Who Owns This Street?

Gated Communities of the Collective Defense in San Salvador

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Abstract

The question of how to manage the urban commons has been a widely debated issue within urban studies. While ideally, everyone should have the same access to public spaces and urban resources, not all urban commons are of open access due to continuing processes of privatization, appropriation, and commodification. Gated communities are an example of that. Yet, most perspectives assume that gating occurs only in upscale, newly built developments, ignoring the wide diversity in typologies of gated communities which may have different causes and effects than the stereotypical cases. Specifically, there is a large research gap regarding the type of gating occurring in many Central American cities, in which previously open streets in low- and middle-class neighborhoods are being informally enclosed and turned into "gated communities of the collective defense". My research project addresses this issue by looking at the informal process of enclosure of the urban commons. I aim to answer the following questions: What is motivating the informal enclosure of streets and how this is fragmenting the urban commons? Why has the local government allowed this to happen and how does this affect the quality of life in the city? In my thesis, I look at three cases of gated communities in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, El Salvador, using observation and semi structured interviews. I argue that these cases are examples of a "tragedy of the commons" in which there is a conflict within the management of urban public space between private and public actors. I believe that the situation of socio-spatial segregation and inequality are worsened by the process of gating, and that the current government policies do not address this issue adequately. This thesis, by closely examining the causes and consequences of gated communities of the collective defense, sheds new light on the process of enclosure of the urban commons.

Key words: gated communities, fortification, enclosure, urban commons, socio-spatial segregation, walls, gates, informality

Abstrakt

Die Frage, wie städtische Gemeingüter zu verwalten sind, ist in der Stadtforschung ein viel diskutiertes Thema. Obwohl im Idealfall alle Menschen den gleichen Zugang zu öffentlichen Räumen und städtischen Ressourcen haben sollten, sind nicht alle städtischen Gemeingüter aufgrund fortlaufender Prozesse der Privatisierung, Aneignung und Kommodifizierung frei zugänglich. Gated Communities sind ein Beispiel dafür. Die meisten Perspektiven gehen jedoch davon aus, dass Gates nur in gehobenen, neu errichteten Siedlungen vorkommen, und ignorieren dabei die große Vielfalt an Typologien von Gated Communities, die andere Ursachen und Auswirkungen haben können als die stereotypen Fälle. Insbesondere besteht eine große Forschungslücke in Bezug auf die Art von Gates, die in vielen mittelamerikanischen Städten auftreten, in denen zuvor offene Straßen in Vierteln der unteren und mittleren Klassen informell eingezäunt und in "Gated Communities der kollektiven Verteidigung" umgewandelt werden. Mein Forschungsprojekt befasst sich mit diesem Thema, indem es den informellen Prozess der Einfriedung der städtischen Allmende untersucht. Ich möchte die folgenden Fragen beantworten: Was ist der Grund für die informelle Einfriedung von Straßen und wie wird die städtische Allmende dadurch fragmentiert? Warum hat die lokale Regierung dies zugelassen, und wie wirkt sich dies auf die Lebensqualität in der Stadt aus? In meiner Arbeit untersuche ich drei Fälle von Gated Communities im Großraum San Salvador, El Salvador, anhand von Beobachtungen und halbstrukturierten Interviews. Ich behaupte, dass diese Fälle Beispiele für eine "Tragödie der Allmende" sind, bei der ein Konflikt zwischen privaten und öffentlichen Akteuren bei der Verwaltung des städtischen öffentlichen Raums besteht. Ich bin der Meinung, dass die sozialräumliche Segregation und Ungleichheit durch den Prozess des Gating noch verschlimmert werden und dass die derzeitige Regierungspolitik dieses Problem nicht angemessen angeht. Durch die genaue Untersuchung der Ursachen und Folgen von Gated Communities der kollektiven Verteidigung wirft diese Arbeit ein neues Licht auf den Prozess der Einschließung der städtischen Allmende.

Schlüsselwörter: Gated Communities, Befestigung, Einfriedung, Urban Commons, sozialräumliche Segregation, Mauern, Tore, Informalität

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Introduction

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1.1 Problem Statement

Figure 1. Elderly residents of Colonia Yumuri protest the teardown of the gates in their neighborhood (Jordán, 2021).

Figure 2. The same gates being reinstalled a day later by municipality workers (Alvarado, 2021).

"They have left us unprotected!" These are the words of the residents of Colonia Yumuri who protested the actions of the municipal government of San Salvador when municipal agents were sent to destroy the gates that they themselves had built to limit the access to some streets in their neighborhood (Funes, 2021; Jordán, 2021). The elders who lived in this street that connects the park to the rest of the neighborhood alleged that they did not feel safe anymore and that some of them even suffered from robberies; that is why they justified the construction of the gates that was done without asking the municipality for any permit. So, in a case widely covered by the media, the local government made a rare display of force and acted against a phenomenon that had long remained in a gray legal zone: the gates that have turned many streets and neighborhoods of the city into gated communities. However, this did not last long, as the public outcry caused the municipality to revert its decision. The gates were reinstalled

a few days later by municipality workers (Alvarado, 2021) and everything apparently returned to normality (or at least to those who live inside). Yet, those who live in an informal settlement outside of the newly gated area cannot access their local park anymore. The gates that divide the neighborhood cause a very complex situation which revolves around the question of who owns the street and who has the right to use it.

The previously described situation is not unique, though. Gated communities are a phenomenon that is highly prevalent in neighborhoods of all kinds in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (Baires, 2018). In the case of this thesis, the focus is on "gated communities of the collective defense", which are open streets or small neighborhoods which are transformed into private spaces, such as what happened in Colonia Yumuri.

While ideally, everyone should be able to have the same access to public spaces and urban resources, not all urban commons are of open access (Harvey, 2011). Gated communities limit the access to neighborhoods to a select group of people who have access to them, causing social segregation (Roitman, 2003). Gated communities of the collective defense worsen this situation by causing an unregulated growth of gated areas that damage the urban fabric of a city and limit access to it to the most unprivileged groups (Baires, 2018).

The wider issue of gated communities has fascinated scholars from the last decades of the twentieth century to the present. Yet, most of it focuses on the traditional North American gated community and its variants, which is typically a new development built from scratch in the outskirts of the city. Therefore, it is important to know more about this different typology of gating in order to understand what the implications of an unregulated fragmentation of the urban commons by processes of enclosure and fortification are.

1.2 Research Questions

I aim to answer the following research questions: What is motivating the informal enclosure of streets and how is this fragmenting the urban commons? Why have local governments allowed the enclosure of streets and how does this affect the quality of life in the city? Specifically, in my project, I will be looking at three cases of gated communities in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, El Salvador, in order

to show that while those living inside may benefit from the enclosure, everyone faces the negative consequences of a limited access to the urban commons.

1.3 Structure

The rest of this thesis is structured in four sections. The 'Literature review' section gives an overview of the theories that support this research. Here, I develop ideas of how gated communities affect the city and its neighborhoods. This section starts with the commons, and how this term has evolved from its beginnings to nowadays, and how the city fits within this framework. Then, I will discuss how two phenomena, enclosure and fortification, affect the urban commons and how this is related to gated communities. Finally, I give an overview of different types of gated communities and how the typology that occurs in San Salvador fits here.

In the third section, 'Methods' I focus on the methodological approaches for the research. This part details the different methods that were used, observation and semi-structured interviews, as well as the three case studies where these methods were employed, and the process for analyzing the collected data.

The obtained data is discussed in the fourth section, 'Results'. This section includes a collection of maps, pictures, and text that is the result of the field work in the case studies. This section explores how these gated communities look like, which similarities occur between them and what are the differences. The objective is to see how life is both inside of the gated areas and in their peripheries. The perspective of different groups of people; those living inside, those who live outside, and governments officials; is included here.

The final section, 'Discussion', elaborates on what was obtained in the previous section within the framework of the literature review. Here, I will go beyond the case studies and analyze both the causes and the wider implications of gated communities of the collective defense in San Salvador, and how this all relates to what is known about enclosure processes of the commons.

Part 2: Literature Review

Part 2: Literature Review

Image on previous page: sign on the gates of a gated street in Jardines de Cuscatlán.

2.1 The Commons

2.1.1 The "Tragedy of the Commons"

Hardin has been well known for popularizing the use of the commons in academia after his 1968 article. Using illustrations from the natural world, such as grazing land, forests, or fisheries in the open ocean, he described a theoretical "tragedy of the commons" that can emerge over the management of commonly owned resources. In his examples, he assumes that the different actors do not communicate with each other, and instead they just act for their own personal gain. The tragedy resides in the fact that if left unsupervised, individual actors will overexploit these resources for a temporal individual profit that eventually leads to the detriment of all. So, in one of the most common examples, cattle grazing over common land, the system is in balance if all the farmers limit their cattle's consumption of the grassland so that all the other farmers still have enough. However, if one farmer decided to let their cattle consume more than would be appropriate, this will result in the detriment of the others. The natural reaction of the other farmers would be to also try to overconsume, resulting in the "tragedy of the commons" While Hardin did not define what the commons were (the focus is instead on the effects of the mismanagement of the commons and potential solutions), there is a strong association of the term to resources or goods, and at this point this is all based in natural resources.

Ostrom (1990) continues with the view of the commons as goods and defines four types of goods based on the subtractability of use and the difficulty of excluding potential beneficiaries[1]. She focuses on one of those types of goods, which she calls "common pool resources" or CPRs for short. They are defined as "a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly (but not

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[1] Ostrom (1990) says that resources which have a low subtractability potential can be called public goods if it is difficult to exclude others. If it is easy to exclude them, they are called "toll or club goods." Those resources who have a high subtractability potential can be called common-pool resources if it is difficult to exclude others and private goods if exclusion is easy. While her definition of commons is based on CPRs, subsequent authors with a new commons perspective have a wider view on which resources they consider part of commons.

impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use" (Ostrom, 1990, p. 30). Again, no clear definition for the term commons is given, and this has caused others to criticize her for using the term CPR interchangeably with the word commons (Euler, 2018). Nonetheless, this demonstrates again a focus on tangible resources, but with a newfound interest in institutional arrangements to manage them.

2.1.2 The New Commons

While Hardin and Ostrom built the original theory that has been used in commons research, it is important to recognize the limitations of their work. Their definitions and views of the commons have been challenged in the last decade by the interest in the so-called "new commons" (Hess, 2008). This new conceptualization includes other types of resources from various disciplines that go beyond the natural occurring CPRs, such as culture, knowledge, information, infrastructure, or even the city and neighborhoods (S. Foster & Iaione, 2015). Therefore, the commons are not limited to being tangible or natural resources. The list of new commons is rapidly expanding, with newfound CPRs emerging constantly. But what makes a resource, even those as defined in the new conceptualizations, a type of commons? Muhl (2013) thinks that what makes resources commons are not the goods themselves buy how people use them. Therefore, commons should be viewed as social relations. Mies (2014, p. 108) agrees by saying, "no commons can exist without a community." He argues that relations between society and resources have always existed, and that it is important that this should be acknowledged in commons research. Euler (2018) thinks then that commons include two important components that are deeply interrelated and that should be used for conceptualizing the commons: the resources themselves and the social relations linked to those resources.

These social relations are related to the way in which the commons are managed. This had long been a topic of discussion between different authors. Hardin (1968) thought that a strong state control is necessary to oversee the resources and limit appropriation by private actors, thus avoiding the "tragedy of the commons." Ostrom (1990) calls this the theory of the state. On the other hand, the theory of the firm argues that private actors in the free market can independently create a firm to coordinate the actions of the actors. In this case, the commons is divided between private actors. These entrepreneurs then act to "the best of their interests" by acknowledging the necessity of collaboration. Ostrom uses the classic illustration of the prisoner's dilemma to show how collaboration could theoretically produce the best results for all parties involved. Some scholars that come from a Marxist background (Fournier, 2013; Harvey, 2011) oppose heavily the theory of the firm,

though, due to its focus on the market. However, even Ostrom (1990), acknowledged that neither totally public or totally private situations are the solution, and recognizes that both the theory of the state and the theory of the firm have significant flaws. Instead, she campaigns for a third type of arrangement, in which the commons are managed by self-organized, self-governed institutions. While the government still has a role to play, it is not the only actor in this arrangement. Instead, the State should focus on facilitating, supporting, and supplying the tools for governing the resources (Ostrom, 2010). Hess (2008) argues that innovative solutions of governance are needed beyond the traditional private or public dichotomy, so governance solutions should be polycentric. Moreover, he thinks that the focus should remain not on the resources, but on the community that creates the institutions to govern them.

New Commons advocates link this to what they call "commoning." This term was coined by Linebaugh (Linebaugh, 2008) to refer to the fact that communities and resources have always been related. Commoning, therefore, refers to the social processes in which the commons are created and managed (Euler, 2018). Fournier (2013) argues that in the neoliberal age, commoning is the social organization that resists the processes of commodification and enclosure that threaten the commons. This process should ideally occur from grass-root movements instead of top-down from a central authority. One type of new commons where this process of contestation and resistance is seen is the urban commons (Harvey, 2011).

2.1.3 The Urban Commons

The new conceptualizations around the commons allow the understanding of new resources as commons. But it is important to understand the ways in which these new commons are different from the traditional ones in order to not to make the wrong presumptions (Harvey, 2011). In fact, even Ostrom (1990) was wary of recommending the use metaphors such as "the tragedy of the commons" or "the prisoner's dilemma" as a way of making policy; after all, they are models and models have limitations. So, if the city is to be considered as a commons, there are many differences that must be acknowledged when using the commons framework(S. Foster & Iaione, 2018). For example, in contrast with the traditional commons as defined by Hardin (1968) and Ostrom (1990), urban commons are not diminished when they are used; on the contrary, it is the use or the consumption of the city that adds to it (Borch & Kornberger, 2015). This is called a nonsubstractive resource (Hess & Ostrom, 2011). This is because when talking about urban commoning, the focus is not only on the resources or physical infrastructure on the

city itself (such as sidewalks, streets, public spaces and services), but also in the activities that happen on it and the resultant urban life that happens on it.

While the term "urban commons" is quite recent, literature related to the governance of urban space and the social relations linked to it exist since many decades ago, with some of the most influential foundations being Jane Jacobs (1961) and Henri Lefebvre (1968). Jacobs' activism and critique on traditional city planning focused on the fact that the city has an "irreplaceable social capital" that should be preserved. After all, she argues, the liveliness of the neighborhood depends on its "self-governance" by its residents (Jacobs, 1961). While she did not use the term "commons" explicitly, her writings have become a source of inspiration for urban commons research nonetheless, especially for her focus in preserving community. This is related to the idea that the residents have a "right to the city" and to shape the city in the way that more adequately fills their needs and desires (Lefebvre, 1968, 1970). Castells (Castells, 1983) affirms in a similar way that the city is a place where grass-root movements can make political change and change in the city itself and on the management of its resources.

But not all resources in the city are the same (Cowen, 1985). Ostrom (1990) already distinguished between different types of resources based on subtractability and difficulty of excluding others. Solum (2010) expands this by dividing commons into additional categories that can be applied to the urban commons: "open access" and "limited access" commons. In this case, transportation systems such as streets could be considered open access goods since everyone in the city can use them while a gated community is as a limited access good exclusive to only those who live inside. Yet, even if an urban good is open or limited, it does not mean that its ownership is public or private. That is why Solum (2010) also makes a nuanced differentiation amongst public and common goods.

Furthermore, urban commons are not static, as they are continuously being produced and used in a process of "commoning" (Euler, 2018). Hardin (1968) and Ostrom (1990) already warned that commons can be improved or degraded depending on their management. Similarly, commons that used to be open access could theoretically be transformed into limited access ones and vice versa (S. Foster & Iaione, 2015). However, the problem is that the forces driving the transformation from open to limited access commons are quite strong and are often dominated by the market. In a neoliberal society, the urban commons are being continuously enclosed, appropriated, and commodified (Harvey, 2011) and it is difficult to find examples of processes that push into the opposite direction. Some theorists believe that these exclusionary and enclosing processes occur because not all commons have stable forms of co-ownership (Lee & Webster, 2006). For example, neighborhoods in particular are extremely vulnerable to exclusionary practices due

to their complex nature of the co-ownership (Lee & Webster, 2006). Harvey (2011, p. 103) uses the example of gated communities to refer to a space "within which an exclusionary commons gets defined."

This poses another related problem, which (Harvey, 2011) defines as a "problem of scale." When defining the commons, he argues that it is important to define the scale and the limits of that commons. There may also be interaction between different scales, in which one is favored and another one is degraded. Harvey says that,

> "What looks like a good way to resolve problems at one scale does not hold at another scale. Even worse, good solutions at one scale do not necessarily aggregate up, or cascade down, to make for good solutions at another scale" (Harvey, 2011, p. 102)

These contests between scales also reflect contestations between groups of people and interests (Borch & Kornberger, 2015). Again, gated communities are an example of a problem of scale. While gating may be beneficial if the commons is defined as just the neighborhood, if it is seen as part of a city-scale commons the consequences are different.

2.2 Fortification and enclosure of the urban commons

2.2.1 Conceptualizing fortification

It is clear that gated communities are one way in which the urban commons is degraded, but it is not a phenomenon that occurs by itself. It is deeply connected to the concept of fortification. Fortification is, of course, a concept that has been used in urban contexts since ancient times, as cities needed to defend themselves against enemies. Yet, even if cities nowadays are rarely fortified as to block a potential invader, the concept is still used; not in a way to divide the city from the exterior, but as to divide the interior of the city in many parts (Low, 1997). It is explained as a process in which the built environment is contoured by social groups that form communities, compete for territory, and segregate themselves; thus, keeping others out and dividing social groups (Fainstein, 1994). This term was re-popularized in the last decades of the twentieth century, as American cities were facing the consequences of decades of inequality. Low (1997) described that fortification

measures are done by urban designers and urban planners as a way to respond to the changes in urban and suburban American cities. She says,

> "The increasing inequality of neighborhood resources and services, the escalating price of decent housing, the ever widening income gap between rich and poor, and the dismantling of the legislated safety net leaving families homeless, has resulted in the buttressing of social and physical barriers that separate people and communities by race, class, and gender" (Low, 1997, p. 53).

Davis (2011) recognizes that fortification can still occur physically through the use of architectural elements such as walls, fences, enclosed spaces, and a hostile design of the public space. For example, public spaces may be designed in a way to discourage a specific group from staying in a space. He, for example, uses the term "mean streets" to refer to the actions that the City of Los Angeles was doing for avoiding homeless people in wealthy areas. But architectural fortification can still occur in a similar to how ancient cities had walls to protect themselves. Urban enclaves such as gated communities use them to avoid potential unwanted people in them (Trisnawan & Harjoko, 2020). But, Davis (2011) also adds an additional element to his vision of fortification, which he calls the "militarization of the city." He explains that sometimes physical elements are not present, but the use of the police, private security and surveillance can also act as elements to divide two groups. In his examples, these two elements together can reinforce exclusion of groups, creating a fortress city. Davis (2011, p. 158) considers that the "fortress effect" that is occurring in many cities is not a design failure, but a feature, an intentional socio-spatial strategy. Webster (2007) calls these strategies "exclusion by design."

Trisnawan and Harjoko (2020, pp. 070025−1) conceptualize fortification as " a condition, where a strong enough 'medium' exists between two spaces." Additionally, they argue that fortification can be metaphysical, consisting of both physical and non-physical elements. This means that an existing imaginary border between two groups becomes strengthened and solidified when the architectural elements are built. Similarly, when a physical division is erected, a mental one is constructed too. These divisions cause a contestation of urban space, since "fortification makes city space into a contest arena that has certain impacts due to the existence of the fort itself" (Trisnawan et al., 2022, p. 88). These contestations in the commons are also relate to conflicts between social and political interests (Harvey, 2011).

2.2.2 Causes of fortification

Some theories about why fortification occurs blame it on "urban fear." This related to the idea that architecture and building practices are linked to emotional experience. Foucault (1975) gives the example of a literal fortress – a prison – to exemplify this. In prisons, space is controlled through intricate architectural designs that isolate and separate individuals. The fear that the prisoners will escape influences the design in order to discourage this. Surveillance, security, and discipline complement the architecture as a way to regulate behavior. Indeed, fear has been related to city building since a long time ago (Ellin, 2001), and most of the time this involves one group who seeks to distance themselves from another that it perceives as a danger or hazard.

This can be seen as contradicting, since cohabitating with strangers is one of the main reasons that cities exist (Zeeb & Joffe, 2020). In the US context, Flusty (1994) views this as a result of the degradation of American city centers where people of different social groups mixed together. Because of the phenomenon of "white flight" and redlining policies[2], these commons are not inclusive anymore.

> "The more inclusive the urban commons, the greater the diversity of interactions. These interactions synthesize new cultures, alternative ways of living and popular forces occasionally strong enough to upset entrenched status quos. (…) The inclusive urban common has thus provided venues for the creation and expression of a pluralistic society or a preponderantly powerful minority. (…) The dismantling of urban commons has accelerated and assumed an increased belligerency in recent years under the impetus of a plethora of urban fears." (Flusty, 1994, p. 12).

This separation of where the elites and the masses live cause them to be disconnected from the actual reality of the city. Those who fortify themselves tend to believe that crime and violence rates are much higher than what they really are (Low, 1997, 2001). They tend to isolate themselves into their urban fortresses (Davis, 2011), using both the architectural and militarized elements of fortification. In spaces where the elites and the "undesirable" masses could interact, fortification techniques are used in order to filter them out. Frequently, the one who are left out are the poor, immigrants, and those from racial minorities. (Davis, 2011).

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[2] White flight refers to a mid-twentieth century phenomenon in the US in which white people left central neighborhoods as they became more diverse in favor of suburbs. This was accompanied by "redlining" policies that forbade people from other groups to live in those areas.

On the other hand, some view fortification as an inevitable result of capitalism and neoliberal policies applied in the city. (Molotch, 1976, p. 309) already warned that the city was being turned into "the areal expression of the interests of some land-based elite." Cities are turned into "growth machines" that assist these groups in accomplishing their objectives. However, in such a model based in land, physical boundaries are an unavoidable necessity for growth (Webster, 2007). In other words, as groups compete for limited resources, such as urban land, strong boundaries or fortification processes are very likely to happen. Militarization of the city helps the group interested in maintaining those borders. In the neoliberal city, both architectural and military fortification techniques are used as a way to attract investors which are seen as more valuable, thus creating the image of a more "competitive" city, even if it is at the cost of the unprivileged groups (Swanstrom et al., 2002). Harvey (2008) adds that by having this focus on growth and competitiveness, the neoliberal turn has fragmented the city, creating fortified "micro-states" of wealth that concentrate most of the resources. This is a fragmentation of the urban commons, where only a privileged few can use space, keeping others out and deciding the city (Fainstein, 1994).

2.2.3 Fortification and gated communities

The place in which urban fear and the interests of a land-based elite coincide is the gated community. Blakeley and Snyder (1997, p. 2) define them in the following way:

> "Gated communities are residential areas with restricted access in which normally public spaces are privatized. They are security developments with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration by non-residents. They include new developments and older areas retrofitted with gates and fences, and they are found from the inner cities to the exurbs and from the richest neighborhoods to the poorest."

This definition by Blakeley and Snyder can be related to both the concepts of the commons and fortification. It acknowledges that gated communities define an exclusionary commons to which only certain people have access (Harvey, 2011) and that this is done through the use of both physical and non-physical fortification techniques (Davis, 2011; Low, 2001). The separation caused by gating, has effects in social relationships in neighborhoods, which have caused debates regarding the name gated "communities." Some (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004; Morris, 1996) argue that the definitions of "community" may not apply to them, due to the intentional design of these places to create a separation from the rest of society. On the other

hand, some defend the use of the term due to the possibility of interaction that exists between residents inside them (Lai, 2016) .

> While a gated development does not necessarily produce a community, a gated community [...] is a community because its residents have, beyond their private dwellings, a specific well-insulated and delineated *common place* within which *face-to-face* (i.e., bodily, rather than virtual) communications can occur. (Lai, 2016, pp. 379−380).

Yet, a fundamental key in this debate remains in the definition of community that is used. Lai (2016) believes that the origin of this debate is that since the term "community" is almost always used in a favorable way, its association to something as contentious as a gated community raises strong feelings. However, the fact is that the term is so widespread, that even detractors have to use it. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, Blakely and Snyder's (1997) definition will be used.

While contemporary academic interest in modern occurrences of gated communities started in the nineties, the phenomenon of gating is not new. In fact, gated communities are "as old as city building itself" (Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p. 4) with examples existing in Roman cities, medieval England, and Spanish settlements in the Americas. They are always tied to an idea of separating groups of people. The industrialized age accelerated this, as the working class arrived in masses to the city and the industrial aristocracy wished to separate themselves from them. In the first half of the twentieth century, they expanded within American cities, but remained an oddity reserved for the celebrities and aristocracy. By the mid twentieth century, they spread more as the first master-planned retirement developments were built (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004).

But the middle class does not have access to gated communities yet at this point. It was only until suburbanization accelerated during the post-war years that this happened. Boosted by a good economy, they are no longer something reserved for the richest of the rich; now, a relatively larger segment of the population has access to this kind of place. Deeply inspired by the writings of Ebenezer Howard (1902), they were designed following the principles of the "Garden City", with long winding roads, abundant vegetation and greenery reminiscent of a romanticized version of the countryside (Fischman, 1996). Gated communities, therefore, begin to be associated with the suburbs at this point (Blakely & Snyder, 1997).

> "They [gated communities] are the outgrowth of decades of suburban design and public land-use policy. Gates are firmly within the suburban tradition: they enhance and harden the suburbaness

of the suburbs, and they attempt to suburbanite the city." (Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p. 11)

In the same way as the suburbs, they were utopias where the rich and upper middle class could "materialize their dreams" (Fischman, 1996) even if those means meant denying the reality of the city (Blakely & Snyder, 1997). Yet, one cannot think of gating without the parallel processes that were occurring at the time in less privileged neighborhoods, such as redlining and Jim Crow laws that prevented minorities to access these places (Mitchell & Franco, 2018). As seen in this very brief history of gating, these communities have served different purposes over time. In the next section, I will explore some of the categories that different scholars have used for differentiating them.

2.2.4 Types of gated communities

Blakeley and Snyder (1997) identify three main typologies of gating, which have been widely used ever since. Grant and Mittelsteadt (2004) add that while these categories are useful, they are not exclusive. In fact, many gated communities incorporate elements from various typologies. These are:

> *Lifestyle communities.* These are the ones that developed from the original retirement communities. They cater towards users who want amenities and recreational facilities. Some amenities may include golf courses, country clubs, pools, sport facilities, among others. Many of these projects are developed from big master plans that may be themed, thus creating "suburban utopias" (Fischman, 1996). Nowadays, these aesthetic themes may be linked to globalization and an ideal of developing amenities for attracting the transnational elites (Fu, 2020).

> *Prestige communities.* Harvey (Harvey, 2011) conceptualized gated communities as places for capital accumulation, where both the developer and the people who live there expand and show off their wealth. This typology focuses on being symbols of status and wealth and are further subdivided into three categories by Blakeley and Snyder (1997) according to the level of affluence of the residents: enclaves of the rich and famous, top-fifth developments, and projects for the executive middle class. In all of these examples, preserving the value of housing remains a big priority, so residents tend to organize themselves and set rules and guidelines on behavior and property maintenance (Lai, 2016).

> *Security zone communities.* In places where urban fear is prevalent, this typology of communities offer potential residents a place to retreat from the

"outside world" (Flusty, 1994; Low, 2001)The upper classes justify this separation with the discourse of urban fear (Caldeira, 2000). Here, developers try to incorporate as many security features as possible as a selling point. Or sometimes, it may be the residents who organize themselves and fortify their own neighborhoods. There are examples where they may not be completely closed or that they are designed in such a way that the layout of the streets is inconvenient for traffic or pedestrians to pass through. Blakeley and Snyder (1997) call these "barricade perches."

These typologies show that even in the United States, gated communities have never been homogenous, and that instead they can vary considerably[3]. In fact, they are not a phenomenon exclusive to North America. Due to this, the validity of using Blakeley and Snyder's (1997) concepts outside of these geographical limits has been questioned (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004). They think that these typologies focus only on the function of the enclosure. Instead, they propose eight features of any gated community model that can be used to create a checklist for analyzing a model of gated communities. These features are (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004, p. 917):

1. *Function of enclosure:* the purpose that the gating is intended to fulfill. It can be subdivided in physical, economic, social, and symbolic functions, which are similar to Blakeley and Snyder's (1997) three types of gated communities. Likewise, in Grant and Mittelsteadt's classification, a gated community can have many functions.

2. *Security features and barriers:* the fortification measures that are used in the gated community; they can be subdivided in the nature of the boundary and the nature of security. These are related to Davis's (2011) two main types of fortification. The nature of the boundary refers to the physical infrastructure that blocks access if other people to the gated community, such as gates, doors, and fences. The nature of security refers to others features that complement the security of the gated complex, such as private guards, cameras, alarms, controlled access systems, among others.

3. *Amenities and facilities included:* the physical infrastructure inside the gated communities that is meant to provide a better environment quality for the residents. These include recreational and commercial facilities, community centers, schools, among others. The higher-end gated complexes will have many of these amenities and facilities, while the simpler ones may lack them at all.

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[3] In fact, Sanchez et al.(2005) recognize that even in the US context, there is also a dichotomy in the demographics of who inhabits gated communities. While many of gated communities are inhabited by white, wealthy residents, most people fail to realize that minorities are increasingly choosing to live in these types of neighborhoods.

4. *Type of residents:* how homogenous or heterogeneous the residents of the community are, considering age, class, ethnicity, race, status, and shared activities. This is all based on the demographics of the gated community and can vary drastically depending on the type of gated area.

5. *Tenure:* this refers to the conditions under how the housing units and the gated community are owned and managed. This includes details such as for how long the residents stay there (year-round, or seasonal), if the housing units are owned, rented, or part of a condominium, and what is the ownership status of the common areas (simple ownership or condominium).

6. *Location:* where the gated community is located. It could be urban, suburban, exurban, or rural. Grant and Mittelsteadt (2004) note that this is tied to the variables that cause the gating.

7. *Size:* the physical dimension of the gated area. It can vary in size from a single street with a cul-de-sac to a neighborhood, and in extreme cases up to the size of a town. Other than the dimensions themselves, size is also important because it affects the social relations that occur within the enclosed areas (Grant & Mittelsteadt, 2004).

8. *Policy Context:* what is the government response towards this type of gating and what is the effect that this is having in the growth or decline of an area. Some places will have legislation that encourages gating, while others may have policies in effect with the objective of limiting them.

While the original theory comes from a different context, these categories are wide enough to be useful for studying gated communities in different contexts. Nowadays, there is a big movement to try to study "ordinary cities" (Brill, 2022; Robinson, 2016) and to theorize about gating from different perspectives, specially from the Global South. Scholarly research about gated communities is also being transformed by this trend, and now, many are researching about countries that have previously been overlooked. Some authors have written about them in widely different contexts, such as Brazil (Caldeira, 2000), Chile (Kostenwein, 2021), Argentina (Roitman, 2003, 2017), Indonesia (Trisnawan & Harjoko, 2020), South Africa (Breetzke et al., 2014), and China (Wu & Li, 2020). However, one thing becomes clear is that even if there are differences, there are general tendencies that are the product of globalization (Lungo et al., 2001)

Grant & Mittelsteadt's (2004) eight features of gated communities are a good way of comparing amongst different contexts and types of gated communities. However, there is one basic assumption that is not considered in most of the literature about gating, and it is that gated communities are new developments. The fact is that gating can also occur in spaces that are already public, and the transformation from "open commons" to "exclusionary commons" is possible in the same land. Blakeley

and Snyder's (1997) definition of gated communities already mentions the possibility of older neighborhoods being transformed, but because of the rarity of this happening in the American context, this was not dealt in detail in their article. This means that there is a gap that is still in big need of further research.

2.3 Gated communities in San Salvador

2.3.1 Context

> "A theory's situatedness refers to the context in which it has been produced and reproduced. (…) A theory's specificity refers to the limits of its explanatory power. (…) A theory's partiality refers to the fact that theories are, necessarily, not theories of everything."
> (Lawhon et al., 2016, p. 1619)

When analyzing the existing body of literature about gated communities it is important to know that urban theory is not universal, and that instead, it is deeply based on the context where it was written. Therefore, urban theory should be provintialized if the desire is to develop a "more pluralistic understanding of the urban condition" (Lawhon et al., 2016). Even if, as previously explained, there is a growing body of literature on the phenomenon of gating coming from the Global South, the reality is that the theoretical foundation on this topic is still heavily localized on the Global North, specifically in American cities. Thus, there is a need for re-examining the understanding of this concept by thinking though elsewhere (Robinson, 2016).

For doing this, I focused my attention on a case study outside of the usual sphere of academic knowledge-making. My case study is the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador[4]. As the capital country of El Salvador, a country located in the so-called "northern triangle" of Central America, this city has various characteristics that make it suitable for analyzing the phenomenon of gated communities of the collective defense.

First, it is a city which until very recently had very high levels of crime. In fact, it, along with other Central American cities, frequently ranked among the ones with the highest rates of intentional homicide around the world. This makes it interesting

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[4] Additional information about the case study is given in the Methods section of this thesis (3.2 Case Studies).

to research since most of the theory around gated communities deals with the concept of urban fear (Ellin, 2001; Low, 1997, 2001). In San Salvador, violence is high, and it is "a multicausal social phenomenon," and "to give an exhaustive explanation is a challenge that surpasses the scope of a single discipline" (Salgado, 2011, p. 243), but social division and inequality are usually understood as some of the biggest causes (Huhn, Sebastian, 2006; Salgado, 2011). This situation contrasts with previous influential research (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Davis, 2011; Ellin, 2001; Low, 2001) done on American cities that emphasize that murder and crime rates in those cities are not that high and they are frequently overestimated by those living inside. It will be interesting to analyze if the justification of gated communities holds up when those violence levels are high. Additionally, high-violence environments have consequences in city making that are worth studying. (Adams, 2017) explains that human development, social practices and urban citizenship are affected by chronic violence. (Dammert, 2018) agrees that high levels of violence, such as the ones the selected case study, pose additional challenges to city making; gated communities are, of course, part of this challenge.

Secondly, this period of high crime and political stability coincided with a period of high urbanization in San Salvador. The post-Civil War[5] period saw a deepening in the social inequalities around the country, in which large parts of major cities expanded (Tardanico, 2008). It is during this time that the different municipalities of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador grew and sprawled into the hinterland that once separated them, forming a continuous conurbation (Vargas-Bolaños et al., 2020). The urbanism of these new neighborhoods of the city is a response to the violence situation, and therefore, most of them have been gated. This, of course, occurs with different typologies (Baires, 2018; Urtecho-Osorio et al, 2021, López and Gonzáles, 2012). Some neighborhoods have been gated from the start and others have been informally gated as a response to the violence situation of other factors.

A third reason why San Salvador is an interesting case study is the migration processes that affect the way in which the city grows and sprawls. Klaufus (2010) identifies both internal migration from the countryside to the city together with an international migration towards other countries, but mainly the United States. In return, El Salvador gets an influx of remittances that build up to 24% of the GDP, one of the highest in the world (World Bank, 2022).

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[5] El Salvador suffered a Civil War from 1980 to 1992 between the Armed Forces of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the government of El Salvador. This war resulted in the displacement of over a million people and the death of over 75,000 (Chávez, 2015). This conflict ended in the Peace Treaty of 1992 in Mexico City which started an age of democratic transition that is now known as the post-War period (Tardanico, 2008).

> "Family remittances have managed to maintain an artificial economy in El Salvador, since they are responsible for supporting consumption and imports without generating a deficit in the trade balance and without the need for the country to be imminently productive. This situation began to be palpable in the 80's during the civil war in El Salvador, when thousands of compatriots emigrated mainly to the United States and other countries such as Canada and Australia." (FUNDASAL, 2006, p. 2, own translation)

This, of course, has an effect in city building, since the objective of remittances is to give a better lifestyle to those who are receiving them. Naturally, remittances receivers may use some of that money for improving their places of residence.[6] Klaufus (2010) mentions that in many Central American cities, those who receive remittances have become a "transnational middle class" who have an extra income that allows them to live in an 'Americanized' way, closer to the lifestyle of their family members in the United States. This reflects how globalization affects the city. When choosing a place to live, there is a preference to living in enclaves with security features, such as gated communities. Additionally, they are more likely to improve their housing than those who do not receive them (FUNDASAL, 2006).

Informality is a fourth reason why San Salvador is an interesting case study. But what is informality? Old definitions of the term understood it as a sector of the economy and something that existed in a dichotomy; something was either formal or informal with no space in-between. It was understood as a phenomenon that occurred in poor groups and that was in need of being fixed (Herrle & Fokdal, 2011). However, newer conceptualizations understand that there is no such a binary, so instead there is a continuum between the poles of "formality" and "informality" and that it can occur across different sectors (Banks et al., 2020). Urban informality can also be understood as a way of life, depending on the governance interactions between citizens and government (Herrle & Fokdal, 2011). Regarding urban informality, Foster (2009) understands urban informality as the result of a "regulatory slippage," a situation in which the control of the urban commons has slipped away from a central governing authority.

As a Global South city, informal city building processes are prevalent in San Salvador. Large parts of the city have been built without a central mandate and without being overseen or planned by a professional (Tardanico, 2008). Yet, there

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[6] Data shows that most of the received remittances are destined for consumption and purchase of daily need items. However, 13.1% of remittances are used for paying housing owned by the remittances sender and an additional 19.5% is used for housing owned by the family members of the remittances sender. (Maldonado, 2016).

are also cases, such as gated communities of the collective defense, that exist within the continuum of formality and informality. While the neighborhoods were planned, designed and built according to regulations, they have been transformed in a way akin to what Foster (2009) would call a "regulatory slippage." This different lens of understanding gated communities within the framework of informality is something that the Global North literature has not dealt with, and the case of San Salvador can approach new perspectives about it.

Finally, the last reason why gated communities in San Salvador should be studied is the high prevalence of them in the city. The latest data available, by Baires in 2005, shows that at the time, 13.5% of the territory of San Salvador was gated, with most of the closings occurring since the end of the Civil War in 1992 (this number is very outdated, and it has continued to increase rapidly since then). As previously mentioned, not all gated communities are the same, with Baires (2005) identifying three typologies: private complexes of the elite, middle-class subdivisions and complexes, and subdivisions of the collective defense.

2.3.1 Collective defense

Figure 3. Example of a gated community of the collective defense in the case study of La Sabana.

In this subsection, I will have a look at how gated communities of the collective defense work, but first, it is important to distinguish the three typologies of Baires (Baires, 2005) from each other. First, we have the "private complexes of the rich," which refers to newly built neighborhoods reminiscent of the "stereotypical" gated community. While they are the most iconic and visible, they account for only a very small percentage of enclosed neighborhoods (Lungo Rodríguez, 2021). They tend to have high-end security features such as 24/7 guards, cameras, a closed perimeter and electric

fences. They are normally located on the outskirts of the city and houses are large and may be detached. These neighborhoods are very desirable places to live in, and in addition to the security features they also have amenities such as large green spaces and recreation areas. Secondly, we have the "urbanizations and condominiums of the middle class" which tend to mimic upper class neighborhoods at a more modest scale (Lungo Rodríguez, 2021). They may still have some of the security features and amenities that the richer neighborhoods have, but without the luxury of those places. Thirdly, we have the "streets and residential complexes of the collective defense." My focus will be on this third typology.

This last typology refers to a type of gated community where streets that were previously public are gated to combat the high levels of violence that affect the city (Baires, 2018). The gates are commonly built by the residents themselves in a process that many times does not involve permission from the government (Cruz & Vorobyeva, 2021). This category is not exclusive to San Salvador, but also in other Central American cities which have similar levels of violence, but varying degrees of prevalence. This typology is an interesting example where the vulnerable urban commons has actively been transformed and its management has been transferred to a group of neighbors that exclude others from it (Baires, 2018; Lungo et al., 2001; Lungo Rodríguez, 2021; Martel & Baires, 2006).

With the objective of understanding better the gated communities of the collective defense, it is important to define their characteristics. In the next paragraphs, I describe them based on Grant & Mittelsteadt's (2004) eight features of gated communities.

Function of enclosure

The function of gating in Central American cities are complex and can vary a lot. Yet, scholars focusing on San Salvador have identified mostly a physical function related to security, with some economic, social, and symbolic elements. Baires (2018) argues that the biggest justification of the gated communities of the collective defense is urban fear and protection from violence. This is due to the perception of people from all social classes of the violence phenomenon (Huhn, Sebastian, 2006; Salgado, 2011). While the effectiveness of gating has been questioned by authors from the United States (Davis, 2011; Low, 2001), the fact is that many people still have a perception they are quite useful[7], so they keep spreading around the city. This

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[7] The perception of the usefulness of gated communities in the case studies is analyzed in the results of this thesis.

physical function part becomes even more evident once the prioritization of security features above amenities and facilities becomes evident.

However, living in a gated area is also seen as a privilege of those with some economic resources and a signifier of status (Lungo Rodríguez, 2011). As in many cases, the first gated communities in San Salvador were exclusive for the very rich, and since then, they have expanded into other economic groups. While living in a gated community of the gated defense may not carry the same status signifier of living in a rich complex, they are still very desirable places to live for a large segment of the population.

Security features

As previously mentioned, the physical function of gated communities of the collective defense becomes evident through the security features of these enclosures (Martel & Baires, 2006). In simpler gated communities, the obstruction of circulation may start with a limitation of vehicular traffic, but it commonly includes full gates that block pedestrian access as well. This might be complemented by other types of architectural elements, such as metallic gates, razor wire, and the construction of walls around the perimeters of the neighborhood. According to Martel and Baires (2006), these features are meant to represent the opposite of insecurity, so strong looking elements are preferred, even if they might be exaggerated. This is so that an "imaginary of security" can be created in the mind of the residents.

Figure 4. Example of physical fortification elements in a house in the case study of La Sabana.

These physical fortification features are also complemented by other elements that Davis (2011) classifies as non-physical fortification. They may include alarms, cameras, and private security guards. In fact, the security sector is an important element of the Salvadoran economy (Pérez, 2014), with the number of private security guards outnumbering those of the police (CONNECTAS, 2015). This type of job,

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however, is not a well-paid one, and those working as security guards may suffer from work abuses from the security companies, such as small wages, long hours and lack of benefits such as healthcare. Muñoz (2014) argues that this represents a psychosocial risk, since the security guards are responsible for deciding who enters in the neighborhood and of dealing with any potential situation that may occur inside them.

Interestingly, the physical fortification of the neighborhood does not stop at the boundaries of the enclosed areas, but they are frequently replicated on the individual houses of the residents (Martel & Baires, 2006). Houses inside gated communities of the collective defense commonly have architectonic elements that have been added by the owners after construction. Figure 4 shows a typical example of this. In this case, their windows have metal bars, the access to the car park has been gated, the garden in front has been faced and on top of the roof there is a row of razor wire.

Amenities and facilities included

Since the main purpose of these communities is self-organized security, amenities beyond gates and security are rarely existent (Baires, 2018). They mostly occur in new developments with are outside of the definition of "gated communities of the collective defense" (Lungo and Baires, 2006), such as newly built neighborhoods that are gated from the start. However, it is not uncommon that green spaces and parks that used to be public are enclosed within the gates during the gating procedure.

Type of residents

Gated communities of the collective defense can occur in different types of neighborhoods, including low and medium income (Baires, 2018), but within each neighborhood, they usually have a similar economic level due to the way in which zoning has separated areas where the poor and the rich live (Coreas, 2019). However, something that the gates do is to limit the type of people who pass through the streets of a neighborhood. Therefore, by limiting who can pass through the public space, it becomes more homogenous. Lungo Rodríguez (2021) sees this as part of a strategy that people from the middle class or upper middle class use to separate themselves from other groups. This separation is not only physical, but also mental.

> "Enclave strategies are accompanied by a series of representations that tend to identify violence with the lower classes… These representations tend to heighten stigmatization of the lower classes

and reinforce social distances in El Salvador."(Lungo Rodríguez, 2021, p. 157).

Tenure

While tenure in newly built gated communities is normally on a condominium, or shared property agreement, this is not as clear in gated communities of the collective defense. Exact ownership details depend on a case-by-case scenario; but generally, most of the streets, sidewalks, and parks continue to remain public property. This is a common cause of conflicts and remains as a main reason why the negative opinion on this type of gating exists (Funes, 2021). In fact, municipalities continue to provide public services and maintenance of the streets to these neighborhoods, even if these works are paid with takes from all citizens. The residents of these enclosed areas usually organize themselves in homeowner associations called *directivas* or "directives", however, the legality of this type of association and how much power they hold to represent the homeowners is not completely clear.

Regarding home ownership, specific data that distinguishes gated areas compared to normal neighborhoods does not exist. However, due to the function of these neighborhoods, most of these are main residences and their owners inhabit them most of the year. However, renting is becoming increasingly common as properties in gated communities become more attractive (Baires, 2018).

Location

Contrary to traditional gated communities that can be in isolated areas, gated communities of the collective defense are by nature urban. Their objective is to create a separation between two groups when they are close to each other (Baires, 2018). Therefore, they are mostly located in dense urban areas, but cases in suburban settings do exist. However, one of the biggest factors regarding where these enclosed areas are created is the morphology of the road structure. Gating rarely occurs on main streets or in places where the blockage to circulation will cause major disruptions. Instead, it happens on secondary roads in residential areas where there is little potential opposition from other land uses. Normally, it is easier to build them in cases where the gates would not block outside traffic from circulating, such as in dead ends, but that is not always the case (Martel and Baires, 2006).

Size

Gated communities of the collective defense can vary dramatically in size. This can be from a single section of a street to medium sized neighborhoods (Baires, 2018). However, it is important to recognize that due to the informality of this process and the requirement of some internal organization within the community, it is easier to build them in smaller streets. Thus, larger gated areas are much more difficult to enclose. When large areas have been gated, it is not uncommon to have a neighbor's association. In these cases, some kind of legalization has to occur with the respective local government.

Policy Context

The policy context regarding gating depends on the specific city. Places with strong local governments make this process more difficult. However, in the case of El Salvador, despite of recent efforts, the government is still highly centralized with little power and budget given to the municipalities (Rosales, 2017). This is made even more complex because in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador there are 14 small municipalities that have different policies regarding gating. Officially, the procedure for asking permission consists of a multi-step procedure that involves collecting signatures of the neighbors and obtaining both the approval of the Viceministry of Transportation and the respective municipality. However, this process requires only basic paperwork, the opinion of those living outside of the gates is not required and no traffic studies are needed.(Alcaldía de San Salvador, 2022a; Viceministerio de Transporte, 2009). Despite this, most gated communities lack the necessary paperwork. After inquiring the municipality of San Salvador, I found out that there are only 29 gating permissions[8] (Alcaldía de San Salvador, 2022b), out of the hundreds that exist. This corroborates Baires's (2018) argument that most of them are illegal.

Yet, the importance of the policy context becomes evident when comparing to other Central American Cities. Guatemala City and Tegucigalpa, the capitals of Guatemala and Honduras, respectively, also deal with this typology of gated communities.

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[8] I inquired the Municipality of San Salvador for a list of all the gating permissions since 1992 (a thirty-year period since the end of the Civil War) organized by district, address, and year of approval of the permission. The municipality argued that no permission permits were found for districts three, five, and six, but provided records for districts one, two, and four. Additionally, the oldest permit that they found was from 2011. This also means that the municipality is not systematic in keeping a good record of its files. When asking the Municipalities of Santa Tecla and Antiguo Cuscatlán, where the case studies are located, they replied that the information was non-existent. The Vice-Ministry of Transportation failed to reply to numerous information requests that were sent.

However, the policies that are in effect are quite different and have affected the prevalence of the gating phenomenon. While in San Salvador, gating exists in a grey area of semi-legality but with little to no enforcement of laws restricting the phenomenon, Tegucigalpa has legalized the process. In the Honduran city, the municipality created the program "Barrios Seguros" (or "safe neighborhoods") in 2011, in which they have regulated the construction of gates. Additionally, the municipality gives the funding to build them, but in return they expect the neighbors to abide by regulations of periods in which the gates have to be open and other requirements (Handal & Irazábal, 2022; Urtecho-Osorto et al., 2021). However, the program has been extremely controversial with Hándal and Irazábal labeling it as a "paradoxical" project that has solved some problems while creating new ones. Meanwhile, in Guatemala City the situation is slightly more controlled, but informal gated communities are still prevalent in large sectors of the city, but specially in those areas with higher incomes (Lacayo Henry, 2018; López & González, 2012). In lower income areas, they still exist, but the "collective defense" element of these neighborhoods becomes stronger as in some places neighbors rotate themselves to act as security guards during the night hours (Grassi, 2018).

To summarize, gated communities of the collective defense are a phenomenon that requires its own typology. General terminology may be misleading as it refers to different types of enclosures. Figure 5 shows a diagram summarizing the features of these gated communities.
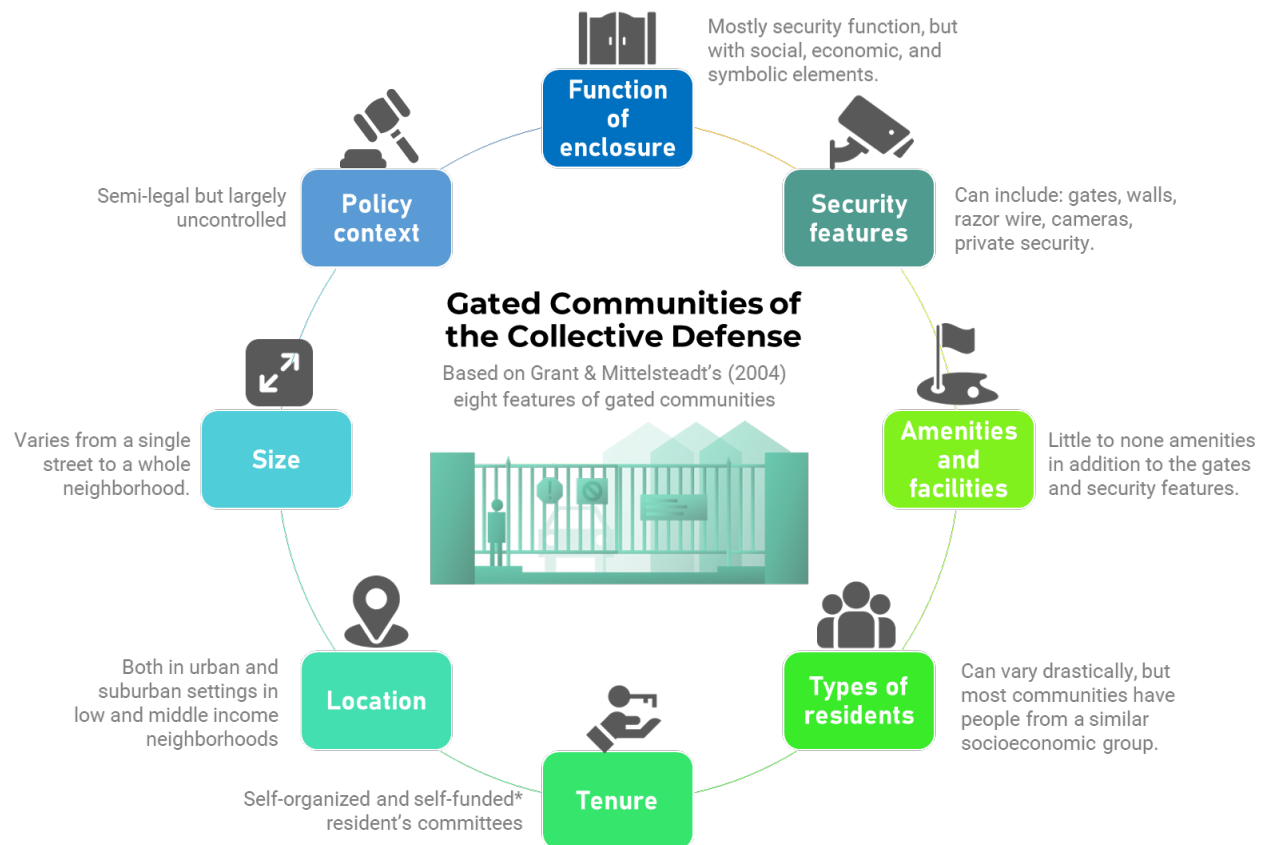
Figure 5. Diagram synthesizing the main characteristics of gated communities of the collective defense according to Grant and Mittelsteadts's (2004) eight features of gated communities.

2.3.2 Living within gates

As seen in the previous list based on Grant & Mittelsteadt's (2004), the features of gated communities of the collective defense defer from what Kostenwein (2021) considers the "stereotypical" gated community, that is based on the theories of Blakeley and Snyder (1997), Low (2001), Davis (2011). Yet, the way in which people live inside the gated communities of the collective defense is similar in some ways to the "stereotypical" ones. A big common factor is the use of urban fear as a justification.

Low (2001, p. 46) said, "the discourse of fear of violence and crime and the search for a secure community for those who live in gated communities ... legitimate and rationalizes class-based exclusion and residential segregation." Much of the consensus is that those living inside get disconnected from the reality of the rest of the city (Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2001). They inhabit a bubble that only includes people of the same social status and causes them to avoid public spaces (Lungo Rodríguez, 2021) leaving them no other option than to seek information of the outside world through the media (González, 2004). However, this reliance of the media, which

often exaggerates the actual violence creates a "culture of fear" (Low, 1997). Some may actually become desensitized by viewing violence (Huhn, 2006), reducing their sympathy for those who are suffering the real effects of it firsthand (Adams, 2017)

Salvadorans, for example, are very aware of the problem of violence, with survey data by (IUDOP, 2022)consistently raking violence as the biggest problem in the country up to 2020 before the start of the COVID pandemic. This perception of violence shapes (and is shaped) by the way in which San Salvador is physically built, influencing the society. In Salvadoran society, violence is a permanent topic of discussion. Even children grow up hearing of the violence by the media, their parents, and their friends (Baker, 2011). Huhn (2008, p. 253) argues that "this permanent 'talk' about violence and crime … generates as much insecurity and fear in society (or even more), than the concrete acts of violence themselves."

Yet, there are other factors beyond violence that are related to urban fear. Low (2001, p. 56) suggests that "the discourse of urban fear encodes other social concerns including class, race, and ethnic exclusivity as well as gender." This is because the social groups that benefit and are affected by the gates are not the same. Those who are more vulnerable see their conditions worsened as they are segregated from the city (Caldeira, 2000).

Yet, there is still much that is not known about gated communities of the collective defense which deserves to be studied and researched. The latest data available, by Baires in 2005, shows that at the time, 13.5% of the territory of San Salvador was gated, with most of the closings occurring since the end of the Civil War in 1992 (this number has continued to increase dramatically since then). If the city-wide commons is continuously being fractured and privatized, the consequences of those should be better known in order to better understand how urban policy should react to that. In the next sections of my thesis, I will continue to look at how life inside these spaces looks like, and how it affects the spaces around them.

Part 3: Methods

Part 3: Research Methods

Image on previous page: sign on the gates of a gated street in La Sabana

3.1 Research Perspective

3.1.1 Researcher positionality

I would like to start this section discussing my personal background and experiences that shape my understanding of the research topic as a researcher. I was born in the city of San Salvador, where I have lived the first decades of my life. Like most of the citizens, I grew up experiencing the gates and all the fortification processes that have been previously explained firsthand. And while all my previous places of residence have been in gated communities of different typologies, they have not been located in areas of the city that have a high incidence of crime and violence. It was not until I left my city due to my superior studies that I began to reflect on how such a situation has been normalized by most Salvadorans and how most people are not aware on the specificity of this situation. So, my experience has allowed me to have some prior knowledge about the topic, but also has created some assumptions about how the processes worked that I have had to either confirm or discard as I have read literature about the topic or done my fieldwork.

Therefore, my first reflection is on my position of privilege as a researcher. Growing up in El Salvador, I have not experienced the worst part of the urban violence of San Salvador, and most of my interactions were with people who were in similar situations. Also, as a male, cisgender, young, able-bodied person, I experienced the neighborhoods in a different way than another person would have seen them. My perception of what I considered 'safe' or 'unsafe' depended on those factors, and I am aware that other people might disagree with my perceptions. Therefore, I prioritized hearing the experiences from people different than me, especially those of elders, women, and those in vulnerable situations.

My experiences have also shaped the way in which my ideas and certain assumptions were formed. For example, the last years of my life have been spent out of El Salvador, living in European cities with relatively high levels of safety. In none of these places I have experienced such a high prevalence of gated communities of any typology, which was what originally piqued my interest in the topic. Additionally, I have received a master-level education from a Western, white, European-centric

perspective. The theories that I have learned during this time have been very useful in understanding this phenomenon, but I have learned that they cannot be translated immediately into other contexts. As I started my research project, I had a very negative bias towards gated communities, with some knowledge of what the typical causes of their creation were in other contexts. Perhaps I was influenced by the traditional theories about gating, and this created a negative point of view that simplified many of the processes related to them. But after visiting these neighborhoods and talking with their inhabitants, my research challenged my thoughts and beliefs, causing them to become more complex and nuanced.

However, hearing from the residents about their stories is not the same as living them in person. For example, I cannot understand the level of suffering that some of the people who lived in these places experienced due to the high levels of violence before the gates were installed. I have tried to empathize with them, but it will never be the same as living those experiences firsthand. So, while I cannot completely agree with the methods chosen to enclose the city, I can comprehend some of the reasons why this has occurred, and this has impacted my point of view. I have also come to understand that many of the effects of the negative effects of gating are not intentional, and that people who live inside just want to have a nice lifestyle and solve some of the problems that they have been frustrated about. Therefore, any discussion about the topic and potential solutions has to consider that.

I cannot say that I have a completely objective point of view, but exercising reflexivity has been an important part to empathize with the different—and even contradictory—opinions throughout the research process. I have reflected that my outsider, privileged point of view prevented me initially from empathizing with the residents of gated areas and their ideas. But this openness to different points of view was important throughout the whole procedure, and the methodology was intentionally designed to do so.

3.1.1 Researcher–participant relationship

Throughout this study, having a positive and ethical relationship with the participants was extremely important. I understand that there are inherent power dynamics at play and tried to have an inclusive and respectful interaction with the participants. Before engaging with them, I obtained informed consent from the participants. This was done by explaining the purpose of the research, their voluntary participation, the confidentiality of their responses, their right to avoid answering a question, and their right to withdraw from the study if they desired to do so. No questions were done without filling consent forms, and every interaction before the signature of the forms was not considered.

Additionally, I had to consider my position as an outsider while doing my research. I am aware that some people were not completely happy about my presence in the neighborhoods while doing the research, but I tried to avoid doing anything that might have disturbed them. When moving through the neighborhoods, I did so while respecting the residents and their privacy. Due to the nature of gated communities, I decided to experience these neighborhoods just as any regular person would. I did not go into gated areas without permission and when I accessed them I did so only until I had a contact inside that could let me in. Always having an insider next to me helped ensure my safety but also helped me to obtain more accurate information from a local's perspective.

Regarding pictures, Salvadoran legislation gives the right to take pictures on the streets and the buildings, but I avoided taking pictures of people when they appeared from the front or when their features were recognizable. When someone desired to have a picture deleted, I did so right away in front of them.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Choice of methods

In this study, qualitative research methods were employed to explore the multifaceted nature of informal gated communities in San Salvador. Qualitative methods were particularly suited to this research as they allow for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, perspectives, and subjective interpretations of individuals within the community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the rich narratives, insights, and personal accounts of residents and stakeholders directly affected by the phenomenon of informal gating. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility and enabled participants to express their views and experiences in their own words, providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying motivations, benefits, and concerns associated with informal gated communities.

Additionally, observation was employed as a complementary method to gain firsthand insights into the physical manifestations of the gated communities, the dynamics within the neighborhood, and the interactions between residents and their environment. Through direct observation, I was able to document the physical infrastructure, such as gates, walls, and security measures, as well as the spatial arrangement and use of public and private spaces within the neighborhood. This

method provided a deeper understanding of the tangible aspects and the daily lived experiences of residents within the context of informal gated communities.

The use of qualitative methods allowed for a nuanced exploration of the social, cultural, and contextual factors shaping the phenomenon of informal gating. By engaging with participants in open-ended interviews and directly observing their surroundings, this research aimed to uncover the complexities, motivations, and implications of informal gated communities beyond mere statistical data. It facilitated an exploration of the underlying meanings, values, and social dynamics that inform the decisions to create and maintain these communities. The qualitative approach aligns with the exploratory nature of the study, enabling a holistic and nuanced analysis of the phenomenon within its socio-cultural context.

During the month of January 2023, I visited three neighborhoods which I used as case studies. In each one of these, I walked through the neighborhood while being accompanied by a key informant that lives in the area. I took notes, elaborated maps detailing the current situation of gating and fortification; and used photography to capture how the gates in these neighborhoods look like.

3.2.2 Interviews

Participants

For the interviews, a total of 18 people were interviewed. The first 15 are related to the three case studies that will be explained in the next section; the rest are related to the arts or governance of the cities in which these case studies are located. All participants were chosen because they can fit within one or more of the following categories:

- People who live inside the gated areas
- People who work inside the gated areas
- People who live outside the gated areas, but within close proximity
- People who work or own businesses within close proximity to the gated areas
- Community leaders of the neighborhood, both from the gated and non-gated areas
- Government officials from the urban planning areas at both the local and metropolitan scale
- Artists that represent the situation of gating in their works

The table in the following page describes the profile of these people (those who wished for anonymity had their names changed for an alias). Regarding demographics, the ages range from 26 to 78 years old, with most of the respondents being people in their forties or fifties who have lived in the neighborhood for a long

time. Most of the residents that were interviewed were women and the professions of the respondents were very varied and include housewives, accountants, bakers, tortilleras, teachers, entrepreneurs, actresses, and fashion designers.

Due to the complexity of gated communities, the participants were sampled in three different ways. First, During the months of November and December 2022, I posted in different groups of neighbors and in my personal networks asking for people living in gated communities in the area of Santa Tecla and Antiguo Cuscatlán who desired to participate in the study. After having a small conversation and checking that they were suitable for participating in the study, they were added to the possible participant list. A second filter was applied once the case studies were defined, so that only those with some relation to the case studies remained on the final list. Once I had the contacts, I started by interviewing them.

Secondly, at the end of all the prior interviews, I asked if they knew other people of the neighborhood who they believed had relevant opinions and who might be interested in participating. While I am aware that this is snowball sampling and that this might have introduced some bias into the results, it is important to recognize that other sampling methods are difficult due to the enclosed nature of gated communities. In fact, a lack of suitable contacts in case study 2 prevented me from being able to go inside. In that case, the respondents come from the surrounding areas. Nonetheless, I still believe that I ended up with a wide array of opinions during my interviews.

Thirdly, in the case of interviewing business owners or those who work in neighborhood businesses, I went personally and asked if they were willing to participate. I followed a similar approach with government officials and artists who were contacted via email. Unfortunately, not all of the desired institutions accepted being interviewed, despite numerous attempts.

Table 1. List of interviewed people

#	Person	Role	Occupation	Age	Gender	Time living in neighb.	Location
1	Juan	Works in a main street of a neighborhood with gates	Baker		M	-	Calle Chiltiupán
2	José	Security guard in a gated street	Security guard		M	-	*Anonymous*, Jardines de Cuscatlán
3	Beatriz	Owner of a laundromat	Business owner		F	-	Avenida L-C, Jardines de Cuscatlán
4	Javier	Owner a tienda in an open street	Store owner		M	-	Avenida L-C, Jardines de Cuscatlán
5	Julia	Directive of Senda 6 Neighbor's Association.	Housewife	49	F	25 years	Senda 6, La Sabana
6	Guadalupe	Lives in street with gates	Teacher	45	F	20 years	Senda 6, La Sabana
7	Hector	Works in the corner of semi open street, on the open side	Car mechanic	46	M	37 years	Avenida C and Senda 2, La Sabana
8	Laura	Owns store in street without gates	Store owners	33	F	33 years	Senda 8, La Sabana
9	Rubidia	Works in a street that was robbed and caused the first gates to be placed	Accountant	63	F	10 years (working)	Senda 6, La Sabana
10	María	Lives in semi open street, on the open side	Housewife	78	F	30 years	Senda 2, La Sabana
11	Rosa	Lives in semi open street, on the closed side	Fashion designer	64	F	11 years	Senda 2, La Sabana
12	Emy	Lives in a pedestrian street, open	Actress	26	F	26 years	Pasaje 10, Jardines de la Hacienda
13	Ricardo and Emicela	Former members of directive of Jardines de la Hacienda	Business owner		M	40 years	Pasaje 10, Jardines de la Hacienda
14	Teresa	Lives in a street without gates	Housewife	67	F	2 years	Avenida C, La Sabana
15	Dinora	Works in a semi open street, on the open side	Tortillera	60	F	-	Senda 2, La Sabana
16	Camila	Works in an open street	Tortillera	55	F	15 years	*Anonymous,* La Sabana
17	Ronald Morán	Artist whose works are related to the theme of violence and closure of the city	Artist	50	M	-	La Fábrica, Zaragoza
18	Boris Funes	Director of Urban Planning at OPAMSS	Urban Planner		M	-	OPAMSS
19	Guillermo Chinchilla	Director of Planning at the Municipality of Santa Tecla	Planner		M	-	Alcaldía de Santa Tecla

All the interviews were done personally during the month of January 2023. The interviews were done on site in the location of the case studies, and many of the respondents also acted as guides of the neighborhood during the research. The first interviews were done with people whose contacts were obtained via social media, while the following ones were obtained via snowballing sampling, in which the respondents shared contacts of other neighbors who they believed might be open to talk with a researcher. While this may have introduced some bias in the answers, it is important to acknowledge that in gated communities it is impossible to enter without obtaining a contact first, so a complete random sampling was not feasible in this case.

Questions

The interviews were semi-structured. This means that there was a general guide which was followed, but with modifications based on the specific context of each person. In the case of the people who resided in the case studies the questions were:

1. When were the gates built in this street?
2. How do the gates work?
3. Who decided to place the gates?
4. Were you and your neighbors consulted about the gates?
5. Why were the gates built?
6. Do you think that the gates are accomplishing the reason why they were built?
7. Describe the situation of security before and after the construction of the gates.
8. Describe the situation of privacy before and after the construction of the gates.
9. How would you describe the relationship between neighbors in this street and on the neighborhood scale?
10. Is there any type of neighborhood association?
11. Do you have any type of activities with your neighbors?
12. What benefits do you have from the gates?
13. What disadvantages do you have because of the gates?
14. Are you in favor of gates in this neighborhood?
15. Are you in favor of gates in other neighborhoods?
16. Do you think that it is just to block access to others in this street?
17. In case there were no security issues, should these gates continue to exist?

This first set of questions made to resident of the neighborhoods in each case study intends to respond to Research Question 1, What is motivating the informal enclosure of streets and how this is fragmenting the urban commons? The second

set of questions, which was specific to government officials, intends to respond to Research Question 2, Why has the local governments allowed this to happen and how does this affect the quality of life in the city? The questions were the following:

1. How would you describe the situation of gating in the city?
2. What do you think are the causes of these phenomenon?
3. What do you think are the consequences of this phenomenon?
4. Does your government agency have any data or measurements on how widespread this issue is? If you do not have data, why is it so?
5. How legal is the process of the creation of these gated communities?
6. Does your government agency play any part in the authorization process? If not, then who is responsible for it?
7. As a planning body, what is the position of your government agency to these gated streets?
8. How is urban planning affected by the gating phenomenon?
9. Has there been any action taken to react to gating? Or is there any plan to do so? If there is a plan, why hasn't it been implemented?
10. What is your opinion regarding the new urban developments that are designed with gates from the beginning and is this related to informal gating? How?

3.2.3 Observation

To complement the data obtained from the interviewees, I also visited the neighborhoods where these interviews took place. For this, I visited both the interior and the outside of the areas, whenever possible. Each neighborhood was visited at least three times, in different days of the week and at different hours. To record my observations, the following was done:

1. *A cartography of the neighborhood.* I took notes on a map detailing which streets are open and which ones have been gated. Special attention was paid to physical infrastructure such as gates, walls, fences, and security measures. I noted the types of materials used, their height, design, and how they are integrated into the surrounding environment. I used the local knowledge to label special situations within these case studies, such as opening hours, or arrangements to allow certain people in. The objective of this is to show how the urban commons is being fragmented through gating.
2. *Field notes.* I detailed how it feels to be both inside and outside of the neighborhood. In the notes of what I considered key aspects that go beyond the physical infrastructure, such as demographics, signs of cohesion or exclusivity, social interaction, sense of security or insecurity, use of public

spaces, daily routines and everyday life of the residents, and the emotional atmosphere.

3. *Photography.* I made use of a camera to get images of the neighborhood. These images were all georeferenced, helping me to map and understand the case studies (Google Streetview or other tools like that are non-existent here). Additionally, the images served as a way to document the different gates and fortification procedures and how these affect the urban landscape.

3.3 Case Studies

3.3.1 Context
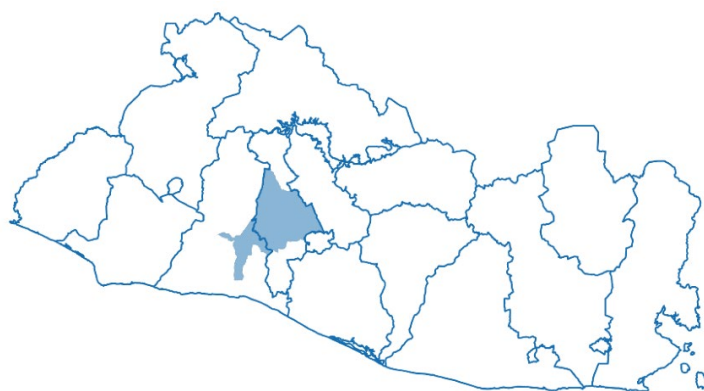
Figure 6. Location of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (highlighted in blue) within the Republic of El Salvador. Source: (Ayala et al., 2019).

The case studies are three neighborhoods located in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (AMSS) (see Figure 6), a region where the phenomenon of gating is widespread. This conurbation of fourteen municipalities forms a contiguous urbanized area centered in the municipality of San Salvador, which is both the capital and largest city in the country of El Salvador. The region as a whole is the economic, political, educational, and cultural center of the country, and also a place where 1.5 million people, or 27.3% of the country's population resides, despite of its extension of only 2.8% of the country's territory (COAMSS-OPAMSS, 2017).

This region is characterized by high levels of socio-spatial segregation. Baires (2018) identifies three scales at which it happens: first, on a metropolitan scale, where there western area (Santa Tecla, Antiguo Cuscatlán and the north-western part of San Salvador) have higher incomes, lower rates of poverty, better access to

education, and even the highest HDI levels of the country (FUNDAUNGO & PNUD, 2009). This contrasts with a poorer east and north which consists of half of San Salvador and the remaining eleven municipalities. Second, segregation happens on a neighborhood scale, where new urbanizations or "colonias" are typically built for a specific socio-economic group and where social mix is not a consideration. This creates patches of richer and poorer areas all over the city, even within the "richer municipalities." Thirdly, within those neighborhoods there is an additional level of segregation,

Figure 7. Location of the municipalities of Santa Tecla and Antiguo Cuscatlán, where the case studies are located, within the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador. Source: (Ayala et al., 2019)

which occurs when individual or groups of streets within a neighborhood become gated (Baires, 2018). It is at this third scale where this research focuses.

3.3.2 Selection of cases

The selection of the case studies considered these factors, but there were certain limitations that are important to disclose. The first one is that gated communities, due to their nature, are hermetic and closed to the outside world, thus, realizing any research without pre-existing contacts is impossible. Secondly, the country of El Salvador is, "state of exception" since March of 2022. This has restricted some constitutional rights as well as access to certain neighborhoods which are considered "high risk", since the police are conducting raids to capture people associated with the gangs. Finally, there was a time limitation for conducting research, so it was more effective to select neighborhoods which were near each other. Originally, I intended to study gated areas in various points throughout the city, but this was not possible in the end. While research was possible despite all these limitations and I obtained some very interesting results, I cannot deny the possibility that the results of this research would have had differences if the chosen areas of study would have been others.

Thus, the selection of neighborhoods considered the following factors:

- Areas where the gating phenomenon is widespread, with preference to places where the gating happened recently or is currently ongoing.
- Gated communities that have open streets in their surroundings, making a comparison between the gated and non-gated areas possible
- Areas where there are possibilities of contacting neighbors and people within who are willing to talk.
- Areas where the current political and crime situation of the country makes it safe to conduct research.
- Neighborhoods which are located in close proximity to each other, but with marked differences between each case.

After a careful consideration of these factors, the selected were three *colonias* or neighborhoods in the area of "Ciudad Merliot," which is located in the border between the two western municipalities of Santa Tecla and Antiguo Cuscatlán (see Figure 7). These neighborhoods fit the criteria selected for the study.

These neighborhoods are (see location in Figure 8):

1. Residencial Jardines de la Sabana
2. Residencial Jardines de Cuscatlán
3. Residencial Jardines de la Hacienda

The numbering scheme will be used through the rest of the thesis and does not represent any preference in particular.
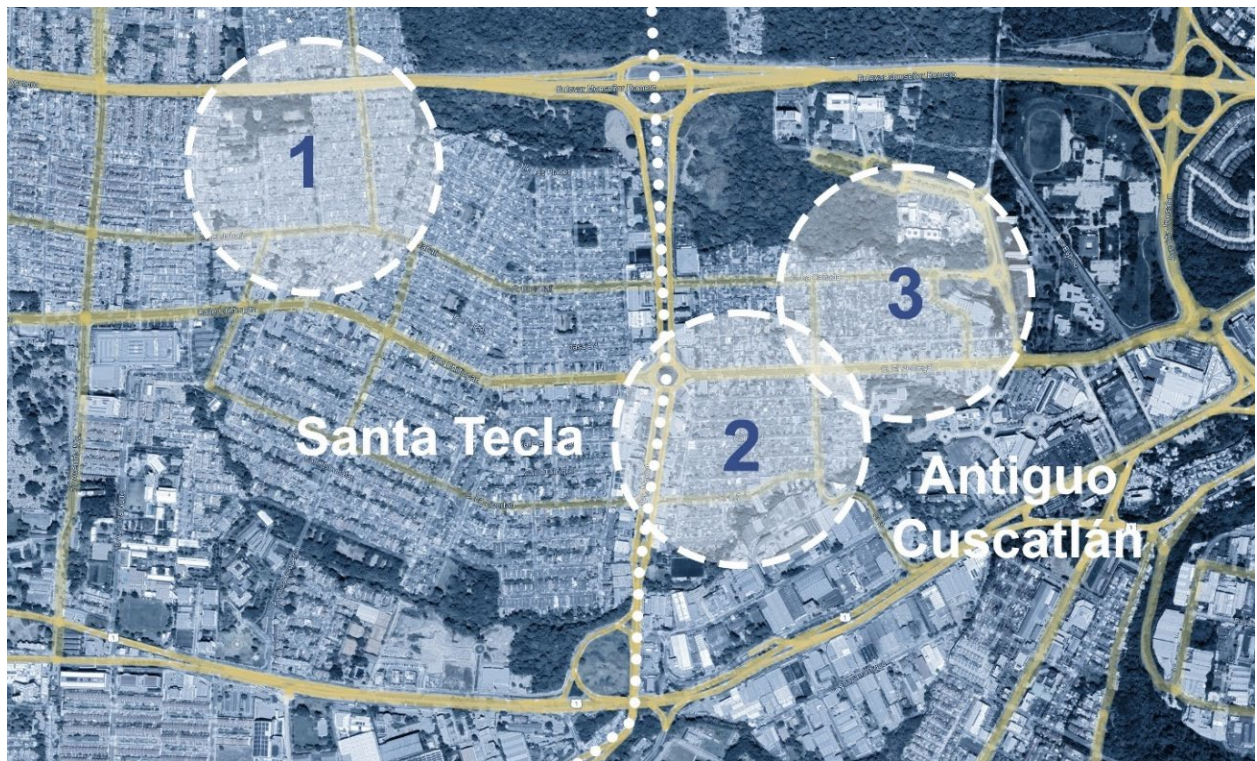
Figure 8. Location of the three choses case studies. 1 – Jardines de la Sabana, 2 – Jardines de Cuscatlán, and 3 – Jardines de la Hacienda. The dotted line in the center represents the municipal boundary between Santa Tecla (west) and Antiguo Cuscatlán (east).

3.2.3 Description of the study area

Ciudad Merliot is the district that is analyzed in this thesis, an area which was urbanized during the last decades of the XX Century as an infill of the hinterland between the municipalities of Santa Tecla, Antiguo Cuscatlán and San Salvador, the capital. This location naturally causes it to be an important transportation crossroad of paths, since the main roads connecting these municipalities have to pass through here (See major roads highlighted in yellow in Figure 8). It is a large area with many smaller neighborhoods inside it that are further fragmented due to the high prevalence of gated communities.

To describe the study area, I will use Lynch's (1964) methodology, in which he describes that a city has the following elements: paths, nodes, landmarks, edges, and districts. These elements can be seen in Figure 9:

1. *Paths*: as previously mentioned, many important roads pass through this area. On the north side, Bulevar Monseñor Romero, an important highway, goes in an east-west direction connecting the western municipalities with the rest of the city. On the south, the Panamerican Highway, which is the most important traffic infrastructure in the country and in the continent, runs roughly in an east-west direction. On the west, the Avenida Jerusalén

goes in a north–south direction. Internally, there are two big roads which connect the district, but also cause the creation of four "quadrants" or sub-districts. The first one is Bulevar Merliot, a large, wide street that goes north–south that has a green space in its center, which acts as a linear park. The second one is Calle Chiltuipán that goes in an east-west direction. On the Antiguo Cuscatlán segment it changes name, and it is called Calle El Pedregal. Many businesses are located on both sides of this street.

2. *Nodes*: There are four important nodes in this neighborhood, which occur when the previously named streets intersect. Three of these are roundabouts and the fourth one is a cloverleaf interchange (see location as pink circles in Figure 9).

3. *Landmarks*: The main landmarks are located in the exterior parts of the district, and they are parks, shopping malls, and iconic buildings. The big landmark which is actually located in the center of the neighborhood is El Platillo, which is a large roundabout that is used for orientation in all of Ciudad Merliot, and also a node (see location of all the landmarks as pins in Figure 9).

4. *Edges*: The three external highways, Bulevar Monseñor Romero, Avenida Jerusalén and the Panamerican Highway also act as borders in the north, east, and south sides, respectively. The west side does not have a clear edge, and as such, it is difficult to say where Ciudad Merliot ends in that direction. Additionally, Bulevar Merliot and Calle Chiltiupán / El Pedregal also act as internal edges that create four smaller districts inside.

5. *Districts*: Despite the municipal border that runs through the middle of Bulevar Merliot (see Figure 8), the whole of Ciudad Merliot could be considered a district by itself. It is a place that has relatively clear edges and exists as a mental construct and an identity for people who live there, regardless on which municipal side they live. The subdivisions of this district are normally defined by "colonias," which are units of urbanization of a neighborhood scale that private developers have built at a time. The different types of urban fabric that are noticeable from a satellite view are the result of this urbanization procedures. Most of these different neighborhoods were originally designed to be connected to each other, but fortification and enclosure processes have limited the connection between these urban pieces.
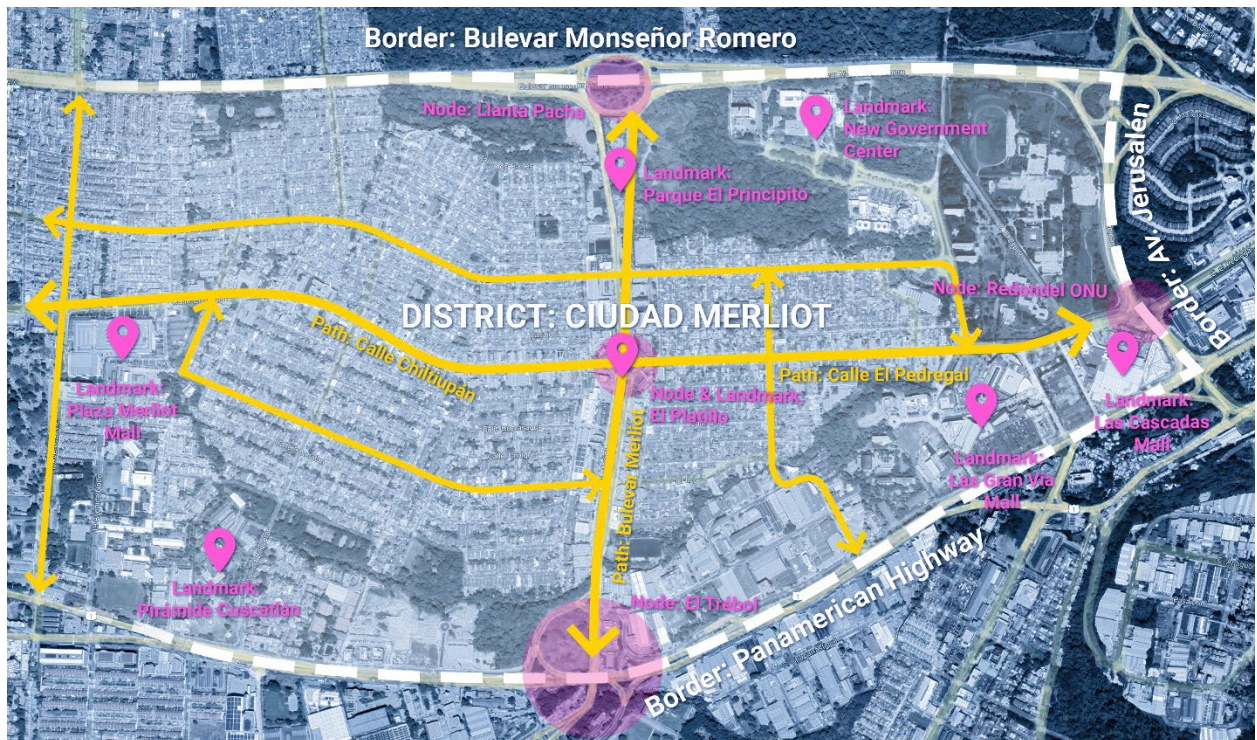
Figure 9. Urban analysis of the selected neighborhood according to the elements in Lynch (1964).

Regarding land uses, it is clear that Ciudad Merliot has clearly separated land uses which are the result of zoning regulations which have been placed by OPAMSS (the Spanish acronym of the Metropolitan Office of Planning of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador) or by previous institutions. The two main internal paths, Bulevar Merliot and Calle Chiltiupán / El Pedregal have a clear commercial use, which is evident in the map of current land uses elaborated by OPAMSS (See Figure 10). These corridors have a variety of big, formal businesses which include shopping malls, restaurants, banks, and a variety of car-related land uses. The rest of the district has a very dominant residential use, with the exception of some mixed-use secondary corridors that have emerged in the streets that are not gated, such as Calle El Jabalí. This zoning has resulted in monofunctional, residential areas that have very few other uses, and thus, a lack of "eyes on the streets" (Jacobs, 1961). These are areas that were urbanized by private contractors where normally they focused on massed produced houses of the same typology. However, most of these houses now look different since most homeowners have decided to renovate and modify them. This is especially evident in the facades, where fortification measures are very evident. The differentiation of residential and commercial areas is very evident, and it is something that OPAMSS tries to maintain in the current plan from 2017 (See Figure 11).
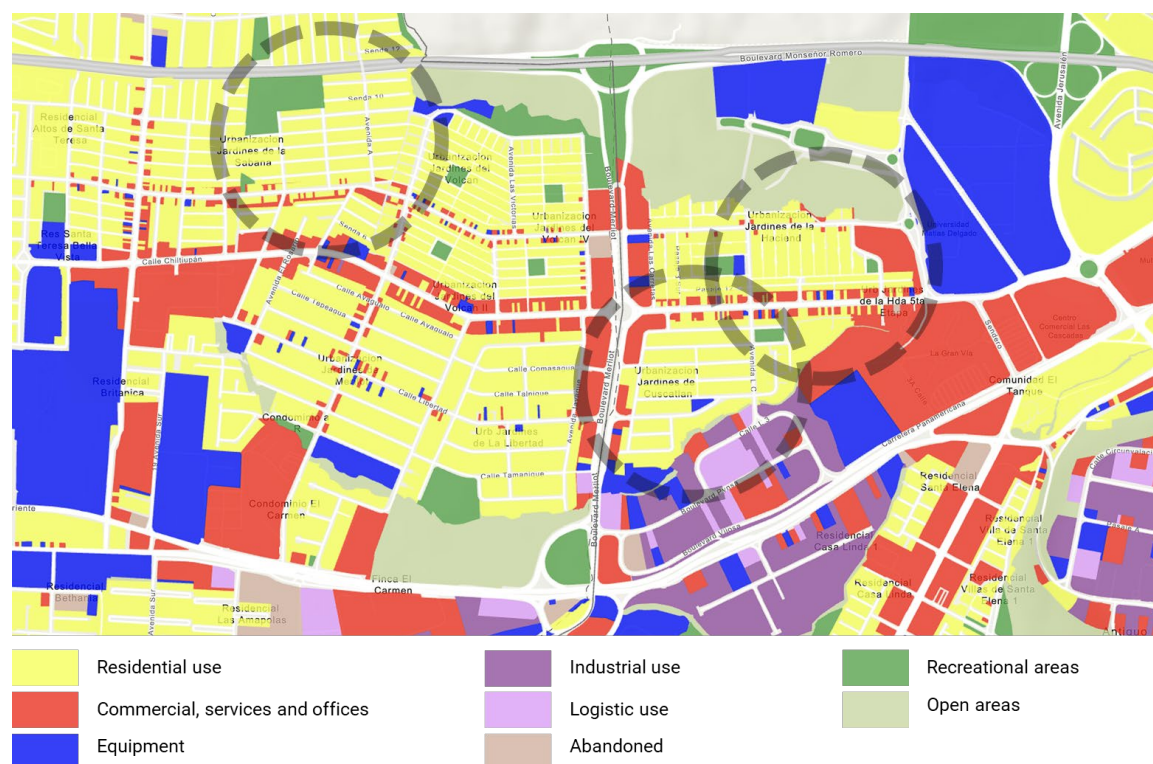
Figure 10. Map of actual land uses in Ciudad Merliot as surveyed by OPAMSS. Source: OPAMSS(2014).
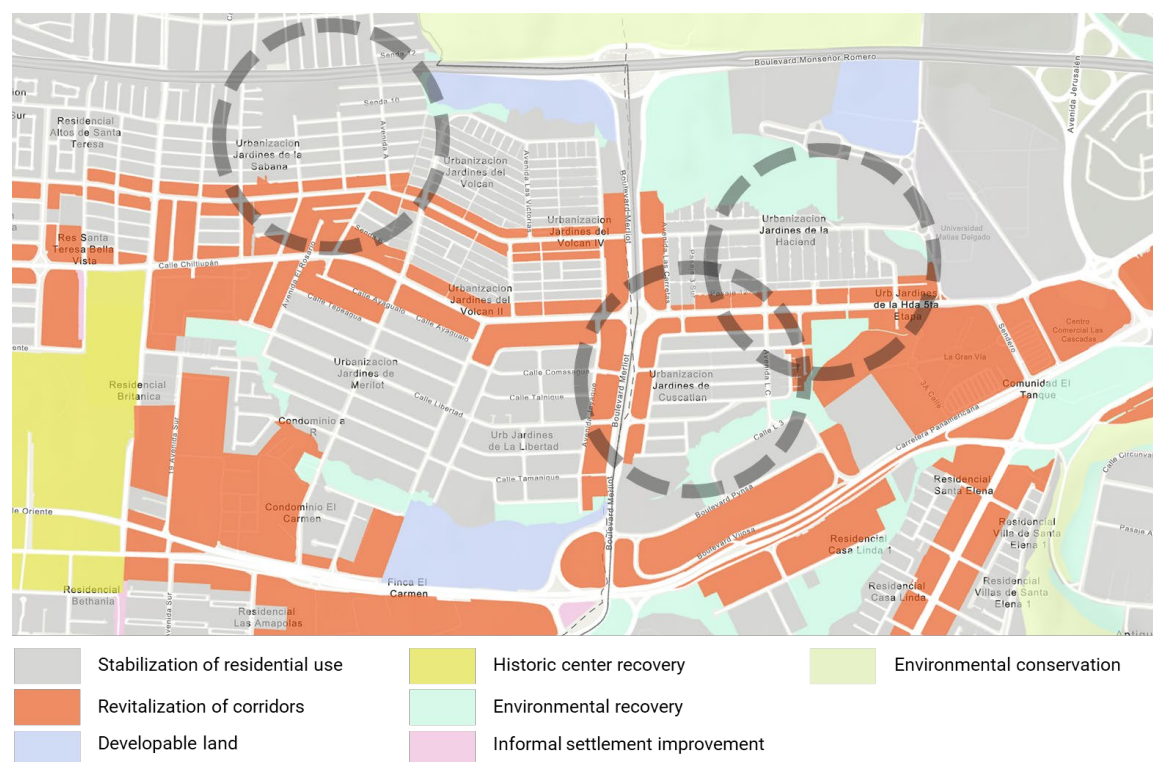
Figure 11. Map of urban development treatments according to the Esquema Director of 2017. Source:(COAMSS–OPAMSS, 2017).

Part 4: Results
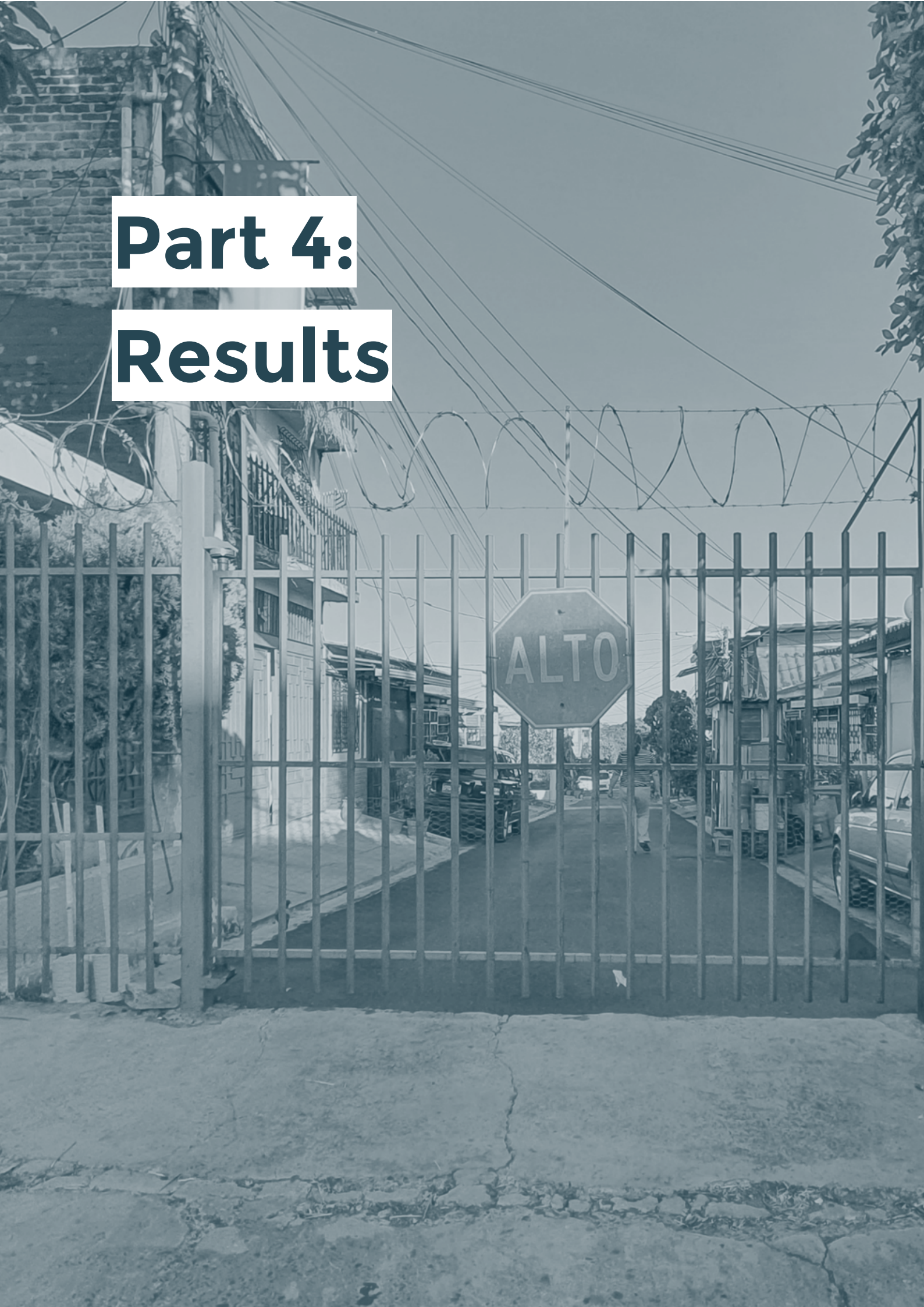
Part 4: Results

Image on previous page: gates on Pasaje 6, a gated street in La Sabana.

4.1 Observation and Pictures

The observation component of the research involved walking through the streets of the neighborhood to identify the nature of the gating and the ways in which the people interacted with each of the neighborhoods. Special importance was given to how the gates work and how people interact with or avoid them. A map was elaborated for each case with the objective of showing the extent of the gating situation. This was accompanied by a series of pictures of each case that include the streets, sidewalks, as well as any defensive, hostile, or fortified elements.

4.1.1 Case 1: La Sabana

La Sabana is a neighborhood which is located north of Calle El Jabalí, a secondary street which has become a mixed-use corridor, and south of Bulevar Monseñor Romero, an elevated highway (see Figure 12). The streets are designed as a grid, with avenues running north to south and "sendas" running perpendicular to them. The streets at the eastern and western part of the neighborhood are cul-de-sacs. All of the houses are oriented to the north or to the south, which means that all of the doors of the houses are on the "sendas", while the avenues face the sides of the houses, which have windowless facades.

The first things that became evident in this neighborhood were how widespread gating was and how different the character of the avenues is compared to the sendas. The avenues are long, narrow streets filled with cars, since they act as the only access point to the neighborhood (see Figure 13), with some people walking through them. However, there were a lot of walls without windows and all of the gates of the sendas faced the street, which made them feel quite unsafe. Many of those walls were unpainted or had graffiti. The gates, on the other hand, were all different, but looked well maintained and freshly painted. A phenomenon that I noticed is that some of these houses that are in the corners have been turned into small businesses, such as bakeries, tortillerias, snack stores, cafeterias, or car repair shops, particularly in Avenida C.

GATING IN "LA SABANA"

Figure 12. Map of gating in the neighborhood of La Sabana. The colored streets represent the situation of gating.

The sendas, on the other hand, are lined with narrow houses on both sides, all around 10 meters wide, which vary from one to two floors. The streets are around 6 meters wide with sidewalks of 1 meter on each side. The entrances to these streets are gated in most of the cases (see Figure 14). These gates are normally made by local welders out of square pieces of steel distanced close enough so that people cannot pass through them. The central part of the gate allows cars to enter and exit, and in most cases pedestrian gates also exist.

Originally, all of the central streets in La Sabana had a small garden at the center of the road (see Figure 15). The objective of these gardens was to block car traffic from going through and to add some green space to an otherwise very grey neighborhood. However, since the sendas in the central part of the neighborhood are now gated from both sides, this has forced the demolition of most of these gardens (see Figure 16). This is because opening and closing the gate requires either a guard or automatic gates with a motor; both of these options have additional costs. So usually, only one set of gates can be opened and closed and the other one remains permanently sealed. This is the case of Senda 6 (see Figure 17), where the gate that faces Avenida C is managed by a private security guard and the gate that faces Avenida A is closed all the time, except, when the garbage collection enters. The security guard has a small shed where he can rest (see Figure 18), but usually the conditions of these spaces is not adequate.

Fortification measures in this neighborhood are not limited to the gates, though. They may show features such as big walls, small or no windows, metallic bars, fences, razor wire, alarm systems, and cameras (see Figure 19 for an example).

Mobility in the neighborhood is, of course, limited greatly due to the gates. For example, the access to the park at the end of Avenida C (see Figure 20) is limited since the other streets that lead into it have fenced the access to it (see Figure 21). The public school in Avenida D (see Figure 22) is now more difficult to reach due to the gating of Calle La Sabana (see Figure 23). I theory, this street is supposed to be open during school days; but during all of my visits to the site and according to neighbors, this is rarely the case.

Interestingly, some streets are not gated on both sides (Senda 2 and 4, see Figure 12). In these cases, the garden at the center of the street is still present, so vehicular access to one side of the street is not possible. Pedestrians can still enter, but it acts as a dead-end. In the open sections of these semi-open streets, it is possible to find small businesses, such as traditional *tiendas* that sell food and snacks (see Figure 24).

Figure 13. Picture of Avenida C in La Sabana. This street is open and connects the park to the main street, Calle El Jabalí.

Figure 14. Picture of Senda 2 in La Sabana and Avenida A crossing it. There are gates on both side of Avenida A that limit access only to the neighbors.

Figure 15. Picture of Senda 2 (segment between Avenida A and Avenida C. Here the original garden on the middle of the street still exists. In other streets which have gates, these have been demolished.

Figure 16. Picture of Senda 6 between Avenida A and Avenida C, where the green space that used to be on the middle of the street was demolished to allow passage of cars from one side of the street to the others. In this street only one side of the gates open.
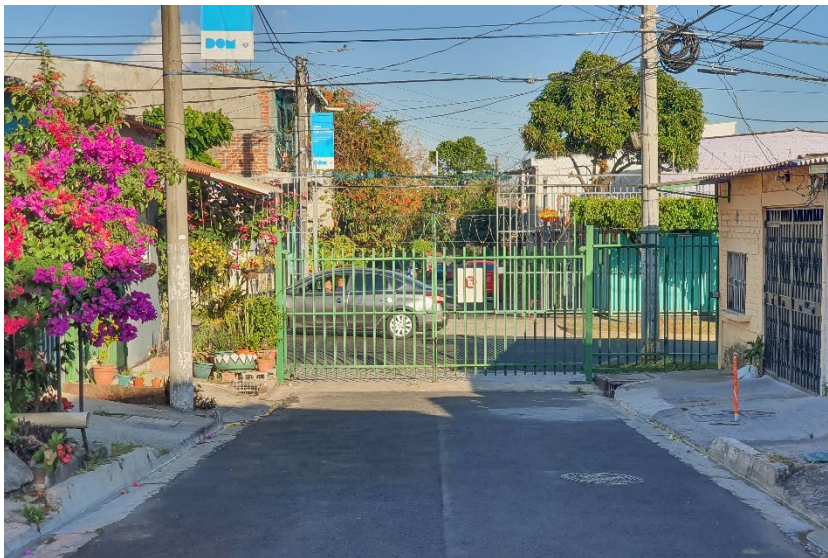
Figure 17. Picture of the gates on Senda 6 to Avenida A. These gates are locked most of the time, with the exception of the pedestrian gates which can be opened by residents with keys.

Figure 18. Guardhouse in Senda 6. Inside, there is a small space so that the private security officer hired by neighbors of these street can sit down and rest. There is also a toilet and a sink in this space.

Figure 19. Picture of the houses in Senda 6. In most of these streets, the architecture is very defensive and hostiles, with very little windows to the outside and walls that block the once existing front gardens.

Figure 20. Picture of the park at the end of Avenida C. Access to this park is limited by the gating phenomenon.
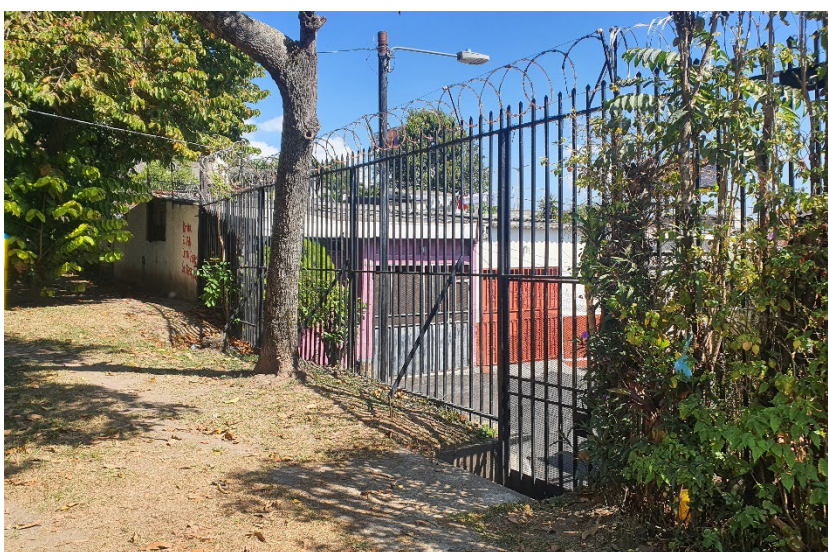
Figure 21. Access to the park from Senda 10. The access now is closed and only the people living in this street have the key.

Figure 22. Picture of the public school in La Sabana, at the end of Avenida D. The access to this school has caused tensions within neighbors.

Figure 23. Picture of the gates on the west side of Calle La Sabana, facing the school. When this street was gated, it was supposed to be open during school hours so that students could pass; but as seen in the image, it is not the case.

Figure 24. Picture of a family-owned tienda in Senda 10, between Avenida C and Avenida D. This is one of the few streets that is not gated, in part due to the resistance of the business owners.

4.1.2 Case 2: Jardines de Cuscatlán

The second case study, Jardines de Cuscatlán, is a more affluent neighborhood, where both the streets and the houses are bigger. The neighborhood is roughly delimited by Calle Chiltiupán in the north, and by Bulevar Merliot in the west. These two streets carry heavy vehicular traffic at most times, and the roundabout at the intersection of the two, "El Platillo", is a source of vehicular congestion. The streets of this neighborhood used to act as alternate routes for drivers, but now most of them have been gated (see Figure 25). The other streets, Avenida L-A, and Avenida L-C are now mixed-use corridors where small businesses are located.

The gated communities in this neighborhood have some peculiarities that differentiate them from the other case studies. The first one is that since the streets are longer, they have required a higher level of coordination between neighbors to be built. While in the case of La Sabana only a few streets had informal security guards, here basically all streets have hired a private security guard from one of the country's many security companies. This situation made it more complicated to get information from the residents, so I was prevented from going into the gated streets. However, I was still able to interview a security guard and some people who lived in the surrounding areas.

Avenida L-C, the main avenue that runs north to south in this neighborhood is a lively street with some traffic. It connects Calle El Pedregal, a main street, to the Pan-American Highway, passing through this neighborhood and an industrial area. In this section of the street, there are many shops, such as bakeries, laundromats, small supermarkets, and restaurants. From this street, residents of the gated streets that run east to west can enter through highly fortified and defended access points (see Figure 26). In theory, these gates should be open during hours of the day, and they even have signs that say so (see Figure 27). The reality is, though, that they remained closed all the time, and when I tried to pass through them the security guards stopped me.

Another phenomenon that happened in this neighborhood is the mixture of different typologies of gating. In the eastern part of it, there is a section that was gated from the beginning. From a design perspective, it is clear that it was designed with this purpose from the beginning, since it has only one access point that distributes to the whole gated area. Additionally, the gates are more aesthetic than the other ones that have been built informally in the rest of the area (see Figure 28).
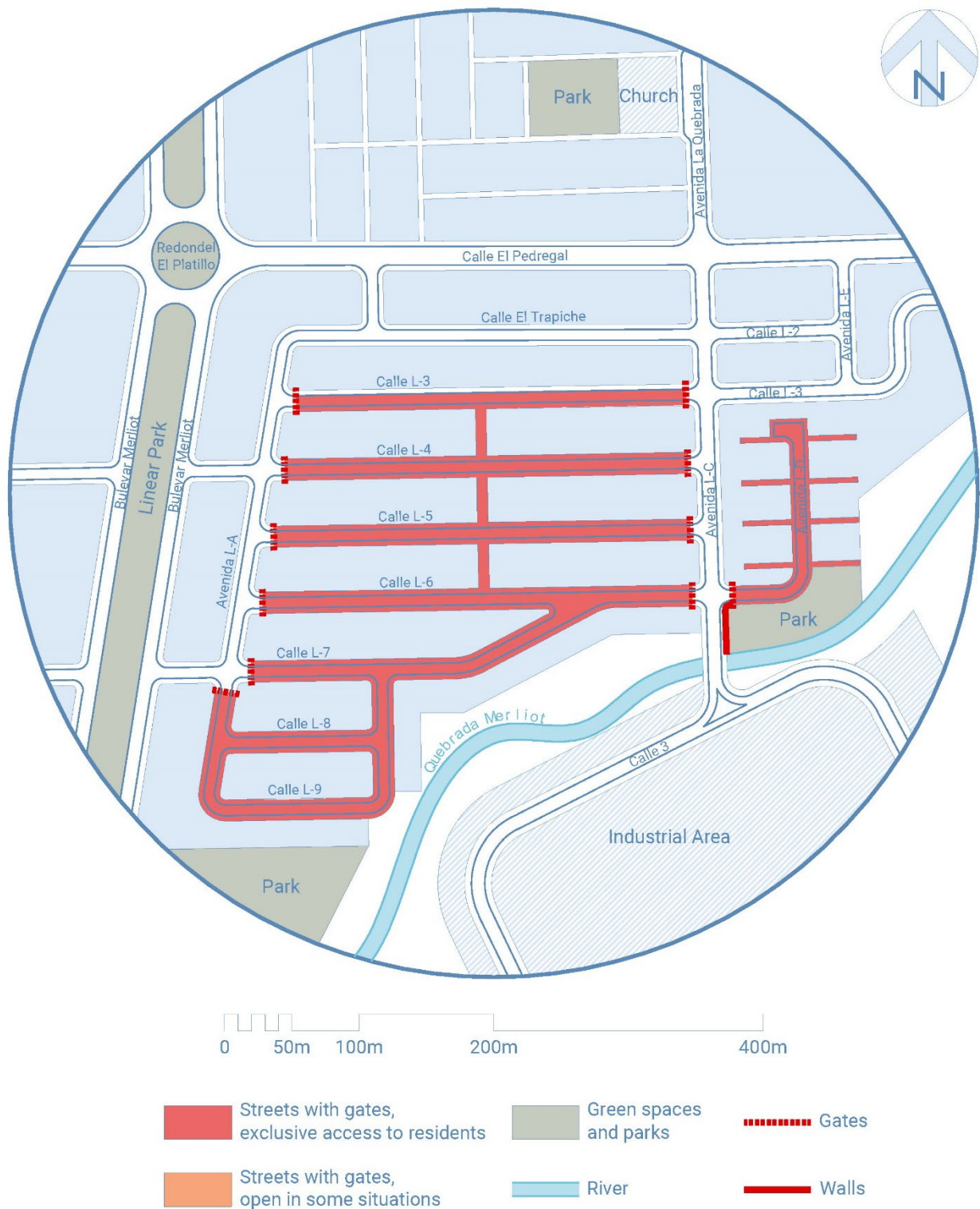
GATING IN "JARDINES DE LA LIBERTAD"

Figure 25. Map of gating in Jardines de Cuscatlán. The red streets represent gated streets that are closed all the time, while the ones in orange close only during the night.

Figure 26. Picture of gates to Calle L-3 in Jardines de Cuscatlán. Here, there is a guardhouse and a speed bump to control those who enter better. Additionally, the signs inform that the gate on the other side of the street is closed and that they have video surveillance ("Smile, you are being recorded").

Figure 27. Picture of the gates on Calle L-4. In this case, the sign informs that the gate is closed from 9 PM to 6 AM; however, in this case the gates were closes at around 2 PM.

Figure 28. Picture of the entrance to a newer urban development that was built with gates right from the beginning. Here the gates have a more "aesthetic" look.

4.1.3 Case 3: Jardines de la Hacienda

Jardines de la Hacienda is a case study that physically differs a lot from the other cases. It is a neighborhood that was built under a concept of popular housing by a private developer. Therefore, the houses are much smaller and most of the streets were designed to be for pedestrians. The borders of the neighborhood are the following: to the north, Calle la Cañada; to the east, Avenida las Arboledas; to the west, Avenida la Quebrada; and to the south, Calle El Pedregal. The first three of these streets also have parking areas for the residents. Other than that, the only other place for parking in this neighborhood is at the center of the neighborhood, at the end of a nameless street (see Figure 30).

The urban fabric of this neighborhood is quite simple (see Figure 29). Pasaje 10 is the main internal street that connects everything; it is a pedestrian street that runs east to west, but at some point, it was made wider so that small cars could enter. The street is not gated, but it has barriers located at both ends which have the function of avoiding non-authorized cars to enter (see Figure 31). Pasaje 12, a street parallel to this one, is the only one in the interior of the neighborhood where cars can comfortably enter; this street also has the same kind of barriers at the ends (see Figure 32) but with traditional gates from the other side (see Figure 33). The rest of the streets run north to south connecting Calle La Cañada with Pasaje 10.

The gating in this neighborhood occurs in most of the streets, with the notable exception of Pasaje 10, which joins all the streets together (see Figure 34), and Pasaje 29, which is a short street that connects the market and the park. The rest of the streets have two sets of gates (see Figure 35) which do not have guards, and instead rely on only on keys and locks. In theory, most of the streets should be open during the day, with only Pasaje 17 and Pasaje 27 remaining closed all the time. However, it is not rare to see the other streets closed too sometimes during the daytime (see Figure 36).

Similarly, to the other case studies, the houses here are heavily fortified (see Figure 37), and this affects the way in which the neighborhood is perceived. It is probable that this is why at some point the neighbors decided to paint some murals (see Figure 38). The themes of these art interventions are peace, nature, community building, and Bible scenes and verses.

On the east side of the neighborhood, across Avenida Las Arboledas, the Municipal Market of Antiguo Cuscatlán is located, a popular destination in this municipality famous for its fresh produce and restaurants. Additionally, some municipal services and offices are located there.
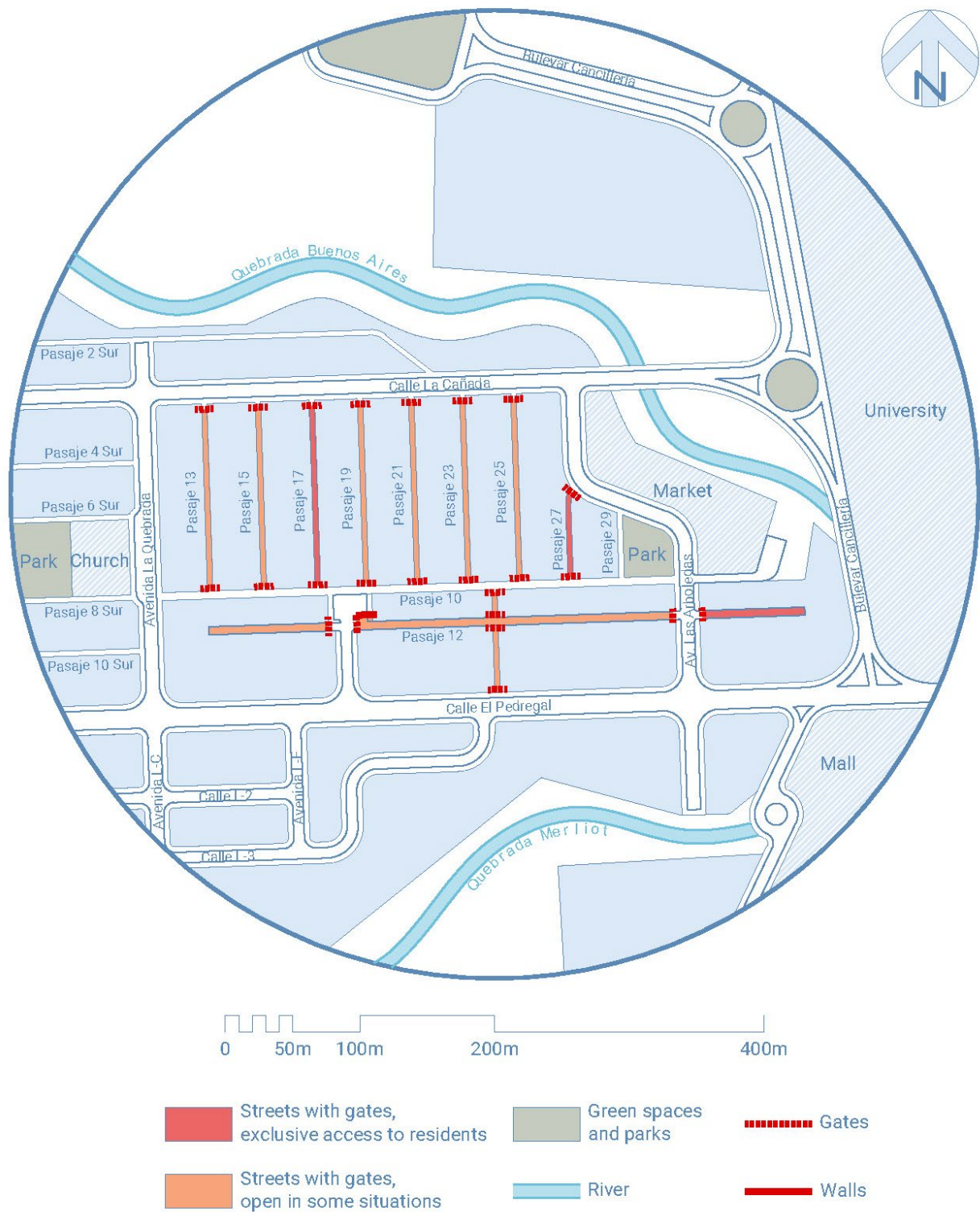
GATING IN "JARDINES DE LA HACIENDA"

Figure 29. Gating in the neighborhood of Jardines de La Hacienda.

Figure 30. Picture of the main parking of Jardines de la Hacienda. This neighborhood is pedestrianized, and parking is one of the biggest conflicts between neighbors. Part of this parking was appropriated and walled by residents of Pasaje 12.

Figure 31. Entrance to Pasaje 10, the main street in the neighborhood from Avenida Las Arboledas (in front of the market). The barrier is meant to avoid cars entering this "pedestrian" streets, but it is not very effective at doing so.
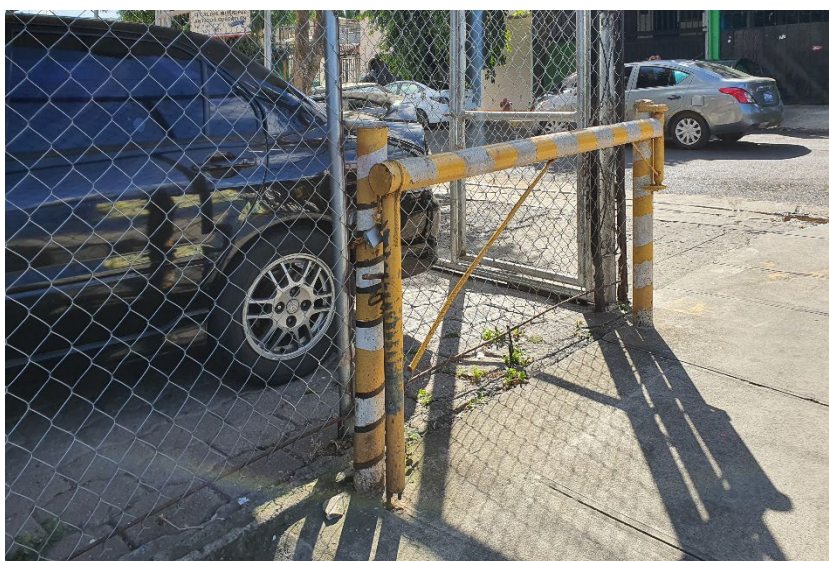
Figure 32. Picture of a barrier for cars in Pasaje 12. This type of barriers may obstruct the passage of vehicles, but pedestrians can still continue.

Figure 33. Gates at the entrance of Pasaje 12. This street has been widened to allow for cars to enter.

Figure 34. Picture of the main street in Jardines de la Hacienda, Pasaje 10. While this is completely open all the time, the architecture on both sides is incredibly hostile and fortified, with elements such as gates, walls, barbed wire, and fences.
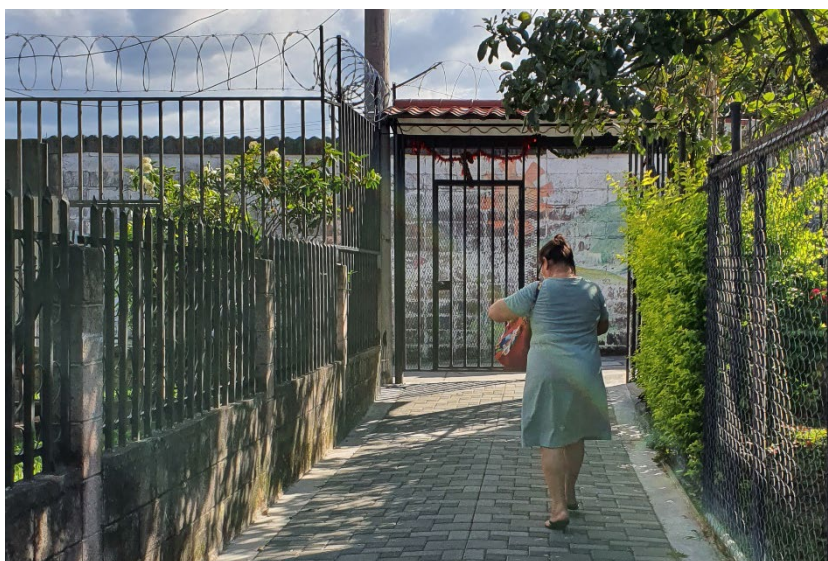
Figure 35. Picture of one of the secondary streets, Pasaje 13. In most of the streets of this neighborhood, the gates remain open during most of the day, closing only at night.
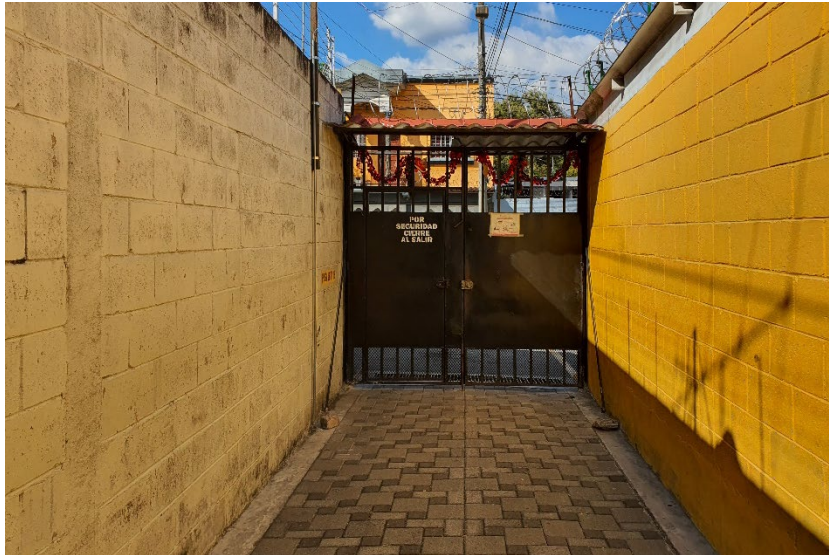
Figure 36. Picture of the gates at the end of Pasaje 13. The gates have been closed despite the theoretical schedule. More hostile elements are visible, together with some remnants of Christmas ornaments.

Figure 37. Picture of some of the residences in Pasaje 12. Houses are fortified using metal bars, walls, and gates.

Figure 38. Picture of a wall which used to have a mural done by the residents of Jardines de la Hacienda, as part of a campaign against graffiti. However, the mural was vandalized by members of the gang Mara Salvatrucha as evident by the letters 'MS.'

Figure 39. Picture of the gate to Pasaje 27, one of the two streets that always remains closed.

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Interviews in the neighborhoods

Origin of the gates

According to the neighbors, the gates started fifteen years ago. In most of these cases, the reason attributed to the gating process was the high levels of crime. In Jardines de la Hacienda, people mentioned the presence of street gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha, while in La Sabana it was because of the high prevalence of robberies and burglaries. Occasionally, people also mention other factors, such as intense traffic, the high speed of the cars that pass, the "annoyance" caused by street vendors or simply the desire for more privacy.

I was able to talk to residents of the first street in La Sabana that was gated – a segment of Pasaje 6 between Avenida A and Avenida C (see map in Figure 12). They cited a high-profile robbery, in which an engineering office that is in this street was robbed. That day, the boss of this office went to the bank to get cash to pay the mandatory Christmas bonus that all employees must be paid in December. In his way to the office, he did not realize that he was being followed by some criminals. Once

he entered the office, the criminals followed and threatened him to give them all the money. During this situation, other neighbors remember hearing the commotion caused by the robbers, but they decided not to act. This situation, together with a car theft and a pair of house robberies made the neighbors organize themselves to think about possible solutions to the problem. However, the solution at the end was to decide to gate this street. After that, they organized themselves in a directive. A member of the homeowner's association of the street mentioned this in her own words:

> "In the beginning there was no directive. But when it was created, it was made by us, the neighbors, due to a series of events that happened. (…) Then the neighbors from here [Senda 6], we organized ourselves and we said, 'Look, it's getting ugly here, we have to do something.' So, we closed [the street]. There was no directive. It was us the neighbors." (Interview with Julia, directive of Senda 6).

After these first gates were installed, more gates started to appear in other streets of the neighborhood. Something similar happened in Jardines de la Hacienda. A member from the directive of Pasaje 10 in that neighborhood mentioned how this happened:

> "The people who lived on the other side passed through here to get there. They even entered sometimes on motorcycles through the pedestrian streets. But some people did not want gates, so directives were formed in the other streets. First on one street and they gated, then on the next one, and suddenly all the neighborhood was gated. (…) The first street was Pasaje 15 around ten years ago, and the last one was Pasaje 17 four years ago." (Interview with Ricardo).

Organization of the neighbors

Directives, or homeowners' associations, are a common way of neighbors to organize themselves in neighborhoods in El Salvador. However, in existing neighborhoods such as the case studies of this thesis, the power that they have is limited and only depends on the willingness of other neighbors to accept it. They are grassroot organizations that get formed when there is a desire to take collective action at the neighborhood level. In the case of gated communities of the collective defense, directives are the main way in which neighbors organize themselves to build them. In most of the gated streets, the directives circulate petitions where the neighbors can sign if they agree to build the gates. I learned that this is usually accompanied by a compromise of the neighbor to pay their corresponding share of the construction costs, and depending on the specific arrangement, even the

maintenance costs. In Pasaje 6, the directive did that, and all of the neighbors accepted. They claim to have visited the Municipality of Santa Tecla and the Viceministry of Transportation, where they were given permission to install the gates. (However, when representatives of the municipality and central government were asked, they denied the legality of the gates and claimed that most of them were built without any permission).

Due to their grassroot nature, most directives consist only of one street. In La Sabana they only existed on a street level, and not on a neighborhood one. There was an attempt to create one in Jardines de la Hacienda, and it remained active for some years, but it failed to regulate gating. A former directive of this homeowner's association commented the struggles that they faced:

> "There were attempts to gate the whole neighborhood, but it has always been problematic because not everyone wants that. For example, here in the Pasaje 10, no one wanted gates, but people in the other ones wanted to have them. So, the directive failed to regulate that." (Interview with Ricardo, former directive member)

In general, the gates in Merliot occur on individual streets and not on a bigger scale. The only exception is a part of Jardines de Cuscatlán which was developed as a gated community from the start. Here, there is a unified gate and security system for the whole neighborhood, as it tends to happen in most new urban developments which have a gated community concept. In La Sabana, there have been initiatives to do neighborhood-wide directives, but they have failed so far due to a lack of agreement on the gating situation.

When deciding to build the gates, the neighbors must also decide the operation system. This largely depends on the funds that they were able to collect and on the willingness of the residents to continue to give monthly payments to the directive or not. In the simplest of arrangements, which occur in most of the streets of Jardines de la Hacienda and many of La Sabana, the gates have locks, and every resident is given a pair of keys to open and close the gates. This is advantageous in cases in which the residents do not wish to pay for further operation costs, but carries the inconvenience of having to carry the key at all times and that in streets which have vehicular traffic, the driver must get out of the car, open the gate, move the car across the gate, get out again and close the gate, and then get into the car again to continue driving. This of course, can generate some traffic. Due to this, some streets have decided to place motorized gates in which each neighbor has a wireless remote to open and close it. This offers increased convenience, but the motor will eventually need maintenance, or it will break down, which is quite common. A mechanic living in La Sabana commented that the directives of some

streets that placed motorized gates skimmed on the costs and installed residential systems not fit for constant operation of a street, resulting in frequent breakdowns, which have a cost that is distributed among the residents.

In La Sabana and Jardines de Cuscatlán, however, the operating system that is becoming the most common is to have a security guard. These guards may be ordinary doormen who have the task to open and close the door or they might be professional private security guards hired from a security company. Residents of these types of streets express that guards offer the biggest convenience to those living inside, since the streets are small enough that the guard can recognize the neighbors entering or exiting by memory. Additionally, the guards can control who enters the street. This is very inconvenient for those who live outside, however, since guards normally ask where the person is going to, and occasionally, even an ID. Some people who live outside complain that racial profiling is common, and that showing an ID to an unknown person is something that they do not trust. And, in the strictest of situations, the guards may even need to call the resident by phone to ask if they allow the visitor to enter.

The "convenience" of having a guard, however, also has a cost to the residents, who have to pay monthly fees which may range from 15 to 50 US dollars depending on the case. Bigger streets will, of course, have lower costs than the smaller ones, since the costs are distributed among all the houses. This is also why most of the gated streets in La Sabana that have guards have only one side of the street that is open, effectively turning a street that used to be a way through into a dead end. Since they cannot afford to have a security guard on both sides, they have to choose one side to leave open and the other one is sealed. Due to this, they have also had to demolish some small gardens that were located at the center of every street so that cars can circulate from the open side to the closed one. This was a complaint of some neighbors, who thought that in a neighborhood with so few green spaces, removing the little that they had was a bad decision.

The operation costs of the gates can have negative effects. It can be difficult to pay for those who are passing through a bad economic situation, so they might stop paying the directive at some point. Commonly, the response of the directives is to tell the security guards that they should not open the doors of those who have not paid for the respective month; so, those in debt to the directive have to open and close the gates by themselves. Additionally, not all residents trust security guards. A resident living in a street with a lock said that house burglaries "still happen" and that the security guards are often involved, since he claims that since they usually come from poor economic backgrounds, they might let their friend thieves enter. This, however, is just a comment and not something that has been proved.

When talking with a security guard who works in Jardines de Cuscatlán, he complained about the bad working conditions that are common for people doing his job. He said that in his street (which he wishes to maintain anonymous due to fear of being fired by directive or by the private security company) there are two guards, including him, who do 24 hour shifts every other day. He does not get any holidays and for each of these shifts, he gets paid 20 US dollars (which amounts to around $310 a month, lower than the country's legal minimum wage of $365 a month), an amount that has not increased in the last ten years and which he considers insufficient by today's standards. He does not receive social security or healthcare benefits, which are mandatory by Salvadoran law. Additionally, he complained that some of the neighbors are not kind to him and act in a rude way towards him. This precarious situation is similar to what some organizations have denounced in the past (CONNECTAS, 2015).

> "I have worked in many security companies, and they are all the same. They never paid me ISSS or AFP [social security and pensions]. And now that everything is more expensive, they keep paying me the same. The best pay that I have gotten is $170 every fifteen days, but it's a job that makes you tired." (Interview with private security guard working in Jardines de Cuscatlán)

While hiring private security guards is the most prevalent way of getting extra security, this is not always the case. There have been attempts to use security systems where instead of hiring private security guards, the members of the community are the ones that get involved. In Jardines de la Hacienda, there was a brief experiment for a time, but it failed in the long term because of the high levels of coordination that it required.

> "What we proposed originally [after a series of robberies] was to place more security [sic] including camaras. That is what we proposed instead of the gates. (…) We even had a neighborhood monitoring system for a time, in which we did rotations and used a whistle system to alert neighbors that were doing security rounds. So, if someone found a burglar on a street, he would alert people doing rounds in the other streets with the whistle. That way, the burglars would have no way of escaping. I remember that we even did some drills of what would happen if we found a burglar. The Police even helped us with the logistics. (…) But instead, people preferred the gates." (Interview with Ricardo, former directive member of Jardines de la Hacienda)

Life inside the gates

When interviewing those living inside, it was pretty clear that they benefitted a lot from the gates. They cited an almost complete reduction in crime, increased sense of security, privacy, tranquility, and being able to allow their kids to play outside in the street. Some of them admitted getting used to this lifestyle and that would like to continue living in gated areas like this one. Interestingly, some streets now have a large percentage of houses that are rented. From what a member of the directive of Pasaje 6 said, landlords can increase rents if the house is located in a gated area, so many neighbors have left and now rent the houses that they own. On the other side, many are attracted to areas which have gates, since they are considered to be safer, and it is associated with a higher socioeconomic status. A resident from Senda 2, a street that is partially gated, mentioned that there are more rented houses on the side that is gated compared to the one that is open.

Figure 40. Picture of a community dinner occurring in Pasaje 6. Image used with permission of Julia, member of the directive of this street.

Interestingly, in some streets, the gates resulted in a higher level of neighborhood involvement and more neighborhood activities. These streets did not used to have any type of organization before the gate phenomenon, and now the directives exist in almost all streets. While the focus of these neighbors' associations is on security, some of them have taken the opportunity for improving the neighborhood in other ways and for socializing more between neighbors. For example, in Pasaje 6, the neighbors painted the electricity poles with artistic designs, have a small community garden and host regular community dinners. Additionally, they do three special events every year. Guadalupe mentioned the activities that happened on her street. "We celebrate all the mothers on their day with a special gift. On Children's Day we have a piñata and activities for the kids, for Christmas, we have a community dinner." However, it should be noted that this is more of an outstanding case than the norm, since in most of the other streets the social activities and neighbor-to-neighbor interactions are still limited to the management of the gates and security. Yet, something that is noticeable is how people use the space more inside the gated communities. Emy, a resident of Jardines de la Hacienda mentioned this increase in the use of the public space:

> "Now [after gating] there are many more kids who come out of their houses during the afternoon to play. I think that it is because now it is safer, so parents are more willing to let them out to play. There are no strangers who will go through the street." (Interview with Emy).

When asked about it, those living inside the gated areas failed to identify the disadvantages of gated communities. Some mentioned problems with parking or conflicts with the monthly payments for maintenance. However, the most mentioned problem was how difficult it is to walk now. A teacher living in La Sabana shared how it is much more difficult for her to go to her favorite convenience store now, since she has to go around the block and walk for 15 minutes, opposed to the 3 minutes that she used to be able to do. Others expressed their annoyance at residents of Calle La Sabana, since that is the street that used to connect to the public school. When the gates here were installed, the members of the directive said that they were going to allow through traffic during school hours, but that is not always the case. A mother from the neighborhood said,

> "I think that the ones who suffer the most are those who have to go to the school because they cannot cross through the pasajes anymore. They had been told that they would still be able to cross through Calle La Sabana, since it is a main street. But that's not true. The other day I tried to pass there, and they didn't let me." (Interview with Laura).

Another person also expressed how difficult it is to go to the local church in La Sabana, since there used to be a pedestrian street that connected all the sendas together with the other neighborhood, Jardines del Volcán. She mentioned that the priest of the church was able to talk with the directive of Senda 10 to let the members of the congregation pass through the street on their way to mass. A part of the pedestrian street was reopened, but with gates that members of the church had the key to open.

Life outside the gates

However, those living outside the gated communities were much more vocal to express their negative opinion of the gates. Nearly all the respondents who lived outside these areas expressed their disapproval of this. First, they say that they were not consulted at any moment during the procedure of installing them. The procedure of authorization for installing gates only requires a signature from every person living on that street. While permission can be denied if one person opposes, there are no mechanisms that allow those living in the surrounding areas to express

their discomfort. Second, they complain that their neighborhoods have become unwalkable, since the grids that all the case studies had do not longer exist in practice anymore. Thirdly, they said that some of the gates had conditions when they were approved, such as having limited closing hours. This is the case in Jardines de la Hacienda, but in reality, many of these gates close during the day. Fourth, many said that they disagree with the perception that their neighborhood is dangerous. They said that there were other ways of fixing that that, such as cameras, that did not involve blocking the circulation of others. Fifth, they say that the traffic and parking situation is now worse. In some of the case studies, such as Jardines de Cuscatlán, the streets were used as alternatives to the main streets, and these helped the traffic decrease. However, everyone now has to go to the main streets, which in their opinion worsens the situation. Additionally, in La Sabana, those living in open streets complain that when those living inside the gated streets have visits, they instruct them to park in other streets, thus removing the spaces that they normally used.

And while regular citizens disliked the gates, the biggest critiques came from business owners. While those who have a business in Calle Chiltuipán or Bulevar Merliot said that they were not affected, those who had a business in streets were gating movements were starting opposed fiercely to these initiatives. They consider that gates limit them to get new customers, and that since now they must walk more to get around the neighborhood, their clientele has been reduced. In La Sabana, all of the streets that were not gated had a business inside the street that had resisted the fortification measures. Interestingly, there is a car repair shop on the corner of Senda 2 and Pasaje C which is active all day long. A neighbor that lives in the open half of Senda 2 mentions that since there are people there all day, she feels safe and thinks that the gates are unnecessary. This might be related to Jane Jacobs (1961) theory of the "eyes on the street."

Future alternatives

The main reason why residents mentioned that they needed the gates was to keep security. Yet, crime rates in El Salvador have been drastically reduced in the last year as a result of several factors. So, I asked the neighbors if they believed that gates would be necessary in a future where crime and violence is no longer a consideration. Some of them laughed at the question saying that "that would never be the case." But others reflected on the thought and said that in such a case, the gates would no longer be needed.

> "I think that if we lived in another environment, one in which we wouldn't have violence, then yes, these gates shouldn't exist. But

for now, these gates have helped us to stop crime. So, if crime disappeared yes, but for the moment not." (Interview with Rosa, resident of a gated street).

4.2.2 Interviews with government officials

Regarding the government officials, their opinion on gated communities is quite clear. They think that they are bad for the city and should not exist in an ideal scenario, but also recognize that the neighbors have security concerns which should be solved in one way or another. Boris Funes, of the OPAMSS, the metropolitan planning office, expressed that gates limit the citizens' rights to free mobility, and that the member municipalities should act on them. When asked about the impacts of gated communities he mentioned:

> "The first way they [gated communities] affect our city is in mobility. I have seen that, for example, in the case of Merliot. (...) And there is even a second impact, that I think that they have caused—the consolidation of small corridors of mixed use. Because of the gates in these neighborhoods, on the inside there is only housing. So, in the parts that face the streets that have not been gated, we have detected this change in land use. (...) This is not necessarily bad, but because it is not planned, they cause a saturation of traffic. (...) Another impact would be the empowerment of neighbors. While this may be positive; this can also be negative, due to the fact what they want doesn't line up with public interest, which should be above private interest." (Interview with Boris Funes).

Guillermo Chinchilla, head of planning of the municipality of Santa Tecla, agreed with the perception of negative effects. He mentioned how traffic is affected, but also recognized how citizen's rights are violated:

> "Yes, when they were built, they were 'alternative' short-term solutions for the problem of violence and traffic. However, they have been a problem in the long term because they affect circulation. (...) Between the neighbors, some of them are in favor. Of course, they benefit from increased security or at least a perception of it. (...) But from the perspective of planning it is a problem. They generate too much traffic and of course it affects citizen's free circulation, which is a right that they all have." (Interview with Guillermo Chinchilla).

However, when asked if OPAMSS or the municipality had any plans or even data to act on them, both replied with a no. Mr. Funes said that there are so many projects

and problems in the government that is it unlikely that such an issue will take priority soon. In fact, he labels the process in which these permissions as given not as formal or informal but as "semi-formal."

> "I would label this as a semi-formal process. They [the residents of the gated communities] may argue that they have permission from the Viceministry of Transportation. However, when the Viceministry grants these permissions, they do not do that under technical arguments. There is not a mobility study, or a study on the impact on surrounding streets, and they do not give guidelines about how the gates should work. So that is what I say semi-formal." (Interview with Boris Funes).

Guillermo Chinchilla explained that in his municipality, most of the gated streets had "no permissions at all." In some cases, they gave permissions to gates that had already been built, but prior permission is rare.

> "In Santa Tecla, almost all of the gates are illegal. By illegal I mean that they did not ask for prior permission. They have to ask both the Viceministry of Transportation and the municipality for permission, but sometimes they only get one, or none at all. (…) Another issue is that they are not aware that they must renew their permits. Our monitoring that discovered that this procedure is not done." (Interview with Guillermo Chinchilla).

Yet, no gates have been demolished so far, such as in the case of Colonia Yumuri that got in the media a few years ago (Alvarado, 2021; Funes, 2021). Both Mr. Funes and Mr. Chinchilla agreed that these demolitions of gates failed because of the way they were done. By using force, they only attracted the attention of the media and residents of other gated communities and in the end, the municipality had to retract and reinstall the gates. Additionally, they do not have the tools to act on that. Mr. Funes said that prohibiting the gates is impossible with the current legislation. Regarding other typologies of gated communities, he mentioned that what they try to do is to "design counter proposals so that developers can see that there are alternatives to gating." But no real plans exist about gated communities of the collective defense. Chinchilla identified that the biggest problem is that removing the gates would be an extremely complicated process that will anger the citizens.

> "In reality, the gates are still there to avoid any conflict with the citizens, because it is true that they benefit from having the gates. And going back to the previous situation would mean for them to go back to disorder and insecurity. (…) So, the topic is important to the

municipality, in the sense that it maintains harmony between the neighbors." (Interview with Guillermo Chinchilla).

Talking about alternatives to this situation, Funes mentioned that a different approach is needed where both sides, the municipality and the residents win.

"What I think that could be done in the future is a 'pilot program.' (…) The thing is, if we want to demolish the gates, we will have to offer something to the neighbors that would make them feel safe. It must be a win-win situation. And we could experiment with that to later replicate those experiences on a bigger scale. But other than that, I cannot see it being done in a short-term interval." (Interview with Boris Funes).

4.2.3 Interview with artist

As an additional interview, I contacted Ronald Morán, a visual artist whose latest works are related with the issue of fortification that affects Salvadoran culture and cities. His latest exhibition was in the Museum of Modern Art of El Salvador (MARTE) and was called *Por Encima del Jardín* (above the garden). In that exhibition he used mediums such as Japanese ink and paper to make designs that evoke the razor wire that is frequently used in Salvadoran homes and neighborhoods (see Figure 41 and Figure 43). Additionally, he also used the razor wire itself to make creations inspired by nature, such as flowers and vines (see Figure 42).

To know more about how this phenomenon is affecting other aspects of Salvadoran life, such as art and culture, I visited his studio in La Fábrika. This is a space where he and other artists share and collaborate in different works. He showed me the space, demonstrated how he makes some of his creations with nontraditional mediums and answered my questions. Ronald commented that in a context such as the Salvadoran one, art should be a medium that goes beyond its decorative function, and should also be used as a way of critizing and starting a conversation on the situation of the country. He mentioned that "this series … is a very punctual critique to insecurity, and to what insecurity creates as a medium for gating." When I asked him about how he got inspired to make this series he commented the folowing:

"This all started during the quarantine [due to Covid-19], which was a moment in which we all saw our vital space reduced to a few square meters. We were forced to be locked in. (…) But that also made me reflect that we [Salvadorans] are very locked up culturally. And that also is reflected in the way that we lived, which is entrenched, with

obsolete security devices which cultivate barbarism." (Interview with Ronald Morán).

In his work, he has used one of the most visible element of fortification processes in gated neighborhoods: razor wire. He uses this material as a symbol and a criticism to an out-of-control situation.

"Why the razor wire? How did we reached this point? It shows up the extent to which we humans go to protect out property. (...) We as humans like to defend ourselves, but the thing is that we have replaced our front gardens and our thorned shrubs with an artificial material such as barbed wire. We have locked ourselves in this artificial environment, creating a walled fortress around our property. (...) Add to that we are now electrifying that wire, adding cameras and movement sensors. Where are we going? What will come next after this?" (Interview with Ronald Morán).

Figure 41. Artist Ronald Morán posing in his studio in front of some of his works.

Figure 42. Flower made from razor wire. Image taken with permission of the artist.

Figure 43. Paintings made with Japanese ink showing natural elements made from razor wire. Image taken with permission of the artist.

Part 5: Discussion

Part 5: Discussion

Image on previous page: gates removed by the municipality of Santa Tecla for maintenance to the streets in La Sabana.

5.1 Analysis of Results

Research Question 1 says, what is motivating the informal enclosure of streets and how is this fragmenting the urban commons? This question can be divided into two elements: causes and consequences of gating. Each of those elements will be discussed in an individual subsection. Research Question 2 says, why have the local governments allowed the enclosure of streets and how does this affect the quality of life in the city? This will be analyzed in the third subsection.

5.1.1 Causes of gating

The causes of gating are varied, but three main factors could be identified throughout the interviews and the observation: a perception of high crime rates, traffic and circulation issues, and a desire for status and privilege.

Perception of high crime rates

The classic theory held by authors from a North American background that have researched about traditional gated communities is that a perception of crime causes people to move out and seek fortified spaces (Davis, 2011; Low, 1997, 2001). According to them, urban fear is a factor that causes people to move out of central neighborhood and to prefer places such as gated communities. Blakely and Snyder (1997) emphasize that this does not necessarily mean that the people moving out have experienced violence firsthand or that they are the victims of some type of crime. Rather, it is a perception of fear that affects people (Ellin, 2001). This is usually aggravated by a disconnection from actual reality and an overreliance on the media to make an assessment of the actual security situation in the neighborhood (Low, 1997). However, there is a big difference between these cases and gated communities of the collective defense. Here, it is not a perception of high crime that motivates people to move out. Rather, the gating processes are often kickstarted by high-profile crime cases that get the attention of a particular street. This means that

a perception of crime in the neighborhood is not enough, but the process normally starts after the residents experience this crime firsthand.

In the case of La Sabana, the residents of Senda 6 reported the robbery to the employees of an engineering office. In Jardines de la Hacienda, members of the directive mentioned many cases of burglaries across the different streets of the neighborhood and the presence of gang members. In Jardines de Cuscatlán, I was told about people being robbed outside of their homes. So, all these cases have a common factor, which is a concrete crime case. This was followed in all examples by the organization of neighbors into directives or homeowner's associations, the collection of signatures, raising of funds, and the eventual construction of the gates.

Once a street in a neighborhood is gated, this starts a "domino effect" that spreads to neighboring streets until gates dominate most or all the neighborhoods. This is what causes the case studies of this thesis to be so dominated by gating (see maps in Figure 12, Figure 25, and Figure 29). In the case of La Sabana and Jardines de la Hacienda most of the streets have already been gated, with only some left untouched. In Jardines de Cuscatlán this process of gating is complete and only the main streets have been left open to the public. Normally, the first street that is gated on a neighborhood faces some opposition or organization complexity. There might be a lack of knowledge about the requirements that are necessary, or neighbors do not agree completely on what should be done in this situation. However, as residents of other streets see this process, connections between neighbors living on different streets make it easier for them to replicate the experience of previous streets. Baires (2018) notes that this process started in the eighties during the armed conflict, and that since then has been growing without any type of regulation.

This is worsened by a lack of trust in public institutions and the police. In the different interviews, the residents of gated areas frequently mention the lack of government action to take control of the violence situation. This means that neighbors decide to take actions into their own hands, either by asking for permission from the government or doing it illegally, as most commonly happens. Figure 44 shows how the process of gated communities of the collective defense typically occurs, based on the case studies analyzed during this thesis.

| High-profile crime cases | → | Neighbors get afraid and organize themselves in directives by street | → | Collection of signatures of neighbors in favor of gating | → | Raising of funds and construction of gates | → | Gating spreads to nearby streets | → | Gating areas attract new neighbors seeking increased safety |
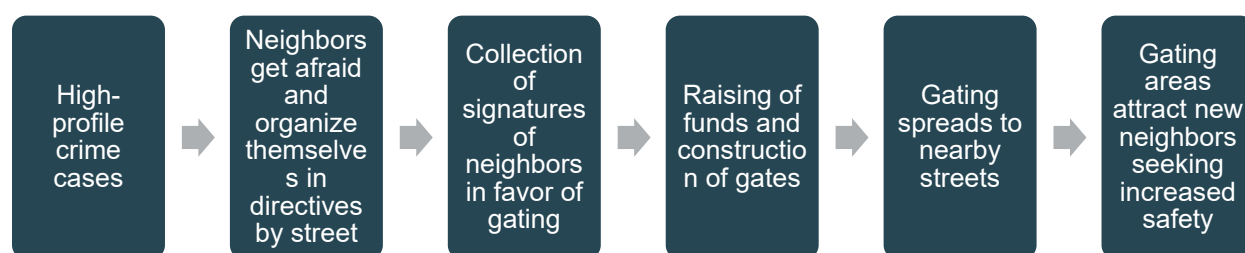
Figure 44. Pattern of gating due to crime rate in the case studies.

Traffic and circulation conflicts

Figure 45. A minibus circulating through Avenida A in La Sabana. Previously, these minibuses did an unauthorized deviation through Calle La Sabana and Avenida D, but now they are limited to this street due to the gates.

During the interviews, residents frequently mentioned problems with cars speeding, public transport buses diverting from their routes[9], parking conflicts, fruit trucks with loudspeakers, and vehicles and motorcycles entering pedestrian areas. These problems caused gating of some of the streets, such as in Calle La Sabana (see Figure 12). This street used to be open and was designed from the start as the main street of the neighborhood with the same name, since it connects the different avenues to the park and the school. However, residents complained about minibuses speeding through these streets, and after a lack of government action, they decided to gate the street by themselves. Another example is in the case of Jardines de la Hacienda, a neighborhood with mostly pedestrian streets. Here, residents of Pasaje 12 (see Figure 29) complained that their neighbors from the other streets left their cars on their street when the main parking was full. This led them to gate their street and to assign the parking spots on the street to specific neighbors.

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[9] In San Salvador, public transportation is managed by privately-owned companies on routes authorized by the Viceministry of Transportation (Central Government). The municipalities have little power in this and cannot enforce the This causes many deficiencies in the service, such as the mentioned problem of unauthorized deviations from the routes.

And while traffic problems are not the most common cause of gating, they were mentioned quite frequently throughout the interviews. This is a factor that is not mentioned in the literature as a typical case, but it makes sense when considering the theories surrounding the commons (Hardin, 1968; Ostrom, 1990). In this case, the lack of regulation of the urban commons and a bad system of governance led the neighbors to appropriate parts of the streets to solve a problem that could have been solved in different ways, such as with traffic calming measures, redesign of the streets, or better traffic management.

However, in many cases, the problem that the residents have is not that vehicles are passing, but *who* is passing through the streets of the neighborhood. Throughout the interviews, I encountered cases of people trying to justify the fortification processes because people that they deemed 'undesirable' (such as homeless people, informal vendors, and people from adjacent informal settlements) used the public space. This is extremely problematic, because it creates a distinction of who is desirable and who is not desirable in the public space. Unfortunately, this desire to be separate from these people is related to the processes of discrimination and stigmatization of those who face poverty. In the Salvadoran context, the most stigmatized group are young people, especially those who come from poorer neighborhoods (PNUD, 2015), who face a "double condition of victims, both due to the direct effects of violence, but also due to the lack of opportunities necessaries for their development, worsened by discrimination and their stigmatization..." (PNUD, 2015, p. 7).

Status and privilege

However, the desire to live in a safe area and without traffic problems and strangers are not the only causes of gating. I believe that even in gated communities of the collective defense there is a desire for status and privilege that drives gating processes to continue and expand throughout the city.

Since its beginnings, gated communities have been theorized as places for the elite where status is an important consideration (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Low, 2001). However, as research about the topic has progressed, it has become evident that people who do not come from privileged backgrounds can also live in gated communities. Sanchez et al. (2005) mention that in the American context there is a dichotomy between the gated communities that are built for status versus those who are built for security. This is related to both demographic change and changes in preference, but status is not noted as a main reason.

Regarding the Salvadoran context, Baires (2018) follows a pattern similar to Sanchez et al. (2005). When defining her three categories of gated communities, she clearly

divides the 'elite complexes of the rich,' which are built mostly for a status function, to the 'gated communities of the collective defense,' which have a strong security component. Lungo Rodríguez (2021) explains that in the case of the Salvadoran upper-middle class, living in a gated area creates a perception of socioeconomic status (Lungo Rodríguez, 2021) that many people desire.

However, I argue that even in the case of those gated communities that are built mostly for protection, there is still a desire for status. As Grant and Mittelsteadt say (2004), functions are not exclusive, and a gated community may have many functions. This is backed up by my results, in which I saw several instances of this. First, it is evident that living in gated areas is also synonymous with having a certain lifestyle. Residents mentioned that they are content with not having to deal with many of the problems that are 'outside' and that they cannot imagine going back to that. When asked if the gates would still make sense in a scenario where violence is not a problem, there was a split between the respondents. About half said that the gates would no longer be necessary, but the rest mentioned that even in that case they would like to keep the gates. Second, it is known that gates have the potential of changing the value of a property. In fact, in the gated communities I visited, many homeowners have transformed their properties into rental units; perhaps due to the higher rents that can be collected from these places. This also affects the cost of land and housing inside these places, thus furthering socioeconomic demand. In maps elaborated by OPAMSS (2014), it is clear that in areas where gating is prevalent, such as Merliot, the cost of land has spiked over the years. Third, many people mentioned an aspiration to live in these places. Some of the people who I interviewed that lived outside the gates expressed their desire to also live in these places. So, it means that living in a gated community is an aspirational desire of many. This is, I believe, why I found that not everyone who lives outside the gates criticizes the gated communities.

5.1.2 Consequences of gating

When talking about gating, it is important to differentiate between two different types of effects, the first effects are tangible and physical, while the second ones are intangible and are a result of the built environment. This section will be divided into two parts that discuss each of these types of consequences.

Tangible consequences

Fortification process can be expressed in different ways, but the most obvious one is the fortification of the built environment, which can be done both through a series

of different measures (Davis, 2011; Trisnawan & Harjoko, 2020). Figure 46 is a diagram that represents a fictional street, but with fortification elements taken from all the case studies. These elements are:

1. "Blind walls" towards the public space.
2. Use of private security guards to control access.
3. Controlled pedestrian access for residents with key.
4. Controlled access for vehicles of the residents, these may be opened and closed by the guard, automatically via a motor, or manually by each resident.
5. Hostile signs detailing the rules of the gated area.
6. Fences separating the public space from the enclosed one.
7. Park that has been enclosed by the gated community; use is exclusive only to the residents.
8. Guardhouse, which may be located either inside or outside the gates.
9. Speedbump or other measures to calm traffic inside the gates.
10. Sections of the sidewalk which have been appropriated by the neighbors and turned into private gardens.
11. Windows on the façade with metal bars, usually small in size and with frosted glass.
12. Garage gate with metallic elements. Visibility between the interior and the exterior is usually low.
13. Surveillance cameras and alarm systems.
14. Razor wire on fences, walls, balconies, and roofs.
15. Electrified fences.

In summary, gated communities of the collective defense have a diversity of security features that creates a strong fortified medium between two spaces. The security elements are not discrete and hidden, but large and obvious with the objective of intimidating potential criminals. This creates a fortified environment with a very strong, intimidating character.
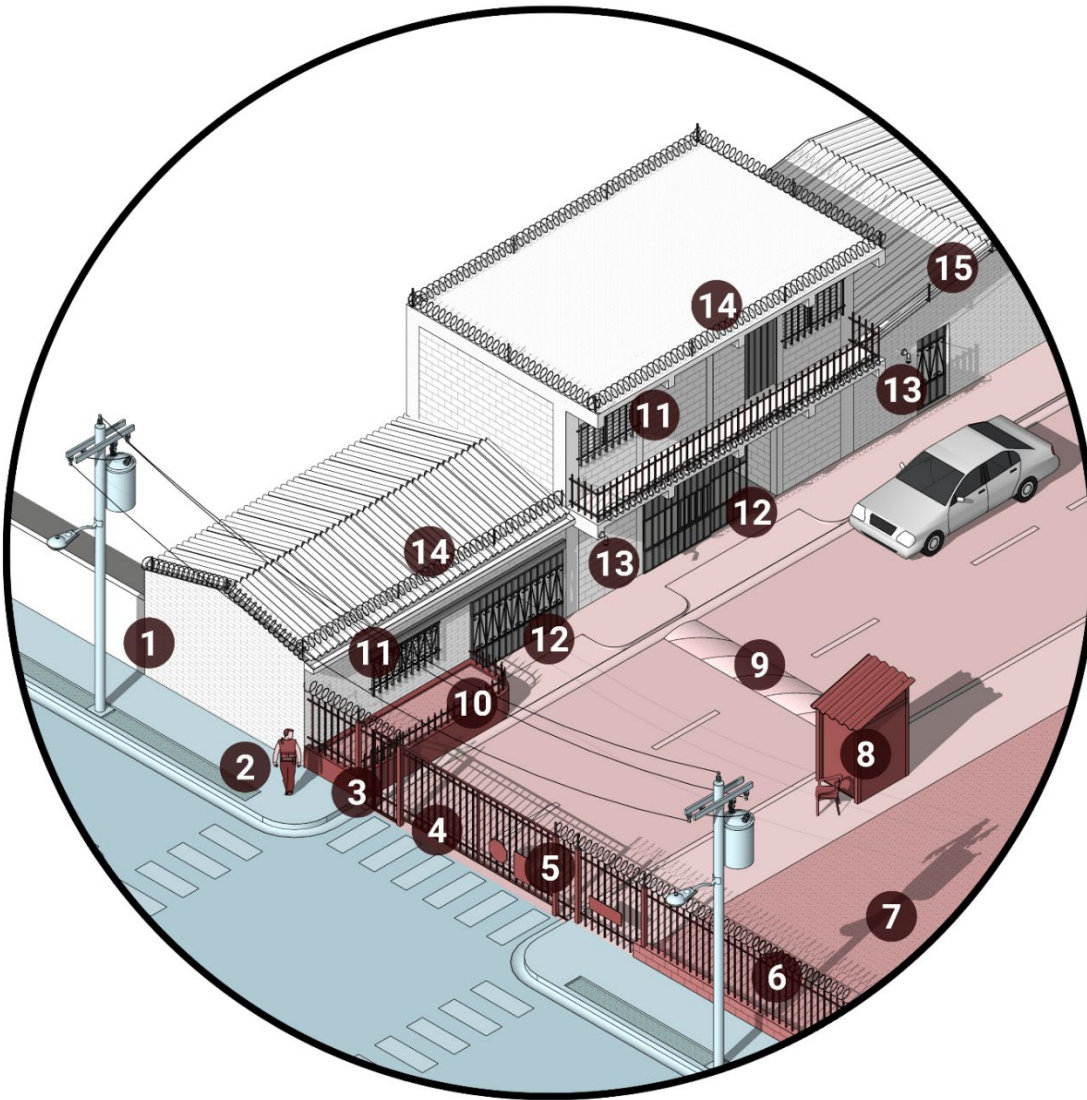
Figure 46. Diagram representing different ways in which fortification processes are visible in the case studies. Blue represents public space, red represents appropriated public space by gating, and gray represents private property. The labels detail the fortification processes (described in the text).

Nontangible consequences

The nontangible consequences of gating refer to the effects that the physical infrastructure have on people. However, it is important to distinguish that gating does not affect everyone in the same way. For example, some consequences might be positive to those living inside of a gated community, but often at the cost of affecting their neighbors. Sometimes, it is more complex than that, and even those living inside might face some negative effects. Regardless, fortification and gating are meant to benefit those living inside at the cost of those who are outside them. As Trisnawan et al. (2022) mentions, fortifications are meta-physical, furthering a social separation in addition of the physical one. The following table gives a summary of the consequences that I will detail in the next paragraphs.

Table 2. Summary of the results of the consequences of gating inside gated communities and on their surroundings.

Consequence	Inside gated communities	Immediate surroundings
Security	Residents report a noticeable reduction in crime, but it is unclear if the gating was the cause.	May result in reductions in crime in surrounding areas, but crime may still occur in the streets that are not gated.
Perception of security	Perception varies from total security to exaggerated levels of insecurity.	Hostile environment worsens the situation of insecurity, but perception seems more realistic.
Access and control	Residents can limit who enters and who does not to the gated streets. Sensation of increased tranquility, but also a generalized mistrust in strangers.	People cannot enter the gated streets unless they know someone living inside. Physical barriers become also social barriers that distinguish "locals" and "outsiders"
Motorized mobility	Reduction of traffic inside gated streets. Regulated parking.	The lack of alternative routes causes motorized traffic to be concentrated in the non-gated streets.
Non-motorized mobility	Residents need to carry keys to open and close the gates for pedestrians. Walking in the neighborhood also becomes difficult to those living inside.	Access to services and public spaces more difficult and requires walking for longer periods of time.
Public transportation	Public transportation does not pass inside the gated streets.	Some public transportation routes have to be modified or shortened. It is more difficult to reach the bus stops.
Sense of community	Increased interaction between neighbors. The creation of gates requires the creation of street directives, which in some cases has led to a greater sense of community and belonging.	Those who do not live on the gated streets get excluded from social interaction with those living inside. In cases in which the gating processes are not successful, social conflicts are not rare.

Local economy	Gates limit entrepreneurship and the creation of new businesses inside the gates.	Transformation of open streets into unplanned mixed-use corridors where businesses concentrate.
Provision of public services	Gates make provision of services more complex and might limit access to emergency services	Provision of public services remains the same.

Security

First, it is to be noted that security and the perception of it are two different things. Actual crime rates are based on numbers from statistics, but the perception of crime can be different, depending on factors such as how the physical environment replicates messages of urban fear (Martel & Baires, 2006), how media and propaganda represent crime levels (González, 2004), and on personal experiences dealing with crime; so, it is something completely personal and varies from person to person (Ellin, 2001; Low, 2001).

When analyzing georeferenced crime data by OPAMSS (2023), I noticed that it is extremely complicated to distinguish if gated areas are safer than non-gated ones, especially when gating occurs at the scale of the case studies discussed in this thesis. Figure 47, which represents crime data in the area of Ciudad Merliot, shows a slight tendency that crimes tend to occur more in main streets that are not gated, but is it difficult to infer if this is because they are not gated, or simply because higher numbers of people make it more likely to have more crimes in these areas. What is clear though, is that the number of crimes in this western part of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador is lower than in the eastern part. This might be related to wider patterns of the geographies of crime distribution.

Homicides   Negligent homicides   Robberies

Thefts   Car robberies   Car thefts
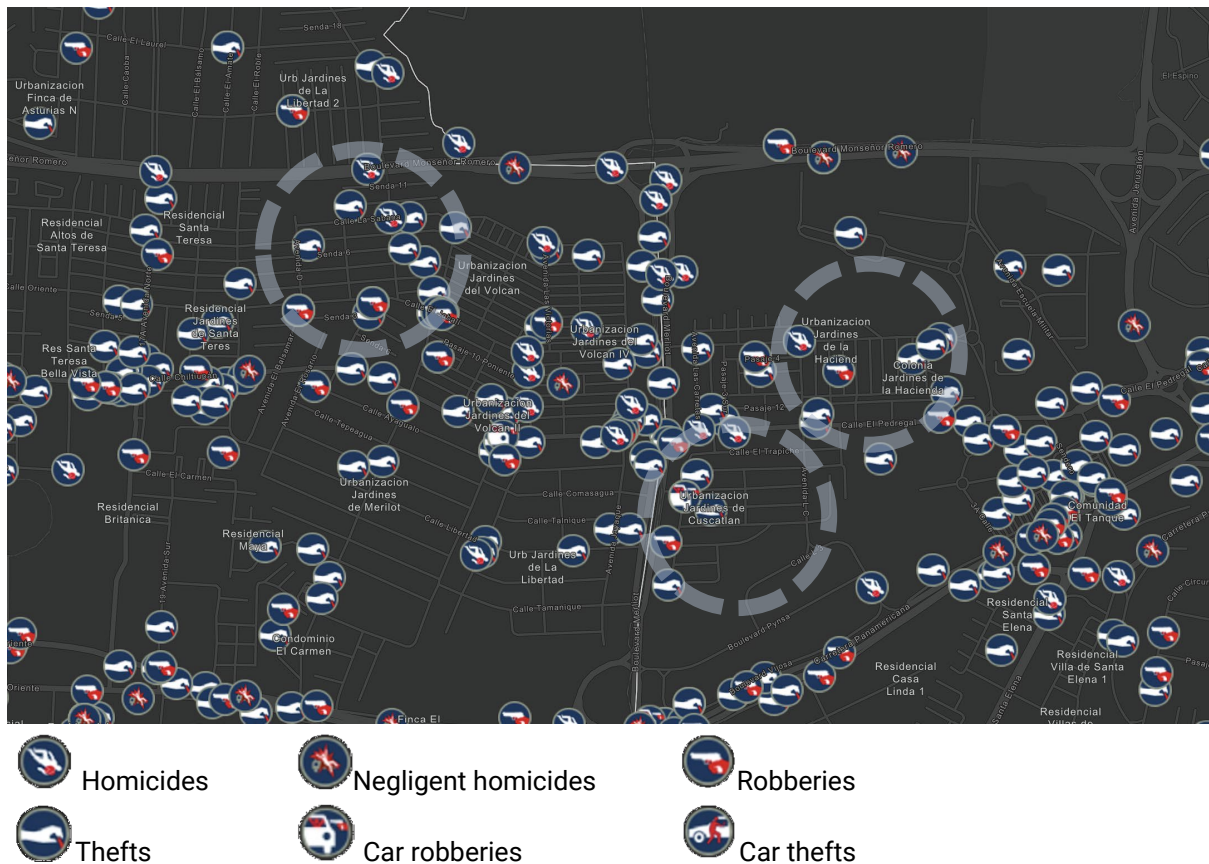
Figure 47. Map with geo-localized crimes committed in the area of Ciudad Merliot in 2019 (last year with full data). Source: (OPAMSS, 2023).

When considering the time variable, it becomes evident that crimes in the respective municipalities of the case studies have decreased during the the last years, but again, it is not clear if these reductions are just related to trends at a macro scale, such as security plans or due to the gating itself. Therefore, from the data that I have analyzed, I cannot make any strong conclusions regarding the effectiveness of gating at reducing actual crime levels. However, because of the focus of this thesis in qualitative methods, limitations regarding data accessibility, short time, and few resources, I would recommend future research to be done in this area.

Perception of security

When doing the interviews, I asked participants about their perception of security in the neighborhood and outside it. Of course, these opinions changed drastically depending on the respondent, their personal experiences, and on where they lived. Those who resided in gated areas repeatedly mentioned how crime has been reduced inside of the gates, but their opinions on the exterior remains divided. On one hand, some people believe that the presence of gates has helped the whole neighborhood, while others still feel that the exterior is inherently dangerous.

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Alternatively, those who lived outside the gates tended to have less polarized views of the phenomenon. Some believed that the security levels of the neighborhood have not changed and that some crimes still happen in the non-gated areas; others tend to have more negative views of them and claim that crime is now concentrated in the streets that are not gated.

In short, it seems that gates affect the perception of security, but this is not in a uniform way. There is a perception that the interior of the gated communities become safe places as long as the security features are installed, maintained, and well managed; but no clear conclusions can be given about the surrounding areas.

Mobility

Perhaps the way in which gated communities of the collective defense affect day-to-day life the most is the impact to mobility. However, this impact is not the same for everyone. After all, gating worsens existing inequalities and differences in quality of life, so normally, the unprivileged ones are those who also suffer the most (Caldeira, 2000). It becomes clear that even though those who live inside face some negative consequences, those outside the gated communities are the unprivileged ones which face the worst part of the effects. The specific effects also depend on the type of mobility that the person chooses or is able to use.

Regarding motorized mobility, it seems like gating turns this situation into a 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin, 1968) due to the consequences on multiple scales. It was already mentioned that traffic and parking problems are factors that cause some streets to be gated. But if a street is closed, then the traffic must move to another street, which will see its capacity compromised. As a result, this street will have an increased tension to be closed as well. In the end, most streets will be closed, and everyone will have to experience bad levels of traffic in the few streets that remain open. This is a problem that planning officers from the municipality of Santa Tecla and OPAMSS recognized.

While the impact to motorized traffic is considerable, non-motorized mobility is much more affected. This is because the micro-scale at which gating occurs in the case studies is the same one in which small walking trips are feasible. This means that gating can turn what would have been a short walk into a longer one, that would make walking a less optimal method. This means that some trips might be avoided, or that instead those trips could be done with less sustainable modes. This of course, also has an impact on activity levels and health. Figure 48 shows an example of how a simple walk from Pasaje 10 in La Sabana to the park is made dramatically longer because of gates.
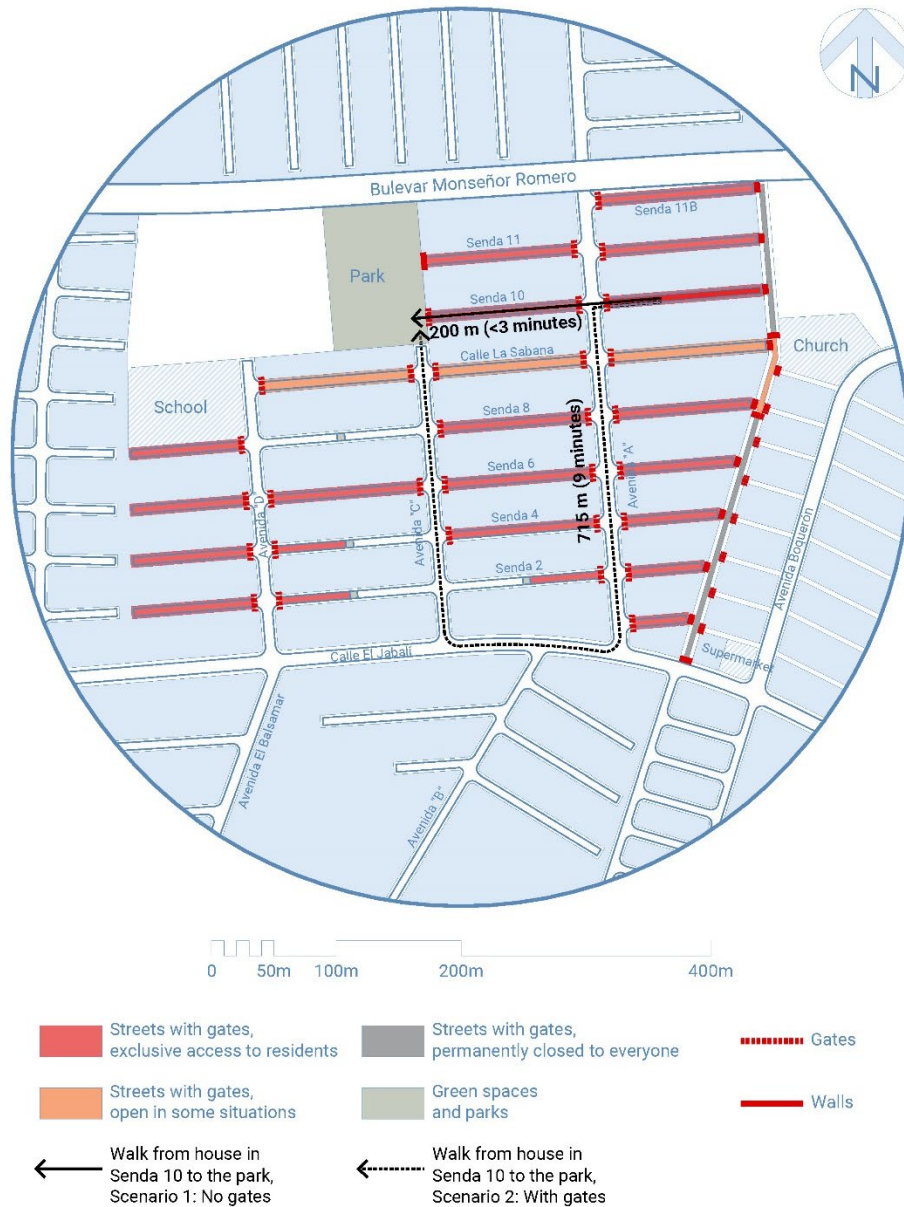
Figure 48. Example of how a walk to the park is made much longer because of gating.

It is also important to factor in the intersectionality of mobility with factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic groups and mobility limitations. The mobility patterns of certain groups, such as women, elders, poor people, and peoples with disabilities make them especially vulnerable to the effects of gating. For example, women are the ones who most commonly are responsible for care duties at home. Activities which have a disproportionate burden on women, such as picking and dropping kids at school, doing house tasks, and shopping for groceries require many small displacements that become increasingly difficult when gating is present. In another example, such as in Figure 48, the times it would take for a person with reduced mobility to do the same walk would increase dramatically.

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Sense of community

There is a debate around the inclusion of the word 'community' in the term 'gated community,' but Lai (2016) already mentions that the fact that they share a common space where interaction is possible. While gated communities can be thought as exclusionary commons (Harvey, 2011) where not everyone can enter and interaction with strangers is not possible, it is the presence of people that make this an urban commons (Mies, 2014), even if it is an enclosed one. The doubt regarding gated communities of the collective defense is if their inhabitants feel a sense of belonging to a community or a place. This, however, is very difficult to generalize, since each individual gated section can be different, and even within the different case studies I had various results. For example, in La Sabana, people from Senda 2 reported that there is no kind of interaction within neighbors other than random discussions when the gates need maintenance. On the contrary, residents of Senda 6 (the oldest gated street in the neighborhood) are highly organized, have meetings together, celebrate sport events, celebrate the holidays together, and have quarterly community dinners where the residents can mingle and interact with each other. Similarly, while some of the pasajes in Jardines de la Hacienda are quite bland and little interaction between neighbors happens, others had murals made by the community and have a more organized community.

An increased sense of community and neighbor-to-neighbor interaction cannot be predicted in gated communities of the collective defense; but it does happen sometimes when the organization between neighbors is good enough and their interests line up in a common cause. Unfortunately, gating can also be a source of internal division, as seen in some of the streets of La Sabana where gating has occurred in only half of the street. When the interests of the neighbors do not line up I the same direction, discontent becomes more evident.

However, even in the cases I which neighbors of a gated street become united, this is at the cost of separating themselves from the rest of the neighborhood. So, while gating can become beneficial on a micro-scale, at a bigger scale the effects are negative. Mr. Chinchilla recognized that this increased neighbor empowerment is both a positive and a negative force. The challenge remains in using this empowerment to create community between different types of neighbors, not only those who have the same socioeconomic characteristics.

Local economy

As explained by Boris Funes of OPAMSS, gated communities of the collective defense have produced unexpected and unplanned changes in land use that have repercussions both in urban planning and in the local economy. First, the

monofunctional character of the residential areas gets reinforced, since it is difficult for businesses to thrive in places where strangers are not allowed in the first place. This makes entrepreneurship more difficult for the residents of these streets and puts a big strain on the businesses that already exist.

On the other hand, the concentration of commercial uses outside of gated areas pushes towards a polarization of land uses. This may push the residents of these areas out, since businesses can only be in these streets. Additionally, this may exacerbate the traffic problems that gating causes in the first place, since these land uses were not appropriately planned.

Provision of public services

Figure 49. Temporary removal of the gates of a street in La Sabana by a local mechanic before the Dirección de Obras Municipales *enters to repair a street.*

Gated communities of the collective defense also affect the provision of public services. Even if the streets are gated, they are still technically owned by the municipality, so they still must maintain them. Additionally, any public service, such as water, electricity, waste disposal, police, and ambulances, must still be able to enter the gated areas. However, because of their informal construction, they sometimes limit the accessibility of these services to the neighborhood. A mechanic in La Sabana commented that he has made a considerable amount of money by removing and reinstalling the gates in emergency situations. For example, the streets of the neighborhood were in the process of being repaired while I was doing the fieldwork; but due to the design of some of these gates it was impossible for the machinery to enter. So, the mechanics were hired by the government to remove and reinstall the gates temporarily (see Figure 49). Other neighbors say that they have experienced problems with garbage collection. Another one commented that he once needed a towing truck to move his damaged car, but it was not able to enter because of the gates. Informality, which is a key part of the construction process of these gates, makes it more difficult for the government and its agencies to provide services, and the extra cost to adapt to these situations comes from all the taxpayers, not from the residents of the gated areas.

5.1.3 Government interaction

As explained previously, gated communities of the collective defense may have very different legal status, so the interaction that the different levels of governments have had during their construction can vary from non-existent to limited involvement. The official legal procedure for installing gates is to present the municipality documents that show that the neighbors have organized themselves in a directive and that everyone who lives inside is in favor of the gates. Additionally, they must provide the drawings and constructive budget of the proposed gate and the location. No technical studies are necessary, since in theory they are done by the Viceministry of Transportation. However, the reality is that most gates are done without permission (Baires, 2018). When I asked the Transparency Office of the Municipality of San Salvador for a list of all the permits that they had given to gated communities, I received an incomplete list of 29 streets, (Alcaldía de San Salvador, 2022b) a number that is ridiculously low compared to the hundreds, if not thousands of gated streets that exist in the city. The municipality of Santa Tecla commented that the data is non-existent and the municipality of Antiguo Cuscatlán failed to reply. Just the fact that the government institutions have no data of how widespread the issue of gating is reflecting the low importance that the topic has received so far.

Therefore, I have identified four reasons why the main response of the government so far has been inaction: political considerations, resource constraints, perceived benefits and legal complexities.

Political considerations

The main responsible of giving permission to put gates are the municipalities, with the Viceministry of Transportation also having a role in the process. But regarding the current proliferation of gates, there are three possible routes to take. The first one is to continue with the status quo, in which the gates continue to exist in the same way and new ones continue to be built in the streets that do not have them already. Based on the interviews I had, it seems like this is the route that the government agencies currently are, which is a route of disregard of the problem. The second option would be to go in the same direction as Tegucigalpa (Handal & Irazábal, 2022; Urtecho-Osorto et al., 2021) and keep some gates but regulate how they function and enforce rules and stricter requirements for the construction of new gated areas. The third option is to ban the gates, and to start a procedure of dismantling them and limiting the construction of new ones. The municipality of San Salvador already attempted to do this unsuccessfully in the case of Colonia Yumuri (Alvarado, 2021; Funes, 2021).

Due to all the negative consequences seen from the last section, from an urban commons perspective, removing gates would be the way to go. Yet, there are many political obstacles as to why this does not happen. In fact, removing gates is not seen as a priority issue that will get votes: on the contrary, it will very likely make all those who live in gated areas challenge these decisions and even vote against the political party in power. Since security is traditionally a responsibility of the government, removing gates without fixing the security problem will be very likely to infuriate citizens.

Resource constraints

In El Salvador, municipal competences are quite reduced and opportunities for obtaining tax money are low. Additionally, municipalities in El Salvador have very little resources as the country is moving towards a model of centralization that is stripping them of resources. An example of this was the reduction of the FODES from 10% to 1.5%[10] (Calderón & Flores, 2021). It is very difficult for local governments to take decisions like these when they have little personnel to design these strategies and limited economical resources to execute them. In fact, a big part of the problem is that the municipalities lack the information to reflect on how big the scale of the problem is.

Due to this situation, most municipalities in El Salvador focus on maintaining a basic level of services and doing some urban projects but removing gates or finding alternatives to this situation is not something feasible at the moment. For fixing this situation, the priorities need to change, and municipalities would need adequate funding to develop plans to find alternatives to this problem.

Perceived benefits

It is no secret that violence and crime have been the biggest problems that Salvadorans have faced for the last decades (IUDOP, 2022), so they have a big expectation for the government to solve this problem, and if it does not happen they will not be reluctant to tackle it firsthand. Gated communities of the collective defense are an example of this situation. And while gating does not solve the complex structural causes of violence in the country (Salgado, 2011), it does give a

[10] The Fund for Economic and Social Development of the Municipalities (known as FODES due to its name in Spanish) mandates that municipalities must receive a percentage of all the State's taxes. The money was meant to be use in projects, but since its reductions, the DOM (Direction of Municipal Works), part of the central government, is the responsible of doing them.

relief for the people living inside. The government also benefits from the relative security that the gates provide, so if the neighbors are paying for their own security the government can focus resources on other areas with higher crime indexes.

Additionally, a government that allows neighbors' initiatives to take place can be seen as positive. By allowing gated communities of the collective defense, governments may be perceived as empowering to the citizens. Therefore, they might be even incentivized to allow this situation to continue to happen, so that the impression may be kept.

Legal complexities

A problem regarding gates is that the laws regarding this issue are contradictory, making it complicated to ban them. Article 81 of the Constitution of El Salvador (Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador, 1983) mentions that "everyone has the right to circulate freely on the national territory." Meanwhile, the Municipal Code of El Salvador says that municipalities are responsible of "regulating the use of parks, streets, sidewalks, and other municipal sites; in the case of streets and sidewalks, free circulation should be guaranteed without infrastructure or other constructions that block it"(Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador, 2000, Title 3 Chapter 1 Art. 4). And while it may appear clear that gated communities should not be allowed based on these two laws, the reality is more complex. Planning officers from OPAMSS commented that developers of new gated communities use an old from the mid-twentieth century to justify the gates, which is the *Ley de Propiedad Inmobiliaria por Pisos y Apartamentos* (Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador, 1961). This law mentions that some type of enclosure is possible, but it does not refer specifically to gated communities; yet this loophole has been used to allow for it. A solution to the gating problem would require making a clearer legal framework and making sure that the legislation is correctly applied.

Additionally, another problem is the multi-actor coordination that is necessary for achieving this. As already mentioned, both the local and national governments are involved in the regulation of gating, but the interests of the two do not always match. Figure 50 show the different parties that have governed the municipalities of the case studies and the central government since 2000. In order to regulate this better, it could be possible to leave these competences to an institution that is not linked to a party, such as OPAMSS, the planning office of the whole metropolitan area. This way, governance processes could operate more smoothly, and they would have a direct link to the urban plans.
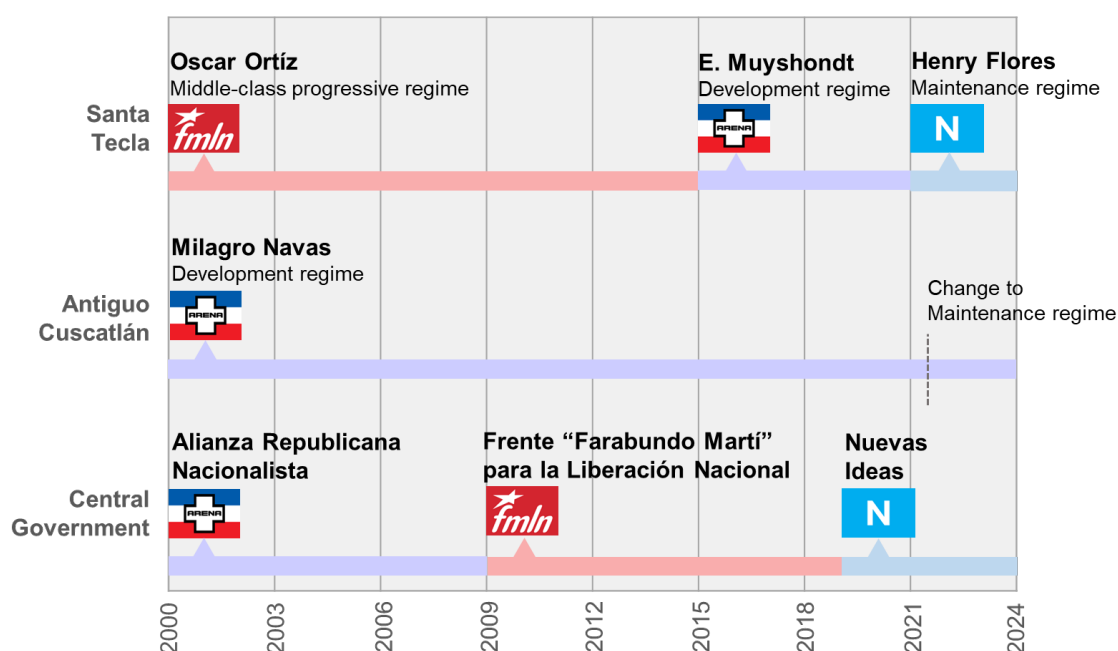
Figure 50. Timeline showing the different governments at the national and local scale relevant for the case studies.

To sum it up, gated communities of the collective defense are caused by both internal and external factors, but in the end, what prevents or allows them to happen is the level of involvement that the government has. The government has three possible options to deal with gated communities of this type: inaction, legalization and regulation, and illegalization and dismantling the gates. However, the response of the government so far has been inaction, and this is due to a series of factors. First, destroying the gates would entail political considerations that most governments do not want to deal with. Second, municipalities have resource constraints that do not allow researchers to understand the problem or to have funds for programs to act on them. Third, gated communities have some perceived benefits, such as reduction of crime and empowerment of citizens; this makes acting against them more complicated. Fourth, there is a series of legal complexities that would have to be solved so that no loopholes are used to justify the existence of gates in public space.

5.2 Limitations and recommendations

This research had certain limitations that I would like to acknowledge in the following paragraphs. The first one is that this thesis does not intend to be a

systematic explanatiexists why all gated communities of the collective defense exist. Because of the little previous work done in this topic, I had to focus a considerable amount of energy in the explorative aspect of this research. I think that further research would need to go deeper into the causes of gating communities. One option for doing this would be to consider a bigger sample size than the three that I had. Another one would be to choose different case studies. The chosen neighborhoods for this thesis, while very enriching and complex, also had their limitations. For example, if the chosen case study would have been a poorer neighborhood in the eastern part of the city, where gang violence used to be stronger, then different reasons would have been discovered and the results would have varied.

Second, there were temporal limitations. The research for this thesis was done during the first months of 2023. These temporal limits had an effect on the results, such as the drastic reduction in homicides that started during the previous year and the current state of exception. Additionally, this punctual temporality did not allow for a longitudinal study that evaluates the evolution of the situation across time. By considering the factor of time, it would be possible to monitor how certain decisions affect the case studies.

Third, I was limited spatially to case studies in the same city. Originally, I was intending to do a cross-city comparison with the other capitals of the Northern Triangle of Central America, Guatemala and Honduras. However, the limitations of having an international master program outside of Central America made this not feasible. Perhaps future research can be done that considers comparison as a method.

Fourth, I was limited by the amount of information available. I have to recognize that while it is true that some institutions gave me their support for getting interviews and shared some information with me, there were others which were reluctant to do it or simply ignored my requests. Additionally, when asking for information, a lot of it was declared "non-existing" or the received information was incomplete. This is extremely concerning since it shows either a disregard for the importance of this topic, or an organizational mess that does not allow for this information to be stored properly. Either way, I think that future research done from within of the institutions is important. Policies around the topic cannot be made without actually knowing the actual scale of this problem, and from an outsider perspective collecting that kind of information is impossible without deeper collaboration from the government institutions.

Fifth, my methods were limited to qualitative ones. While this made it valuable for understanding a few case studies in depth, I consider that future research would also

benefit from quantitative studies that consider the spread and expansion of gating, and how this affects the city in ways that can be measured.

Finally, as a researcher, it is possible that this thesis was affected by some internal bias. Being a Salvadoran who grew up in the same city that I studied was a strength and allowed me to go deeper without having to familiarize myself previously with the context, but this probably also made it possible for some bias to permeate through. However, I acknowledge that many of my previous assumptions were changed from the research and my view is not as polarized as it was before.

Regarding other options for future research, I would recommend delving deeper into the intersectionality of gated communities of the collective defense and analyzing how this is related to gender, race, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and other factors. Additionally, I would also recommend participatory approaches to find alternatives to these types of gated communities, so that possible solutions can be found from a bottom-up direction instead of imposing something on them.

5.3 Conclusions

This research analyzed gated communities of the collective defense, a typology of gating that has been so far overlooked and ignored, under the assumption that all gated communities are built from scratch. Blakely and Snyder (1997), when defining the term already gave out the possibility that retrofitting gates into an existing neighborhood is possible, and that this is still considered a *gated community.* However, the characteristics of this typology of gating make it necessary to distinguish from what Kostenwein (2021) considers the 'stereotypical' gated community, which was defined by influential scholars from a predominant North America (Davis, 2011; Low, 2001). Gated communities of the collective defense, as first named by Baires (2018) are characterized by their security function which is visible through strong, hostile infrastructure. However, the way in which they look is dramatically different from the stereotypical cases and their dimensions might vary from a single street to a whole neighborhood. They are built through bottom-up processes, which normally do not involve the respective government.

Through my research, which involved quantitative methods, such as semi structured interviews and observation, I visited three neighborhoods in the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, where I learned that the formation of these enclosed spaces are extremely complex, multi-dimensional processes. Yet, I

identified three main causes. first, a perception of high crime rates, which is related to the phenomenon of urban fear (Ellin, 2001; Martel & Baires, 2006); second, circulation and traffic conflicts, which are worsened by the continuous spread of gated spaces; third, the desire of status and privilege, in which the middle class tries to imitate the patterns in which the urban elites live (Lungo Rodríguez, 2021).

The effects of gated communities of the collective defense are varied and do not affect everyone in the same way. Those who live outside the gates and who are in already vulnerable situations; such as poor people, youth, elders, women and people with reduced mobility; are the ones who suffer most these consequences, which tend to exacerbate the existing state of inequality in socio-spatial segregation (Roitman, 2003). Physically, gated communities of the collective defense cause landscapes of fear, where hostile elements are used to strengthen the conception of fortification. Additionally, they produce non-tangible effects, such as a change in the perception of security, reduced mobility options, an increased sense of community inside the gates at the cost of severing relationships with the exterior, a monofunctional local economy that separates residential and commercial uses even further, and additional complexities to the provision of public services.

As a problem of the urban commons, this situation is related to a mismanagement of the urban resources (S. Foster & Iaione, 2018), which in this case is the public space (Lee & Webster, 2006). The local and central governments have the power to stop this. However, so far, they have decided against doing so. It seems like the biggest factor causing this is prioritization of other issues and a failure to recognize the situation as a problem. Other than the current status quo, the government has two options, which are legalization and regulation of the process or a total ban that would return the streets to be public. Most attempts of solving this in the past have used the second option but have failed due to a lack of recognition of the structural causes of violence and insecurity in the country, which would have to be addressed in order for a return to the previous situation to be feasible. Gated communities are complex processes which produce damaging consequences to the urban commons and worsen existing socio-spatial problems. Yet, some of the characteristics that have allowed gating processes to exist could be used as opportunities to turn the situation around. Such policies could involve using the heightened citizen participation and involvement and empower citizens to transform the public space in ways that do not limit public circulation.

While it is true that some of the situations that have been described in this thesis are particular to the specific context, it is important to recognize that all urban knowledge must be provintialized and adapted to the local circumstances (Lawhon et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to avoid assuming that theories produced in the Global North can be applied 'as they are' to the Global South without necessary

adaptations. Yet, there are some processes that while different in the specific details, occur on a global scale. The wider issue that is discussed here is the enclosure and appropriation of the urban commons and its division into exclusionary commons (Harvey, 2011). In fact, enclosure and fortification are processes "as old as city building itself" (Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p. 4) which have continued from the past into our days. While other cities may not have big enclosures of public space due to urban fear, they may face appropriation of public space by forces of the market or other factors. Regardless, gated communities of the collective defense in El Salvador help to theorize about 'ordinary cities' (Robinson, 2006) that are out of the common focus of urban studies. By studying alternative cities other than the typical cases in the Global North, urban theory is enriched, and scenarios that have not been explored before can be analyzed, which are enriching for the discipline.

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