

Segregation by design:

To what extent do gated communities in Mexico City uphold structural inequalities

Bachelor Thesis

CFB063A10: Capstone Project

University College Fryslân, University of Groningen

BSc. Global Responsibility and Leadership

CFB063A10: Capstone Project

Supervisor: Dr. Nicholas Q. Emlen

Total Word Count: 8649

Date: 10.06.2022

Author: Daria Yune Elizarrarás Veenstra S-4067754

Abstract: In Mexico, the privatization of otherwise public urban spaces carries a deep history of social inequality, and its normalization today must be understood in the context of current violence, corruption and high crime rates within the country. At the same time, I argue that gated communities both reflect and maintain current structural inequalities that have been put into place since Mexico's colonial past. This thesis contains the experiences of residents and workers of three gated communities in the South of Mexico City. By including the workers' perspective's it attempts to counter the lack of representation this perspective has had in past research.

Keywords: Gates communities, Urban segregation, structural inequalities, Mexico city, insecurity

Acknowledgements

Hereby I would like to express my gratitude towards my supervisor Nick Emlen for introducing me to ethnographic research and for his guidance throughout this project.

My family who attempted to aid me in any way possible while being far away. As well as my friends for the continuous support, with a special mention to the following people, Sarah Elena Rosas Morales, Sara Argyriadis, Nienke Horinga and Lotte Kallio. Your critical thinking and insightful thoughts always continue to make me curious about the world. With a special thanks to Fernando Aldair Valencia Vasquez for his assistance and great key additions to the subjects. Your ideas and opinions are always very valuable to me.

I would like to express my endless gratitude towards Juan Carlos Hernandez Acevedo and Doctor Tereresa Becerril-Sanchez for their clarifications and contributions.

And finally, to my participants, thank you for wanting to share your stories.

Table of contents

1. Gated communities in Mexico City	5
2. The historical context of social inequality in the urban space of Mexico City	7
2.1 Concepts in context: from the colonial period to the present	7
2.2 The city as a mould for social stratification (and as a reflection of inequality)	9
2.3 The role of gated communities in socio-spatial fragmentation	10
3. Social life and segregated living in three gated communities	11
3.1 El Teporingo	12
3.2 Privada Ajolotes	15
3.3 Los Jaguares	18
4. Enclaves, gated communities, and social inequality	22
4.1 How (in)security justifies segregation	22
4.2 In search for community	24
4.3 Privatizing the public	25
5. Conclusion	27
6. Bibliography	29
7. Appendices	32

Segregation by design:

To what extent do gated communities in Mexico City uphold structural inequalities?

In Mexico City, a metropolis of over twenty million people in South-Central Mexico, many people live in so-called "privadas" (a word which literally translates to "private's", better known by the concept of 'gated communities' in English). These private neighbourhoods are surrounded by a wall, only accessible through a gate, with a code, fingerprint or (most frequently) after an interaction with a guard. While they vary in size from six homes to more than 200 houses, these gated communities share a common socioeconomic place in Mexican society: they tend to be home to the elite, most wealthy residents of the city, who then become separated from the city's other residents.

These gated communities draw on a long legacy of social and economic inequality in Latin America. This inequality can be traced back to the period of European colonization, which created strong wealth disparities, and consequentially new conditions of exclusion and social polarization that have come to be reflected in the contemporary urban space. In particular, the "self-segregation" practised by the residents of gated communities responds to middle-class and upper-middle-class individuals' desire for community, intimacy, and protection while simultaneously facilitating separation from, and surveillance of, the less affluent people living outside the walls. In Mexico, the privatization of otherwise public urban spaces carries a deep history of social inequality, and its normalization today must be understood in the context of current violence, corruption and high crime rates within the country. At the same time, I argue that gated communities both reflect and maintain current structural inequalities that have been put into place since Mexico's colonial past.

In this thesis, I combine semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and visual ethnography to understand the opinions and experiences of those who live and work in such communities, and how these experiences fit into the history and contemporary urban panorama of socioeconomic inequality in Mexico City. Prior to the 1990s, relatively little research conducted on the subject of segregation in Mexico's major cities (Schteingart, 2001). Demonstrating how recent the topic in question is, as well as the necessity to widen the scope of available information. Furthermore, it is worth noting that by contrasting the experiences of

residents inside the communities with those who work in them, I intend to contribute to the lack of attention paid to the workers' perspective within this research area, hoping it can broaden our view on the social impacts that gated communities have on the city and all its residents. A missing perspective that again reflects the influence of structural inequalities in research as well. My goal is to learn why people choose to live in gated communities in Mexico City, and to examine the social consequences that this form of segregated urban living has on the society. What do people perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of such spaces? What consequences do these spaces have on the public culture of the city? How do they relate to other social issues in Mexican society? And in particular: To what extent do gated communities in Mexico City uphold structural inequalities?

The thesis is structured in the following manner. First, I begin with an introduction to gated communities in Mexico City (Section 1) and provide a range of context to better understand the subject (Section 2), before moving on to describe the gated communities I visited (Section 3) and addressing the major findings of my research.

Lastly, I want to disclose my position at this point in the research, since it has a significant impact on both my research process and my understanding and interpretation of the findings (Holmes, 2020). I was born into a bi-cultural, upper-middle-class family and raised in Mexico City where I am and have always been racialized as white. Additionally, I would like to point out that, while I did not grow up in a gated neighbourhood myself, I was surrounded by many who did. At the time, I never questioned the existence of such spaces, and I frequently took pleasure in them. Nowadays, I live in the Netherlands while my family recently relocated to a small gated community in Mexico City's south zone, demonstrating that my family has always possessed the privilege and ability to do so. (My full statement of positionality can be found in Appendix 1).

1. Gated communities in Mexico City

Before discussing my methodology, ethnographic findings, and conclusions in greater detail, I begin with a general description of gated communities in Mexico City and how they fit into the city's urban space. In the context of this research, the term "gated community" refers to the housing complexes, horizontal condominiums, middle- and high-income single family home

neighbourhoods as well as single streets, all with limited access to outsiders, achieved by restrictive entrances in which normally public spaces have been privatized (Giglia, 2008; Blakely and Snyder, 1997). As the city and its population continue to rapidly grow, different social groups are forced to coexist, consequentially increasing people's fear of the "Other" and their desire for separation. To ensure this explicit separation gated communities make use of two types of tools. The first are physical dividers, such as walls and fences, as well as the large empty spaces that become a result of these walls, which in turn may (un)intentionally discourage pedestrian circulation. The second instrument is the use of private security systems, think of security guards, cameras and alarms (Caldeira, 1996). These create what Caldeira calls "Private universes turned inward", with no designs or organization making any gestures toward the street (1996, p.408).

In Mexico City, this increasingly common phenomenon has surged across most areas of the city, not being limited to one place in particular. The richest groups are not concentrated in a single place but dispersed in these small, exclusive islands scattered around Mexico City (Bayón & Saraví, 2013). They can be found in delegations inhabited resided by both lower and upper class individuals, as well as in more exclusive locations, where street life is discouraged and most places are accessible by cars only. As stated in the introduction, Mexico City is home to a big variety of gated communities ranging in size, price, level of security and/or luxury, out of which, some are legally constructed, whereas others unofficially became one. Each community selected for this research loosely fits into a specific category, covering three different environments that could potentially showcase a broad range of perspectives and experiences.

In Mexico, the concept of gated communities can be referred to by the umbrella term "urbanizaciones cerradas" (in english, closed urbanizations). In public discourse, however, the most common terms are "privada", "fraccionamiento", and "condominio". While these concepts are all interchangeably used, there is one important distinction that should be made. While the specific differences between a horizontal condominium or "fraccionamiento" remain unclear, both possess a legal connotation. A property with these denominations is administered by the "regimen de propiedad de condominio", which is based on a condominium property law and depends on each State of the Mexican Republic. This regulates all operations, subject to the regulations, constitution and owners and is formed when the departments or premises of a

building have an independent and common areas, giving each owner exclusive rights to the property and its department or premises. In addition, he has the right of co-ownership over the elements and common areas of the property necessary for his use. “Fraccionamientos”, which literally translates to subdivisions, and “privadas” make use of huge extensions of urban space and are usually constructed to divide territory and towns into houses and apartments, but they can be rather large. I believe the private ones are closer to street level, in residences that have already been built but are not necessarily segregated prior to the choice to make it "private."

“Unofficial” gated communities, termed ‘privadas’, are not formed around this legal set of rules. They are frequently built on land which rather than having been bought by a real estate company in order to be turned into a horizontal condominium, residents organized themselves to close the street and privatize the former public streets their houses were located in. These are more of a neighbourhood organization, and can be found in various places, including impoverished communities, as a method to address insecurity.

While the differences between these two distinctions are seemingly insignificant, they way residents interact with each other can be potentially influenced by the fact that individuals in the unofficial areas cannot be held accountable for contributing to the community by any legal reasons. This is later exemplified in my text.

2. The historical context of social inequality in the urban space of Mexico City

The urban landscape is made up of a complex interplay of social actors' determinations (public institutions, private agents, and family or social practices), the past, and the present (Schteingart, 2001). In order to understand how gated communities fit into the panorama of social inequality in Mexico City, it is first necessary to review the history of how that social inequality came about and how it is structured in the city's urban space today. To do so, one must start five centuries ago at the time of Mexico's colonization. From the founding of the city by Hernán Cortés and the construction of the first fortress houses to modern-day gated communities.

2.1 Concepts in context: from the colonial period to the present

Bonfil Batalla once described Mexico's decolonization as incomplete. He argued that while the country did become independent of Spain: “[...] the internal colonial structure was not

eliminated, because the groups that have held power since 1821 have never renounced the civilizational project of the West nor have they overcome the distorted vision of the country that is consubstantial to the point of view of the colonizer” (1987, p.13). Hereby Bonfil Batalla explains how Mexico’s colonization has impacted the people and its culture so deeply that, century’s later, some Western colonial concepts and perspectives have never fully disappeared. For example, prior to the 1600s, there had never been any mention of race as we understand it today (in the Western context), the modern-use of the term is a human invention (NMAAHC, n.d.). It is a concept which gains meaning, not due to any sort of innate qualities it possesses, but in the discourse of language, and in relation to other notions and ideas of socially constructed signifiers (Hall, 2017). It is therefore that ideas and discriminatory practices such as racism and xenophobia can be said to have been imported during the European conquest and have been deeply rooted in society since. Racism became a powerful resource that justified the system of social classification and domination that was imposed by the European colonization (Velasco, 2016). Today this persisting racism is often overtly exemplified in the general appearances of the people on television and advertising, when compared to that of the majority of Mexicans (Dulitzky 2001). As well as it is indirectly present in the general discourse on race that attempts to establish a single, unmistakable truth: "Mexican nationality is mestizo" (Velasco, 2016). A truth that erases the complexities of present race-differences and the history that has led to this point in time.

Social class, in turn, can be said to have surged from a capitalist system that was not inherent to the Pre-Hispanic indigenous communities of the country, which is often upheld by the Western idea of meritocracy. The interplay between economic, social, and cultural capital is central to Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of class, which is not limited to employment inequality only (Savage, 2010). Classes are more than just economic realities; they are also deeply connected with social reproduction and cultural differentiation (Devine, 2004; Savage et al., 2005).

“It’s not racism, it’s classism”, is a statement I grew up hearing when living in Mexico. While it exemplifies the big erasure of racism within Mexican public discourse, I would also like to argue, it is not one or the other, but both concepts are deeply intertwined. To such an extent that they cannot be viewed as separate entities. Deep socioeconomic disparities across classes have

long been a persisting feature of Mexican history, the social divides have widened and become more visible in recent years (Bayón, 2009). Despite having some of the world's wealthiest individuals, more than half of Mexico's population lives in poverty (Bayón & Saraví, 2013). In Mexico this inequality is all reflected upon the urban fabric of the city.

Finally, one must acknowledge the growing insecurity and corruption that has forged the path to what the city looks like today. High crime rates in Mexico are one of the main reasons for the urban fear that has led to the protective architecture that are gated communities. With some of the highest homicide rates in the country's history (recorded in 2018) and an estimated 24.7 million people above the age of 18 who are believed to have been victims of crime across Mexico in that same year, it is easy to understand where that fear comes from (INEGI, 2019; Animal Político, 2019). Nevertheless, despite the worrying numbers, 31.7 percent of crime victims said they did not report a crime because they thought it was a “waste of time” and 17.4 percent said they “did not trust the authorities.” (INEGI, 2019) This lack of trust is deeply connected to the deeply rooted corruption within Mexico's Institutions.

2.2 The city as a mould for social stratification (and as a reflection of inequality)

Cities are centres of social and political life, in Mexico, 78% of the population lives in urban areas, all of which face the challenge of achieving an equitable distribution of services today (Lefebvre, 1968; INEGI, 2010; Ojeda-Revah, 2021). The experience of the city and the patterns of sociability in the privileged and disadvantaged classes are characterized by contrasting urban lifestyles (Bayón & Saraví, 2013). As a result, I believe it is critical to examine Mexico City in order to comprehend its contemporary socioeconomic difficulties in the light of current inequalities.

Noting the growing commodification of the urban landscape, the increase in crime and violence, social and spatial polarization, and the increasingly common practices of exclusion, we can observe how the city has been moulded in ways that reflect these changes (Moreno, 2008). I argue that while Mexico's social context is reflected in the design of the city, this design will serve to maintain and exacerbate the same ideas it was consequentially built upon.

An example can be seen in the way natural disasters unfold, like it happened five years ago when a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck central Mexico in 2017 (CNN, 2017). Where it was evident

how the spatial reorganization, that derived from the country's politics, had resulted in a social fragmentation where the most marginalized find themselves positioned in areas of increased vulnerability and social risk, a scenario that implied the government's non-compliance with regulations, policies, and programs, as well as the deeply rooted corruption of the State (Narciso, 2018). This is an ongoing phenomenon visible in all kinds of challenges (particular) citizens are facing: the water scarcity of the city and its unequal distribution, the constant flooding and its long-lasting repercussions, the absence of green public areas, among others.

As stated by Ojeda-Revah, the consequences of these burdens are thus carried by the most marginalized groups within the city (2021). The city's design does not meet the needs of its residents, resulting in increased disparity based on gender, colour, ethnicity, and people with disabilities or special needs. Particularly for women, poor lighting, insecurity, and the lack of group exercise programs (Garca-Pérez and Lara-Valencia, 2016), are some of the design issues identified. As well as the absence of specific areas and services for certain groups of people (Flores-Xolocotzi and González-Guillén, 2007).

2.3 The role of gated communities in socio-spatial fragmentation

In Mexico City the concept of enclosed neighbourhoods is not new. History has shown that fortified enclaves for the rich classes have existed since the design of the original colonial urban grid, when the initial residential structures of the Spanish were fortress-like homes designed in reaction to the threat posed by Indian uprisings in the city (Ayala, 1996).

Later on, the bourbon reforms reinforced social and physical barriers within society. Rather than expanding the benefits of urban modernization to all social groups, these reforms posed a systematic policy of socio-spatial segregation, consequentially entailing an unequal distribution of services and resources along those socio-economic lines. Differences that only increased during governance of Porfirio Díaz (Scheinbaum, 2008).

Similarly to the past, the influence of public institutions on the conformation of space today includes not only institutions directly oriented to space planning, but also institutions that indirectly influence socio-spatial aspects of cities from various levels of public management (Campbell and Fainstein, 1996). Real estate developers employ insecurity and the concept of

informality (as in “informal settlements and businesses”) as a threat to justify an enclosed “First World” lifestyle in gated communities (Müller & Segura, 2022). For decades, real estate developers have advanced a formalizing mission by promising that their investment will stop “informal sprawl” (Reforma, March 13, 1998). As a result of this shift, urban planning has become a form of “managing the undesirables” (Agier, 2011).

3. Social life and segregated living in three gated communities

Drawing on the information described above, we can understand how gated communities are a physical expression of Mexican society's socio-economic inequality. Having introduced the social and historical context of gated communities in Mexico City, we can now turn to how they are experienced by the city's residents today. The gated communities I visited for the purpose of this research, were all located in the South of Mexico City, all of which the contexts varied. In the following section I provide a short description of each of the three alongside a few of the experiences of my participants by drawing on my ethnographic material.

For this study, I focus on three different gated communities in the south of Mexico City, to narrow the scope of this research, and allow for a broader perspective on different types of gated communities. These communities were selected through existing contacts, due to a need for trust relationships in order to access those environments, as well as a way to facilitate conversations with those working and living in these areas. For anonymity purposes I assigned a pseudonym to each of the selected gated communities as well as interview participants and will refer to them with that denomination for the remainder of this paper.

I conducted a total of 9 in-depth, semi-structured interviews (to each community both a resident and a worker were interviewed except for one in which two workers were approached, alongside two experts) in ways that adapted to the possibilities of each of the participants involved. This type of interviews offer researchers the opportunity to uncover information that was “probably not accessible using techniques such as questionnaires and observations”, while it broadens the scope of understanding of the investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006; Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Since I expected to find broad differences between the experiences of those who work in gated communities versus those that live within them, I decided to seek interviewees from both groups and pair them alongside the perspectives of experts in fields related to the topic (who were consulted in order to gather general information on the topic and better contextualize the experiences of my other interviewees). The in person-interviews with individuals working in the gated communities were all held during work hours to not take away from the worker's free time, and within the gated community itself (with the exception that one of them was by phone). The data gathering was divided into two different phases. (1) The first one being focused on field research and thus taking place in Mexico City itself, in order to gather observations for all three gated communities and facilitate contact with those who work inside these gated communities (2) In order to allow for better time management during the observation period in Mexico, phase two was carried out in the Netherlands during which all other participants (both residents and experts) were approached by online-communication.

The conversations mainly focused on the participants' experiences working or living inside versus outside gated communities, their motivations to work/live in those areas, alongside asking for their observations and opinions on the topic itself. Finally, a set of ethical considerations was created and later implement throughout the entire research period (see appendix 2).

3.1 El Teporingo

The gated community 'el Teporingo' is one of the smaller versions of this phenomenon. The day I visited the residency, we took the highway and turned right a couple of km before reaching the toll booth that always indicates the city's exit. It is thus located on the outskirts of the city, an area that is known to be more 'town-like' and less prosperous than other parts. El Teporingo consists of a small closed street with a total of 10 individual houses, all constructed in the same architectural style. The entrance is guarded by one of the two security guards who work there interchangeably during 24-hour shifts, on the day of my visit it was Diego's turn to work.



(Figure 1, 'Perspective from the entrance of 'el Teporingo')

After having checked with my contact who was living inside the gated community, he let me in and quickly returned to a car he was cleaning before my arrival. He later explained how his work consisted of more than guarding the entrance of the community. “[I do] surveillance, then I vacuum the cars, [...] in the house here at the back I work. I do gardening, I clean windows, I do anything.” He highlights that living there comes with security and other services. Services all performed by him or his colleague. He shortly goes over what a work-day looks like for him:

“We are here 24 hours a day. [...] My entrance is at 10 in the morning. I arrive, I sweep the entire street to the end [...] and at three or four it's time for lunch, from six to seven I turn on the pump and in the night, from ten o'clock on, I have to stay here in the booth to be aware of the people who enter and leave”.

It is these services that the residents from El Teporingo benefit from and greatly appreciate when living inside, since “you save yourself that work that you usually have to do when you live in

your own particular house”. Nevertheless, to maintain the order one must also know to follow a set of specific rules. Gabriela, one of the residents I conversed with, saw these coexistence rules as a potential disadvantage. Not so much because of their existence but rather due to their inflexibility. Nevertheless, she also emphasized how small this issue was in contrast to the benefits that came alongside living there, while also demonstrating that there was a reason for those rules to have been set in the first place. “You have to adapt to the rules and the community you are living in. Respect the people you’re living almost chin-to-chin with (“barba con barba”), right?”.

In the end, when one chooses to live in a house within the walls of a gated community, one also chooses, or at least accepts, the community itself. That, in turn, comes with the understanding that in order to enjoy the additional services it provides, one carries their own set of responsibilities towards said community. Since “el Teporingo” is also officially classified as a condominium, one can be held accountable both, by the community itself, as well as legally.

In contrast to the inner organization and old European construction style, the outside with its usual electricity cables on display, give the street an immediate feeling of abandonment and disorder. Next to a couple of cars parked at one side of the road, the street looks empty. This may be caused by the two extended walls built on each side of it that may belong to other gated communities or private terrains in the area. When looking at the other side of the street, we get a glimpse of how others in the neighbourhood may live like. Smaller and seemingly unprotected residencies that possess a careless finish (see figure 2).

During one of my online conversations, one of my interviewees (who resided in a different enclave) pointed out that gated communities vary greatly in size, exclusivity and what we could call “elite-ness”. “There are super luxurious condominiums and there are some very marginalized ones in the center of the city. [...] I believe that these types of spaces exist throughout the city in all social classes and I believe that it has to do with many things.”

The gated community of el Teporingo would probably be an example of a horizontal condominium that is considered to be less exclusive within the category of such residencies. Nevertheless, after my research I would argue that smaller gated communities have inherently the same characteristics and consequences as the bigger examples do, but on a smaller scale.



(Figure 2, El Teporingo's outside street view)

3.2 Privada Ajolotes

I first visited the Ajolotes' "privada" around five years ago with a friend of mine who used to live there. At the time it was also my first interaction with a gated community of that scale. Ajolotes can be described as a community that almost resembles a small town in itself with over 200 residences all painted in a similar colour scheme of yellow and orange, distributed on top of a hill. The easiest access is by car, since the outside of the gate has a heavily transited street where pedestrian traffic remains somewhat dangerous. When doing so, one must drive uphill to the gate with the name "visitantes" (visitors) and announce their arrival through the intercom where one is questioned about whom they are visiting. Afterwards, the guards will call the address by phone and only if the residents agree to the visit, the gates will be opened. Finally, at the gate, one is requested to leave an identification card that will be returned on leaving. This security process that visitors are subjected to, in which entry must be authorized, and an official credential turned

in, is actually a very common practice to most gated communities, no matter their size (Becerril-Sánchez et al., 2013; Giglia, 2008). My first experience, nevertheless, was by foot. In this case, my friend and I walked up to a side door where she had to use her fingerprint in order to open the second and final door that led us inside. Moreover, next to the security guards at the entrance, most streets have a boom barrier that is lifted by a guard in order for cars to be able to pass through.



(Figure 3, The gates of 'Privada Ajolotes')

This gated community in particular, offers a range of facilities that are also common to other gated communities internationally, sometimes with the purpose of reducing interaction of the inside with the outside (Caldeira, 1996; Thuillier, 2005). In Mexico, it is mostly the most exclusive communities that offer such amenities, which can range from work areas to schools and shops. In turn, Ajolotes is equipped by a couple of small green areas, known to be places where residents accustom to walk their dogs, a playground and some sport facilities such as a swimming pool, a tiny gym and two padel courts.

Since I knew Amalia from previous visits to the place, I reached out to her during my second research phase, in order to ask some specific questions about her experiences. During our

conversation I decided to ask if she knew what kind of people lived in her residential community: “All types of people seek to be in a gated community”, she tells me. “[This particular community] is a condominium of professionals, above all they are businessmen. In general, they are families, there are hardly any single-person homes. Yes, there is an upper-middle class vibe in this condominium, although curiously the maintenance is much cheaper than in smaller condominiums, but the houses are more expensive.”



(Figure 4, Unity in colour: privada Ajolotes from above)

At Amalia’s place, the cooking and cleaning is done by Leticia, who has been working with the family for almost eleven years and experienced the move from a single home to Ajolotes. While I expected her to be more critical towards a place she worked in, she offered me a different, and somewhat paradoxical, view on the differences between her two experiences. “It’s more boring in a house than in a condominium, cars go by, more fun, less locked up, that’s how I experience it”.

In contrast to el Teporingo, this is a place that depicts how these communities are leaning towards more exclusivity and a consequentially reduced (necessity of) contact with the outside world. Nevertheless, its appeal is not fully reduced to its (security-) services and facilities only.

But it seems that its town-like construction allows citizens to experience a more manageable environment while not giving up any urban perks due to the proximity of the residential islands to the controversial “outside”.

3.3 Los Jaguares

The community I visited most frequently was located nearby to the city centre of Coyoacán, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Mexico City, filled with narrow cobblestone streets that reflected the colonial period of the city. Coyoacán is an area whose rich history and everyday vitality have transformed it into an area beloved by both Mexicans and tourists alike. Undoubtedly, the prestige of its Historic Center has led certain social classes to want to live near it. Resulting in the arrival of new inhabitants, who have the possibility of paying high land prices as a consequence (Ferraes & Valverde, 2018). This gentrification process has brought not only housing, but also land uses that have replaced traditional businesses and services in the area.

The construction of gated communities such as Los Jaguares has greatly contributed to this process of gentrification that has been observed in the neighbourhood of Coyoacán (ibid.). It is these areas that best exemplify how such isolated spaces can easily surge in neighbourhoods where all social classes coexist. An additional characteristic that remains interesting to this particular enclave is its unofficial status as a private space. Rather than being legally classified as a condominium it was turned into a community that functions like other legally established enclaves do. In Jaguares, this distinction is easily identifiable by the broad range of varying houses within it or the park benches, the same type of benches that can be seen in most public places of the city. This distinction was explained to me by one of the residents who worked for a real estate company: “Legally, when there is a gated community, there is something called “condominium property regime”. To be able to have one, each house has a regime and in this regime it is pointed out that there is a regulation with the rules of behaviour and an appointed administrator... It is legally regularized.”



(Figure 5, Typical public benches in a private park)

A ring of houses (55 in total) formed around a central park that serves as a gathering point for residents, of all-ages alike. For Paulina, next to the location and security of the space, the park was one of the main reasons that encouraged her to move into that area. She exemplified the importance of the park by placing it in the contexts of the prior COVID-19 pandemic. For context, in Mexico City, children were unable to follow in person classes until the end of 2021, a period of almost two years.

“It is important to mention that a lot of value was also given to gated communities [then], because the children, not being able to go to school, not being able to have contact with anyone else, [for them] their friends here, became their brothers and a park like this one became their oasis. There they could continue playing and have a normal life.”

Park management, security and other services are all collectively paid for by residents. Nevertheless, unlike a legal condominium, the residents have created their own set of rules to

administrate it themselves. A system that, due to its lack of legal formality, is mostly driven by trust since “everything is done voluntarily by the neighbours”.

This "informality" sparked my interest in understanding how the security system was set up. Similar to el Teporingo two people worked alternate shifts, to guard the entrance. Nonetheless, the guards worked in 48-hour shifts and focused on guarding the gate only. Since Los Jaguares was the community I most frequently visited, I encountered Juan various times at the entrance. He was one of the people who would always open the door for me and greet me with a smile.

Due to the fact that this neighbourhood's security had to be arranged by the residents I decided to ask Juan about his background and how he ended up working in Los Jaguares. Unlike Diego, who was contracted by people who knew him for his gardening work and who is under a private contract, Juan was a trained officer of the auxiliary police of the State of Mexico (not to be confused with Mexico City) who was assigned for his job by the state. In order to understand his explanation, a clear distinction should be made between the terms “policía estatal” (state police) and “policía Federal” (federal police). The Mexican federation's police force or Federal police, has the task of investigating and preventing crimes that pose a threat to the country. Terrorism, drug trafficking, smuggling, attacks on communication routes, national heritage, and vital sites are just some of the examples. Unlike the federal police who are in charge of the entire country, every one of the 32 states has its own police force. Each of these officers' jurisdiction is limited to their own state. It is a preventive and uniformed police force that performs its duties within the jurisdiction of the state to which it belongs, i.e., each state has its own state police. It is this last institution that Juan used to work for: “I work for the auxiliary police of the State of Mexico. [But] we are independent of the Federal police, we belong to the state. The state police made an agreement with private security to have these personal services in terms of armed escort services and so on... Thus, the state police is now independent to provide private services [...] it is as if it were private security.”



(Figure 6, Juan at the gate)

This blurry line between what is meant to be public or private, is again exemplified by this the complexities of 'Los Jaguares' security system. While the state police is a service commonly known to be supposed to cater to the public, part of their services have a private purpose.

Another aspect that stood out to me during our conversation was the frequency in which the gates of the neighbourhood had to be opened and closed. Juan had departed roughly ten times throughout our twenty-minute chat to manually open and close the door. “How often do you have to open the door?”, I asked him at the end. “250 times a day. I actually counted them the second day I was here to keep a mental record of how many times the door opens.”

While it sounded like a demanding job, he did mention he saw the benefit of working in that position: “the advantages are that here you work for two days. One already arrives home and can rest and see the family the same two days.” But the disadvantage is [when the time comes] of

[going to] the bathroom and eating or opening when it is raining. This labour may appear straightforward at first, but can eventually become highly physically taxing in the long run, especially since the guards must be available at all times to let people in and out of the gate for 48 hours straight.

4. Enclaves, gated communities, and social inequality

Do gated communities uphold current structural inequalities, and if so, can this consequence be observed in these three residencies in particular? In order to respond to that question I have laid out three main subjects that came up in most of my conversations and were crucial to my understanding of these gated communities and their relationship to modern-day disparities. Firstly, I want to focus on security as the main driver for choosing to live in a gated community, thereafter contrast the opinions and experiences of my participants in relations to the subject of community and finally compare the opinions and perceived consequences on the privatization of former public spaces. Lastly, it should be noted that a great asset to this particular section lies in its attempt to include the perspective and opinions of those who work in these walled compounds. Very often, the scant research that has been conducted on this topic has frequently come from an urban planning perspective and focused solely on the perspectives of its residents. Hopefully, this comparison will manage to convey a greater understanding of the consequences of such spaces for various social groups, as well as the importance of including the voices of those that have been structurally marginalized in research.

4.1 How (in)security justifies segregation

One of the most visible shifts during the last decades is individual's concern for security. Citizens in Mexico City do not feel adequately protected by public institutions, according to daily news and interactions among the city's residents. The majority, on the other hand, believes that criminality has already overrun the system and that delinquency is out of control. It is this fear that has spawned new forms of self-defence (Scheinbaum, 2008). In each of the gated communities I visited, security was listed as one of the top reasons for moving to that area, Paulina even described it as "the strongest value of the community". Unlike many residents of a gated community, Gabriela chose to live in El Teporingo for its location and proximity to public transportation. Rather than seeking full self-segregation from the outside, she perceives the

possibility of residing in that area as a great addition to the security it provides. “Mainly, what one looks for is a quiet place where you don't have problems, call it crime or whatever.”

On the other hand, since gated communities are in its majority composed of single family homes, much of the emphasis of the security is put on the children and future generations, emphasizing that the country has a culture in which kids are not accustomed and even discouraged of playing outside. “In Mexico you don't play much with your neighbours, in horizontal condominiums you do”. When I spoke to Amalia she explained that before moving to Los Ajolotes she and her husband, had been looking for the opportunity to live in a horizontal condominium in order to grant her kids that opportunity: “I wanted the children to grow up in a horizontal condominium so that they could grow up with other children, so they could go out to the street to play, so they could take the bike outside. But it was more expensive, and it wasn't central, so we ended up living in a single home. That meant they played alone.” Years later, she and her family moved to a gated community for security purposes after having a particular negative experience at their former residency.

This idea of security for your family was also conveyed to me by Juan, the security guard at Los Jaguares. “I don't know if you've seen on the news that there's a lot of crime. These privates are made so that the children can be protected by the officer in charge.” Since he was the officer in charge of the residents' security, I wondered if his opinion on the matter would differ if I asked a follow-up question: “if you could choose, would you like to live here?”

“Well, if I have the resources, yes. Without any problem.” “Because it's quieter, because it's a place where you can take your children out to play without the need for a truck to come by and run over them or have an accident. So I would go to a private one if I had the finances to do so.”

In this case Juan shows he is aware of his inability to access such a space as a resident, due to his lack of economic resources. Nevertheless, he sees the value that it could have for his children. Later stating that sheltering yourself in such spaces is meant “for one's own good and for the good of their children and future grandchildren”.

On the other hand, the security in gated communities is often contested. Enclaves have been said to provide a sense, or perhaps an illusion of control and protection over one's surroundings (Caldeira, 1996). Interestingly, this was noted by a resident and a worker alike. Imelda, who

works at a house in Los Jaguares, stated “well, my boss tells me that because it is a very safe place and because they take great care of the subdivision. But according to me, no, because there have been robberies on this street. There is not as much security as the people who live here, she says.” A similar point was made by Amalia, she told me: “as soon as I walk in the front door, I suddenly feel safer. [But] it is not so true either because there have been robberies in here, there have been people who enter at night and so on. [...] Though my house in particular is less vulnerable. I tell you, it's like a false sense of security, because I do feel that somehow they could get in any way, but I confess that as soon as I enter I breathe differently.” Interestingly enough, at the time, Amalia resided in what I perceived to be the most securitized gated community of my research. Nonetheless, even there, security could not be guaranteed. On the other hand she and Leticia, who also works with her, both told me that they always leave the door open when they're home. While full control will never be achieved it cannot be denied that there is more security inside.

Finally, I would like to make a point by arguing that while security may be increased inside, due to the big walls and empty spaces, the outside environment becomes consequentially more unsafe. The large empty walls that face the streets outside gated communities have a direct impact on public street activity. It is not only harmful to city life and street diversity, but its monotones it can also contribute to an increase in danger. Consider the common fear of being alone in an empty street. An emptiness created by the walls of gated communities

4.2 In search for community

The transformation that Mexico City, among a variety of other metropolitan areas, is currently undergoing, is what Paugam would call a crisis of identification. Where the inability to manage and relate to the metropolis as a whole, consequentially leads to a need for breaking the urban fabric into sections in which the citizen's sense of belonging is transformed, and a different urban experience is constructed (1996). It is also therefore that one could address this newly arisen challenges as a crisis of ‘urban sociability’ (Giglia 2001).

Next to security, the search for community holds great value for those who seek to live in a gated community. Like Amalia who told me her initial purpose was that her “children could live with other children” and that she and her husband could get better acquainted with their neighbours.

To which she later added: “Yes, there is more of a social bond in here, which is very paradoxical because one thinks that as one is more confined. She later added a different view on this community feeling by telling me that “in a space like this, even if you don't trust your neighbour, you know that you can trust that he won't hurt you because there is a certain amount of accountability. In a bigger space no”. A fact that is not limited to, but definitely enhanced, in legally formed enclaves.

Despite the homogeneity we have discussed, is sometimes characteristic to these enclaves, Gabriela told me that “you interact with people of different thoughts, and you learn much more than if you were living in a single house”. This sense of community and trust is, nevertheless, only fostered within the walls of these communities. “Somehow I feel less connected to the community. When thinking about the dry cleaners, the man of the tortillas...” as a contrasting perspective on her community feeling inside.

This experience of inner community development, on the other hand, was never shared by any of the workers I spoke with during my research. This is due to the fact that they were never apart from that community in the first place. While inside, they are othered due to the clear distinction between workers and residents in such locations. Imelda worded it in the following way: “Perhaps they make them private so as not to live with people from outside. No. I would not like there to be so many gated communities. Because yes it already looks like there are more. [...]”

4.3 Privatizing the public

From Imelda's point and all the information that was priorly stated, we can observe a clear trend in which public spaces are becoming increasingly privatized. It is in such environments, that the distinctive aspects of public space in the modern city, commence to disappear. These characteristics include inclusivity and free access, cohabitation of different functions, among others (Giglia, 2008). While gated communities offer security and perhaps a possibility for community building to its residents, its contributions to the outside are vacant.

Unlike Juan, both Diego and Imelda express they would not like to live in a gated community: Diego recognises he cannot afford it and tells me: “No, the truth is that rents are very expensive.

[Since] in addition to paying rent, people pay services.” While Imelda conveyed how she clearly disliked the environment: “here are people who perhaps have much more power. And always [think] “we don't talk to that person because they are poor. They look down at you, and not all people live together [in community]. Not everyone is treated the same, they always criticize each other.” The point she makes offer an interesting contrasting view on the idea of community building that most residents had.

Enclaves serve no greater purpose for non-residents, they contribute nether to public space nor freedom of mobility within the city. It's characterizing walls, fences and gates obstruct the flow of human and vehicular traffic alike. Non-residents are forced to move around them with the normalization of segregation and even discrimination, as one of its consequences (Caldeira, 1996). Interestingly enough, this discrimination can be found in numerous ways, for example, Imelda who felt she was not being treated fairly by the security guards: “well, the policemen change, there are some who are very disrespectful, they don't open the door or one must register for anything. I have never registered, but today there is a new policeman, so I had to register.”

She also elaborated on the lack of respect she experiences due to her social location within the gated community, often determined by her household work. Both Imelda and Leticia said they purposely don't greet anyone on their way in or out for fear of their reactions. “We have a salary, but we are not going to be putting up with the humiliations and insults, because it shouldn't be like that”, Imelda concluded. Finally, due to the heightened security and trust in those areas, in times where things go wrong, the blame is always put on these workers. A situation which was very much illustrated by Diego's experience: “Here once, they broke in. [...] The other guards who were there then, well, they blamed them.” “Has it happened more often that if something bad happens the blame falls on you?”, I ask. “Yes, once because the owner of house one, I had to rest on a Sunday and another guy had to go in.” Due to a mistake made by one of the residents, their house was broken into while being away. Later she blamed both of the guards. “Both of us had to go to testify, [in the end]they fired both of us.” While prejudice based on race and class is not exclusive to gated communities, the normalization of such environments might expose workers to an increased public scrutiny.

Finally, when it comes to the privatization of the public, we must recognize the lack of involvement of the state in public matters. Driving citizens and private companies to fulfil the role of the state. In Amalia's words: "civil society is taking spaces that the state should assume, for security, for parks, for aesthetic and sanitary reasons in public space. In all of this, it is already the private sector that is taking the reins. Because there is no state".

5. Conclusion

In the context of normalizing the privatization of public space to ensure the security of a few, we can argue that, the way it fosters segregation of both class and race, we are continuously diverging from what, according to Fainstein, should constitute a Just city: equity, democracy, and diversity (Fainstein, 2011). According to Jacobs, city diversity itself permits and stimulates more diversity. Besides the dense population, it must, among others, ensure the presence of people who go outdoors on different schedules for different purposes, all able to use common facilities (Jacobs, 1961). Thus, when privatizing what is public, a gated community as such becomes the antithesis of city diversity itself.

As a response to my initial research question I would thus state that not only do these gated communities uphold structural inequalities, but they exacerbate current differences by normalizing and encouraging segregation. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that my conclusion does not imply gated communities are the source of general inequalities in Mexico City. Since its existence is a response to current challenges, I would argue one must always acknowledge the context they were built upon as well. In the case of Mexico City, the insufficient capacity of the public institutions to organize and establish regulation for the use of public space goes together with all these processes (Giglia, 2008). Alongside the disappointing reality of the increase in crime rates, insecurity and corruption that cannot be separated from the subject. For me, the problem lays thus not in the gated communities themselves nor in the people who live in them, but in the fact that these spaces are essentially reserved to only a reduced amount of people.

All parents want their kids to be safe and able to play outside carelessly, but only a select few can invest in that prospect. As long as Mexico's inequities, corruption and the lack of state protection endure, it is impossible to expect the disappearance of such spaces. Ultimately, we all crave

security and belonging. If the state fails to provide these necessities, the citizens (who can afford it) will find other ways to protect themselves. Nevertheless, the impact that gated communities have on Mexico City's society should not be ignored. We must continue to think critically about the consequences of urban phenomena in order to challenge current disparities. Essentially, while the social backdrop of Mexico is reflected in the city's design, this design will serve to sustain the same ideas that it was built upon.

6. Bibliography

Ayala, E. (1996) *La casa de la ciudad de México: Evolución y transformaciones*, Conaculta, México

Bagaeen, S., & Uduku, O. (Eds.). (2010). *Gated communities : Social sustainability in contemporary and historical gated developments*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Baronnet, B., Gonzales, M. Racism and curriculum in indigenous education. *Ra Ximhai*, 14(2), 19–29. Retrieved May 7, 2022, from INSERT-MISSING-URL.

Bayón, M. C., & Saraví, G. A. (2013). The cultural dimensions of urban fragmentation: Segregation, sociability, and inequality in Mexico City. *Latin American Perspectives*, 40(2), 35-52.

Bayón, María Cristina 2009 “Persistence of an exclusionary model: inequality and segmentation in Mexican society.” *International Labour Review* 148: 301–315.

Blakely, E. J. and Snyder, M. G. (1997) *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. & Tight, M. (2006). *How to research*. (3rd Ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Bonfil Batalla, Guillermo (1987)*México profundo: Una civilización negada*, Grijalbo, México, D.F.

Caldeira, T. P. (2012). Fortified enclaves: The new urban segregation. In *The urban sociology reader* (pp. 419-427). Routledge.

Caldeira, T. P. R. (1996). Fortified enclaves: the new urban segregation. *Public Culture : Bulletin of the Project for Transnational Cultural Studies*, 8(2), 303.

Caldeira, Teresa 2007 *Ciudad de muros*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

Campbell s. and S. Fainstein (comps.), 1996. *Readings in PLanning Theory*, USA, Blackwell, Introduction of the authors

Ferraez, A. y Valverde, C. (2018) “La gentrificación de barrios tradicionales, una manera neoliberal de instaurar una morfología de la segregación. El barrio de San Lucas, Coyoacán”. *Topofilia*, XI (16), 64-90. En línea: <http://148.228.173.140/topofiliaNew/numeroactual.html>

CNN (2017). Central Mexico earthquake kills more than 200, topples buildings Retrieved from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/19/americas/mexico-earthquake/index.html>

Devine F (2004) *Class Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dulitzky, Ariel (2001) “La negación de la discriminación racial y el racismo en América Latina”, memoria del Foro Regional de México y Centroamérica sobre América Latina”, *Racismo, Discriminación e Intolerancia*, Academia Mexicana de Derechosmemoria del Foro Regional de México y Centroamérica sobre Humanos, México D.F

Fainstein, S. S. (2010). *The just city*. Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801460487>

Flores-Xolocotzi, Ramiro y González-Guillén, Manuel de Jesús (2007). “Consideraciones sociales en el diseño y planificación de parques urbanos”. *Economía, Sociedad y Territorio*,VI(24), pp. 913-951. doi: 10.22136/est002007242

García-Pérez, Hilda y Lara-Valencia, Francisco (2016). “Equidad en la provisión de espacios públicos abiertos: accesibilidad, percepción y uso entre mujeres de Hermosillo, Sonora”. *Sociedad y Ambiente*,4(10), pp. 28-56. doi: 10.31840/sya.v0i10.1651

Giglia, A. (2008). Gated communities in mexico city. *Home Cultures*, 5(1), 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.2752/174063108X287355>

Hall, Stuart. (2017). *Race –The Sliding Signifier*, in: Kobena Mercer (ed.) *The Faithful Triangle. Race,Ethnicity, Nation*. Stuart Hall. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 31-79.

Holmes, Andrew Gary Darwin. “Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide.” *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2020, pp. 1-10.

INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía) (2020) Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre seguridad pública. Retrieved from: https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/programas/envipe/2019/doc/envipe2019_presentacion_nacional.pdf

INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía) (2010). Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010. México: INEG

Jacobs, J. (1961). Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Jacobs, J. (1993). *The death and life of great american cities* (Modern Library). Modern Library.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The production of space*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Low, S. M. (2001). The edge and the center: gated communities and the discourse of urban fear. *American Anthropologist*, 103(1), 45–58.

Low, S. M. (2003). *Behind the gates : life, security, and the pursuit of happiness in fortress america*. Routledge.

Moreno Carranco, M. (2008). La producción espacial de lo global: lo público y lo privado en Santa Fe, Ciudad de México. *Alteridades*, 18(36), 75-86.

Müller, F., & Segura, R. (2017). The uses of informality: urban development and social distinction in Mexico City. *Latin American Perspectives*, 44(3), 158-175.

Narciso, C. F. (2018). Configuración del poder y fragilidad urbana.

NMAAHC. (n.d). *Historical Foundations of Race*. Retrieved at: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/historical-foundations-race>

Ojeda-Revah, L. (2021). Equidad en el acceso a las áreas verdes urbanas en México: revisión de literatura. *Sociedad y Ambiente*, (24), 1-28.

Paugam, Serge. (1996). *L'Exclusion: l'état des savoirs*. Paris: Ed. La

Rowe, Wendy E. "Positionality." *The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, edited by Coghlan, David and Mary Brydon-Miller, Sage, 2014.

Savage M (2010) *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Savage M, Warde A and Devine F (2005) Capitals, assets and resources: Some critical issues. *British Journal of Sociology* 56(5): 31–48.

Sheinbaum, D. Gated communities in Mexico City: an historical perspective. *Urban Des Int* 13, 241–252 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2008.31>

Sheinbaum, D. Gated communities in Mexico City: an historical perspective. *Urban Des Int* 13, 241–252 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2008.31>

Velasco Cruz, Saul. (2016). Racism and education in Mexico. *Revista Mexicana De Ciencias Políticas Y Sociales*, 61(226), 379–407. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0185-1918\(16\)30015-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0185-1918(16)30015-0)

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Positionality of the author

In order to dive into this research I cannot continue without thoroughly disclosing my position as a researcher, especially since positionality (my stance in relation to the social and political context of the study), heavily affects my research process, as well as my understanding and interpretation of the findings (Holmes, 2020). While I can never be fully objective, engaging in this reflexive approach will help reduce bias and partisanship (Rowe, 2014). I was born to a bi-cultural, upper middle-income family. Raised in Mexico City, by my Dutch white mother and Mexican father (who in the Mexican context is also racialized as white). Due to my background, I will perhaps never be perceived as fully Mexican, a foreignness I frequently experience when being addressed as “güerita” (blondie) on the familiar streets of the city I grew up in. In the Mexican context, I am and have always been racialized as white.

Building upon that statement, in order to understand my positionality in relation to the construction of whiteness, let's look at how whiteness is generally perceived and/or utilized. In her text, *White privilege and Male Privilege*, McIntosh calls white privilege an “invisible package of unearned assets” and continues to explain that she has been conditioned into oblivion with regard to her unearned skin privilege (McIntosh, 2017). White skin is certainly perceived as a passport and associated with unearned advantage, but as mentioned by Emma Dabiri, “its status is not consistent, and has different meanings in different contexts” and also tends to be invisible to those who do not inhabit it (2020; Ahmed, 2012). Whiteness is part of what we see as racialization but very often it remains unacknowledged and perceived as the norm, it sits at an intersection between historical privilege and identity (Meer, 2019). I would argue that whiteness is not really seen because it is rarely named, whiteness lacks meaning since it is only recently that the concept is being used within the discourse of race. As mentioned by Roland Barthes: “Myth is speech justified in excess” (Hall, p.59). The notion that whiteness portrays innocence and is often the representation of “the normal” by default, has been introduced into society through the general (arguably, unconscious) discourse on whiteness (Wekker, 2016).

Finally, I want to disclose that, while I did not grow up in a gated community myself, I was surrounded by individuals who did. I never questioned the presence of such areas and I also

frequently enjoyed their existence. Nowadays, I live in the Netherlands while my family just moved into a gated community in the South of Mexico City, showing that my family has always possessed the privilege and abilities to do so. When I first came across the terms “enclave” or “gated community” I found myself being appalled by the idea of a community that took hold of public space in order to distance themselves from the “others”. It was not until later that I recognized its familiarity.

I believe that my bi-cultural upbringing and broad perspective can be very valuable, and I see it as my responsibility to engage with this topic even if I may not be (always) personally affected by it. Remaining oblivious to the subject is just another way of upholding the unequal structures we live with, especially since the only way to tear them down is for all of us to actively and constantly challenge them. Through the current research and its findings, I hope to contribute to a greater consciousness on this topic and show the importance of continues engagement.

Appendix 2: Ethical considerations

Potential risks of the design lie in the fact that it would include (possibly) vulnerable groups, especially in concerns to those working within the chosen communities. Secondly, the topic is controversial and thus difficult to address for some. Those that inhabit the gated communities may be put in an unpleasant position since the research tries to point to the connection between gated communities and racism and thus addresses topics with negative connotations and may bring up unpleasant experiences for some, while others may be inclined to feel called out. This may result in hostility or lack of compliance and honesty, as well as putting the participants in vulnerable positions. Finally, the interviews will be held in Spanish and then translated to English, the research also deals with a lot of personal information that must be dealt with properly.

Reasons for holding all interviews in the mother tongue of the participants is due to the fact that some of those participants belong to groups that may not speak English as well as the need to make sure there are no misunderstandings due to language barriers.