

**This is a draft only  
It may not be quoted or cited**

## **HONG KONG'S GATING MACHINE**

by

Adrienne LA GRANGE  
City University of Hong Kong

Paper presented at the conference, Housing Assets, Housing People  
ISA International Housing Conference  
University of Glasgow, 1-4 September, 2009

### **ABSTRACT**

A number of case studies has been presented in the international literature that explores the idea of a “gating machine” or “gating coalition” being a confluence of interests, including but not limited to planners, developers, real estate agents, management companies and residents that promotes gated communities. Hong Kong’s high rise housing estates are extremely gated. This paper explores the extent to which this is a consequence of the confluence of interests of the city’s planners, developers, property managers and real estate industry. Although Hong Kong’s private housing sector is extremely gated, this is not a consequence of a “gating coalition” or “gating machine” as presented in the international gated communities literature. Yet some of the “usual suspects”, notably planners (local government) and developers have a huge interest in and impact on the extent of gatedness. While planners are neutral about gating, seeing it as a consumer choice issue rather than a policy matter, Hong Kong’s public ownership of land, its leasehold system and the government’s concern to maximize revenue from land sales play a pivotal role in explaining gatedness. The big five developers develop sites based on permitted land use and the result is often high intensity mixed use developments with commercial uses on the lower levels and gated residential developments above. The vertical integration of large developers also promotes gatedness because their property management subsidiaries have an opportunity to influence developments at the design stage to maximize cost efficient service delivery. Real estate agents do not engage with their clients about gated features because so much of the city’s housing stock is gated and thus the issue does not resonate. Thus the extent of gatedness is a consequence of Hong Kong’s use of land as a resource, its built form, and the nature of its real estate and property management industries and the articulation of these factors.

## INTRODUCTION

Although there are a number of definitions of gated communities and what qualifies as a gated community (GC), these definitions generally coalesce around several key characteristics: restricted public access via the use of gates, booms, walls, fences, security staff, CCTV systems, etc; a legal and social framework that governs the relationship between owners (and indirectly their tenants); and common management and payment for a range of common services such as maintenance, garbage collection, security, cleaning of common areas, snow clearing and landscape gardening. Thus one definition is “walled or fenced housing developments, to which public access is restricted, characterized by legal agreements which tie the residents to a common code of conduct and (usually) collective responsibility for management” (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005:179).

Gated communities have expanded at an exponential rate in recent years across a wide variety of cities and countries although they may take different built, legal and other forms. On a simple level the view is expressed that this growth is a result of a pervasive fear of crime and concern with security that is somehow spreading around the world. On closer reflection however, while indeed many large cities have a crime problem, there is no convincing relationship internationally between crime and levels of gatedness. In this context that residents of cities in South Africa or some Latin American cities gate in response to high crime seems very reasonable; that residents of Hong Kong or retirement villages in Canada similarly gate is perplexing.

There is increasing interest in the idea that in many cities a “gating machine” or confluence of interests, including but not limited to planners, developers, real estate agents, management companies and residents is driving such high levels of gatedness. Each of these groups has a stake in gating or not gating, and where their interests converge, as indeed they increasingly do in many cities, rates of gating are extremely high and not only, or even primarily, related to residents’ fear of crime. Vessilinov et al (2007) uses the term “gating machine” to describe this combination of interests and actions by local governments, real estate developers, the media and consumers. Prevailing structural conditions assure the future proliferation of GCs. Logan and Molotch (1987) portray “growth coalitions” comprising rentiers (real estate developers) as well as politicians, local media, other related institutions, predominantly fiscal. Vessilinov et al (2007) describes the gating machine in the United States as a combination of interests of local governments and developers together with private fears of urbanites, producing a permanent “gating coalition”. Further, developers pay for marketing campaigns, picked up in the local media, that nurture certain property myths about the necessity of gating among consumers. Pacione (2006) depicts proprietary residential developments (PRD) or common interest developments (CID) as driven by market, political and consumer preferences that together constitute a powerful motivational force in contemporary urban development: developers seeking to maintain profits; financially pressed governments seeking to reduce the cost of service provision; and citizens apprehensive of crime and disenchanted with local government. Genis (2007) advocates that more attention should be focused on the role of the state at national, regional and local level to explain the rise of gated developments. McKenzie (1998) proposes that gating is dependent on the relationship between three vectors: developers, potential residents and municipal government, with multiple forces acting on each of the three.

Hong Kong is a very gated city. Across this city of over 7 million inhabitants increasingly the question is not whether but how gated. On face value this is counter intuitive given the emphasis on crime and security concerns in much of the international GC literature and Hong Kong’s extremely low crime rate. Indeed the city’s residents will nonchalantly duck down quiet alleyways to take short cuts to their destinations after dark and wait for taxis or buses in dimly lit,

quite deserted areas, and thereafter barricade themselves in highly secured gated communities even if situated in very good neighbourhoods. A reasonable generalization would be that the only homes not secured are those in old, run-down single buildings whose low income residents simply cannot get their act together to form a common management structure of some sort and as a result, inter alia, secure the building (La Grange and Pretorius, 2009).

Interviews and discussions with Hong Kong residents suggest that there is strong community support for gated communities. Residents like living behind walls and gates surrounded by CCTV and security guards. There is little support for the view that people buy and rent dwellings in gated communities because they have little option – but rather that this form of housing is popular with the community and therefore provided by developers. Holding this idea constant the objective of this paper is to engage with the international literature and identify the extent to which such gating is a consequence of a “gating machine” or a “gating coalition”. If so, in what ways have the interests of the various stakeholders (planners, developers, the real estate industry and housing managers) influenced the form and extent of gatedness.

The paper is divided into two main sections below. The first section presents a summary of the main arguments presented in the international literature about gating machines and the perspectives and outcomes of the main stakeholders, namely planners, developers, real estate agents and housing managers. The second section briefly describes Hong Kong’s built form and extent of gatedness and investigates the views of the main stakeholders and the consequences of their actions. The conclusion suggests how the Hong Kong case contributes to the problematique of “gating machines” or “gating coalition” in driving gatedness in a city where this phenomenon is under-researched, and in a region of the world that is highly gated but given much less airtime than the well documented cases of the USA, Britain, South America and South Africa.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The literature identifies several main stakeholders in the “gating coalitions” where confluence of interests escalates and intensifies gatedness: government planners, developers, real estate agents and housing managers. Each is briefly described below.

### **Planners**

The attitudes of government planners have an important bearing on the expansion and form of gated communities, because, simply put, they pass the plans that permit their development. Case studies categorize planners’ attitudes as being (more or less) supportive, (more or less) opposed to or neutral to gating. In the United States the Las Vegas local government actively promotes gating by requiring that all new development be managed by a homeowner association, which results almost inevitably in the erection of gates. Similarly in Taiwan homeowner associations are encouraged in new developments with similar consequences (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005). Poorer municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires modify planning codes to facilitate the construction of GCs to lure developers to their districts and view GCs as a fast and inexpensive way of increasing local economic activities on unproductive land. Taking advantage of decentralization of land use planning, municipalities with a high proportion of poor households have facilitated development of GCs as a way to increase local employment and real estate investment (De Duren, 2006). In Britain the government subsidizes gated and managed sheltered accommodation for older people as well as alley gating in areas of high crime (Manzi & Smith Bowers, 2005). The Chinese government unambiguously promotes gating as a way of controlling crime and enhancing social stability. Miao (2003) reports strong national, city-wide and local support for gating. Gating is an important criterion in deciding if a community will be awarded

the official title of “Civilized and Safe Residential Quarter”. The city of Johannesburg permits the retroactive gating of blocks of dwellings that cuts off public access to public streets and sidewalks (Jurgens & Gnad, 2002).

If there are many places where planners oppose gating it is under-reported. A survey of local authorities’ attitudes to gating in Country found that twenty local authorities (11%) had rejected applications for GCs for a variety of reasons (Atkinson et al, nd). Since 1977 wealthier municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires have sought to tighten planning controls to discourage the development of GCs, which are deemed to bring little benefit to the district (De Duren, 2006). In Canada planners have sought a range of controls to limit if not eliminate GCs, such as policies limiting fence heights, restricting walls or vegetation screens along public roads or requiring permeable street networks. In some cases councils have passed resolutions to ban private roads, limit fortification of properties or prohibit locking of gates. Planning permission has required emergency access for ambulances, fire trucks and police vehicles (Grant, 2005). In general planners seem to make little real effort to curb the spread of GCs. In so far as they do it is by such means as requiring pedestrian and street connectivity that can prohibit private roads, controlling height, design, materials, location and extent of walls and fences that affect visual impact, or preventing outright enclosure, available, but not being used (Grant, 2005). Central and local governments in the UK have discouraged GCs by restricting planning approval and encouraging neighbourhood renewal schemes based on more ‘traditional’ design layouts (Manzi & Smith Bowers, 2005).

While many planners may be personally uneasy about the spread of GCs, they are often conflicted about the benefits that such developments may offer. For example in the UK planners are concerned to promote infill development to help revitalize the inner city but find themselves torn between achieving density targets and trying to discourage developers from building walls (Grant, 2005). Nottinghamshire promotes the development of “vertical gated communities” in the inner city to revitalize town centres and attract residents back to the city by offering a secure living environment. There are numerous successful vertical GCs in the United States. Gating facilitates mixed use projects, especially combining retail and residential uses in single buildings to reinvigorate downtowns because the residential area can be separated from the commercial areas. GCs are seen as offering advantages for developments targeted to the elderly and single nesters (Chao, et al, 2003).

Permitting development on private roads saves local government expenditure on road maintenance, snow ploughing, rubbish collection, street lighting, recreational resources and police patrols (Grant, 2005). In Buenos Aires impoverished suburban municipalities have relied on GCs as a local development strategy to increase the fiscal base of the municipality (Atkinson et al, nd).

Reservations need to be considered alongside planners’ recognition of their professional detachment and impartiality in application decisions. If housing consumers want to live in GCs it is difficult for planners to deny exercise of this choice (Manzi & Smith Bowers, 2005). “To suggest that residents be denied security merely based on an abstract notion of social cohesion could be construed as paternalism” (Manzi & Smith Bowers, 2005:357). Any personal reservations about GCs need to be weighed against planners’ professional detachment and impartiality in application decisions (Atkinson et al, nd).

Some scholars suggest that the spread of GCs with either the tacit or overt support of planners has considerable advantages. Planning permission is often accompanied by developer responsibility for providing a range of goods and services (roads, landscaping, street lighting, sewerage and

electricity connections, open space) that would otherwise be provided by the city at taxpayer expense (Goobler, 2002). These costs are picked up by the developer and passed on to homeowners. Development permission can be made contingent on the provision of needed social services. After the development is completed public services may not be provided to gated communities because public services must be available to all. GCs are a way to bring wealthier residents into poorer areas to promote development or revitalization, which may increase social polarization at a local level but in a wider sense increase social heterogeneity. Sabatini et al (2001) argue that they are a positive phenomenon in Santiago because they reduce overall segregation in the city, create employment opportunities for unskilled workers living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods nearby and are often welcomed as a symbolic upgrade of status of their locality (cited in Salcedo & Torres, 2004).

A major criticism of planners' permissive attitude to gating (if not actual support) is their lack of concern (at best) and active promotion (at worst) of the spread in their jurisdictions of 'private cities', 'fortress cities' and 'splintering metropolises' (Genis, 2007). Urban goods and services are commodified and privatized and become the preserve of wealthier GC residents (Wu, 2005). Much of the city becomes an archipelago of mini city states that are extensions of the Home Owners Associations seeking to negotiate their terms of involvement with the wider city in their favour (Borsdorf et al, 2007). There are fewer urban resources available to poorer neighbourhoods, fewer opportunities for interaction among people from diverse backgrounds (Vesselinov et al, 2007) and shrinking opportunities for cross-subsidization of goods and services between the rich and the poor (Roitman, 2005).

There are also long term social consequences of the spread of GCs with which planners should be concerning themselves, but seemingly don't. Gating promotes social divisions and concentrates poverty along ethnic and socio-economic lines (Vesselinov, et al, 2007; Le Goix, 2005). GCs undermine local and central state responsibilities at least to attempt to create equity of outcome between neighbourhoods. Disadvantage becomes increasingly concentrated and poorer residents have restricted access to employment and educational opportunities. Richer groups behind walls have less contact with and less empathy for poorer groups outside their walls. Although disputed academic territory, GCs are accused of displacing crime to more vulnerable areas (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005). Extensive gating thus leads to loss of social diversity, displacement of crime and withdrawal of elite groups that threatens what Atkinson & Blandy (2005) has called the spatial contract between neighbourhoods in cities mediated by central and local states. GCs increasingly resemble medieval city states, where residents pay their dues and are protected, literally, as their citizens. In certain areas of South Africa the state or municipality is becoming redundant for certain functions such as the preservation of law and order, and the maintenance of infrastructure (Jurgens & Gnad, 2002). Managua in Nicaragua is described as fragmenting into an archipelago of isolated 'fortified enclaves' where fortified residential, commercial and leisure precincts are linked together by high-speed roads and roundabouts to service the urban elite (Rodgers, 2004). In Buenos Aires the only true "planning" occurs within large private developments, including GCs, and the built environment reshaped and constructed in response to private demands (Pirez, 2002).

Another perspective is that GCs do not cause but rather reflect increasing commodification and segregation of space. Indeed the confluence of interests represented by this process includes public strategies to attract taxpayers, reduce public costs of service provision and the private strategies of developers and others.

## **Developers**

Most developers would argue that they build GCs because that is what the consumer wants: providing security, status, privacy, a good investment and the opportunity to live with like minded people who socially mirror their own aspirations (Genis, 2007). Gated developments however also provide advantages to developers. Where land prices are rising GCs allow cost effective higher density development because they permit more units per hectare and require less circulation space and common utility lines. Indeed this is one of the main attractions to developers of Common Interest Developments (CIDs) which are not necessarily but usually gated. Residents gain access to communal facilities like swimming pools and open space to compensate for less personal space. GCs therefore enable developers to build more units for good money on less land. Owners will pay good money because, while amenities and facilities are communal, their access is restricted to residents (McKenzie, 1994 and 2002, cited in Sabatini & Salcedo, 2007; McKenzie, 2003). Control of common facilities also reduces developer risk in investing in creating and maintaining shared facilities (Glasze, 2005). "...ensuring exclusiveness by all methods becomes a financial and administrative necessity" (Genis, 2007:791). Falling costs of many types of security devices and their incorporation in the design of buildings allows high security (or at least the illusion of high security) to be offered at affordable prices (Manzi & Smith Bowers, 2005).

Several case studies suggest that developers build gated communities as an alternative to poorly planned and poorly served cities. Wealthier residents buy into developments with decent facilities because city-provided facilities do not meet their needs, and they have a more general need for well planned and well maintained neighbourhoods with good security. This creates opportunities for developers to subsume mainstream zoning and building regulatory city functions and tailor these functions to the tastes and preferences of their wealthy clients. In some cases GCs provide basic services like uninterrupted supplies of power and water where their provision by city authorities has become intermittent. Some GCs in developing countries provide all the services provided in a small town, such as schools, and commercial and medical services (Glasze & Alkhayyal, 2002). Residents will pay handsomely for the guarantee of a range of basic and more advanced facilities and utilities a national and/or global elite take for granted.

An alternative view is that from developers' perspective GCs are as much about marketing as they are about anything else. GC developers work hard to create a 'brand name' using conventional marketing principles to sell their product (Lang & Danielson, 1997). Often developers seek out places where they can establish and market exclusive access to areas of great natural beauty, leisure or other natural resources as amenity for their customers (Vasselinov et al, 2007). GCs are marketed as more secure and exclusive with property values less likely to be affected by changes in the surrounding city. Residents can also be subtly offered opportunities to withdraw from civic life, be protected from nuisance from strangers and cocoon with life-minded people (Genis, 2007). Developers of GCs are not only providing a house but rather a total living space, or lifestyle, with private services and governed communities (Genis, 2007; Glasze, 2005).

## **Real Estate Agents**

The literature also identifies the role of the real estate industry in promoting gated communities. Real estate agents are not regarded as a large part of the gating machine, although they do promote GCs as a 'modern' solution to a city's housing problem and disorderly development. As the interface between developer and customer they are in a position to promote GCs as offering a good investment, a range of useful and prestigious facilities and amenities that many cities are increasingly unable or unwilling to provide, a lifestyle that is packaged to meet the demands of a

niche of the housing market (different GCs different niches) and protection from the social maladies of modern society (Mycoo, 2006). In addition GCs are marketed by developers as providing a high environmental quality as well as comprehensive and high-quality services.

There is relatively little evidence that real estate agents push the security aspect of gated communities; logically this would be more relevant in high crime neighbourhoods and cities than others. An example of this is that in a survey of five sales agents in a “mystery shopper” survey they explicitly stated that developments were not gated because of crime, but rather that “most new developments of this size are now being built as gated” and “that’s the way its been set up, the gates are to create a more secure environment” (Atkinson et al, nd:16). The developments they sell are gated because everybody gates.

### **Housing Managers:**

Generally speaking GCs and CIDs require some form and level of professional housing management, provided either by the developer or by a professional management company (and in some cases provided by residents themselves on a volunteer basis). There is little specific information about the role of housing managers in promoting gatedness directly, although their role and value is closely related to the marketing and advantages of living in gated communities. They handle the delivery of all services and utilities, supervise staff including security, cleaning and maintenance personnel, ensure a calm and prestigious environment via the training and management of staff like cleaners and security guards and overseeing of landscaping, manage disputes and conflicts between residents and protect them from intrusive contact with outsiders such as sales staff, beggars, and representatives of political parties and churches (and people conducting surveys). While the role of housing management in GCs is large, important and complex, the literature does not cast this role in the “gating machine” or “gating coalition” problematic.

## **HONG KONG**

Hong Kong has an area of about 1,000km<sup>2</sup>, of which about 10% is taken up for residential use. About half the population lives around Victoria Harbour on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon peninsula where population densities reach 40,000 to 50,000 people/km<sup>2</sup> in most inner city areas. The other half lives in a series of compact, high density, new towns in the New Territories, where densities are 7,000 to 8,000 people/km<sup>2</sup>. Hong Kong’s population is divided quite evenly between private sector housing (53 percent) of which most (37 percent is owner occupied) and public sector housing (47 percent) comprising large rental estates (30 percent) and assisted home ownership estates (17 percent). Nearly all Hong Kong’s housing stock is medium or high rise.

Fierce competition between different land uses, a hilly topography, state ownership of land and development industry characteristics, inter alia, has fashioned Hong Kong’s urban landscape, which comprises in the main, very high density, high rise buildings, much of which is now highly gated. Hong Kong’s drive to higher rise buildings has been inexorable. In the 1960s many of Hong Kong’s 4-to-5 storey tenements were demolished to make way for taller buildings of up to 20 storeys high. Within ten years twenty storey buildings became the norm in the core urban areas (Lampugnani, 1993). In the early 1970s the city moved to even taller buildings. Changes to the leasehold system facilitated the building of Hong Kong’s massive private sector developments, multi-block, multi storey developments. From the mid 1970s developers have constructed a variety of sophisticated, large scale, high rise private developments providing a range of commercial and social facilities such as shopping, recreation, education, social, cultural and transport facilities. These developments needed very large greenfield sites and were often built on what was then the urban

fringe or former industrial sites. Older, inner city housing stock generally comprises stand alone buildings of between five and twelve storeys. Where obsolete housing is redeveloped it is replaced by high rise and, where feasible, large scale, comprehensive developments. Most public housing is located in the new towns in the New Territories. With few exceptions public housing estates are massive multi-storey, multiple-block developments with integrated social and commercial facilities and transport links. This includes both rental and owner occupied developments.

Hong Kong is an extremely gated city. A survey of nearly 100 private housing estates found uniformly high levels of gatedness, including larger and smaller estates, upmarket and affordable estates, from one end of the city to the other (La Grange and Pretorius, 2009). There is a clear trend to greater and greater gatedness in newer housing estates. CCTV is ubiquitous to the point where the city's residents simply do not register the extent to which they are surveilled, not only in their places of work and all public places, but around their homes. Strangers to Hong Kong find it odd. In addition, the relatively low cost of employing security guards means that they too are ubiquitous. High standards of property management services ensures that they are increasingly well trained (many are now certificated) and closely supervised. One does not have to be long inside the boom gates and in the open space of an estate to be approached by a security guard enquiring about the nature of one's business. They are not easily fobbed off.

Public rental estates are significantly less gated than private estates and many of the security features are retrofitted. Although individual buildings have CCTV and touch pads, anybody can enter the grounds of a public housing estate and will be ignored by security if they make some small effort to blend in. Assisted home ownership estates are more gated than public rental estates but less gated than private estates. The only housing that can be described as not gated is older, single buildings in the inner city, often in a poor state of repair, where an unlocked front door and lack of CCTV and security guards reflects the low incomes of owners and the difficulty of establishing management structures in these kinds of buildings. Hong Kong has now also reached the point where there are very few ungated housing opportunities, and these tend to be in small villages in the rural areas.

## **HONG KONG'S GATING MACHINE?**

A series of interviews was conducted with government planners, senior representatives of the major development companies, real estate agents and property managers to ascertain the extent to which this coalition has compelled prevailing trends to gatedness in the city. The departure point was that while residents may prefer to live in gated communities, this would not be the whole picture. Hong Kong's planning system is very top down and land development a major source of revenue to the government. It is unsophisticated to suggest that the big developers actually run Hong Kong but few dispute their power, deep pockets and influence with the government.

### **The Planners**

Four senior government planners were interviewed for this research, for about an hour to an hour and half, where they were asked to engage with the planning issues about GCs summarized in the literature review above. Overall while the planners were quick to grasp the idea of gated communities, this was clearly not a concept that was applied in the Hong Kong context, not terminology commonly used amongst planners and, in itself, not a concern to planners. "Honestly, this is the first time I've heard this term" (Planner A). The planners were asked about the Planning Department's (PlanD) policy regarding gating and indirect, more subtle support or opposition to gating was probed. All four planners agreed that the government has no policy with regard to gating and it is not a consideration in the planning process. "We are neutral on this

issue” (Planner B). “The Planning Department has no policy on gating. We may require provision of open space/parking on private projects, but we don’t tell developers how to manage these kinds of facilities” (Planner C). In answer to the question of whether planners encourage developers to gate.... “No, not at all” (Planner A). They agreed however that as the term is used in the international literature, Hong Kong is indeed a very gated city. Overall Hong Kong had become much more gated over the last twenty years and this was clearly a trend. “The newer they are the more gated they have become” (Planner D). “Even Cyberport [a ritzy new development].... appears to be pretty open on the master layout plan, but it is not” (Planner B).

In Hong Kong housing developments provide a high level of services and amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, barbeque areas, open space, party rooms (the flats are small), computer rooms and gyms. One reason for high levels of gatedness in Hong Kong is to ensure that access to these kinds of services is restricted to those who pay for them (see later). Provision of these kinds of facilities is promoted by PlanD by excluding them from calculation of the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the development. Is this encouraging gatedness indirectly? The interviewees concurred that this was not actually so. There has been a relatively long history of excluding certain facilities from calculation of the GFA and this was originally dealt with by the Lands Department. PlanD has an informal guideline that about 5% of ancillary uses can be excluded from calculation of the GFA, but this is to encourage developers to provide amenities in their development; that this may result in higher levels of gatedness is incidental. Further, providing club goods is a major marketing strategy, very important to residents, and while exclusion from GFA might promote their provision somewhat it is not the major cause. “I think it is really a marketing thing...” (Planner D).

The planners were asked, from a planning perspective, why Hong Kong was so gated and two interrelated explanations were provided: economic and planning incentives to provide very large sites for residential developments; and extensive use of podium designs as a response to the high densities of the city, common mix of residential and commercial uses on the same site (a right very attractive to developers) and interface problems.

In Hong Kong land is owned by the government and disposed of by leasehold. Lease conditions specify development conditions such as land use, plot ratio, height, site coverage, in fact, the usual conditions specified in Outline Zoning Plans. The government decides in great detail how a site can be developed (and particularly what density and site coverage will be permitted) and then auctions it. This has provided the state with considerable incentive to permit very intensive use of land. A site whose lease conditions permit the construction of a 60 storey residential building with ground level retail space will generate greater revenue than the same site with lease conditions that permit the construction of a five storey residential building. In principle public revenue is maximized where sites are very large and lease conditions permit very high site coverage, an extensive mix of commercial and residential land uses (and others) and very high densities. PlanD has, as far possible, facilitated the disposal of very large sites for development and this explains housing estates that comprise numerous high-rise buildings with shopping centres, parking garages, and a range of ancillary facilities. These developments have very large footprints. Large sites sell for more money per m<sup>2</sup> than prices realized for smaller sites. (A large site is more valuable than the same site divided into several parcels. The planners and developers agree on this.) Furthermore, large sites can be developed or redeveloped as Comprehensive Development Areas, essentially requiring a master plan and consequently a more integrated and comprehensive design. The five biggest developers, who dominate supply of new units, prefer to acquire large sites because they can produce more profitable developments from larger than smaller sites by economizing on land use (and time and effort) and thus maximizing their return. As one developer put it, it is the same amount of work to develop one block or ten blocks. Larger

developments provide opportunities to rationalize land use, provide needed facilities, in particular open space, and are popular with residents. While PlanD has no interest in promoting gated communities per se, larger developments tend to be mixed and mixed developments (see below) tend to be gated.

Several planners raised developers' predisposition for podium style developments to explain high levels of gatedness. Many (large) estates comprise several storeys of commercial space at ground level (and very high site coverage, often close to 100%), a podium level above the commercial space and high rise residential blocks and estate facilities on top of the podium. Essentially private housing estates are built on top of commercial facilities but in a two tier design. Unlike other cases, this mixed use development is not restricted to inner city redevelopment of individual buildings but is a mainstream method of providing housing throughout the city. Indeed estates are often so huge that they themselves generate the demand for commercial facilities. Podium developments are practical and profitable to developers, acceptable to planners (up to a point) and popular with the flat buying public. Often these developments are located near or above an underground station. As a consequence of this podium style development the public has free access to the shopping and commercial facilities at ground level and above, and residents enter their estate via this common area (usually lifts) to reach the podium and individual blocks. This style of development is efficient, solves many interface problems, is often integrated with a variety of forms of public transport and simultaneously provides high utility/convenience to shoppers and privacy/seclusion to residents. These podium style developments are however highly gated: access to the podium is strictly controlled to ensure that only residents enter what is a private housing estate. "The upper portion for residential use tends to be gated. In this way they can provide a minimum amount of ground floor space for residents' access to the estate and so maximize the use of ground floor space for other purposes, maybe commercial, maybe for access to public transport facilities. And its also my impression that residents tend to be very receptive to this sort of development" (Planner B).

From a planning perspective the planners did not see any specific advantages to gating. Gated communities do not reduce the cost to government of providing recreational and other services. "We don't count the private swimming pools" (Planner B). While developers have to meet prevailing open space standards in large developments this is only to prevent them from passing the burden of such provision to the government. An emphasis on (if not something of an obsession with) security does not reduce the cost of policing. "The police don't really care if the development is gated or not..... I don't think they have any role in the development process, from processing the planning applications to the leases, to the actual development, building plans approval, to the actual management" (Planner A).

Discussions about the disadvantages of gating focused on scale and type of residential development favoured in Hong Kong (large with podiums) rather than disadvantages of gating per se. Newer developments are often inward looking and have a negative impact on street life. The propensity to build at 100% site coverage at ground level, channeling people from underground stations and other public transport hubs on elevated walkways straight into shopping centres and then up to housing estates at podium level probably does have a negative impact on city life – but this is perceived by planners to be a problem of scale of development and mixed land use, rather than gatedness. "But government is reviewing this policy....." (Planner D). Very large sites provide developers with too much flexibility over site disposition which enhances their profitability but at the expense of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Urban permeability was seen as something of a problem but not a serious one, primarily because GCs are seldom cheek by jowl. Again the same theme – very large developments impede

permeability but this is a consequence of their size rather than the fact that they are gated. What about social segregation? One view was that GCs might prevent strangers entering estates, but why should they do so. The common use of shopping centres by estate residents and residents in surrounding neighbourhoods, extensive reliance on public transport and the proximity of higher income and lower income and public and private housing promotes social mixing, so gating doesn't matter so much. The idea that Hong Kong was a socially segregated society to some extent because of gating did not resonate. "I think this is a very complicated issue. Whether gated communities play a part in inducing [social segregation] or is only a by-product, I don't really know..... (Planner C). Instead, insofar as Hong Kong is socially segregated it is for other reasons: income, class, education, etc. Gating might be a driving force or a by-product – and the latter possibility is at least as likely as the former. Even if a case could be made that gating was leading to greater social segregation – and this case was not yet made – it was not the planners' role to prevent gating. "I think as far as our department is concerned, we are not really in a position to encourage or discourage this kind of thing..... So it is difficult for us to say one way or the other" (Planner C).

### **The Developers**

Interviews were conducted with five senior staff of the major developers in Hong Kong, two from the same company. Some interviewees agreed that Hong Kong was indeed very gated. However there was no consensus and it was suggested that the extent of gating depended on how gatedness was defined. Access to individual blocks and to the clubhouse or swimming pool is highly controlled. Yet it was observed, quite accurately, that large housing estates often have vehicular access, in particular allowing drop-off for taxis, and were therefore not really that gated. Reception staff know who lives in their block, but roaming security guards cannot know everybody and therefore there is quite free access to large estates by outsiders. So, although very large estates may give the impression of high security, they are not that gated in reality. Perhaps some estates can be defined as truly gated, many are only gated to some extent. Thus one developer had a more practical conception of gatedness – real ability to exclude outsiders as opposed to presence of CCTV, boom gates and roaming security guards. "You can say that a lot of multi-block developments are gated but actually they are quite easy to enter... They can't control every entrance..... In small developments of a few blocks the degree of gatedness is much higher than large developments — it simply becomes impractical to make it very gated. Nominally, there are some forms of control but they are not effectively carried out." (Developer D). It would be fair to say that the extent of gating is a question of size of development and that only certain areas are highly gated – individual blocks and leisure facilities, while the remainder is practically speaking accessible to the public. It is also fair to say that the visibility of security devices and the presence and behaviour of many security guards is quite oppressive on many estates.

Much of the interviews was concerned to explore why Hong Kong was so very gated, reservations described above notwithstanding. There was strong support for the idea that high levels of gating reflected market demand. Interviewer: if, say, I build a housing estate very much the same as yours but not gated, what would be the marketing consequences? "You can't." (Developer C). While they do not undertake direct market research into the popularity of/need for gated communities they know what works and what sells.

Based on their wealth of experience in developing and marketing housing estates in Hong Kong they engaged with ideas in the international literature presented above. Hong Kong residents are predisposed to live in gated communities because of the widespread form of fortified towns and villages in Chinese history. Safety is a concern and has obvious implications for gatedness. They

shared the view of the planners that this was often a concern about the safety of their children. “You won’t allow your domestic helper to take your kids to a distant pool or a beach, but she can take them to your estate’s clubhouse, to learn music, kungfu – then the children are out of the flat but still under parental control” (Developer C). A sense of security takes many forms. “After a couple of weeks, your block’s security guards know you. You can come in and go freely.... The guards provide great comfort to residents with young children in the care of domestic helpers. If something goes wrong, then someone is available to do something about it” (Developer B1). Privacy is an important issue; privacy to enjoy the peace and quiet and facilities of the estate. This is often distance from those outside the estate – and Hong Kong is an extraordinarily densely populated city. The idea of gated communities providing residents with opportunities to live amongst like minded people was complicated. “Gated doesn’t mean they are like-minded. It’s price that decides the class of people you live with rather than gated or not gated” (Developer D).

Like the planners the developers generally perceived gating to be an incidental consequence of other things; they just had a different perception of what those other things were. To extrapolate from the essence of the interviews, residents want extensive clubhouse facilities and efficient and cost effective management and developers meet this market demand. Estates are often managed by developers’ property management subsidiaries. As a consequence of the wide range of club goods and the way in which estates are managed, estates are highly gated. Life is of course not so simple and the articulation of developer interests and market demand is discussed below.

For a number of years now almost all housing estates have provided some range of clubhouse facilities irrespective of price of development. Only very small developments (this being a relative term in Hong Kong) do not do so because they cannot achieve the necessary economies of scale. The extensive provision of clubhouse goods is driven by several factors: it is a proven success as a marketing strategy and enables developers to increase the price of flats considerably (according to them) although even extensive facilities are provided at virtually no cost to the developer. Facilities are excluded from calculation of GFA (see above) and even luxurious facilities are a tiny fraction of the land and development cost – this reflecting, if nothing else, the enormous land and development costs in the city. “The developer is going to get his money back easily” (Developer B2). Large estates provide a critical mass that makes leisure facilities affordable to provide and quite cheap to run.

Provision of club goods is a major part of developers’ marketing strategies. “It goes down to basic marketing, of having to differentiate myself from other developers. We all have properties on the market at the same time; how do I persuade buyers that mine are better?” (Developer B1). “The club house may have more facilities than a swimming pool, it may have a games room for the kids, a study room, a movie room. We provide all of these. This is the prestige of living in one of our estates. This is our selling point – our company is famous for its beautiful club houses” (Developer A). It is a mainstream idea in Hong Kong that clubhouses are desirable and that buying a flat in an estate without a clubhouse is an investment mistake.

But once clubhouse facilities are provided, a high degree of gatedness results. Firstly, this is legally required. Lease conditions exclude clubhouse facilities from calculation of GFA but then require them to be restricted to the use of residents and their bona fide visitors. In theory then all developments that provide clubhouse facilities must secure access to those facilities. (This point was not made by any of the planners.) This is not however the whole story and developers concur that residents feel very, very strongly about exclusive access. The interviewer tried very hard to engage the interviewees with the idea that this might not always apply. What if a large pool was underused, enjoyed by a few neighbourhood kids and the resident didn’t use the pool anyway? Residents valued their privacy. They paid for the maintenance of the facilities. Use by outsiders

would result in wear and tear and increase maintenance costs and, simply put, it would really, really annoy them. They spoke for their customers. “Even if outsiders don’t abuse the pool, there would be too many people. It wouldn’t be nice.” (Developer A). “I think residents would mind...even a few people because they are paying for the maintenance. Their view is that these guys are having a free ride. Say only ten out of a hundred, but they are not paying for it.” (Developer D).

There was considerable discussion with the interviewees about the need to secure facilities because Hong Kong is such a densely populated city. In many cases a huge population lives in easy walking distance from an estate. “But then, it all goes back to the simple philosophy, why should a resident pay his management fee so that a stranger can use the facilities” (Developer B2). In fact, many residents feel that clubhouse goods should be paid for by the residents who actually use them, rather than by all residents. “Because they are thinking.... I don’t want to spend my management fee subsidizing that guy who I see, from my sitting room window, swimming day and night” (Developer C).

Successful marketing of estates not only requires the provision of extensive clubhouses but also the creation, or the illusion of the creation of a desirable lifestyle, a lifestyle that is exclusive to the residents. This too has gating consequences. “I think it’s about selling a dream, giving the perception that if you buy a flat here, you’re improving yourself. You’re raising your standards by living here.....” (Developer B1). And more modest developments? “They will sell the same concepts, the same dream to them” (Developer B2). “Take that new development near Kai Tak, where they have.... a former Miss World (featuring in the commercial). It’s quite an ordinary development. The marketing is way OTT. But there she was — there was Miss World and this is all a part of building that incredible dream” (Developer B1).

The big developers are integrated companies. Their developments are generally managed by their wholly owned property management subsidiaries. This plays a critical role in explaining the impact of developers on the extent to gatedness in Hong Kong. Competent subsidiaries enhance the value of the developers’ brand by maintaining the developments in good condition. This is important because developers often keep a proportion of flats in their developments in their longer term ownership. They also often own the retail and commercial facilities associated with their estates that are managed by the same subsidiary. Even developers who do not keep a proportion of flats and/or who do not manage their own properties have a large interest in the good management of estates they develop. Hong Kong residents are extremely savvy about the reputation of individual developers to build well and manage well and the investment consequences that flow from this. Management companies also generate steady income for their parent companies. The other side of the coin is the price consciousness of flat owners regarding their monthly management fees. Additionally this fee is transparent and comparable across estates because it is always quoted in \$/ft<sup>2</sup>. Regarding the management fee, Hong Kong residents know what is a big number and what is a small number.

Interviewees explained that their senior housing managers were intimately involved in the planning of new developments in order to ensure that they could be run competently and cost effectively. “When we have a draft design of the development, we ask the housing manager to come in and comment..... And the housing manager advises where we should improve our design – so that the safety of the residents can be assured. So we are making everything easier to manage.....” (Developer A). “They would input their ideas on how to manage the development, where to place the security guards etc at the design stage. What do the guard rooms need, where should they be located.... what kind of system do we need for car park management... where should we locate all the CCTVs, the infra-red system....” (Developer B2). “But the residents’

management fee is forever.... So mainly we try to control it so that it is tolerable. We try to strike a balance.... When a housing estate has too many exits, finally the management company will ask to close some of them.... because they will need less people to patrol” Interviewer: the more you gate, the cheaper it is for you to manage? “Yes..... I think it’s an operational concern. When we first hand over the architectural drawings to them, they calculate the manpower requirement. And they quite understand that we need a \$2/ft<sup>2</sup> ceiling on the management fee. Then they trim down the manpower.... The architects don’t concern themselves about how many gates we build.... But the management company will come up with their recommendations. They have contact with their existing customers, so they consider the future residents and themselves as customers and service providers.” (Developer C).

It is noted that gating technology is generally cheap and human resources are expensive and complex to manage. “Again, it comes down comes to management fees. If we have a system that can save on the number of security guards the management fee will be lower. The management fee is one thing that people are concerned about when they buy our properties.” (Developer A). “And then of course developers like Sun Hung Kai have to control the quality of the service and by extension their brand name. And then people will say, oh, its managed by Sun Hung Kai, its in safe hands” (Developer D – not employed by Sun Hung Kei). Smaller developers often manage their prestigious properties in-house to protect the reputation of their developments and their brands. Furthermore, even developers who don’t manage their own properties either in-house or by subsidiaries cannot afford to ignore the cost of providing quality management. “Because this will backfire on you when people in the market say your company is very bad quality. Your flats cost a lot to maintain.... Its not related to whether you have your own subsidiary... [but] whether you are concerned to protect your brand” (Developer D).

### **Real Estate Agents**

Interviews were held with three experienced real estate agents. They all supported the idea that there is strong market demand for gated communities. Not only were up-market estates expected to provide high security and extensive club goods but ordinary people also expected these features, if at a lower price reflecting their lower management fee. “Even lower income people renting apartments have many requirements. They expect at least a swimming pool, or good security or good décor” (Agent A). The agents also reiterated the view that buyers and renters view high security, provision of club goods and good management as a package deal. High security or good management are not meaningful alternatives. Residents perceive that good management provides high security and ensures that club goods are restricted to legitimate users. “All three [clubhouse goods, good management and security] are not contradictory.... All three are very important....” (Agent B). “They will think that if its not gated, that means its not properly managed” (Agent C). “Security is “like air-conditioning, you really need to have it” (Agent B). “That’s what the market wants (Agent C).” Interviewer: anything else is problematical? “Yes” (Agent C). But this is academic because nobody builds ungated housing. Overall the agents’ views were that they do not push gated features, specifically high security, because there is such widespread community acceptance of high levels of gating that it was not really a selling point.

### **Property Managers**

Four middle ranking property managers were interviewed. Generally they agreed that Hong Kong was heavily gated, that this was a consequence of resident demand, and it did make their jobs much easier. Managers have a wide range of responsibilities including roads, parking garages, shuttle buses, ferries, kindergartens, pest control, stray dogs and cats, in addition to looking after

the residential blocks, club house and leisure facilities. Many middle ranking managers are responsible for large complements of cleaners, security guards, handymen and others. Some also run shopping centres. The idea that managers are responsible for small cities resonated with our interviewees. “We are managing a village, a city.... Discovery Bay, Mei Fu Sun Chuen, TaiKoo Shing, Kingswood Villa, Laguna Verde... In fact, there are too many of these kinds of operations” (Manager B). High levels of gating made this job possible for the resources available.

According to the managers an important reason for the need for such high levels of gating was residents’ concern about security. They have a zero tolerance for crime on their estates and expect the management company to ensure this. “If there is one robbery on an estate, it will be widely reported in the newspaper. And it may turn away potential buyers... If there is one robbery on your estate you will be in big trouble. Senior management will have a million people coming down to examine your security system. The residents will keep asking you how you can let this kind of thing happen. You have to review your security system from top to bottom to find any loophole.... So, I think it is extremely important to maintain the security systems of the estates. Of course managers represent the management company and they really care about the company’s image” (Manager B). One interviewee described a case where a crime occurred on an estate and as a consequence four employees were terminated, one manager received a warning and another lost his promotion opportunity. Another reported that an award is presented by the police to an estate with a zero crime rate. It may be just a simple certificate but managers are put under great pressure if their estates do not receive the award every year – from “the company, from the senior staff, from his fellow managers, from the [owners] committee, from the residents, from everybody” (Manager C). The managers were also of the view that strict security prevented crime and criminals would take advantage of any lapse in security standards to engage in criminal activities. Estates have low crime rates because they are gated and professionally managed. The idea that Hong Kong has a very low crime rate and therefore does not need so much security did not resonate with the managers or anybody else for that matter.

Managers are also very aware of residents’ dislike of strangers entering their buildings. One manager cited the case of strong complaints from residents when staff members of a internet/pay TV company gained access to blocks under the guise of servicing a resident’s equipment and then went on a sales drive in the building. “We received strong complaints about that” (Manager A1). Interviewer: how long does it take before the residents complain? “They will call the on-site management counter immediately.... They will complain to headquarters the next day.... Head quarters, the management office and the counter. They will phone everybody” (Manager A2) Interviewer: why don’t they just close the door on the salesman? “It irritates them” (Manager A2). “And they will assume that we are not keeping close control” (Manager A1). Residents value their privacy. Regarding strangers knocking at the door – “I think people are kind tired of that, especially in a crowded city like Hong Kong. You know when we walk on the street, we have so many people soliciting us, right?” (Manager B). [We don’t.] Other managers told similar stories of canny salesmen gaining access to buildings and the speed with which residents complained. “.....loan sharks.... not because the residents are in debt, but because they worry that the loans sharks may cause a disturbance... i-cable is always on the blacklist..... some people want to keep the politicians off the estates at election time.....” (Manager C).

Extensive CCTV was important to managers so that they could identify transgressors. Interviewer: how often do you view the CCTV tapes? “You never know” (Manager A1). CCTV can identify who has scratched a resident’s car. If there is a robbery CCTV will identify any strangers visiting the flat. One interviewee suggested that residents have asked to view the CCTV to see what their domestic staff get up to when they are out (Manager A2). While they didn’t check the computer logs of who came and went ordinarily they did access computer records if

there was a burglary. Access cards “..... are very powerful if you want to check who had entered this door, you just check from the computer records” (Manager A2).

But security guards were generally perceived to be most useful in securing access to estates. They keep strangers out. One company sends in mystery shoppers to check that front line staff are controlling access. “If he lets the mystery shopper in, the staff member will receive a warning. And if he receives this type of warning a second time, he will be terminated. He will be fired” (Manager C). Guards also patrol the estate to check that everything is in order. “The patrols will detect security loopholes, detect some crime, a maintenance problem, some other activities, say children playing in the corner, people getting up to mischief....” (Manager C). Counter staff can provide value added services at the counter such as selling stamps or recommending a restaurant. “I think the developer is trying to upgrade the services provided by the security staff stationed in the lobby” (Manager B). In upmarket estates receptionists/security guards are now younger and better educated.

They also agreed with the importance of providing club goods. “Of course, I think this is also one of the developers’ gimmicks. Usually they won’t tell you how big your flat is. In the commercial, they’ll show you how big and how grand the clubhouse is” (Manager B). People might be too busy to use the leisure facilities but their provision is prestigious. They agreed with the developer view that residents felt very strongly that access to their estate, including club facilities, should be tightly controlled. Many estates restrict live-in maids from using the facilities, even though they are residents of the estate. Interviewer: but what if, say, only five people used the pool? “These five people are outsiders?” Yes. “Then not one should be allowed to enter” (Manager A2).

## CONCLUSION

The planning, construction and management of Hong Kong’s large gated communities provides an opportunity to contribute to and refine current knowledge about a number of aspects of the gated communities debate. Hong Kong is an extremely gated city. Interviews suggest that this is not a consequence of the coalition of the interests local government, developers, property managers and real estate agents as has been presented elsewhere. The Planning Department neither supports nor opposes gating and views this as an issue of consumer choice rather than public policy. There is no evidence that planners promote gating to reduce the cost of services or to shift the burden of service delivery from the public to the private sector. Yet planners (or more accurately, the state) do have a considerable effect on the extent of gatedness, although the origin of this impact is subtle in origin. At the most basic level state control over land as a resource (a cornerstone of Hong Kong’s economic development, built form and political system) has led directly to high levels of gating because of the government’s concern to maximize revenue from land sales through its control over lease conditions as described above. Very large developments trend to gatedness and high density mixed land uses virtually require high levels of gating to avoid interface problems – Hong Kong’s podium style developments operate smoothly because the residential tower blocks and leisure facilities on top of the podiums are gated. Thus is it not only what plans say but how, and in whose interests, land as a resource is managed that has an impact on levels of gatedness. In Hong Kong the government’s interests, financial and otherwise, articulate with the spread of GCs. The substance of this observation might not be apparent in western style cities, from which much of the gating coalition literature originates, because the management of urban land as a resource does not inherently promote gatedness given a very different built form and land ownership system. The Hong Kong case thus suggests that perceived and actual public costs and benefits of gating might be considered in the wider context of land as a resource. On the basis of this case study it is also feasible to speculate that internationally changes in the use of land as a resource promotes or constrains gating, likely the latter.

To return to the idea of subtle and indirect impacts, from an institutional perspective gating is a consequence of a seemingly innocuous lease condition requiring that private club goods will be excluded from calculation of Gross Floor Area of private housing but access to any such facilities needs to be restricted to residents and their guests. This standard lease condition would result in much of Hong Kong's private housing stock being gated by definition. Yet none of the planners raised this. It is not that they do not all know about it but that they do not relate this routine regulation directly to the spread of gated communities. Lease conditions are prepared by the Lands Department and implemented by the Buildings Department. It is unlikely that officials in the Building Department, who implement lease conditions, give much thought to the theoretical debate about the positive and negative social consequences of gating and its implications on social cohesion and "spatial contracts" among citizens. This suggests that regulations can have a significant impact on levels of gating even where the focus of those regulations are entirely unrelated. It is thus not only legislation and regulation pertaining to gating that affects the level of gating.

There was general agreement between the developers and housing managers that the vertical integration of major development companies responsible for designing, constructing, marketing and managing Hong Kong's private housing stock is a large part of the explanation for the city's high level of gatedness. It is a truism that developers do not construct energy efficient buildings if they are not responsible for energy costs once the building is occupied. The same kind of logic might apply where development/construction and management of housing stock is fragmented. Yet in Hong Kong most major developers have property management subsidiaries which they realistically anticipate will manage the estates they build. To the developers their property management subsidiaries are a steady income stream. Developers and housing managers concurred that management is more efficient and cost effective where security and other gated features are incorporated into the estate design. This process is given additional impetus because the management companies have vast experience about what works and what doesn't. Thus the characteristics of the development industry (large, concentrated and vertical) have a direct bearing on levels of gatedness in Hong Kong. By comparison housing stock provided speculatively by small developers would have a lower level of gatedness. It is unrealistic to distinguish between Hong Kong's highly concentrated development sector and the city's high rise urban form – a developer needs very deep pockets to buy a large site, build multiple high rise blocks and throw in a wide range of club goods and a shopping centre. A built form of tracts of detached suburban houses is serviced by a very different development industry. Large companies are often vertically integrated and small companies usually are not. This suggests a general proposition that there is a relationship between the dominant built form, the major characteristics of the development industry, the nature of housing management and levels of gating. One might speculate that it is this relationship that significantly informs the type and extent of gating.

This case study also points to the important role of the property management sector in promoting gatedness. In informal discussions property managers propose that owners' committees decide on the level of gating required to ensure security and privacy based on the managers' recommendations. This is not unreasonable as indeed the technical and professional expertise does lie with the professionals. Committee meetings provide a forum for managers to advocate additional security features and they would be calibrating degree of gating, services offered, size of management fee, pressures on their staff to deliver services and profitability of the management company itself. The degree of gating of an estate is at the heart of this calculation. An increase in gating would help solve many management problems: a rise in residents' concern about crime, an increase in staff salaries (a major management cost) or pressure to be more profitable. Although the research has not been done intuitively there is a link between extent of

gatedness and not only management costs (which would be more or less transparent in different cities) but also the cost structure of management companies.

In summary, Hong Kong is an extremely gated city, but this is not a consequence of a “gating coalition” or “gating machine” as presented in the international gated communities literature. Yet some of the “the usual suspects”, notably planners (local government) and developers have a huge interest in and impact on the extent of gatedness in the city. While planners are neutral to the extent of gating, seeing it as a consumer choice issue rather than a policy matter, Hong Kong’s public ownership of land, its leasehold system and the government concern to maximize revenue from land sales play a pivotal role in explaining gatedness. The big five developers then develop sites that routinely result in high intensity mixed use developments with commercial uses on the lower levels and gated residential developments above. The vertical integration of large developers also promotes gatedness because their property management subsidiaries have an opportunity to influence developments at the design stage to maximize cost efficient service delivery. Thus the extent of gatedness is a consequence of Hong Kong’s use of land as a resource, its built form, the nature of its real estate and property management industries and the articulation of these factors.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper has been funded by a General Research Grant of the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (No 9041180 A Study of Gated Communities in Hong Kong). I am indebted to Ms Hoiyee Cheung for her help in conducting and analyzing the interviews.

### **References**

- Atkinson R., Flint, J., Blandy, S. & Lister, D. nd. The Extent and Neighbourhood Impacts of Gated Communities, University of Glasgow and Sheffield Hallam University.
- Atkinson, R. & Blandy, S. 2005. Introduction: international perspectives on the new enclavism and the rise of gated communities, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 177-186.
- Borsdorf, A., Hidalgo, R. and Sanchez, R. 2007. A new model of urban development in Latin America: the gated communities and fenced cities in the metropolitan areas of Santiago de Chile and Valparaiso, Cities, 24, 5, pp. 365-378.
- Chao, T. Y., T. Oc & Heath, T. 2003. Creating a safer community for elder people in mixed use development – vertical gated community in the city centre, presented at the Gated Communities: Building Social Division or Safer Communities? The Teacher Building, Scottish Engineering Centre, Glasgow, 18019 September.
- De Duren, N. L. 2006. Planning a la carte: the location patterns of gated communities around Buenos Aires in a decentralized planning context, International Journal of Urban and Planning Research, 30, 2, pp. 308-27.
- Genis, S. 2007. Producing elite localities: the rise of gated communities in Istanbul, Urban Studies, 44, 4, pp. 771-798.
- Glasze, G. 2005. Some reflections on the economic and political organization of private neighbourhoods, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 221-233.
- Glasze, G. & Alkayyal, A. 2002. Gated housing estates in the Arab world: case studies in Lebanon and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, 29, pp. 321-336.
- Gooblar, A. 2002. Outside the walls: urban gated communities and their regulation within the British planning system, European Planning Studies, 10, 3, pp. 321-334.
- Grant, J. 2005. Planning responses to gated communities in Canada, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 273-285.

- Jurgens, U. & Gnad, M. 2002. Gated communities in South Africa – experiences from Johannesburg, Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, 29, pp. 337-353.
- La Grange, A. & Pretorius, F. 2009. Gating Hong Kong, paper presented at the European Network for Housing Research conference, Prague, 28 June – 1 July.
- Lampugnani, V. M. 1993. Hong Kong, the Aesthetics of Density, London: Tames & Hudson.
- Lang, R. E. & Danielsen, K. A. 1997. Gated communities in America: walling out the world? Housing Policy Debate, 8, 4, pp. 867-899.
- Le Goix, R. 2005. Gated communities: sprawl and social segregation in Southern California, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 323-343.
- Manzi, T. & Smith-Bowers, B. 2005. Gated communities as club goods: segregation or social cohesion? Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 345-359.
- McKenzie, E. 2003. Common interest housing in the communities of tomorrow Housing Policy Debate, 14, 1 and 2, pp. 203-234.
- McKenzie, E. 2005. Construction the pomerium n Las Vegas: a case study of emerging trends in American gated communities, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 187-203.
- Miao, P. 2003. Deserted streets in a jammed town: the gated community in Chinese cities and its solution, Journal of Urban Design, 8, 1, pp. 45-66.
- Mycoo, M. 2006. The retreat of the upper and middle classes to gated communities in the poststructural adjustment era: the case of Trinidad, Environment and Planning A, 38, pp. 131-148.
- Pacione, M. 2006. Proprietary residential communities in the United States, Geographical Review, 96, 4, pp. 543-565.
- Pirez, P. 2002. Buenos Aires: fragmentation and privatization of the metropolitan city, Environment and Urbanization, 14, pp. 145-158.
- Rodgers, D. 2004. “Disembedding” the city: crime, insecurity and spatial organization in Managua, Nicaragua, Environment and Urbanization, 16, pp. 113-124.
- Roitman, S. 2005. Who segregates whom? The analysis of a gated community in Mendoza Argentina, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 303-321.
- Sabatini, F. & Salcedo, R. 2007. Gated communities and the poor in Santiago, Chile: functional and symbolic integration in a context of aggressive capitalist colonization of lower class areas, Housing Policy Debate, 18, 3, pp. 577-606.
- Salcedo, R. & Torres, A. 2004. Gated communities in Santiago: wall or frontier, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 28, 1, pp. 27-44.
- Vesselinov, E., Cazessus, M. & Falk, W. 2007. Gated communities and spatial immobility, Journal of Urban Affairs, 29, 2, pp. 109-127.
- Wu, F. L. 2005. Rediscovering the ‘gate’ under market transition: from work-unit compounds to commodity housing enclaves, Housing Studies, 20, 2, pp. 235-254.