroni (2014)**.

outside communities of similar affluence, given the nature of the data" (p.165).

Scholars have focused either on the social implications of the physical/mental gated community **(Gould and Sutton 2002; Douglass, Wissink, and Kempen 2012)** or its institutional/or club goods nature and/or settings **(Wu and Webber 2004; Lai 2006; Mycoo 2006; Yu and Yang 2008; Hirt, and Petrović 2011; Cséfalvay and Webster 2012; Polanska 2013; Moroni 2014; Zhu and Simarmata 2015)**, but have rarely dealt with its community (stakeholders) aspect, as the term embodies. An excellent exception is the work by **Rogerson et al. (2010)**.

Gating in itself cannot be a valid ground for any social criticism, as invariably all property units, residential or otherwise, are gated. While security is a typical selling point (often in a context of a real need advocated by experts against anti-social behaviour) for gated development **(Zonneveld 2001; Landman and Schönteich 2002; Smart and Smart 2003; Wu and Webber 2004; Landman 2004; Landman and Liebermann 2005; Landman 2008; Asiedu and Arku 2009; Landman 2010, 2013; Almatarneh and Mansour 2013; Tedong et al. 2014; Yau 2014)**, exclusivity *per se* is also not a very good sufficient reason for criticism unless the institution of private property is rejected. It could be argued that in terms of physical design-seeking to restrict access to a residence, a gated development can be considered a step forward in the direction of securing exclusivity (often resulting in segregation) than land use zoning in general or *cul-de-sac* planning in particular.

Then, what is problematic about a gated community being a bona fide community? Two factors canvassed below merit further and better research.


*The impersonal social barrier*

First, the modern gating of housing is more than merely physically installing, shutting, and locking the door of a house located at the end of a well-wooded cul-de-sac or flat on any floor of a downtown tower block. The way gating uses modern labour-saving technology seems, more often than not, highly impersonal and cold. The postman cannot come to the door to deliver and have a chat, children from the "outside" cannot go trick-or-treating for candy on Halloween, and the imagery of the romantic lover singing below the verandah above a public street is out of the question. The physical barriers of a gated community minimize the need to hire doormen, porters, or watchmen who may exercise a degree of personalized face to face interaction with the outside world. They have been replaced by security guards on a short term hire and do not have time to familiarize with all residents.

In extreme cases, even guards are completely replaced by machines so that not only strangers and visitors, but any member of the community who forgets the password or loses his/her access card, can be locked out of the property.[7] Privacy and solitude in the absence of active face-to-face dialogue, lamentably found to be significant in the case of capitalist Hong Kong by **Wang and Lau (2013:p.17),**[8] may degenerate into quietism and melancholic isolationism until one escapes into virtual communications via the web or flees to work out of the gate.

The communication between the world outside and the community inside the gate tends to become faceless, reminding us of the tactic used

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[7] See a complaint by **Ruggeri (2007)**.

[8] "He (an interviewee) said, the ad-vantage of living in a monotonously looking high-rise building is the ability for the resident to "disappear completely and unnoticeably" into the building and "be secluded from the rest of the community at once"; in this way, one achieves "privacy" by being lost in an identity-less setting. This conversation re-minded the authors of the simile with a person attached to a mobile phone number, once the phone is switched on, the person is connected with the rest of the world. Once it is switched off, the person disappears immediately without a trace from the world. In a metaphorical sense, living in a high-rise building gives an individual person protection against intrusion, and privacy in the same way as the mobile phone." **(Wang and Lau 2013, p.17 (Brackets author's))**

by modern terrorists to threaten the world.  A gated community can resemble a high-security prison in physical appearance and atmosphere. This feature is not unique to gated communities, but is true for all gated developments that have no religious symbol or sign that can effectively communicate with those physically outside.  The next factor is probably far more significant.

*The significance of a new place name*

Furthermore, the tendency of such developments to assume *new names* rather than street numbers means plugging *new places* into an area. Such novel place names are not gradual adoptions, but rather sudden bursts into existence in the mental map of the wider communities that engulf them.  This could well be the most significant novel *spatial* phenomenon of modern gated communities: their names serve as powerful verbal communication symbols, in addition to evoking some moral expectations of "the otherness" **(Pow 2007)**.

Unlike religious, civic, or political buildings with their usual symbols and signs, that such names come to mind as *new places* can create a sense of unnatural unfamiliarity.  Unlike ordinary new towns or shopping malls (**Chiodelli and Moroni 2015**), these new residences cannot be easily explored by the public once they are occupied.  In a way, the public can be said to be dispossessed from its mental ownership of the landscape of the original location that has been transformed into a gated place.  An ordinary place is more discoverable on foot to the outside world than a gated community, which is not only faceless and unhospitable, but also almost unknowable except through real estate agents as intermediaries. This suddenly implanted thing[9] can create bad mutual feelings, as the

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[9] The classic landed estate with its gates and high walls from which villagers (unless employed by the 'big house') were excluded and which they could not 'explore' or 'get to know' is different from a modern gated development because the former belonged to an old social milieu and often existed since time immemorial.

new place is not open to all and tends to be more self-serving than most places, even if it looks very nice from the outside – unless planning conditions require making some of its facilities available for public use. Whether it is the case that the nicer and more elegant it appears from the outside, the worse it is perceived by the general public is an interesting question.

A gated development as such is surely a win-lose solution to development, as the gain of the occupant of the development comes at the expense of the wider public.


## Promoting subsidiarity and solidarity in gated communities

In any case, such a situation is not necessarily pessimistic if one remembers that a gated community is, as explained in the last analysis, a community rather than a collection of isolated caged households *necessarily* ring-fenced by an unfriendly facade, although gated buildings that resemble the latter do exist. Given the growing sensitivity to the potential or actual coldness of its physical barriers; the inconvenience these barriers pose to their own members, and the adverse social impact on the district in which such a community is located, a gated community can surely do something to ameliorate the tension and even transform it into a win-win situation. After all, there is a natural tendency for human innovation to convert challenges into opportunities. At Kits Point, Vancouver, "A fully integrated mixed-use neighbourhood…has slowly evolved without overt city bureaucratic decisions" (**Lai and Lorne 2014: f.n.14**).

The principle of subsidiarity has been seen as relevant for a discussion on the habitat of a gated community **(Roriman, Webster and Landman 2001; Brunetta and Moroni 2012)**. Subsidiarity is a social principle that requires a higher order in a hierarchy to serve, enable, and empower rather than dominate, frustrate, or usurp any role proper to a lower one.

Another way to state this is that whatever can be done more efficiently by a smaller body should be allowed.

This suggestion raises two important questions. The first is that since a gated development is a manifestation of the principle of subsidiarity in that it allows individual households to arrange for themselves their own supply of local public/shared goods **(Webster and Le Goix 2004)** rather than relying on a local government or the general taxpayer, would a concern for interacting with the community outside the wall or fence negate this principle? A good reply to this is that subsidiarity is not an absolute value and should be compatible with the value of solidarity (i.e., an affective concern for the good of the wider community). In terms of private property rights, the right to exclusively use a resource or asset includes the right to not exclusively use it (**Lai 2014**), especially when a degree of non-exclusivity can enhance the property's value. An average university campus is a good example of this.

The second question is whether the governance of a gated community permits or enables this to happen. Often, some developers maintain control of the ultimate governance of their gated developments by means of contract and/or retaining a majority share of the development. This prohibits individual property owners from forming their own management organizations to manage their own communities. While one motivation of this is to conserve the image of the development to protect the goodwill of the developer, to which not all minority shareholders will object, there can be a financial motive to retain control of the management of property as a source of income.

Here four principles of planning (or re-planning) for gated communities are worth considering by regulators, developers, and gated community households. These principles, in the tenor of **Rogerson et al. (2010)** rather than **Wang and Lau (2013)**, are not exhaustive, but conducive to avoiding a win-lose solution, and will hopefully arrive at a win-win outcome. Together, they respect the notions of private property,

subsidiary, and solidarity. They also foster the public's acceptance of gated developments as community anchors.

First principle, it is undesirable from a social solidarity point of view to use unfriendly and overtly military designs or materials involving barbed wires and warning signs. Pre-existing buildings should be retained and existing materials reused to demonstrate a sense of continuity.

Second principle, it is desirable to retain watchmen from the points of view of private security, valuation and good social interfaces with the wider community. They should also be permanent, rather than ad-hoc, hires.

Third principle, it is also desirable from a social solidarity point of view to design and make available some of a gated community's spaces and facilities for the general public. Such places should not be cosmetic or treated as reluctant offerings, but should help contribute to the preservation and rediscovery of the heritage of the wider district. A useful communicative means is to have an interpretation room or at least some information panels that retell the history of the development in relation to the wider community.

Fourth principle, the practice of contracting out to its developer a gated community's freedom to reform its own governance, subject to some basic constitutional principles to protect its integrity of the estate, should be outlawed.

## Case studies

The pioneer study on gated development by **Wang and Lau (2013)** identified for Hong Kong three "tiers" of gating: 1) racial segregation zoning on The Peak **(Lai and Yu 2001; Lai et al. 2011; Lai and Kwong 2012)**, 2) development on the Mid-Levels District, and 3) the rest of Hong Kong. This classification is a convenient one, but ignores the far less conspicuous, but far more socially and legally exclusive, residential

enclave along Big Wave Bay Road and Shek O Road **(Lai and Kwong 2013)**. Their study points to the need for case studies.

The four case studies selected are all high-rise housing property developments in a Chinese cultural setting. They were selected [10] because they were already iconic by the time they were first offered for sale on the market. All have resident clubhouse facilities and other amenities. Interestingly, they all have "foreign names" in English. Built and designed at different periods, the technology of gating and integration with the wider community varies. The first case is a dissimilar referent, while the two others are the typical modern gated development of the same genre under severe criticism.

### *Kornhill*

Kornhill is a major private residential estate in Hong Kong that is associated with the Mass Transit Railway Corporation's (MTRC) Island Line joint venture development. The property acquired its name from a Taikoo Sugar manager, Ferdinand Korn, whose company residence, a red brick house, was built on a spur of Mount Parker, the second tallest mountain on Hong Kong Island, and terraced to form the site of this development.

Kornhill consists of 42 "twin tower blocks" of residential flats ranging from 20 to 34 storeys built in a linear fashion in three phases along three roads named as "streets, an office block on a commercial podium, a hotel (now serviced residential complex), and a car park in a separate commercial podium." The two podia are connected to the Taikoo MTR station deep underground. A substantial portion of Kornhill's resident facilities, including a clubhouse equipped with two open air swimming pools, tennis courts, and in-house facilities, are located outside the tower blocks.

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[10] The selection of the second case was made in light of the findings from a comprehensive study of the degree of the gating of 66 major comprehensively planned developments built since 1990.

Completed and first occupied between 1985 and 1987 and visited by British PM Margaret Thatcher, who planted a tree on its premises, Kornhill belongs to the first generation of Hong Kong's gated developments. Its gating has been limited to the main entrance of each residential tower block. This consists of a glass door that is controlled by a buzz-in security system mounted on a planter, a system commonly found in residential and commercial towers. The door and the lobby are watched by a security guard. This guard, an employee of a security company that has won the contract to oversee the estate's security, is familiar with the residents and keeps records only of those visitors who remain in a unit for interior decoration and minor works. Not until three years ago was gating introduced to the two phases of Kornhill's clubhouse. The iron gate entrances at Phase I and glass door entrances to Phase 2 of the club house can only be opened by an annually renewed, upon payment of fees, membership card.

Although proprietors are legally entitled to evict developer property managers before forming individual "incorporated owners," they have allowed the MTRC to be the sole manager for the Kornhill's residential component. All residential facilities are located outside the clubhouse area and, while on private land, they are open to the public without a specific time limit, although there is no legal requirement for this.

The fire escape staircases have exits that are not gated and anyone who gains access to the block can walk from one floor to another without interruption. The three roads that surround the residential towers are public and served by light buses. The car parks have paid visitor parking spaces.


*Leighton Hill*

This site was a World War II battlefield defended by 3 Coy of the HKVDC and the Rajputs. It featured a vast system of air raid tunnels dug into it

and became a zone for government staff quarters and barracks ("Harcourt Place") after the war until 1997.  The whole site, commanding views of the Happy Valley Race Course to the west and Caroline Hill area to the east, was sold by the government to a developer on the condition (as specified in the land contract) that part of the former barracks (where Elliot House and part of Bremar House once stood) would be developed as a government community hall and the remainder (where the rest of Bremar House and Collinson House were situated) an open space to be opened to the public 24 hours a day.  The developer erected eight high rise residential towers and gated the development, but has faithfully made this well-designed and managed space available to the public.  The open spaces in other gated developments required by planning conditions and/or lease terms to be opened to the public were often designed as hanging and secret gardens **(Lai et al. 2007; Lai 1999)**, so that the public may not even know of their existence.


### Sky Tower, The Arch

Sky Tower, The Arch, is part of a huge hotel/commercial/residential complex built near the old Jordan Road bus terminal/ferry on the West Kowloon Reclamation area, which itself is part of the Hong Kong airport rail link built project, built and run by the MTRC.  Seventy-seven storeys tall and completed for occupation in 2006, The Arch was named after the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

This development is managed by the MTRC and its joint venture developer, although its proprietors have exercised their statutory rights to form their own owners' corporation.  Compared to the Kornhill, The Arch is far "more gated," as all of its residential facilities are segregated from the public road network.  A resident would need to pass three gates from the shopping mall before s/he can access a lift to reach his/her flat or any other residential facility, which is completely closed to the general public.  To reach one's unit from the car park, one has to pass through

five gates.  Access through the gates is by means of a resident card with a photograph and other personal details, which may be checked by security guards at the lift lobby.  A resident who fails to produce his/her card needs to obtain security clearance, which occasionally leads to disputes.

There is no visitor parking space for this development.

### *Tomson Riviera*

Situated in Pudong along the river bank opposite the Bund in Shanghai, Tomson Riviera was built on former farmland and is a popular place for expatriates who work in Shanghai and receive company housing allowances.

This development is like Kornhill in that it consists of a group of tower blocks, with each having a ground lobby staffed by security guards.  It is also like The Arch in terms of the hurdles one has to clear to reach its residential section.  From the first gate at the common entrance to the domestic doorway there are four gates controlled by access cards and fingerprint scanners.

Of the four estates, Tomson Riviera's level of security and privacy is the highest.  Each floor has only one unit and can only be reached by a lift controlled by a personal elevator pass.  The door of the unit's fire escape can only be opened from inside the unit so that no one can walk up or down the staircase and enter another level.  Within the estate, residents have opportunities to interact with other residents on the escalators, the ground lift lobbies of the towers, in other common areas, the club facilities, and the car park.  Therefore, face-to-face contact is not completely inhibited and residents are not in any sense under solitary confinement.

All four estates are located in societies where civil disorder has been largely absent in recent decades. Furthermore, the first three cases are located in a global city in which the budgetary resourceful state has adequate resources to provide adequate local open space and community facilities. Therefore, none exhibits any obvious martial law atmosphere, although The Arch hires a few Gurkhas as security personnel. Principle 1 is thus not violated. All cases have guards rather than mere security machines and therefore Principle 2 is not violated. As far as the Hong Kong cases are concerned, the law empowers owners to throw out the developer property manager though this does not happen. Principle 4 is not violated either. What about Principle 3?

The major common finding of the four cases is that their residents' face-to-face interactions are not inhibited, but their designs assign no value to providing private spaces or facilities for residents to interact with the general public on their premises. The major distinction between Kornhill and the other three is that the former supplies the wider district, Quarry Bay, with a recreational facility that is within walking distance and far more relaxed than Tomson Riviera in terms of security. Unlike The Arch or Tomson Riviera, the usual criticisms against gated communities should not apply here. Leighton Hill is definitely less permeable than Kornhill, through which the public can access the Tai Tam Country Park, but is far superior to The Arch or Tomson Riviera for having provided the public with a well-wooded open space on private land. Yet, none of the cases exploits the rich heritage of its locality and all are architectural novelties rather than successors to a tradition. Kornhill has no interpretation room to tell the history of Korn or its historical connection to Taikoo Sugar or Docks. The wartime air raid tunnels below Leighton Hill were simply sealed up rather than integrated with the open space along Wong Nai Chung Road as a possible form of heritage conservation. Sky Tower has no mention of its relationship of the West Kowloon Reclamation as part of the last landmark colonial public work the replacement airport project "PADS".

Another lesson learnt is that while institutional design is always flexible, architectural design may make a gating drive irreversible.  It is not technically difficult for Kornhill to become more gated, but it is doubtful if owners would pay for the extra costs relative to the extra exclusivity. Nor would it be technically hard for Tomson Riviera to be less physically segregated in relation to the neighbourhood of Pudong, though whether the owners would be amenable to this is another question.  It would not hard for The Arch to be less gated but that would hardly make it a better amenity to the public, as it is basically a tower of units, situated on a site which is itself a vast traffic island surrounded by trunk routes.  The exclusive restaurant and club house (with a swimming pool) up in this tower can be seen as tie-in rather than choice goods.  The question of reversibility should be a factor with significant institutional design implications at the planning stage.  In contrast, the potential for Leighton Hill is great, as its lease terms require the protection of all wartime tunnels.


**Conclusion**

Under attack by social critics who tend to be cynical and accusatory, gated communities are more optimistically received by neo-liberals who take pains to point out their diversity and reasons for existence.  In one sense, the critical stance against gated communities is a professional one that targets some phenomena and presents them in socially pathological or dichotomous terms to arouse public condemnation.  This happened with the so-called population explosion during the 1960s, the question over high-density living during the 1970s (**Lai 1993**), the problem of "urban decay" during the 1970s and 1980s, and the plan-market "alternative" throughout the Cold War.  On the other hand, this labelling exercise was different because any discussion of it would not be complete without addressing the notion of a community with a place name and, hence, face-to-face communication in interpersonal and

spatial terms and the "gated mind" (**Brunn 2006**) – or, more correctly, the gated heart.

In any case, it is entirely wrong to assume that an occupant of a gated residential community is completely socially segregated and loses all face-to-face contact with the outside world, as s/he still needs to go out to learn, work, shop, meet friends, consult a doctor, worship, etc.  Such an assumption of social isolation is a general impression left by critics of gated communities.  **Eitzen (2004),** while saying that "gated communities wall the residents off physically and socially from "others," which adds to the stigmatizing literature on the gated community, quickly added that "even in non-gated communities, we isolate ourselves.  One in three Americans has never spent an evening with a neighbor" (p.13).  Therefore, the issue is not gating per se, but the mindset behind it.  Yet, the heart, like the mind, can change and become larger.  Economists have found that such change is pivotal to innovation **(Lorne 2009, 2011; Kovacevik 2013).** Otherwise, what is the point of raising social awareness about potential and actual problems of gated communities?

Gating, in terms of property rights, can be simply seen as one of exclusivity and gated communities often have a background of social or political instability (as in South Africa).  In stable societies like the U.S., the phenomenon of gating is one of the private supply of communal facilities in competition and/or in collaboration with those offered by local governments **(Glasze et al. 2004)**.  This essay draws attention to the potential for social inclusivity of this form of life by surveying the various definitions of a community, as informed by the traditions of Tonnies and Habermas.  Such inclusivity is possible according to the proposition that a development has a place name with significant sign values, particularly in light of a "gated community" being a "keyword" that continues to absorb much intellectual effort.  The land use policymaker cannot afford to fall into the "structural trap of informed inactivity".  **(Williamson and Byrne 1979).**

Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. The gating of multiple-title private properties can help build or negate a community. In other words, they have a large institutional *existential* possibilities[11] of becoming increasingly hostile or friendly to the neighbourhood, the greater community. The four Chinese case studies hopefully serve to demonstrate some such possibilities. It is in this context that a discussion of a "gated community" as a globalizing phenomenon is particularly meaningful, as the term in planning parlance bundles the physical reality of gating with the social connotation of a community, a "keyword". It is with faith in the ability of a community to reshape itself that two social principles, subsidiarity and solidarity, are canvassed in this essay with a view to promote better social integration of gated communities with the rest of the world.

**Lasch (1975)** compared the family to a "haven in a heartless world". Having a home as an observable place, like a gated development, is not always the same as having a family as a sanctuary. A development is not a community just as a zoo is not a farm **(Lai and Ho 2015)**. However, as Chesterton said, "this whole strange world is homely because in the heart of it there is a home" **(de Silva 1990: p.63)**. A change of heart or mindset is the heart of the matter.

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[11] According to Heidegger, possibility means hope.

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