The roots and fruits of gated communities in Lagos, Nigeria: social sustainability or segregation?

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ABSTRACT: Gated communities (GCs) represent an emergent urban pattern in many cities of the world and a key debate facing an urbanising globe. This study examined the sustainability potential and possible segregating tendencies of GCs, with a view to ascertaining their future role in the urban fabric of Lagos, Nigeria. The paper explored the 'roots' and 'fruits' of gated communities, reviewing the literature on their forms, typologies, driving factors, and contemporary debates on whether this increasing privatisation of collective spaces enhances neighbourhood cohesion or encourages social segregation. The study used a case-study approach to collect primary data through field observations and qualitative in-depth interviews with eighteen (18) residents of four (4) purposively selected gated estates out of twenty (20) estates identified from a preliminary mapping exercise. The qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. Findings show that while GCs exhibited some common features, there were distinctions in terms of both the environment and perception of the residents with respect to gated living. There appeared to be prospects for the viability of gated living as a sustainable urban form in Lagos. The paper concluded on a perspective of the potential of gating being harnessed to enhance social sustainability.

Conference Theme: Sustainability and Urbanism.
Keywords: gated communities, gated living, housing estates, segregation, social sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Gated communities represent an emergent urban pattern in many cities of the world and one of the key debates facing an urbanising globe in terms of: *the response to the growing consumption of a fortified lifestyle by urban dwellers.* Although there is no unanimously agreed definition of gated communities (GCs), most explanations revolve around housing developments that restrict public access, through the use of gates, barriers, walls and fences; or through the employment of security staff or CCTV systems to monitor access. Atkinson and Blandy (2005) suggest that the central feature of GCs is the collective legal and social framework which forms the constitutional conditions and legal terms under which residents subscribe to the occupation of these developments, in combination with their unique physical features. They define gated communities as: walled or fenced housing developments, to which public access is restricted, characterised by legal agreements which tie the residents to a common code of conduct and collective responsibility for management, thus emphasizing the governance dimension of GCs. Blakely (2007) conceptualizes gated communities as residential developments with restricted access to non-residents, such that spaces normally considered public have been privatized, thus focusing on the public – private space dialectic. Blandy (2007) suggests that the privatization of public space and the fortification of the urban realm, in response to the fear of crime, have contributed to the increase in GCs. Studies have confirmed increased global spread in the drive to redefine territory and protect neighbourhood boundaries across communities of diverse income levels (Webster et al 2002). Increasing populations live behind gates and fences in residential spaces that were previously integrated into the larger shared public realm (Caldeira 2000; Leisch 2002; Landman 2004). This emergent urban pattern has however assumed varied contextual forms in its historical and global manifestations. While in some cases it is a thematic style, in others it serves utilitarian purposes of security and defence, or may just be a transient fashion or fad.

Given the global trend and associated academic interest, this study examined the sustainability potential vis-à-vis the possible segregating tendencies of GCs, with a view to ascertaining their future role in the urban fabric of Lagos, Nigeria. Following Bagaeen and Uduku (2010), the paper explored the 'roots' and 'fruits' (or 'thorns') of gated communities, reviewing the literature on their forms, driving factors, typologies, and contemporary debates on whether this increasing privatisation of collective spaces enhances neighbourhood cohesion and residential integration or encourages social exclusivity, segregation and fragmentation (Manzi and Smith-Bowers 2005). It entered the discourse on the sustainability potentials of gated communities especially within the cities of the global south, using Lagos as a case-study.

Although there is a lack of comprehensive data on the locations, sizes, populations, forms and characteristics of gated communities in Lagos, their increasing emergence is apparent (Uduku 2010). They are gradually assuming the role of a major expression of the mega-city's urban growth. The pervading state of insecurity in Nigeria – including bomb blasts and kidnappings – makes the issue of GCs even more topical. The questions arise: *What are the 'roots' of gated communities?* Do GCs in Lagos represent a new trend in modernity? Are they emerging

because people can no longer trust civil institutions or the government to ensure their economic and physical security? What forms do they assume and what informs these? Are gated communities driven by security and privacy needs, status and prestige motives, or the pursuit of style and fashion? Do they offer the *'fruits' of sustainability* or the *'thorns' of segregation* embedded in *'roses' of exclusivity*?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. The Roots: history and driving forces of gated communities

Evidences suggest that the trend of gated communities can be linked to global historic patterns of enclosure. Denyer (1978) and Oliver (1987) provide examples of historic 'fortress' settlements in diverse traditional settings. Bagaeen and Uduku (2010) explore the social-historical and cross-cultural roots of gated settlements, ranging from walled hamlets to current American models and the new transformations of the gated concept in rapidly urbanizing settings in Asia and Latin America. The authors draw links between the historic gated homesteads and cities, and case studies of contemporary Western-style secure complexes. Citing archaeological evidence from the Nile River valleys, Mesopotamian kingdoms, and Greek and Roman territories, Blakely (2007) posits that gated cities or residential areas are as old as community building itself, and that in many parts of the world, the traditional concepts of controlled access, community ownership and private space predate the contemporary gated enclave. The Roman system of fortifying landed estates – abbeys, manor houses and castles – of the royal and wealthy subsequently became the pattern of settlement development in England and the rest of Europe. In the case of the United States, gated communities go back to the late 19th century era of the wealthy who built private streets to insulate themselves from the masses, but they remained a relative rarity until large master-planned communities emerged in the 1960s (Blakely and Snyder 1997). In the past two decades, increasing numbers of people globally are turning to gated communities (Genis 2007).

Contemporary driving factors for GCs identified in the literature fall into three broad interrelated categories: *security/privacy*, *status/prestige*, and *style/fashion*. Security refers to the real or perceived fear of the emergent middle-class and affluent regarding encroaching crime or 'contamination' from people of lesser socio-economic status. Psychologically and physically, many gated estates are assumed to be designed to protect residents from the fear of intruders. Bagaeen (2010) identifies fear and privacy as significant factors for GCs in the United States and South Africa. The latter context has in addition a long history of fortified towns such as Great Zimbabwe and a continuing fortification culture in rural homestead design (Landman 2004).

In Nigeria, the colonial precursor to contemporary gating was the government-reserved area (GRA), a fortified enclave of residences for the rich, ruling elite, which reflected the status-related factor. In the case of Lagos, Uduku (2010) analyses the typical generic forms of gated housing at individual and neighbourhood levels, linking the mushrooming of such 'armoured housing' and gated estates to security concerns. He notes that, except for the palaces of traditional rulers, which have historically had gates, the concept of separation from society by creating barriers and gates, is recent to urban life in southern Nigeria, where much of urban life was predicated on the interaction and association of residents, with the street as the site for these exchanges. The 'native' city had walled and exclusive residences only for chiefs and other dignitaries in traditional society, as had always been the case amongst the Yoruba, who have lineage links with the ancient Benin kingdom, noted for its walled city and residences. With the introduction of gated living, there has been a significant transformation of living space and work-life rituals for the urban residents.

Status-related motives include the perceived exclusivity and other attributes of social status that gated living can ascribe. Wu (2005) examines the *club realm* of consumption versus the *discourse of fear*. The former perceives the gated community as an exclusive members-only club; the latter as a fortress to exclude intruders. In terms of the *style-related motive*, Glasze (2005), reflecting on the economic and political organisation of GCs used the club goods theory to explain the potential attractiveness of GCs for developers, local governments, and residents. This theory interprets private neighbourhoods with their self-governing organisation as the creation of club economies with territorial boundaries. Allied to these broad driving factors is the ability and willingness to pay for the exclusivity and services that GCs provide. In addition, a relatively ready supply of subsidized land for developers to construct new estates and convert existing residential enclaves into GCs is a common contextual feature in many developed countries (Mckenzie 2005). In reality however, gated communities may not follow sharp class-based distinctions, but may be driven by a combination of these factors.

Roitman (2010) presents two broad classes of factors influencing the expansion of GCs: *structural* and *subjective*. *Structural causes* relate to: (1) globalisation of the economy, which leads to growing urban social inequalities, the processes of advancing social polarisation and an increase in foreign investments; and (2) more specific concerns about the withdrawal of the state from the provision of basic services, including security, leading to a rise in urban violence and the privatisation of security. Roitman also identifies five main *subjective causes* resulting from individuals' desires, interests, perspectives and opportunities, namely: increased fear of crime; a search for a better lifestyle; desire for a sense of community; a search for social homogeneity; and aspirations for higher social status and social distinction within particular social groups.

1.2. The Fruits: forms and types of gated communities

Gated communities assume diverse forms including for example, common interest developments (CIDs) in the United States, state-led private neighbourhoods in China, low to middle income condominiums in Asian cities, security villages and neighbourhood enclosures in South Africa, traditional gating in the Middle and Far East and enclaves for transnational elites in many developing countries. The common feature is usually that these are

privately managed residential enclaves. Gated communities include both new housing developments and older residential areas retrofitted with barricades and fences. They differ from apartment blocks or condominium buildings with security systems or in which a doorman controls public access to private spaces such as building lobbies or hallways. Gated communities by contrast preclude public access to roads, sidewalks, parks, open spaces and playgrounds – spaces that would otherwise have been open and accessible to all (Blakely 2007).

Conceptually, Newman's (1973) 'defensible space' ideas are often assumed to be a key theoretical basis for the emergence of GCs. It was Newman who first linked the prevention of urban decay to gating as a device that gives social control to residents over their environment. Other attempts at creating defensible space include: suburban areas with manual or electronic bars across private access roads and housing estates with buffer zones of lawns and cul-de-sacs, intentionally designed to exclude or deter access to non-residents. Although not creating obvious physical barriers, these moderated forms of physical separation of space ensure *de facto* spatial segregation (Webster et al 2002).

Dixon et al (2004) present a *seven-fold classification of gatedness* based on the following features: physical barriers (walls, gates, doors, trees/hedges/greenery, speed bumps); technological barriers (surveillance cameras and videos, security alarms, access via swipe card or the intercom); 'manned' surveillance (security patrols and the 'front desk' barrier); signs and markings; design features (narrowing or partly obscuring entrances, colour or texture changes, walls, doors, gates with no handles or levers); natural surveillance (being observed by residents), and implicit signals (closed unmarked doors and gates).

Blakely (2007) identifies three main types of gated developments. *Lifestyle communities* are those in which gates and walls delineate areas for the pursuit of leisure activities and the protection of neighbourhoods, where local authorities could no longer adequately protect them from various forms of urban violence. Living in such GCs often involves a certain lifestyle choice, in which the wealthy and upper-middle class combine resources to enjoy leisure and maintain local security. The *prestige/elite community* feeds on exclusionary aspirations and the desire to differentiate. Here, gates symbolize social status, prestige, distinction and some measure of security, especially on the social ladder. These include enclaves for the rich, famous or affluent, and executive home developments for the middle-income earners. In the third type – *security zone* – the fear of crime and intruding outsider is the prime motivation for defensive fortifications. In addition, by marking their boundaries and restricting access, residents try to build and strengthen the feeling and function of neighbourhood community safety. Rental and lower-income residents sometimes constitute a substantial portion of such gated communities.

Roitman (2010) identifies positive and negative consequences that the urban phenomenon of gated communities has provoked, analysing these according to the sphere they influence: spatial, economic, political and social. Positive *spatial effects* include the provision of services and infrastructure to areas formerly not well equipped and the creation of spaces with high environmental quality; while negative impacts include the closure of streets, the hindrance of emergency services, and fragmentation of urban space (Low 2003). Gated communities often encourage the use of private cars more than pedestrian mobility (Landman 2008). The *economic impacts* of GCs refer mainly to effects on housing and land markets and on the local economy through the creation of 'economic clubs' that provide more efficient services, collectively consumed by their residents. The presence of gated communities can however reduce property values in non-gated surrounding neighbourhoods (Le Goix 2005). The *political significance* of GCs relate to the enhancement of political participation and civil engagement within the community, and reduced responsibilities for local governments. The possibility of communal provision of services and shared consumption agreements following the economic theory of clubs may imply political and economic benefits (Webster 2001). On the contrary, some authors highlight the undemocratic character of GCs, in terms of the usually very intrusive covenants, conditions and restrictions, which dominate life inside a gated community (Blakely and Snyder 1997). *Social consequences* are probably the most often discussed effects within the literature on gated communities, especially the debate as to whether they encourage a sense of community or stimulate social segregation and tensions between the inside and the outside.

1.3. Social sustainability or segregation?
The increasing emergence of gated communities has engendered polarised views among housing researchers, consumers, built-environment professionals, governments, and urban planners. While some regard GCs as a new and stimulating transformation of urban space, others perceive them as an imminent social disaster. It is the availability of empirical evidence that may authenticate either of the claims in specific contexts (Le Goix 2005).

Protagonists of gated communities suggest that they are socially sustainable in terms of: the adequate provision of services and fair distribution of opportunities within the community; the existence of a strong sense of community; and a democratic and sometimes participatory system of private governance. Foldvary (1994) argues that GCs are more efficient in that they enhance the market's supply of collectively consumed goods in optimal quantities: the privatisation of local governance is seen as a more efficient way to achieve urban development. Also, Manzi and Smith-Bowers (2005) use the theory of club goods to explain gating as a response to both real and perceived issues of crime, vandalism and antisocial behaviour. It is suggested that gating can help to foster social cohesion in a neighbourhood by involving a wide spectrum of communities and income groups to create management vehicles which can: reduce crime, protect parked vehicles, increase safety and enhance the local environment by preventing unsolicited entry. Some groups have developed innovative ways of avoiding censure from local authorities, which in turn, has led to the evolution of cohesive, integrated communities of interest, which in evolving cities are particularly successful in delivering a serviced lifestyle that others want to buy into. The

authority for planning and management of space is thereby indirectly delegated to social groups, and is characterized by the supremacy of private governance arrangements over public regulations (Libertun 2007).

At the other extreme however, critics of gated communities refer to a broader segregating impact felt by those outside the gate, and the exclusion of the wider society from the opportunities available to those within the gates. They consider as debatable the notion of GCs being true communities, given their often stringent standards of conduct, extreme regulations, often mono-class and mono-cultural social structures, and the risk of increasing alienation. Gated communities – by alienating and polarising those who have been denied access – are therefore viewed as creating an extremely imbalanced social system with physical, financial and cultural boundaries. Gated communities are viewed as further examples of urban fortification leading to social exclusion and segmentation. From this perspective, the creation of exclusive communities will lead to the fragmentation of urban space raising many issues for urban planning and management, including the future shape of cities (Davis 1990). Goobler (2002) highlights the role of GCs in creating social divisions and perpetuating inequality. In the UK for example, the value of GCs has been challenged by planners who view them as exclusive, unnecessary and burdensome due to movement restrictions that they promote, especially when related to other key concerns such as freedom of access to the wider city, social inclusion and territorial justice (Atkinson and Blandy 2005; Minton 2002).
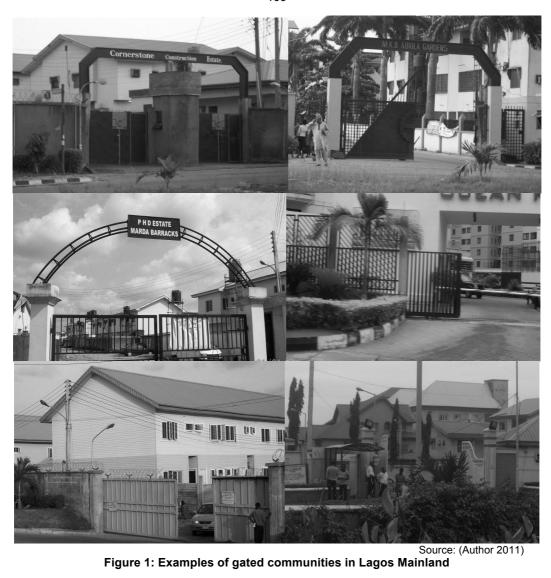
Low (2003) posits that gated communities can generate a number of unintended consequences, such as: creating a false sense of security in that crime still occurs behind the gates; creating insecurity by suggesting that people are not secure unless their homes are fortified; producing an increased fear of outsiders by those living inside the gates; and resulting in increased class-based segregation or social splitting. In addition, the rules governing gated communities (which buyers may not be aware of at the time of purchase) impose a form of social control on residents which leads to a relatively homogenous style of living. The increasing privatisation of collective spaces, spatial fragmentation, exclusion and political disengagement are also possible demerits (Glasze 2003). Blandy and Lister (2005) posit that residents' rights and responsibilities are confined to legalities, rather than extending to a commitment to enhance social networks either within the development or in adjacent wider communities. Blandy (2006) contends that the argument that private urban governance may be an efficient way of delivering public goods often ignores the power relations and issues of exclusionary impact which GCs sustain.

It seems apparent from the literature that the preponderance of research has focused more on gated communities in the developed nations and to some extent Latin America. There has been limited research on this phenomenon in the Nigerian context. Notwithstanding the relatively rapid increase in the emergence of GCs in Lagos in the last two decades, no systematic data are known to exist on these. Given the city's peculiar historical and colonial antecedents, the emergence of gated communities in Lagos demands closer examination; hence this study.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHOD

This paper reports a pilot study of gated communities in Lagos. Preliminary mapping exercises suggest that GCs have become visible features on the mainland areas of Surulere, Ebute-Meta and Ikeja, as well as along the coastal suburbs of Ikoyi, Victoria Island and Lekki. Lekki peninsula is a sprawling seashore settlement that has in few decades transformed from a remote enclave of scattered villages to a hub of residential, commercial and religious land-uses. In the resolve to decongest Lagos metropolis, many housing estates have been developed, either by government or private developers. These constitute the context within which this study was conducted.

The study used a case-study approach to collect primary data by means of field observations and qualitative in-depth interviews with eighteen (18) residents of four (4) purposively selected gated communities out of twenty (20) estates identified from a preliminary mapping exercise in Lekki Peninsula and the Lagos Mainland (e.g. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 illustrate some examples of the identified gated communities). These were visited to ascertain that they fitted the definition of gated communities as residential developments which have a gate or other barrier across a primary access and which may also be surrounded by fences, walls or other natural or erected barriers. From the twenty (20) GCs, two private estates in Lekki (Victoria Garden City (VGC) and Goshen Estate) and two public estates on Lagos Mainland (Ebute-Metta & Ijaiye) were purposively selected for their representativeness and relative accessibility. Twelve (12) interviews were conducted in the latter part of 2010 with residents of the estates (three in each). Six of the interviews were with married couples, making the total number of interviewees to be eighteen (18) – nine males, nine females. In terms of their demographic characteristics, the interviewees ranged in age from late thirties to early seventies; three of them were retired, one widowed and two were single. Their socio-economic status ranged from lower-medium income to high income. Ten of the interviewees had children (up to teenage) who lived with them (either part-time or full-time). All interviews held in the participants' own dwelling and involved open-ended questions around issues such as: reasons for living in the gated estate; previous experience, expectations and problems of gated living; decision-making and governance issues among residents; relationships with surrounding communities; living again in a gated development; and perceptions around exclusivity or social segregation. The qualitative data were subjected to content analysis.

Source: (Author 2011)

Figure 1: Examples of gated communities in Lagos Mainland

Source: (Author 2011)

Figure 2: Examples of gated communities in Victoria Island and Lekki

3. FINDINGS

3.1. The case studies

Summarizing the qualitative data from the analysis of the case-studies, the Lekki estates were more exclusive than their Mainland counterparts, with vehicular entry gates and pedestrian gates manned by security guards, complemented with electronic security sensor. In addition to the physical fortification of the houses, other security measures included the use of security dogs, electrified fences, and armed response guards as a standard. The two estates on the Mainland had manually secured pedestrian gates, with vehicular entries manned by security guards with tally-control for non-residents. Residents were recognised by their car-tags or other forms of identity. All but the Ebute-Meta estate had secured individual gates to the residences fronting on to the road. The gated developments in Lekki could be described as the club democracy type, using Glaze's (2005) term.

Findings from the content analyses of the interviews are summarized as follows:

3.2. Distinction between the gated communities

While the GCs studied exhibited some common features, there were also clear distinctions in terms of their environment and residents' perceptions and views expressed with respect to experiences of gated living. This primarily was considered as a rational, utilitarian and defensible choice linked to the need for security, but in fewer cases based on the desire for status and privacy. A common denominator is the quasi-autonomous organizational structure of the GCs, as they operated in semi-independence of and supplementary role to local authority governance. The characters of the two public GCs on the Mainland broadly differed from the two private GCs in Lekki. Notions of class exclusivity and lifestyle distinction were stronger in the Lekki estates, where the social value of living in a gated community appeared to be more important than the security that it accords residents. Different types and levels of security existed in the estates studied. While the Lekki estates required authorized access at the main gate and had additional home security alarms, the Ijaiye estate was more freely accessible via the pedestrian gate. Individual occupants of apartment blocks erected further barriers at their entries. However the arrangement of the blocks in the Ebute-Meta estate was such that they could not be individually gated.

3.3. Gating and residential choice

Across the four estates, most interviewees reported that they were least motivated by the presence of gates in choosing to live in their GCs. Their decisions were based on such factors as location (including proximity to work places, children's schools, amenities or friends), privacy, familiarity with one or more neighbours, and services. What the residents of the two Lekki estates liked most were the convenience that living in such environments provided them with, in terms of paid-for services, the quiet neighbourhoods, shops and supermarkets in the vicinity, and the social atmosphere.

3.4. Future preferences for gated communities

All the interviewees in the two Lekki estates and few in the Mainland estates expressed strong likelihood of living in GCs in future if they moved from the current homes, thus demonstrating a strong preference for GCs. The major benefits of GCs that residents commented on were the unique services, sense of security and privacy that they offered, and not the mere existence of gates.

3.5. Gating, community and private governance

Interestingly, the public estates on the Mainland evidenced a stronger sense of community and involvement of residents in the governance of their estates than the private ones. The Ebute-Meta interviewees in particular expressed active participation in the affairs of the Estate Residents' Associations, which were guided by an established constitution and whose officers were democratically elected.

3.6. Gates and security

Despite residents' comments regarding the increased sense of security that gating features provided, there was consensus that they acted more as a deterrent than a barrier to access against intruders, although in all the cases, they were more than mere 'symbolic' forms. Two interviewees in the mainland estates illustrated this with examples of instances of burglary attempts around their neighbourhood, during which the presence of gates offered at least some psychological feeling of security. They believed that under most circumstances intruders would choose to enter a non-gated community rather than a gated one. The interviewees in the Lekki estates had no recollections of any major intrusions into their estates.

3.7. Exclusivity or segregation?

To the question of the possible perceptions that outsiders might hold that GCs encouraged social segregation, the general response of the Lekki interviewees was that even though it had never been a major consideration to them that living in such an environment could be viewed so negatively, now they could appreciate how outsiders might view it as exclusive, but they did not personally view it so. Generally they interpreted the term 'exclusivity' more as enjoying privacy and quietness than being elitist.

A more precise evaluation of either the social sustainability or segregating tendencies of the gated communities would probably have been derived by accessing the views of both residents and non-residents. Roitman (2005) posits that the segregationist process is bi-directional: both the residents and those outside GCs feel discriminated against. Notwithstanding this methodological limitation, the findings from this case-study appear to weigh more toward a positive view of the sustainability potentials of the gated communities, as discussed below.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed some differences across the GCs and in the motives and perceptions of residents. On one hand were strong notions of exclusivity; on the other was the primacy of security – in varied types and levels. Residents were essentially motivated to live in GCs for the pragmatic reason of security, as well as the exclusivity and other status-related benefits that such neighbourhoods afford. However, evidence of some form of club democracy gating in place within the middle-income estate of Ijaiye showed that the idea of the gated community may not necessarily be class exclusionary. Gating in this case increased the likelihood of residents getting to socialize, communicate and interact, since joint decisions were required regarding the maintenance of gates and other commonly shared services. Other aspects of gated living such as the close proximity of neighbours, working groups for communally-owned spaces and social events also resulted in neighbours getting to know one another better. However, any of these activities may equally bring about a rise in tension among residents, if there are opposing views about how such things should be managed. This perhaps explains the lower perception of sense of community expressed by the more economically advantaged residents of the private estates, which in addition, were administered by the property developers and maintenance managers, rather than a Residents' Association.

It is assumed that the question of social sustainability or segregation of gated communities is context-specific. Gated communities differ in evolution, forms, typologies, driving factors, and governance structures. It is therefore unrealistic to ascribe a collective label of 'sustainable' or 'non-sustainable' regardless of contextual specificities. The same standards of measuring sustainability applied to suburban GCs of the rich and affluent in the US or the exclusive retirement villages in New Zealand may not be appropriate for public housing gated neighbourhoods in the context of a developing country such as Nigeria. Despite the apparent limitation of this research, being a pilot study, which permits only tentative conclusions, the findings suggest that: gated communities may be beneficial, especially in emerging cities of developing countries, where micro-democracies have existed from pre-colonial times and have continued to proliferate since the colonial era. Moreover, the generally poor level of urban social and physical infrastructure may justify the situation where those who have the means, collectively seek for sustainable alternatives. In this case, the gated community is perceived more as a panacea for, rather than the cause of a substantively unsustainable system. In terms of governance, what LeGoix and Webster (2008) refer to as 'the fragmentation of urban governance' as seen from the perspective of writers in the West, is not necessarily applicable to the public GCs in Lagos, which evidenced a strong sense of communal, cooperative, participatory and effective governance and reflected the important role of community, the idea that the community has a voice.

A few recommendations also derive from this study. Gating is yet to generate significant debate regarding its spatial, social, economic or political implications in the context of Lagos. Architects, planners and other built environment stakeholders need to develop tools to better analyse gating. Housing and planning policies should begin to consciously address some of the concerns about the impact, sustainability, and macro-infrastructural needs of GCs. Strategic and pragmatic steps are required to better integrate GCs within existing urban infrastructure, however rudimentary these are, and to reflect more of the cultural and socio-economic attributes of their contexts. There is need to encourage public openness and debate of the demerits and merits of the gated community in order for the public and the media to enter into an unbiased dialogue about the issues these communities face and the fairness of their existence. A more participatory approach to the planning process, and active effort at community education via grassroots groups and local government initiatives, may prove valuable to obtaining meaningful contributions by residents and non-residents.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the sustainability potential and possible segregating tendencies of gated communities. It explored the evolution ('roots') and manifestations ('fruits') of gated communities in the context of Lagos. Despite the varied debate on these emergent gated and securitized developments, both sides of which were highlighted, findings from this pilot study suggest a positive view to the phenomenon in terms of its sustainability potential. While not denying the excluding capacity of the gated community, there appears to be beneficial prospects for the viability of gated living as a sustainable urban form in Lagos. These include its potential as a sustainable micro-community model in which service and infrastructure delivery and energy sourcing can become affordable and available at the neighbourhood level through the cooperative efforts of residents. Given the limited resources and in some cases the glaring absence of the impact of local authorities, private governance models such as residents' associations may fill the gaps: private solutions thus lessen the burden of urban management. This may help trigger developments in emerging neighbourhoods of other cities that have remained untouched by state provision. The evolution and spread of the gated community may be valid in fulfilling local community, service and security needs, perceived or real, which state and local governments have no willingness or resources to do. We may therefore tentatively conclude on a perspective of the potential of gating being harnessed for purposes of social sustainability. Further researches may focus on: differentiating the mix of features, housing typologies, locations and functions of gated developments, in order to respond better to the diverse needs of the communities they are to serve; analysing the effects of gated communities on existing and future urban form; and ascertaining and examining the perceptions of those outside of the gates.

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