PROLIFERATIONS OF GATED COMMUNITIES AND THE FEAR OF CRIMES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF SOME SELECT GATED COMMUNITIES IN ZARIA AND SABON GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Gated communities are becoming increasingly popular in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. The objectives of the study were to investigate the reasons for the proliferation of gated communities, and their safety and security. The study adopted the Defensible Space Theory. This article which is an empirical endeavour used the qualitative method in collecting and analysing data. In-depth interviews were conducted to elicit primary data. Key findings of the study revealed that the proliferation of gated communities was a result of the high level of insecurity and the quest for a secure community. The study further discovered that informants interviewed in the gated communities feel safe and secure against all forms of criminal activities. The study recommends that the Kaduna State government should design a policy that will make gated communities a residential development pattern in urban areas like Zaria and Sabon Gari.

INTRODUCTION

Globally there was the emergence and proliferation of gated communities as a residential development pattern in urban centres across developed and developing countries. Gated communities, which are walled/enclosed and gated housing neighbourhoods, signify a form of urban way of life where public spaces are privatized or privately owned. In the United States of America, Chile, Brazil, and Canada, enclosed housing neighbourhoods represent a considerable part of the housing market, especially in the recently urbanized societies. They have become a sign of metropolitan fragmentation (Goix, 2013) where some members of the society created a housing enclave for themselves either by personally building their houses or acquiring them in a private place. This has led to the division of societies, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Blakely and Snyder (1998) defined a gated community as a residential zone fenced up perimeter or enclosed with a masonry wall that restricts public access. The access is usually regulated by residents of the communities. This was what Kennedy (1995) called a residential association.

Gated community enclosures are common in urban areas of the USA (Blakely & Snyder, 1998), Canada (Grant, 2005), England (Blandy, 2006), China (Huang, 2006), South Africa (Jurgens & Gnad, 2002; Breetzke et al., 2014) and Latin America (Janoschka & Borsdorf, 2006; Clement & Grant, 2012) and Africa countries alike which are far-spreading in some urban centres. The reason for the fast spread of these types of communities in African countries is yet to be known.

Gated communities are mostly equipped with facilities and amenities like swimming pools, clubhouses, landscaped parks, and playgrounds. These communities can be in the form of high-rise structures such as apartments or landed properties such as terraced houses, bungalow houses, and semi-detached (Tan, 2016). This type of residential pattern varies entirely with the present open neighbourhood patterns which were and still exist without a street barricade erected, no gate, no surrounding walls or guards seen around the area. Gated enclaves are described as an expression of the post-industrial societal changes (fragmentation, individualism, rise of communities), as part of a commodification trend of urban public space (Sorkin, 1992; Dear & Flusty, 1998), this is why these types of communities are provided with differentiated nature through different mechanisms such as walls, gates, fences, and 24-hour surveillance via closed-circuit television (CCTV) (Soyeh et al., 2020). This is done with the intention of making the communities appear unique and appealing to the general public. This commoditization of public spaces is driven by some socioeconomic factors like income, social status, level of educational attainment, privatization and governmental policy. It is similarly seen as an indication of urban pathologies by declining public space and increasing private space for dwellers of gated communities, who abandoned open neighbourhood communities in favour of the emerging gated enclaves. There is the rapid proliferation of gated enclave communities across the urban centres globally. Some individuals who are hitherto members of open neighbourhoods or gateless communities are migrating to gated communities based on the push and pull factors of urban nature.

These days, gated communities are mostly commoditized residential neighbourhoods for the middle and upper class, stressing a "community lifestyle" (Blakely & Snyder, 1998). This increases social preference in favour of this residential pattern among some members of the society who found fulfilment in this pattern based on the housing types, seclusion and many infrastructure facilities available on the premises. Residents of gated enclaves are provided with personal security outfits, roads, amenities, etc., in a private governance effort to avoid the spillovers of urban residential and industrial developments: crime, increasing through traffic, free-riding and use of the amenities, urban decay and decreasing property values due to unwanted land-use (Goix, 2005). Through these arrangements, urban externalities are been reduced and controlled through participating in private government. In doing so, public governments have a habit of transferring the costs of urbanization to private individuals/developers (in the form of individuals or organizations) who repeatedly increase the number of gated communities. In Nigeria and Kaduna to be specific, gated enclaves are created for many reasons, among which are commoditization, abandonment of open space, making the communities unique, and or for safety. This study investigates reasons for the proliferation of gated communities, the safety feelings of the members of the communities and as well as understanding the types of crimes prevented as a result of the gates in the study area.

Literature Review and Theoretical Explanations

The literature focused on the proliferation of gated communities in urban centres, its nature and the safety feelings of the people living in these communities.

The appearance of gated communities is usually predicated on some factors as the precursors. Some of the causes of the emergence of the proliferation of gated enclaves/communities are highlighted below. Gated communities are seen as architectural securities of modern residential development that are used to curtail the occurrence of crimes in the communities. This is possible because of the fear of criminal activities among residents and the belief that a fenced-up community is capable of reducing the level of crimes in housing areas (Sanchez et al., 2003; Atkinson & Blandy, 2005; Xavier, 2013). All authors attributed the rapid proliferation of gated communities in urban areas to the benefits of security from some of the negative externalities of urban settlement. According to Tan (2016) in a study titled Residential satisfaction in gated communities,' a case study of Desa Park City, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Self-administered questionnaires were used to prompt data from 160 respondents in some gated environments. The study was anchored on the following research objectives; to examine features that can

indicate residents are most satisfied and or least satisfied with, to investigate the benefits that motivate households to own gated apartments, and to measure the extent to which motivations of owning gated homes affect residential satisfaction levels. Five reasons why respondents were motivated by gated communities were discovered in the study; one of them is safety and security. Which is part of the hierarchy of needs of individuals, the study concluded that the sudden change in lifestyle of people determines the way they get interested in living in a secure community. The findings further portray the love of individualistic lifestyles that characterized the modern way of living among urban or suburban dwellers. Nevertheless, the study does not utilize any theory to provide theoretical insights into the phenomenon and does not also employ qualitative data through either IDIs or FGDs to provide an in-depth analysis of the issues under investigation. Security and safety are key in gated communities as further noted by Goix (2013), Gated communities signify the hope of security; with a plea to consumers searching for a sense of community and identity where protection is more guaranteed (Grant, 2005). This is why the number of gated communities is on the increase in most urban settlements in Kaduna State and Nigeria in general, as residents desire to stay in a secure, respected and serene environment. One of the typical security strategies used now in gated communities is questioning strangers noticed at the entrance or exit of the gate, or sometimes requesting the stranger to call his/her host to be identified before granted safe passage of entry or exit from the gate arena. This has enhanced the confidence in the safety of the residents of gated enclaves.

Another explanation for the rise in gated communities is the desire to manage land development within a state. Rapid urbanization has prompted local authorities to take an active role in regulating residential layouts and structures in their areas. According to Goix (2013), although municipalities often work closely with Property Owners Associations (POA), the rationale for incorporation highlights the need to control local development and challenge the County Board of Supervisors' support for new residential subdivisions. The incorporation of Calabasas in 1991 serves as an example with all new developments being gated. These gated communities typically functioned as Planned Unit Developments (PUD), where developers take on the role of public government in planning, and constructing roads, access points, and utility lines (Knox & Knox, 1997). This results in public spaces being transformed into private spaces for homeowners in gated enclaves, potentially leading to consequences such as displacement and sudden increases in property or land prices in the area, as well as potential feelings of inferiority.

Consequently, urbanization costs shifted to homeowners in gated communities, contributing to high property and land costs in these areas. Additionally, gated communities often emerge from collaborations between local governments and private land developers driven by profit motives in real estate ventures. As argued by Goix (2013), both private developers and the government agree to transfer the overall cost of urban expansion to the end buyer, who is responsible for covering the expenses associated with constructing and maintaining urban infrastructure within the gated community. In return, home buyers gain exclusive and private access to areas formally public, such as Canyon Lakes Lake, which was originally public property but has been leased to the association. This type of partnership is frequently observed in some state capitals in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where private developers purchase land, often in underdeveloped areas, and enhance them to attract land or home buyers, effectively creating gated communities.

Private developers in Nigeria often use strategies like establishing access roads, providing electricity, and security services, offering low land purchase costs for early buyers, and setting up installment payment plans for purchasers in newly established gated communities. Many developers acquire expensive land in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods with the aim of building properties and selling them at prices that match the financial capacity of new residents, often including affluent and upper-middle-class families (Sabatini & Salcedo, 2007).

Gated communities also emerged sometimes as a tool of social segregation in some modern societies where class differentiation is mostly pronounced and promoted. A 2005 study conducted by Goix (2013) revealed that gated communities tend to foster social divisions between the affluent, predominantly white neighbourhoods and younger ones. This leads to the emergence of ethnic separation and distinctions in social status, primarily influenced by factors such as age, wealth and economic standing, rather than racial differences, as indicated in the study. This manifestation leads to the emergence of homogenate neighbourhoods inhabited by members of the same social class, ethnic group, economic status and other social divides. Grant (2005) posited that apart from the increased housing costs; gated communities also enhance class and ethnic segregation in areas where they are created. This is why sometimes they are perceived as class settlements by both the residents inside gated enclaves and residents of opened neighbourhoods. This position is at total variance with the findings in a study conducted by Sabatini and Salcedo (2007), who found that when exclusive real estate development is strategically distributed in an area, it fosters certain aspects of social cohesion and offers benefits to less affluent residents. This is achieved through the creation of employment opportunities within the communities, stimulating enhancement in public services, and even rekindling a sense of dignity and belonging among individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. They disagreed with the submissions of scholars like (Caldeira 2000; Low, 2001, 2003; Dear & Flusty, 2002) among others whose findings favour exclusion, social inequality, segregation and class differentiation. Sabatini and Salcedo (2007) found that gated communities bring about social integration and social mixing between the upper class and the poor residents of open neighbourhoods where gated communities are established, this is evident in Santiago, Chile where poor communities now exist side by side with elites gated communities.

Another emerging factor that drives the emergence of gated communities is the consequences of gentrification. Gentrification is the colonization of less affluent communities which ouxt the less privileged or local inhabitants of an area and creates a private space urban residential pattern located in gated communities. The initial improvised inhabitants will face displacement due to land market forces, leading to an increased level of dissatisfaction and bitterness within the poor community (Sabatini & Salcedo, 2007) but creating satisfaction for urban elites who will become the new occupants of the gentrified locations by enjoying the sophisticated urban life with facilities like supermarkets, hotels, restaurants and eateries and serene gated communities. Households are driven to buy landed homes due to factors such as "Safety and Security," Financial advantages", "Social Standing" and "amenities for quality of life."

Gated communities come in various forms and developed for different reasons. Blakely and Snyder (1998) have categorized them into three main types; "elite or golden-ghetto communities which are centred around prestige and lifestyle; Communities with gated access to leisure amenities; and "security zones communities" where residents safety is the primary concern, even leading to the retrofitting of gates in some lower end neighbourhoods to enhance safety and combat gang activities. In these communities, some facilities are shared collectively, while others are for private household use. The shared spaces typically consist of a parking area, a communal garden, or a swimming pool, but these areas do not meet the definition of public spaces, such as streets, squares, sidewalks, parks, beaches, etc. (Goix, 2013).

Another prevalent pattern is the gentrification model, as described by Sabatini and Salcedo (2007), these communities are often retirement-oriented and situated in remote settings that offer scenic views and foster a sense of intimacy for residents. The secluded and oasis-like locations serve a similar purpose as gate isolating residents from the broader urban social context.

Theoretical Explanations

Defensible Space Theory is a concept in Urban design and crime prevention developed by Architect Oscar Newman in 1972. The theory posited that the physical layout of buildings and public spaces can influence crime and social behaviour, by creating well-defined spaces and clear boundaries.

The central idea of the theory is that a well-designed community is capable of reducing crime and increasing community unity. The theory was based on some basic assumptions like territoriality, natural surveillance, image and maintenance, and physical barriers.

The theory is based on the following key assumptions:

i. Territoriality: people have a natural tendency to establish and protect their territories. When individuals feel a sense of ownership and control over a space, they are more likely to monitor and defend it from potential threats.

ii. Natural Surveillance: the theory emphasizes the importance of visibility and the ability to observe public spaces from private ones. Here gated communities are designed in a way that allows for easy observation of street arrangements, entry and exit doors, and security posts among other factors that scare criminals from unleashing their terrors.

iii. Image and maintenance: well-maintained environments with clear signage and upkeep convey a sense of pride and ownership. People in gated communities usually have some sense of social distinction, segregation and fulfilment living in the enclave. This signal that the area is being monitored and cared for, crime cannot easily thrive and discourage criminals from patronizing the communities.

iv. Physical Barriers: the presence of physical barriers such as fences, walls, gates and fencing wires (both electric and non-electric). All these create a clear distinction between public and private areas. This distinction makes gated communities more secure and immune from intruders.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Zaria and Sabon Gari Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The local government areas are located in the northern part of the State. The two local government areas were purposively selected because of the proliferation of gated communities and the level of insecurity/ crime in the study area. Three gated communities each were also purposively selected from the two local government areas, making it six gated communities in all. The gated communities selected are Tukur-Tukur Layout, Gaskiya Layout and Gyallesu from Zaria Local government, while Hanwa, Government Reserve Area (GRA), and Kabama layout were selected from Sabon Gari local government for the study.

The researcher adopted a qualitative method of data collection. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants like heads of vigilante groups, community leaders, leaders of security committees, and police officers for in-depth interviews (IDIs). Thirty key informants were interviewed. The data were coded and analysed using a thematic method.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Proliferation and Reasons for Creating Gated Communities

 Many reasons were advanced by scholars (Grant, 2005; Tan, 2016; Xavier, 2013) ethnic segregation, safety and security, reduction of crime etc. The findings of this research also showed different types of reasons for the creation of gated communities in the study area. For instance, one of the leaders of the security in the gated communities argued as follows:

> There are fifteen gates in this community, I have been living in this community for more than sixteen years. The gates were fixed by us and they were fixed because of the growing crimes in the community. Before the gates, hardly a day passed without thieves attacking a house. We thank Allah now they cannot do that (R5).

Another informant, a vigilante, also confirmed that gates were fixed because of the fear of the unknown. "We were hired because this community hitherto, find it difficult to sleep with their two eyes closed. They have provided all it takes for us to protect them, yes, they pay us well" (R12).

In addition, another informant, a police officer working in a gated community argued as follows:

> leaders of this community created these gates to prevent crimes, and I am optimistic the gates have drastically reduced crime in this community. There are always informal securities by the gates and they sometimes stop people and ask them about their destination. This is a very good tactic (R2).

The findings of this study are in line with the works of Tan (2016) who previously reviewed that gates are created for safety and security and Xavier (2013) also stated that gates are capable of reducing crimes.

On the contrary, one of the informants argued that the community he was living in was gated just to protect a religious leader. He argued as follows:

> This community is the first to be gated in this local government, when the gates were erected, there were no kidnappings, banditry and other burglary like now. Those who build these gates build them because they want to protect their spiritual leader who was living in the community. In fact, they were securing the community for free (R4).

Another informant believed that the proliferation of gated communities in the study area was regulating people from entering the communities. He argued as follows: "*We put the gates in this community because we want to know or regulate those entering the community. We have informed members of the community to always monitor those moving up and down in the community*" (R6).

Furthermore, findings from the studies (Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2001, 2003; Dear & Flusty, 2002) show that gated communities were created for segregation, initiated by estate developers for business' sake, but on the contrary communities in the study area were gated because of the recent high-level insecurity in the Nigeria and the northern part of the country. It was also discovered that before the insecurity most of the communities were not gated as it was only one community that was gated before the insecurity in the two local government areas sampled for the study. This has made the reason for the proliferation of gated communities different from the hitherto studies conducted.

Gated Communities Feelings of Safety and Secured in the Study Area

There is no doubt that the security of lives and properties is one the most important concepts in life. Insecurity affects the socioeconomic dealings of people in every community. A good number of the informants interviewed argued that they feel secure in gated communities because the level of criminality has been reduced to the barest minimum. One of the leaders of the security architecture in one of the gated communities argued as follows:

> Issues related to insecurity have drastically reduced in this community as a result of the gates created. I am feeling safe and secure. You will never hear any criminality in the night, the few once is those stealing in uncompleted buildings in the afternoon (R16).

Another informant, a leader of a vigilante group who is in charge of preventing crime in one of the gated communities and also an occupant corroborated the earlier submission and has this to say:

> I am the leader of the vigilante group in this community, again, I am among the first to settle here. Before erecting these gates, everyone in this community was in a state of fear. People sold their houses and left for a more secure environment. Now most of them regret their decisions, the community is safe and poor people like us cannot even afford to buy a plot of land here because of the rate and competition. The community has now changed to be that of the rich people with maximum security (R17).

This finding revealed that gated communities in the study area are turning segregation between the upper and the lower class and also commoditization of the area since the poor can no longer afford a plot of land there. This study corroborated the findings of Goix (2013) which argued that gated communities lead to social separation between the white, aged and wealthy neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the findings also corroborated with Blakely and Snyder (1998) that gating communities have led to commoditized suburban neighbourhoods for the upper and middle classes.

Another informant also argued that he always feels safe and secure in his community. "I am feeling safe and secure whenever I am within this community, we only hear of kidnapping and other crimes in other communities, but we are safe here as a result of these gates and Almighty Allah" (R14). Another informant also corroborated by making the following submission: "This community is very safe, the criminals like kidnappers cannot operate here, where will they follow? The gates are locked you cannot go out until in the morning" (R20).

Another informant, a member of the security committee in the study area, said "We are very secure, people are always interested in this community because they know the community is safe from kidnapping and other vices. Our mounted security at the gate are always vigilant" (R12)

The literature reviewed for this study revealed that segregation and commoditization are the leading reasons for gated communities but beyond that this study found that insecurity, protection of religious leaders and commoditization of property leads to the proliferation of gated communities in the study area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps, no problem received greater global attention today like insecurity. In Nigeria and Kaduna State in particular, insecurity appears to be the greatest challenge of the economy with serious economic and social consequences. Insecurity was found to be the major reason for creating gated communities in the study area. It was also discovered that the quest for security was the main reason for the proliferation of gated communities in the study area. Furthermore, the study revealed that members of the gated communities, despite the insecurity in the local government areas studied, have feelings of safety and are secure in their various communities.

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