The growth of gated communities

The growth of gated communities throughout Europe is causing concern. The recent rise of gated communities in Europe has raised questions about their reasons for development and impact on private urban governance. Moreover, it illuminates the inadequate levels of research on the trend. The project 'Challenge of private urban governance and the rise of gated communities in Europe' (GATEDPUG), funded by the EU, seeks to close this knowledge gap.

In the process, it discounts traditional theories that cite social concerns, safety issues and economic efficiency as the primary drivers for such developments. A study conducted in Budapest reveals that, in fact, gated communities are developing in low crime areas. Additionally, while evidence partially supports the significance of economic considerations, there are other motivating factors at play such as the prestige derived from residing in gated communities.

Researchers have developed the trilemma theory in examining urban governance and the problems presented by gated communities. This illustrates the three key considerations of urban development: lower congestion...
costs, higher efficiency in the production of public goods and services, and higher social cohesion.
Gated communities effectively privatise urban governance and address concerns of congestion and allocation of goods and services. The downside of this is the negative impact on social cohesion, although it is unclear how much of a concern this is at this point.
GATEDPUG also conducted a cross-European analysis to determine why some European countries have more gated communities than others. The analysis returned a correlation between countries with centralised governments and gated communities. Researchers suspect that local governments in centralised countries have insufficient fiscal autonomy and therefore cannot meet the needs of its citizens.
More work must be conducted to understand the increase of gated communities, their impact on social cohesion, and the greater implications of privatised urban governance.

Keywords

Urban governance, gated communities, centralised states, European studies

Project Information

**GATEDPUG**

Grant agreement ID: 219867

Funded under

FP7-PEOPLE

Overall budget

€ 170 709,11

EU contribution

€ 170 709,11

Coordinated by

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

United Kingdom

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Last update: 13 October 2014
Record number: 148820


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