

## FOREWORD: GATING AS A VARIABLE

These chapters narrate the current forms of gating in a far more encompassing manner than do standard narratives about gated communities. Once gating is conceived of as a variable it can become a more complex and contradictory process, one that requires research, interpretation and debate. The first volume put together by Samer Bagaeen and Ola Uduku in 2010 brought history into the frame, signalling that gating is perhaps the more intriguing frame for understanding and conceptualising a pervasive process. In this second volume they basically explode the category of 'gated communities'.

In writing the foreword for the first book, *Gated Communities: Social Sustainability in Contemporary and Historical Gated Developments*, I saw gating as the emergent conceptual tool coming out of those themes being explored within the chapters. In this volume I see space-gating as yet another conceptual jump, opening up gating to more ambiguous processes whose valence may vary from the positive to the unstable in some cases. In my own work I have begun to think of what we now not-so-gently call 'land grabs' in the Global South, as a kind of gating executed by powerful states and powerful firms in foreign countries, and requiring extreme contractual innovations allowed by the sovereignty of state territories. The other term in play is 'enclosures'. This is a term that had been relegated to older histories which have now re-emerged in today's global modernity. 'Gating' is less burdened by familiar thick past histories, and is more of a provocation when used.

Both volumes represent an enormously exciting turn on what some of us thought was an exhausted concept. The work and the meaning of gating go well beyond the facticities of today's gated communities for the top 20 per cent. The editors and authors are to be recognised as makers of expanded meanings of gating.

In today's global modernity, the work of gating a space is likely to consist of thick, localised interventions by diverse actors, who can be local or global, good or bad. Across the world, these localised and thick interventions begin to constitute a

global condition through their recurrence in city after city. In my work I emphasise such local and thick interventions in the *making* of a global condition rather than the far easier invocation of floating signifiers – 'beautiful architecture' or 'economic prosperity' – as explanations for the transformation (in this case, gating). As an aside, this also shows us that the spaces and times of the global can contain thick immobilities – such as gated spaces. These begin to constitute a proliferation of partial, sometimes highly specialised, assemblages of bits of territory, authority, and rights once firmly ensconced in, or subordinated to, national institutional frames. At the limit, and at its most negative, this is a multi-sited, global presence of a vast array of logics of expulsion. In such a context, gating is one dynamic giving a particular shape to the act(s) of expulsion. At its most positive, probably, it is the proliferation of justice-seeking initiatives, such as the local 'occupy' movements described within this volume.

And yet, across these differences, what is at work is the articulation between the particularity of the local event and the larger process that engenders it. Any large diverse city contains a range of spaces that are neither national nor global, which allow for a recurrence of themes (struggles, sufferings, humanities) across all these differences. In my view, this is the DNA of our current global modernity – that 2 per cent that can make all the difference.

The way in which the chapters in this book expand the meaning of gating well beyond the standard notion of gated communities is by focusing on a far broader range of instances. These include the closures of what were once public laneways, to home fortification practices inside kibbutzim.

Some of these chapters go digging to unsettle easy meanings of today's gating formats – 'let's not collapse gating into an action confined to the rich'. Are there deeper infrastructures of meaning and of aspirations that generate outcomes we can conceive of as gating? I agree that there are multiple conditions, some of which are compelling and signal a range of strategies that go well beyond the aspirations of the newly rich who are not quite the top 5 per cent, let alone the top 1 per cent. Other work in this book ranges from examining border-making as the physical manifestation of far deeper dynamics than the established borders of the inter-state system, to an examination of gating as part of larger dynamics than privilege or security – notably the Occupy movement in London. In all these chapters effort goes towards not flattening gating into a single dominant meaning – a matter of elites and fear – but more contemporary modes and methods of exclusion.

Some of these chapters make me think of a larger context within which gating can be seen as a strategic format or option as the decay of a dominant format sets in. Thus, for centuries national states worked at nationalising territory, identity, security, power, rights – all the key elements of social and political existence. When the national state is the dominant format, the overarching dynamic is centripetal: the centre grasps most of what there is to be had. Those nationalising dynamics assembled the pieces of what we now experience as the national – and the natural. And what happened outside the borders of territorial states was written out of history; whether the impoverished terrains of former empires, or the earth's poles. As

the national encasement weakens we can see the constituting of a proliferation of partial – often highly specialised – assemblages of bits of territory, authority and rights once firmly ensconced in national institutional frames. Today's forms of gating begin to disassemble those earlier larger, and more encompassing, formats – the city, the region, the nation.

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