

GATED COMMUNITY

Space and Social Inequality

SUNYOTO USMAN

The topic that I would like to talk to you is gated community, space and social inequality. For me the topic is very important and relevant to be explored in discussing the urban culture and society, particularly it is indicated that the gated community has produced many kinds of social problem in city life. It seems that the problems become more complex, and some people feel that the gated community gradually is destroying urban culture. I would like to focus my discussion in the impact of gated community on space domination and environmental conflict.

It has been indicated by observers that the number of gated communities in Indonesian cities is growing fast. A study conducted in Yogyakarta Special District, shows that at the moment there are closed to 50 such gated communities in this city. The demand for such gated communities from the rest of society has been growing, especially among professionals who attracted by the prestige of such developments and fear of crime. The greatest concentration of gated community development is in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia and other big cities of Java, and in number of cities outside of Java. But we have found evidence of a lot more across the country and they seem to becoming a dominant feature of city development.

From the sociological point of view, the first issue that is important to be discussed in relation to gated community is social relations, both among the residents and between the residents and people who live in surrounding areas.

The residents of gated community tend to develop an urban segregation or enclave, that is a distinct area or isolated within a society. They tend to avoid maintaining social relationships to people who live in the villages located in outside of the gate. They feel that the people who live there are outsiders. Their lives are privatized and enclosed space therefore should be gated. The fear of violence is one of their main justifications.

Who are the residents? What is their background? They mainly come from middle and upper class of society. They are mostly professionals and political elites. Their opportunities to live in gated communities are facilitated by investors and contractors, validated by the government rules (both local and national government) that manipulated regulation of land use and master plan of city, and academically approved by consultants from the university. The enclaves are getting stronger and stronger, mainly because there is no institution or local organization that able to control and criticize the enclaves.

The second issue that is important to be discussed related to gated community is the housing policy. The development of gated community is believed to be a part of government policy that encourages private sectors to participate in providing houses for middle and upper classes of society. The government is more likely to focus on the housing program which are designed and implemented for groups of poor people which is known as “rusunawa” (apartment for rent) and “rusunami” (apartment for sale). Because of lack of budget, a number of cities the local government give a strong support to provide the development of gated community. They tend to develop rules of master plan that give private sector more access to space utilization.

The local government has argued that the policy to encourage private sector to participate in the development of gated community will increase regional income. They said that the policy develop public-private partnership in the housing development. The policy provides rules that able to make the private sector have more access to facilities needed to support the development of gated community. They believe that the local government will get money from tax and retribution that paid by the investors and contractors. The tax and retribution then can be allocated to bring welfare program, and consequently poor people will get benefit from the program.

The third issue that is important to be discussed related to gated community is lifestyle. In sociological concept, lifestyle is identified as a label of personal uniqueness. Lifestyle has emerged as a vehicle for differentiating a population or for fragmenting its interests and distancing its members from forms of collective action. As I have mentioned above that the residents of gated community come from middle and upper class of society. By staying in such gated community, they feel that they could find many kinds of modern symbols those are swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, play grounds, spa etc. By buying the houses people we can play golf in front of the doors. The golf courses have emerged as a vehicle for distancing the residents of gated community from forms of collective action belong to people who live in its surrounding area.

The fourth issue that is important to be discussed related to gated community is social exclusion. There is an inward-looking cohesion of people with similar expectations and outlooks. The social cohesion is purchased, and it is not developed in a neighbourhood context. Even though the phenomenon of gated communities has been creating space as well as social inequality, the government seems to have a slow response to stop the possible negative impact on society.

Are the residents really happy staying in such gated community? It is not easy to answer such question. Several studies indicated that a number of residents are worry with those conditions. They feel that they do not know how they will engage with society outside their own cloistered community. They are worry that they kids feel afraid when they go outside the gates, and it could create an even worse 'them and us' attitude for the future. They buy such houses or live in such gated community want privacy, but they are worry when they are realized that they are not able to get involved with the social activities of local community.

A gated community is a form of residential community or housing estate containing strictly-controlled entrances for outsiders. It is characterized by a closed of walls and fences. Given that gated communities are spatially a type of enclave, a number of experts have argued that they have a negative effect on the overall social capital of the broader community outside the gated community. Some gated communities, usually called guard-gated communities,

are staffed by private security guards and are often home to high-value properties. However, a number of observers believe that gated communities actually offer a false sense of security. Safety in gated communities may be more illusion than reality, particularly because it is no part of security system developed by authorities

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