

Gated Communities In The Usa - Alexandra Nadler

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International visitors, rising crime, and increasing economic class differences in the growing cities are not only an American issue. France, England, Switzerland, South Africa, Australia, and Sweden are only a few among the countries worldwide which are concerned with gated communities. But since gated communities are a typical form of suburban living and suburbia is rooted in the United States I want to focus on this country. Different forms of gated communities are spreading rapidly. In the suburbs, as well as in inner-cities, but also as entirely new cities the spaces they characterize are larger and larger and also the life of more and more people. What had so far only been known from mega cities of the Third World or as a phenomenon of the apartheid in South Africa, is common anywhere today. Historically, spatially separated communities are actually nothing new in Europe or the US. Even in the middle ages monasteries and castles served as separation, and Tuxedo Park in New York was already fenced in 1885. However, the current development in the USA is new in terms of its variation and quantity and is therefore a relevant subject to research for urban studies. Gated communities and their origin, development and spreading are a topic on which only little research has been conducted so far. In the past 15 years the boom of fenced neighborhoods in the United States has not only caused a dramatic change in American city landscapes, but has at the same time contributed to the development of a new, suburban society which deliberately wants to separate itself from the city, i.e. public life. Due to the decreasing quality of public service in many cities in the USA an alternative, private form of local government has established alongside the gated communities; often it has already substituted public communities in their function. With regard to these fundamental changes, it is astonishing that the matter of closed settlements has so far been subject to research only to a small extent. Studies, which deal with gated communities with regard to segregation of society and the fragmentation of the city connected to this, have only been carried out for few years.

Author: Nadler, Alexandra Publisher: GRIN Verlag
Illustration: N Language: ENG Title: Gated Communities in the USA Pages: 00022 (Encrypted PDF) On Sale: 2007-01-01 SKU-13/ISBN: 9783638728997 Category: Business & Economics : Economics - Macroeconomics

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