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Entitled

GATED COMMUNITIES IN THE UAE FROM A SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY BARRIER TO A CATALYST

by

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Abstract

Gated communities are commonly defined as residential areas with restricted access, where commonly public spaces are privatized. The main characteristic of gated communities, based on the physical aspect of the development, involves gates, walls, guards, and closed-circuit surveillance. Scholarly studies have focused on the phenomenon of gated communities through covering its implications on the society and the city, where the benefits of this type of development have been frequently questioned. Gated communities have been linked with their negative impacts on the communities as socially segregated areas form the surrounding urban context. Nonetheless, some other studies advocated paradoxical theories related to social bonding, sense of safety, and sense of community that gated communities might provide for its residences. The question that poses itself is: what is the balance point, if any, for gated communities to satisfy the social sustainability for both the communities within the gate and the community outside it? This study seeks to explore the potential for such a balance point through investigating the different aspects and attributes of the case in the context of the UAE with the aim to understand the impact of gated communities on social sustainability within and outside the 'gates' of these communities. The Case Study method was used to examine the data closely within the defined urban context through mixed methodological quantitative and qualitative tools. The utilized qualitative research tools included field surveys, interviews, and spatial analysis for relevant maps. Meanwhile, the quantitative research tools included the questionnaire and the Space Syntax DepthmapX software for spatial analysis. The research has revealed that while it is difficult to reach a 'perfect' balance point between to satisfy the social sustainability for both the communities within the 'gate' and the community outside it because 'safety' has proven being preferable to the interviewed residents of gated communities than 'connectivity' with the surrounding urban context. However, some sort of a 'balance' could be achieved if local services of the gated communities can be utilized and exploited as the social integration link between the local communities in and out the gates. This would convert these services into social nodes for both communities in way that maintains 'safety' while encouraging social 'connectivity'.

Keywords: Gated Community, Social Sustainability, Housing, UAE.