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Varie(gated) communities: Looking into socio-spatial splintering in renewing kibbutzim

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1. Introduction

The extent and dominance of gated living and enclosed communities have significantly intensified in the neoliberal age. Walled residential enclaves automatically distinguish between those within and those outside the gates thus reinforcing socio-spatial exclusion. By epitomizing the deepening of socio-spatial separation tendencies, gated communities contradict lofty ideals of openness, vibrancy, and diversity while enhance civic disengagement of those who can distance themselves from urban problems by moving into exclusive and enclosed environments (e.g., Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Atkinson and Flint, 2004). All in all, scholarship tends to focus on the physical form and function of gated communities while taking almost no notice of internal socio-spatial configurations and complex realities within gated communities. Even though gated communities are known for being legally and physically segregated entities, it is not necessarily correct to assume that exclusion ends at the gate; in fact, socio-spatial practices of separation may find their way into gated communities themselves.

In Israel, ideological, geopolitical, cultural and legal conditions have produced a multitude of gated communities, which have been part of the long-lasting diverse Israeli landscape (Lehavi, 2016). The variety of gated communities in Israel is impressive: small rural communities established on the periphery to support geopolitical agendas, voluntary religious ultra-Orthodox enclaves that prioritize cultural isolation and segregation, retirement communities, and

neoliberal enclaves built for the wealthy population. The diversity of enclosed communities reflects interactions between global forces and specific contexts that produce place-specific gated communities (Rosen and Razin, 2008, 2009; Yacobi, 2012). An enduring type of a gated community in Israel is the kibbutz. For many decades, the kibbutz epitomized collective and egalitarian principles, however, in recent decades, socio-economic and spatial restructuring has called into question the homogeneity assumed within the kibbutz.

In this paper, we investigate the case of renewing kibbutzim: kibbutzim which are undergoing changes from being collective communities into communities that have maintained only a fraction of their egalitarian principles. These communities are characterized by social, economic, and power stratifications that accommodate people of unequal wealth, decision-making powers, and rights. This paper is a part of a large research project which has scrutinized recent developments in renewing kibbutzim (Charney and Palgi, 2013, 2014). In addition to knowledge and insights gained in earlier stages of the research, this paper draws on the analysis of a variety of documents (kibbutz bulletins, local regulations, kibbutz covenants, and development plans), observations, and on semi-structured interviews. We conducted seventeen face-to-face interviews in six kibbutzim in northern Israel. The interviewees were people who have held managerial positions in the kibbutz administrative and decision-making apparatus. We also conducted five interviews with architects who have been engaged in preparing new outline plans for kibbutzim. Following a literature review on gated communities, this paper considers change and transition to be central elements of gated communities that do not conform to ideal-type neoliberal enterprises; in this context, the renewing kibbutz is a gated community in the process of transition. The next two sections explore two dimensions of internal divisions and emerging complexities in the renewing kibbutz: formation of a quasi-class system and the reconfiguration of the physical layout. Since its foundation, the status of a kibbutz member was the most important and practically the sole status of those who permanently residing in the kibbutz. At present, three distinct residency types (full members, partial members, and permanent residents) epitomize unequal power relations and property rights that have completely transformed the long-lasting internal order of the

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kibbutz as a gated community. Similarly, the land of the kibbutz is collectively leased from the state. Socio-economic restructuring has prompted the subdivision of undivided space in a way that would correspond with the sweeping transition of this society. In the conclusion we encourage exploring internal complexities and dynamics within gated communities.

2. Towards varie(gated) communities

In the past two decades, extensive urban scholarship has documented the global proliferation of gated communities. Different explanations such as the fear of crime and violence, the search for multiple amenities, and the desire to create a sense of prestige have been associated with the emergence and rapid spread of gated communities in urban and suburban areas (e.g., Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2001; Manzi and Smith-Bowers, 2005; Csefalvay, 2011). A growing number of studies has significantly broadened the scope of research to include diverse contexts in which gated communities have emerged making them different one from another, based on the composition of population, governance structure, and their internal dynamics (Low, 2003; Grant and Mittelsteadt, 2004; Rosen and Razin, 2008; Grant and Rosen, 2009; Rosen and Grant, 2011; Csefalvay and Webster, 2012; Tedong et al., 2015). As rural places are becoming increasingly implicated in global economic and social processes (Woods, 2007; McCarthy, 2008), gated communities have become part of the rural landscape (Phillips, 2000; Nelson and Nelson, 2010). Gated communities may spring in the countryside as another facet of rural gentrification and the desire of a wealthy middle class for exclusivity and privacy farther away from the public eye (Woods, 2016).

As privately-governed communities, gated communities are anchored by different types of institutional arrangements. Known as common interest developments (CIDs), these types of private governance epitomize the ascendancy of neoliberal thinking.¹ Based on the case of the United States, McKenzie (2016) has differentiated between three types of CIDs: homeowners' associations, condominiums, and housing cooperatives. In homeowners' associations, the association owns the common areas whereas residents own their homes; in condominiums, the entire property is owned by all unit owners and each has a percentage share of the property; in housing cooperatives, people buy a share of stock in the cooperative and acquire with it a proprietary lease that entitles them to live in the unit as long as they own a share of stock in the cooperative. Within gated condominiums and cooperative housing, institutional arrangements (e.g., covenants and regulations) and the role of gatekeepers determine the actual power of enclosed communities to monitor and control their boundaries (Low, 2003, 2011; Low et al., 2012).

Research tends to contrast, either directly or indirectly, gated communities with non-gated neighborhoods (Sanchez et al., 2005; Chapman and Lombard, 2006; Genis, 2007; Vesselinov et al., 2007; Le Goix and Vesselinov, 2013; Walks, 2014). The desire not to be part of the surrounding environments reflects an exclusionary nature which has been highly criticized; this type of development embodies the withdrawal of those who can do so into insulated enclaves and contributes to the already high degrees of horizontal and vertical segregation across urban space (Graham, 2015). This is perhaps the reason why there is a tendency to perceive gated communities as internally uniform entities, downplaying much of the complexity that may exist within the communities themselves.

¹ Not all gated communities are common interest developments in the neoliberal sense. Older and traditional gated communities coexist alongside neoliberal enclaves (Rosen and Razin, 2008).

As the main incentive has been to create safe, amenable, and exclusive communities that are separated physically and institutionally from their surroundings, research has hardly addressed the internal composition of gated communities. While differences exist between gated communities, each gated community of the same type is conceived to be ethnically and economically homogeneous (Le Goix, 2005; Le Goix and Vesselinov, 2015). The perception and the belief that the internal social and ethnic structure of gated communities is homogeneous may be attributed to the long tradition of socio-spatial segregation in the United States. The ultimate justification for maintaining segregation and thus reinforcing social homogeneity within neighborhoods and cities has been the preservation of property values (Massey and Denton, 1993; McKenzie, 1994; Le Goix and Vesselinov, 2013). It is assumed that this motivation which is based on covenants would produce communities in which the population would be almost indisputably uniform. Within gated communities homogeneity is preferred because "... everyone looks and seems the same ... [and] there would be no need to accommodate differences" (Low et al., 2012: 288). This is a key reason why those who live in this type of a community prefer to admit 'people like us' (Charney and Palgi, 2013). Thus, it is understandable that "mixing rarely occurs in gated projects" (Grant and Mittelsteadt, 2004: 924). Contrary to widespread belief, a few studies have suggested that residents in gated communities are not ethnically, socially, or economically homogeneous and that more research into the diversity of such communities is needed (Sanchez et al., 2005; Danielsen, 2007; Plaut, 2011; Addington and Rennison, 2015).

In a recent paper, Pow (2015: 480) has urged scholars to "search for more nuanced and differentiated accounts of gated communities that complicate the overcoded logic of urban gating and segregation". Seeking to see beyond mainstream literature which stresses dystopian reflections such as segregation and exclusion, Pow has claimed that researchers should be "... acutely aware of the diverse ways in which gated communities are embedded in a set of wider territorial spatial-temporal contexts as well as the diverse urban outcomes and practices of gating" (Pow, 2015: 473). Together with Pow, we perceive gated communities as contingent, differentiated, and variegated. The term, *varie(gated) community*, captures multi-dimensionality rooted in contextualized accounts which considers diverse and dynamic characteristics of this type of a private community. Beyond basic and static elements, change has to be considered in greater detail to explore how societal changes come together to form internally-multifaceted communities.

Acknowledging the need to unpack internal arrangements within gated communities, this paper focuses on the evolution of socio-spatial dynamics in rural gated communities – the kibbutzim. From socio-economic restructuring, which has destabilized and modified the well-established social makeup and spatial order of kibbutzim, these communities have become less homogeneous and more contentious and divided places. In fact, restructuring has transformed them from old-type gated communities into neoliberal enclaves (Rosen and Razin, 2008).

3. Gated communities in-transition: the rise of the renewing kibbutzim

Change is the greatest enemy of the ideal settlement design, which offers a perfect, balanced and static solution. Any social organization incapable of adapting itself to the dynamics of historical, scientific and technological development is doomed to failure (Chyutin and Chyutin, 2007: 44).

As an ideological type of settlement, the kibbutz has formed a

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