

## Article

# Imposing ‘Enclosed Communities’? Urban Gating of Large Housing Estates in Sweden and France

Karin Grundström <sup>1,\*</sup>  and Christine Lelévrier <sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> Department of Urban Studies, Malmö University, SE-205 06 Malmö, Sweden<sup>2</sup> School of Urban Planning, Lab’Urba, University of Paris-Est-Créteil, 94000 Créteil, France; lelevrier@u-pec.fr

\* Correspondence: k.grundstrom@mau.se

**Abstract:** Gated communities and gated housing enclaves have primarily been identified as elite spaces of privilege that support self-imposed disaffiliation and spatial and social withdrawal by the affluent. Over the past decade, however, European countries have also seen a rise of gating in large housing estates. Drawing on previous research and a comparative case study that includes interviews, observations, and mapping, this article analyses policies and practices of gating in large housing estates since 2010 in Malmö, Sweden and since 2000 in Paris, France. We argue, first, that gating is legitimised by policy arguments about ‘defensible space’, by a critique of the modernist design, and by a perceived need for diversification. Secondly, we expand the notion of urban gating and identify four types of enclosure: complete enclosure, semi-enclosure, enclosure through densification, and enclosure of parks and playgrounds. We conclude that the notion of the welfare state has changed, not only in financial terms but also as an urban form, leading to the micro-segregation of housing and land, which makes visible the social stratification within large housing estates. Gating of large housing estates thus leads to ‘enclosed communities’ rather than ‘gated communities’.

**Keywords:** gated communities; enclosure; housing estates; micro-segregation; France; Sweden; urban gating



**Citation:** Grundström, K.; Lelévrier, C. Imposing ‘Enclosed Communities’? Urban Gating of Large Housing Estates in Sweden and France. *Land* **2023**, *12*, 1535. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12081535>

Academic Editors: Thomas Maloutas, Sainan Lin and John Logan

Received: 13 June 2023

Revised: 28 July 2023

Accepted: 29 July 2023

Published: 2 August 2023



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## 1. Introduction

Gated communities and gated housing enclaves have primarily been identified as elite spaces of privilege, supportive of self-imposed disaffiliation and spatial and social withdrawal by the affluent. Disaffiliation has been analysed as a fear of crime and a privatisation of services, amenities, and public space due to a deliberate ‘successful’ secession of the upper- and middle-class [1–5]. Elite gated communities have been more common in countries with high socio-economic inequality and have been understood as driving forces of inequality [6]. Furthermore, the gated community is based on the urban morphology of the neighbourhood in the U.S., where it originated. As practices of gating have spread across the globe, gating has encountered other urban forms and planning regimes and has morphed into new patterns of neighbourhood segregation and micro-segregation [7–10]. In European countries with strong welfare states and a long history of investing in housing for all, such as Sweden and France, an equivalent of the elite gated community has so far not been adopted, even though elite housing areas do exist. Various cities, such as Paris in France and Malmö in Sweden, have, however, seen an increase in gated housing in social housing areas and poor housing estates in recent decades. In France, the gating practice known as *résidentialisation* emerged in large housing estates at the end of the 1990s and was included in the urban renewal programme launched in 2003 [11–14]. In Sweden, the gating of large housing estates started as a practice of privatisation during the 2010s [15,16]. Recent gating practices thus suggest a new form of segregation: a new pattern of gating in poor housing estates in welfare states, which may have detrimental consequences on social stratification and may lead to new forms of micro-segregation. Based on an investigation

of large housing estates in Sweden and France, the aim of this article is twofold. First, the aim is to analyse the changes in housing provision in the two countries, and secondly, the aim is to analyse the spatial layouts and social consequences of gating as a form of micro-segregation. What are the main political–ideological arguments driving the process of gating large housing estates? Which forms of spatial layouts and types of gating are implemented, and how do residents and local actors respond to gating? We argue, first, that the gating of large housing estates is legitimised by three main policy arguments: the need to create a ‘defensible space’ that is supposed to reduce stigmatisation, a critique of the modernist design, and a perceived need to diversify housing tenure in order to attract middle-class residents. Secondly, we identify four types of urban gating at the level of individual buildings and blocks. Third, we argue that urban gating is not chosen by but rather imposed on residents. We conclude that the notion of the welfare state has changed, not only in financial terms but also as an urban form, reflecting a trend towards housing privatisation. Urban gating of large housing estates is a form of micro-segregation that leads to ‘enclosed communities’. This article contributes to research on residential segregation by not only analysing the policy arguments underpinning the rise of gating in large housing estates, but also by taking into consideration how gating materialises in complex patterns of micro-segregation. In line with a body of international research [3,10,17–20], the results also contribute to deepening the understanding of the political and socio-economically differentiating gating practices that evolve around the globe.

### *1.1. Self-Segregation and Disaffiliation of Middle-Class and Elite Groups*

The ‘gated community’ is primarily associated with the gated enclaves in which the middle-class and the elite self-segregate [1,2]. One reason for privileged groups to self-segregate is to exert control over the local environment. This may include private services; guards that ensure privacy; extensive recreational amenities; local regulations of property, appearance, and behaviour [2]; and, importantly, the displacement of crime [21,22]. A second reason to gate is to maintain property values [23] and to secure the production of club goods for residents [24]. The search for community is another prominent feature of the gated community [2]. It has been suggested that the proliferation of gated communities leads to a ‘fortress city’ [22] built up of gated enclaves based on a fear of crime and the perceived need for increased security. According to this line of thought, material gating in the form of walls, gates, and fences has come to reflect and reinforce hierarchies of racialisation, wealth, and power [6].

Neither Sweden nor France has directly imported the spatial layout or local governance systems of the U.S. gated community. Even so, the disaffiliation of wealthy groups into gated enclaves has spurred research and debate on gating and gated communities. In France, the building of gated housing complexes began in the 2000s in the suburban areas around cities in the south of the country [5,25]. This kind of gated housing is defined as ‘closed residential enclaves’ of private housing rather than as gated communities. It is developed as a real-estate product for the middle class [26] and is thus driven by developers more than by residents. Nevertheless, these gated enclaves reflect a fragmentation of space and a middle-class strategy of isolating from social housing and, despite regulations, privatising car parks and streets to restrict access [27]. The gating of private housing can be understood in relation to a public withdrawal from the management of public space, leading to forms of ‘private cities’ and ‘private urbanity’ [28]. Sweden, meanwhile, does not have gated communities based on the U.S. model, but the country has seen a rise in the disaffiliation of wealthy groups in the metropolitan regions [15,16]. The rise of the ‘residential hotel’ [4,9] started with a luxurious gated housing complex in Malmö, and the concept has since spread to other cities. The residential hotel is an urban, serviced, and gated housing complex similar to the gated housing enclaves of inner-city Gdansk or luxurious condominiums in New York [18]. Like France, Sweden also has planning laws that regulate access to public space, but, even so, large, enclosed properties have been gated off from public use. The most recent development, however, is that both countries

have also seen an expansion of gating around poor and vulnerable housing estates and in social housing.

### 1.2. Urban Gating—A Form of Micro-Segregation

As several scholars point out, the Anglo-American concept of the ‘gated community’ poses challenges when it is applied to the analysis of gating in differing urban contexts. One problem is that it may influence different cultural understandings of housing and way-of-life norms in housing [29]. A second problem is that it ignores the different material urban forms and legislations that exist in various parts of the world [30,31]. A third problem is that it is based on the neighbourhood as the basis for analysis, thus assuming homogeneity of residents and ignoring spatial scales and urban forms of segregation other than the U.S.-based ‘loop-and-lollipop’ urbanism.

Residential segregation in both Sweden and France has been reinforced over the past two decades by a process of social and geographical polarisation [32,33] with an increasingly racialised pattern. Patterns of residential segregation, or the ‘residential separation of social and ethno-racial subgroups within a wider population’ [34,35], are found on the scale of urban districts or quarters but also on the scale of individual buildings and urban blocks. This pattern thus differs substantially from the ‘neighbourhood’ as the physical basis for the analysis of gating practices. According to Maloutas and Karadimitriou [10], the term *micro-segregation* was identified to capture and analyse how social hierarchies are constantly rebuilt in space, even at the building level. Micro-segregation refers to ‘micro-segregated urban milieus below the neighbourhood level, where individuals living in spatial proximity occupy unequal positions according to their socioeconomic status or ethno-racial identity’ [10]. The term micro-segregation also aims to stress that social mix is not an alternative to segregation, because socio-spatial hierarchies are rebuilt at micro-spatial scales even if social mix on a neighbourhood level is achieved. Research on micro-segregation investigates spatial patterns, how housing markets influence patterns of segregation, and the consequences for social inequalities. While the vertical segregation of residential towers is the most analysed form of micro-segregation [30,36], the patterns of gating of poor housing estates follow individual buildings, blocks, and entrances.

In line with the criticism by research on micro-segregation, the term *urban gating* was developed to capture the fragmentation process evolving from the increased use of fences, locks, and codes around individual buildings and blocks. Urban gating is a form of gating at the scale of individual buildings and single blocks (not on a neighbourhood level); it is a disperse form of gating that takes place in socio-economically different areas across cities (not connected to either super-rich or impoverished neighbourhoods). Urban gating restricts access to land that was previously accessible to the public, and it is a process that both parallels and materialises an ongoing polarisation of the metropolitan regions [4,30]. Although some research exists, we can nevertheless conclude that few studies have sought to investigate urban gating in poverty-stricken housing areas in Europe. The gating of poor neighbourhoods was originally mentioned early on by Blakey and Snyder [2], who identified the ‘security zone community’ as one of the three categories of gated communities. In poverty-stricken U.S. neighbourhoods, fences, gates, and security systems were implemented by residents, developers, and local authorities alike. Irrespective of which group initiated gating, it was ‘less of a choice than a necessity’ due to gang activity, drug dealing, and other crime, according to the authors. Similarly, Atkinson identifies ‘ghettoized poverty’ as one form of ‘incarceration’, i.e., the strongest form of segregation [7]. In Europe, one of the first studies of gating in large housing estates showed that gating was implemented in Britain in the late 1980s as a means to prevent delinquency [37]. In France, gating is embedded in the urban restructuring of large housing estates and public efforts to increase housing diversification. It is mainly associated with safety measures in deprived housing estates [11–13,38]. In Sweden, gating emerged from policies of mixing and diversification and from the privatisation of housing [4,15,16]. In Sweden and France, research has focused on the displacement of the poorest households and the social fragmen-

tation resulting from social mixing through housing diversification [39–41]. However, few studies have explored the spatial layouts of this micro-segregation and the development and prevalence of gating in large housing estates, despite the growing number of fences.

We situate our analysis in the context of urban gating and micro-segregation as an apt framework for critically unpacking how gating has emerged in poor, urban neighbourhoods. In order to identify types of gating in large housing estates, we use the term ‘*enclosure*’. Enclosure in this context refers to a building, block, or area surrounded by a barrier, such as a fence and gate, which is part of a process of privatisation and fragmentation of public space. In line with research on micro-segregation, we analyse how changes in housing provision influence the social stratification and the spatial patterns of residential segregation.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This article is based on previous research conducted in Sweden and France, including policy analysis, mapping, observations, and interviews with stakeholders. In order to strengthen the comparison between Malmö and the Paris region, a cross-complementary investigation was added.

In Malmö, gating was investigated in 2019 through a case study of the urban districts of Rosengård and Annelund [42]. These two districts were selected using an information-rich selection process [43]. Both districts were built as modernist housing areas, Annelund with buildings of four floors and Rosengård with building heights of six, nine, and fifteen floors. Furthermore, both districts have experienced a rapid increase in fences during the past decade. The variation of spatial layout and privatisation of individual buildings has led to diverse forms of enclosure. Fences and gates were identified and drawn on maps in ArcGIS. The fences were categorised according to height and types of locks, and photos were taken of all the fences and gates. In parallel to mapping, a questionnaire [44] was distributed to 50 respondents in each of the two districts. Questions included why respondents thought gating existed; how it might influence segregation; and what they thought about the increase in gating. In addition, respondents were asked to give written comments on potential positive or negative aspects of gating. The responses to the questions have been translated by the author from Swedish to English. In Paris, the aim was to analyse the impact of gating on the inhabitants’ representations and practices of space in large housing estates in the Parisian suburbs of Athis-Mons and Orly [41,45]. Social housing landlords and cities have extended gating to all existing and new social housing. The two Parisian districts were selected using an information-rich selection process [43] based on three main criteria. First, the scale of demolition, restructuring, and rebuilding in Orly, a large housing estate of 5400 units that has been under renovation since the 1980s. Secondly, Athis-Mons, a housing estate of 1500 units, is an example of *résidentialisation* where the local actors specifically aimed at involving the inhabitants in the enclosure of their buildings. Third, the two housing estates are complementary in their urban form, as they comprise high-rise buildings of ten to fifteen floors in Orly and four to six floors in Athis-Mons, which has resulted in diverse forms of enclosure. The process of *résidentialisation* was investigated through documents and interviews with social housing managers and urban planners who were proactive in disseminating the re-design of public and private spaces. In addition, five in-depth interviews with local actors and twenty-five interviews [44] with tenants influenced by gating were conducted in 2004. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and, for this article, translated from French to English by the authors.

In 2019, cross-complementary observations and mapping were carried out in the same four districts in order to analyse and compare how gating had evolved. Site visits were made to the four districts and the types of enclosures were developed, compared, and found to coincide. Materials from this investigation include the photographs and drawings presented in this article. In addition, data that have not previously been made available for an international audience, such as quotes from interviews, are included in this article to highlight residents’ perceptions of gating.

In all, this rich material from the three investigations forms the basis for the analysis. The data collected were analysed thematically [46]. Clearly, the Swedish and French investigations differ in methodology and data as well as in the time period under investigation. Nevertheless, a comparison is both relevant and feasible because the empirical materials exhibit substantial similarities, as do the political contexts. We propose to use this heterogeneous but complementary data to analyse the common development of gating in large housing estates in two European welfare states with a similar history of housing. We compare housing provision models and policy rationales for gating in the two countries. Based on this cross-comparison, we then identify the spatial layouts and consequences of the implementation of urban gating in large housing estates.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. *Models of Housing Provision and Policy Arguments Underlying the Gating of Large Housing Estates*

##### 3.1.1. Large Housing Estates in Sweden and France: Similarities of Models for Housing Provision

In Sweden and France, as in many other European countries, large housing estates were built in the mid-twentieth century with the aim of eradicating the housing shortages of that time [47–50]. This goal was achieved, and in 2020, the large estates still provided a major part of the lower-cost housing in both countries. Even though the housing contexts in Sweden and France are not identical, there are similarities in the shift from universalist approaches to housing to restructuring policies aimed at social mixing through diversification and privatisation.

The housing provision models in France and Sweden were—in spite of differences in the numbers of units constructed—quite similar compared to other European countries [51]. Both models were aimed at all people, not just the poor. In Sweden, this was defined as a ‘universalist’ model, and in France, this was defined as a ‘generalist’ model, in which income ceilings were applied. A second common feature was the industrial mass production of housing and the design of modernist and functionalist layouts to include high-rise housing, traffic separation systems, and an enclave-like urban form [52–55]. Although the housing shortage was successfully eradicated, the large housing estates were criticised by architects and planners for being large-scale, homogenous, and monotonous; in Sweden, they were described as a ‘newly constructed slum’ [54] and in France they were criticised for creating ‘urban isolation’ [49]. Furthermore, segregation patterns in both Sweden and France have been reinforced over the past two decades by a process of social and geographical polarisation [32,33] with an increasingly racialised pattern, as low-income migrants have been relegated to primarily low-status housing estates [39,56,57].

Like other European countries, Sweden and France have implemented restructuring and social mixing policies to reduce segregation [58]. In France, the first renewal efforts to renovate estate housing were undertaken in the mid-1970s through the policy of ‘Social Development of Neighbourhoods’. Sweden followed a decade later, launching its so-called ‘Building Mix Policy’ in the 1980s. A succession of area-based policies followed in both countries, targeting housing estates that were characterised by high unemployment rates, a foreign-born population, low income, and low education levels [59]. From the 2000s on, the aim of social mixing through mixed-tenure housing came to heavily define restructuring policies in both countries [41,60].

While the two countries initially identified housing as a key aspect of the welfare state, both have experienced—since the 1990s in Sweden and beginning in the 2000s in France—a process of housing deregulation and marketisation [55]. At the beginning of the 1990s, a paradigmatic shift took place towards deregulation, the abolishment of subsidies, and the rise of privatisation in Sweden [61]. In 2006, Swedish state housing subsidies were completely abolished, and the municipal housing companies were re-regulated from non-profit-driven to profit-driven and based on ‘business-like forms’ [62]. In France, privatisation was mitigated and did not begin until a decade later in the 2000s. Social



housing was preserved and expanded, albeit with a reduction in—but not the abolition of—state subsidies [63].

In conclusion, restructuring, privatisation, and area-based development in both Sweden and France have been criticised for failing at the goal of de-stigmatisation while leading to gentrification and the displacement of relocated households [57,64,65]. Research on social-mixing strategies through housing diversification has also highlighted limited social interaction between poor inhabitants of the neighbourhoods and newcomers, with both leading parallel lives [66]. Thus, the old residents do not benefit from the influx of new social groups, except for those who move upwards from social housing to buy one of the new flats [40,67]. In France, the location of the new private developments at the fringes of neighbourhoods—where new buyers can obtain tax reductions—increased social and spatial distance [14,39]. This re-highlights and concurs with research conducted in the 1970s and 2000s showing that spatial proximity of heterogeneous social groups does not reduce social distance and may increase conflicts [68,69]. Adding to this criticism, we argue that these strategies of the 2000s also led to the rise of gating.

### 3.1.2. Policy Arguments Underlying the Gating of Large Housing Estates: Safety, Modernist Critique, and Social Diversification

The gating of large housing estates is not a policy per se but rather a design practice that is embedded in urban restructuring policies. In France, it was formalised with the concept of *résidentialisation* at the end of the 1990s and officially included in the first urban renewal programme in 2003. In Sweden, the gating of large housing estates developed later, in the 2010s, and occurred as a consequence of area-based policies of diversification rather than as a direct policy. Despite these differences, the Swedish and French rationales and implementations converge in some respects, and they also have resonances with other European countries [70,71]. Our analysis shows that these rationales are structured around three different issues related to gating: safety, through the creation of a more ‘defensible space’; a new urban design that was opposed to the ‘dysfunctional’ modernist architecture and planning and intended to contribute to a form of social de-stigmatisation; and social mixing through diversification.

The first argument is inspired by the ‘situational crime prevention’ theory that developed mainly in the United States and Britain in the 1980s and 1990s. Architects and scholars argued that spatial planning and design play an important role in crime prevention by discouraging offenders to act [37,72,73]. According to Newman [73], the separation of private and public space into clearly identifiable entities supports control over space and shared responsibility among residents. According to this line of thinking, smaller blocks and fences are considered a form of crime prevention. In both Sweden and France, crime prevention has been an argument for physical as well as social measures taken to counteract vulnerability and the stigmatisation of large housing estates. *Résidentialisation* clearly employed gating as a means of crime prevention. According to Bougenot [74], ‘originating from the word *résidence*, *résidentialisation* aims at fighting against degradation and insecurity in large housing estates’. The rise of gating in poor and vulnerable areas was embedded within a wider expansion of safety measures in urban planning [11]. *Résidentialisation* in France was clearly inspired by British examples and by mutual visits of social housing managers through European networks that supported the dissemination of the practice [38]. In order to justify *résidentialisation* as a practice to make social housing safer, the notion of ‘defensible space’ was explicitly referred to in a public report [75]: ‘It is necessary to make places more uncomfortable for offenders and produce not only aesthetics spaces but also manageable and defensible spaces’. Social housing corporations thus promoted gating as a safety measure. The aim was to control access to their buildings, restrict access to inhabitants only, avoid vandalism, and prevent youth from loitering on the premises. Swedish policy did not include fences and gates as a safety measure, but even so, safety and crime prevention were central issues for the government’s ‘Metropolitan Development Policy’ of 1985–1994. The social problems arising from housing segregation were seen as threats that

could lead to ‘social tensions, insecurity and crime’. Projects launched to upgrade large housing estates during the 1980s and 1990s alluded to ideas of supporting integration and defending space [59]. Typically, this involved physical safety measures, such as restricting accessibility by adding key cards and safer locks and improving visibility around stairwell entrances [60]. In both Paris and Malmö, physical measures to control behaviour and restrict access were supplemented by social measures that involved residents. Thus, the physical restrictions of residentialisation often went along with a reorganisation of the management of housing and gardening projects [38]. In Malmö, resident participation in gardening and maintenance was highlighted as a means to decrease crime and to increase social control. In addition, the physical upgrading of public spaces in the Swedish estates was central [60].

The second argument for gating evolved from a critique of the modernist, urban design of large housing estates. This line of criticism draws on the work of scholars, such as Jane Jacobs [76] and Jan Gehl [77], who argued against modernist architecture and urban design while supporting the traditional town with grid plans and pedestrian streetscapes. The ‘lively street’ supports a positive ‘life between buildings’ and ‘eyes on the street’. Modernist urban designs were criticised for creating spaces with little sense of ‘neighbourhood identity’ among residents. In addition, the large housing estates drew critique for their lack of diversity in urban functions and their lack of integration in the wider urban fabric [33,47,78]. In France, this approach has been defended mainly by architects, urban planners, and local mayors who have promoted gating as a way to clarify the difference between public and private spaces and to convert the open, public spaces to mixed use [70]. The aim is to clarify who the owners, managers, and users are. Gating is included in a wider restructuring of outdoor spaces to transform modernist urban plans and to introduce the design of a ‘traditional city’, reflecting a normative social representation of what a city should be. Streets, squares, and private gardens are at the core of this spatial redesign. One of the underlying assumptions is that large open spaces do not favour residents’ appropriation. Instead, intermediate spaces created between the street and the building, designed as small front gardens, are thought to provide spaces for appropriation by residents. In Sweden, the ‘Building Mix Policy’ of the 1980s initiated the redesign of the large estates into more varied and mixed neighbourhoods [79]. ‘Mixing’ referred to mixed forms of tenure and mixed housing design, urban plans, and mixed populations [60]. Since the 1980s, strategies and projects have aimed to construct infill housing in the buffer zones between modernist areas and to reconnect wealthy and poor neighbourhoods through bike and pedestrian paths in order to support a lively streetscape [80]. In addition, plans to upgrade modernist housing estates suggest a design that would change the open urban form into enclosed courtyards as a way to introduce a ‘traditional urbanism’ believed to be more supportive of integration.

The third argument for gating evolves around the perceived need to increase social diversity in vulnerable housing areas, including the large estates. Restructuring policies in both countries note the need for a mix of social groups. Achieving social diversity through mixing is embedded in the same rationale as the abovementioned policies and practices of increasing the overall ‘mix’ of the housing estates. Foremost, social diversity means attracting middle-class residents to the large estates. This is achieved by introducing private housing through municipal housing associations, developers, and social housing corporations. In France, social housing corporations promote gating as a way to reduce the stigmatisation of neighbourhoods by adapting to the design of private housing. Both old and new social housing as well as new private housing developments, produced for tenure diversification, are gated. Gating forms part of a kind of diversification by design [13,14]. In Sweden, gating is being used around privately owned housing located in large housing estates with rental housing. Gating becomes a sign of ‘private property’, ‘security’, and ‘keeping unwanted groups out’. Thus, even though gating has not been supported by local government (nor has it been counteracted), it can be understood as a consequence of the privatisation process. In order to diversify large estates both by attracting middle-income

residents and by providing housing for residents with higher incomes, local authorities have sold off rental housing and provided land to developers. This has increased the number of privately owned housing associations [30] who gate their properties.

Similar arguments and rationales regarding challenges and solutions can thus be found in both Sweden and France. In both countries, gating seems to be understood as a practical solution intended to answer the social and institutional challenges posed by large housing estates. The rationales for gating imply that positive social change can be achieved through urban planning and design, which is in line with the notion of the ‘spatialisation of social problems’ [81]. Altogether, the issues of ‘defensible space’, the ‘dysfunctional’ modernist architecture, and ‘diversification’ tend to support micro-segregation [10] in that they lead to differentiations below the neighbourhood scale.

### 3.2. Spatial Layouts of Urban Gating in Malmö and Paris: Four Types of Enclosure

In addition to the similarities in the arguments underlying the development of gating, some principal similarities in the implementation of gating have also been found. Our comparison of urban districts led us to identify four types of *urban gating*: *complete enclosure*; *semi-enclosure*; *enclosure through densification*; and *enclosure of parks and playgrounds*. The first three examples are forms of urban gating around buildings, while the fourth example is a form of gating that encloses green spaces. Common to all of these forms of gating is that they comprise an enclosure of previously public space.

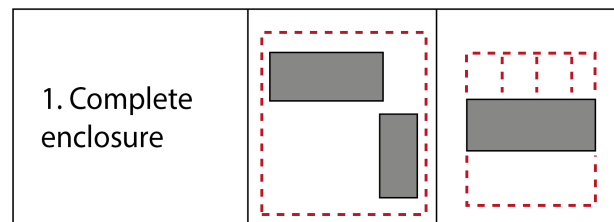
To begin with, ‘the fence’ represents the main symbolic act of gating in large housing estates. Unlike in affluent gated communities, where the ‘gate’ and the ‘wall’ are the symbols of the disaffiliation of wealthier groups, in vulnerable housing estates, enclosure is represented by the metal fence. The fence serves as protection against outsiders by means of locks and digital systems and with a height ranging between 2.5 and 3 metres. It also serves as a symbolic boundary between private and public space and as a legal property line dividing the public space managed by local authorities from the private space managed by the housing complex.

#### 3.2.1. Complete Enclosure

The primary form of urban gating is *complete enclosure* of housing (see Figure 1). In both Malmö and Paris, large urban housing estates typically take the form of freestanding slabs set in park-like environments. In both the Swedish and French estates, this type of gating comprises fences that completely enclose the entire housing complex. The French process of *résidentialisation* literally means ‘changing social housing into middle-class residences’. Modernist urban plans are transformed into ‘street-plot-block’ planning, imitating urban row housing and thus creating smaller residential units. In large housing estates, each entrance of the original slabs is gated. This means that each entrance, serving approximately twenty to thirty flats, has fences towards the neighbours, fences and gates towards the street, and, sometimes, fences at the back of the building as well (see Figures 2 and 3). The underlying assumption is that fragmentation into smaller differentiated units will lend a specific ‘socio-spatial identity’ to each of the created units [82]. According to one social housing manager, ‘...this will make people feel at home/.../we should create more privacy and scale down’ (respondent in Athis-Mons, 2007). In the case of Malmö, the first gated housing complexes in large housing estates belonged to private housing associations that decided to gate their properties. Here, as in other complexes that later followed their example, there is one main fence, with one gate, that completely encloses the entire complex, including the green areas (see Figure 2). In contrast to the Parisian practice, there is no subdivision by entrance. One reason is that one private housing association often owns one housing complex—one entire building. Thus, the fences are constructed at the property limit towards streets and neighbouring properties. The consequence is a fragmented urban space in which some housing slabs are gated while others are not. This leads to a distinct identification of which housing complexes within the large estates consist of rented housing, and which ones are private housing associations. It should be noted that the fences in



the Swedish large housing estates are visually very strong features. According to one resident, the fences made his housing complex ‘look like a prison’ (young man, Malmö, 2019). Another resident stated, ‘I walk past fences with barbed wire every day. It is brutal. Ugly’ (young man, Malmö, 2019). Unlike the wooden ‘picket fences’ found in wealthier parts of the city, the fences in estate housing are chain-like metal fences, sometimes with the addition of barbed wire and serrated metal above the gates [42]. Gating drastically changes the spatial layout, as fences and gates enclose previously public land or (as is sometimes the case in France) land without a clearly defined owner, in both cases fragmenting the modernist, open, park-like environment.



**Figure 1.** Schematic drawing of the spatial layout of complete enclosure.



**Figure 2.** Complete enclosure: example from Rosengård, Malmö. The entire property is gated, including the housing complex, playground, and green space. The gated entrance (**left**) and the fence along the property border (**right**).

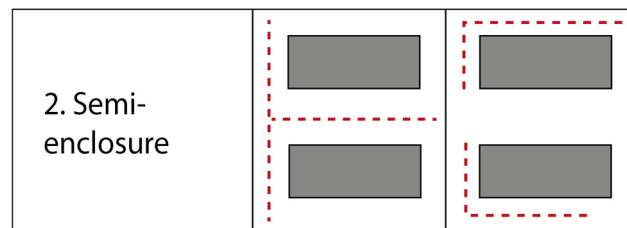


**Figure 3.** Complete enclosure: example of résidentialisation in Athis-Mons, Paris. The entire slab is gated along the street (**left**) and the back garden, and there is a subdivision of each entrance (**right**).

### 3.2.2. Semi-Enclosure

The second form of urban gating in large housing estates in Malmö and in Paris is the *semi-enclosure* of spaces (see Figure 4). These fences cut across green spaces between individual high-rise buildings without comprising a complete enclosure. Still other fences are constructed between cycle paths and playgrounds and between cycle paths and housing. These fences function as a way to slow down mopeds and cyclists and to reduce the potential flow of pedestrians through the space in proximity to the individual housing (see

Figure 5). The protective aspect of fences is appreciated by some residents. One resident said, 'It is good for children since it keeps them from running out into the street' (young mother, Malmö, 2019). There are also cases where people do not accept complete enclosure and the fences are destroyed, making a space for people to pass through (see Figure 6). This may occur when an often-used pathway has been gated off and residents re-appropriate it, when the fence is a form of protection needed in only one direction, or when gates are left open or entirely dismantled. Whether the gating built is partial from the beginning or dismantled over time, what results in both cases is the same: a semi-enclosed space.



**Figure 4.** Schematic drawing of the spatial layout of semi-enclosure.



**Figure 5.** Semi-enclosure: example of a fence between a green space and the street in Rosengård, Malmö.

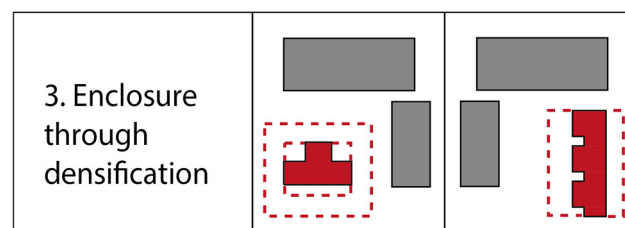


**Figure 6.** Semi-enclosure: example of a pathway where a fence has been taken away in Athis-Mons, Paris.

### 3.2.3. Enclosure through Densification

Yet another influence on the spatial layout of the large estates is *enclosure through densification* of large estates (see Figure 7). Densification has been identified as necessary to achieve more sustainable cities, both in national and local policies and in urban development plans. The large housing estates are selected for densification projects due to their seemingly spacious layout in park-like landscapes. In combination with area-based policies, housing owned by private housing associations is added, often in block-like urban form (see Figure 8). In the French urban context, the new middle-class housing is gated, sometimes with several layers of fences (see Figure 9). Thus, the practice of urban gating does not solely target the slabs of the housing estates but has also been extended

to include new buildings. In the French urban restructuring projects, all buildings that replace demolished slabs are gated, and they are smaller units composed of 60 to 150 flats in one building with three to six floors. In Malmö, densification is a policy and practice in urban renewal that has led to the addition of privately owned multi-storey housing to the city's large estates. But, in contrast to the modernist plans, the new urban plan is designed around principles of the traditional and enclosed urban form. As urban gating is strongly related to privatisation, the prevalence depends on which housing is owned by private housing associations because they are the ones driving the process. This fact was not lost on young residents, who stated that gated housing equals 'private ownership' (young man, Malmö 2019). We observed the same perception among the residents in Athis-Mons, who associated urban gating first with private buildings and second with private car parks. In both Malmö and Paris, we found examples of housing that has been added to large housing estates as a form of urban gating and as a means of increasing urban density.



**Figure 7.** Schematic drawing of the spatial layout of enclosure through densification.



**Figure 8.** Enclosure through densification. Street with estates and addition of new private housing (left). New, private, and gated housing added to the large housing estate of Athis-Mons (right).



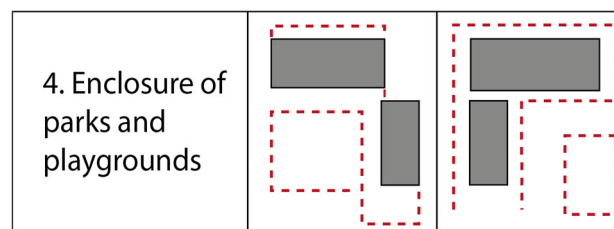
**Figure 9.** Enclosure through densification. Example of several layers of fencing in new, private housing in Athis-Mons.

### 3.2.4. Enclosure of Parks and Playgrounds

The fragmentation of public space is primarily related to urban gating around housing. In addition, however, there is a fourth form of gating that we call *enclosure of parks and playgrounds* (see Figure 10). This type of urban gating can be a solitary enclosure in the midst of a public green (see Figure 11) or an enclosure adjacent to the fences surrounding housing (see Figure 12). In the large French housing estates, the small residential units are an entry



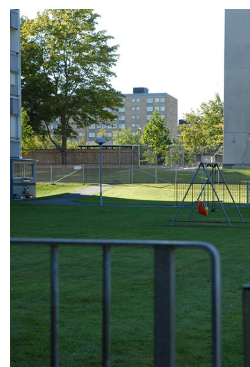
point to also introduce participatory design and shared use of small community gardens and small public spaces. Landscape architects, planners, and social housing landlords who practice this type of enclosure are convinced that a small unit is more supportive of social interaction. Furthermore, people's participation is thought to ensure sustainable appropriation and social control of use and access. Similar urban gardening projects have been implemented in Malmö, although they have not been gated. Instead, playgrounds and small gardens tend to be located behind the gates of the private housing associations. The playground can be seen from the street, but in contrast to before, not all children can enter. In both Paris and Malmö, we find examples of gated parks and playgrounds in the middle of a green surrounded by housing.



**Figure 10.** Schematic drawing of enclosure of parks and playgrounds.



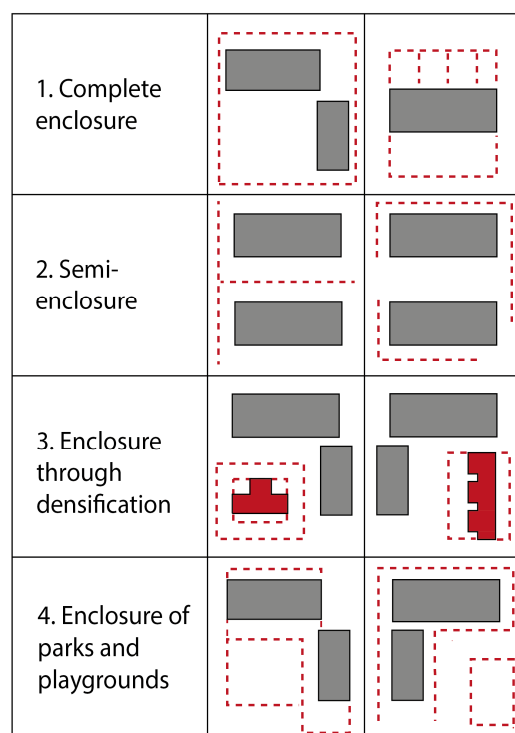
**Figure 11.** Small enclosed park in a previously open, public space in Athis-Mons.



**Figure 12.** Small playground privatised for residents of gated housing in Rosengård.

### 3.2.5. Urban Gating of Large Estates: Towards a New Generative Model?

Urban gating in the large estates comes in many forms and shapes. These differences can be related to the adaptation of gating to the urban morphology, to the design of buildings and public space, but also to the management scale of social housing. Above, we have identified four types of gating, which all have in common that they comprise the enclosure of previously publicly accessible space (see Figure 13 below for a compilation of the four types).



**Figure 13.** The four types of gating identified.

One consequence of urban gating is that it walls out the public from previously accessible places in the large housing estates. The fact that fences and gates act to wall out the public may seem self-evident. The paradox is, however, that the fences and gates are walling out the public from spaces they could previously access. Urban gating leads to a drastic reduction in the overall amount of public space. As a result, access is restricted, or denied, to greens, courtyards, passages, and in-between spaces that were previously available to the residents. Another consequence is that the urban gating of large housing estates leads to a significant change of morphology. It transforms the original modernist urban design of buildings in a park and fragments, subdivides, and privatises previously shared spaces. All of the forms of enclosure we have identified contribute to the fragmentation of public space, each by themselves and all together. The subdivision of modernist space into gated enclosures indicates that the notion of the traditional urban form dominates both in policy as well as in the implementation of upgrading and renewal projects. An urban design based solely on the two entities of the street and the block can be said to promote a generative model for cities, one which clarifies private and public spaces and produces smaller ‘residential units’ that can be sold to private developers. As a form of micro-segregation [10], the fences and gates materialise and make visible the social stratification between residents inside and outside certain buildings and blocks.

#### 4. Discussion

##### *Imposing Urban Gating and Spatial Fragmentation of Large Housing Estates*

Urban gating is imposed on the residents of large housing estates. It is a process that is bound in policies and strategies developed outside the housing areas. The consequence of urban gating is a fragmentation to the scale of individual buildings and blocks, which influences residents’ daily movement patterns.

In the large housing estates we investigated, urban gating is *imposed on residents* rather than being a choice of ‘disaffiliation and withdrawal’ [7] from society, as is the case in the gated community. To begin with, in both Sweden and France, urban gating emerged from national policies to ‘improve’ stigmatised housing, i.e., from outside the estates. Gating does not emerge as a spontaneous practice or a spontaneous demand from the inhabitants of



large estates. Instead, social housing landlords, public authorities, planners, and landscape architects use it to their own ends: partly to transform the urban form of the estates, but also to defend their own property. Gating is believed to solve ‘social problems’ in deprived areas, such as petty crime and lack of social control. Secondly, due to densification through private ownership, urban gating reflects the differences between social groups within the large housing estates. One might argue that there is a difference between the top-down policy imposed in France and the laissez-faire policy of Swedish authorities. It is correct that private housing associations in Sweden gate their own buildings, which may be seen as a form of withdrawal. But again, this is a consequence of restructuring policies and of adding private housing by densifying the estates. The process of densification thus reflects the differences between communities within the estates. While residents in gated communities supposedly share norms and lifestyles, the ‘community’ of the large estates is culturally heterogeneous. This was expressed in a comment made by a young woman in Athis-Mons: ‘The residence is something private, quite strict while a cité [large estate] is a place where there are a lot of young people who do a lot of shitty things. This will never be a residence’. Third, the wall around a gated community is constructed to provide a safe space for a homogenous and socially dominant group, while the fences around large estates divide the shared space of a heterogeneous, deprived population into smaller spaces. Security in poor, deprived districts is a matter of national policy and the enforcement of police presence. Gating is based on a negative diagnosis of daily practices in deprived neighbourhoods. Urban gating is supposed to generate new social practices: avoidance of young people gathering but also more social control of the uses of the space and a better appropriation by the local residents. The impact on safety, however, is not obvious, even if gating does provide a feeling of security for some inhabitants [14,38]. One could argue, and rightly so, that residents see the necessity for reduction of crime, but gating is rarely the most efficient measure. Previous research in the UK and in the U.S. shows that gating in fact did not reduce crime and vandalism, but instead increased the amount of empty spaces, thus calling into question the relevance of space fragmentation as a form of crime prevention [11,83,84]. In Sweden, the implementation of restructuring policies for mixed forms of tenure and diversity of income groups, along with the construction of gating, has not led to a decrease in crime, as national police register statistics show. On the contrary, there has been an increase in what are referred to as ‘especially vulnerable areas’ on a national level [78]. In the estates we studied in Malmö, a new police station had been constructed even as the number of fences increased. Residents also question the securitisation of large estates by destroying fences they have deemed useless or counterproductive for local daily use. We saw similar tendencies both in France, where many fences have been destroyed, especially those that limit pedestrian access and mobility, and in Sweden, where gates are also left open and fences are destroyed.

Urban gating in large housing estates also means that public space is *fragmented down to the scale of the individual entrance or building*. First of all, there is an important difference of scale between the gated community and the gated estate. The gated community is often an entire neighbourhood, an area composed of several freestanding dwellings. The loop-and-lollipop urbanism common in the U.S. makes it possible to gate an entire area simply by gating the main access street leading into the community. The gated communities are criticised for fragmentation on an urban, city-wide scale [20,22], but in large housing estates, gating fragments the neighbourhood itself. As shown above, public space is fragmented into smaller units, from the tiniest front gardens to property boundaries around entire housing slabs, following the ideas of Newman [73] and planning ideals from the early twentieth century [85]. Secondly, the fencing strategy of urban gating appears to proliferate in large estates, especially around private housing built for diversification. As many as three separate layers of fences can be deemed necessary: one fence around the entire block, a second fence around the unit, and a third fence restricting access to the front garden and main entrance. Some respondents even interpreted urban gating as marking a shift towards greater distrust in Swedish society. A young man in Annelund said that gating ‘tells of a

society where people don't trust each other, and even if the opposite is a utopia, it is still very sad'. Urban gating tends to create a new design for social and rental housing that risks adding a material expression of stigmatisation instead of reducing it. In the Malmö large housing estates, there is a visible demarcation between who lives in rental housing (is poor) and who lives in a private housing association (is better off), making polarisation manifest in a very visually apparent way. Third, space is also shared differently inside gated communities and gated estates. In affluent gated communities, sports facilities and open spaces are provided to residents. In contrast, public land in large housing estates is divided and fragmented and thus made less accessible and less useable for shared activities. A young woman in Malmö complained that she was shut out of places: 'I feel that it is so un-welcoming it makes me sick, especially since I used to play there as a child'. In large housing estates, (too much) public space is thus believed to promote violence and crime. Finally, the fragmentation of space also influences the daily movement of residents. Urban gating implies a sort of standardisation of use and behaviour. Interviews show that gating forces more controlled behaviour and restricts movement. A middle-aged woman in Athis-Mons explained: 'There were no fences before, we went ringing the bell at Pierre, Paul, Jacques... Now it is a pain in the ass... And these mail boxes... What do you do if you want to post a letter? You cannot enter directly into the stairwell...'. In the large housing estates, residents have longer routes to take their children to the playground or park, and they may need to travel further to access goods and services that are no longer available locally.

### 5. Concluding Comment: Imposing 'Enclosed Communities' through Planning?

In conclusion, urban gating of large housing estates is a form of micro-segregation [10] that leads to 'enclosed communities'. As shown above, Sweden and France show similarities in the rationales for, and ideology behind, urban gating that tend to support micro-segregation in that it leads to differentiations below the neighbourhood scale. The pattern of micro-segregation that is materialised in fences and gates in the large housing estates investigated makes visible the social stratification between residents inside and outside certain buildings and blocks. Urban gating reinforces segregation patterns that already existed and that urban renewal has increased, but on a micro level, as it transforms the daily practices and movement of residents. Research on social-mix policies in France and in Sweden has highlighted positive outcomes for newcomers and middle-class groups. Young couples found housing opportunities through these new developments. However, being apart and physically distant from the 'cité' and the run-down rental buildings is something of a pre-condition for newcomers to move to these stigmatised large housing estates [86]. Gating is part of this process of distancing.

Urban gating of large housing estates can be seen as a practice of imposing 'enclosed communities' through planning. Rather than being 'gated', the large housing estates are 'enclosed' by policies and regulations formed outside the large estates. While the 'community' of the gated community is (at least in principle) based on some aspect of similarity between residents, the community of the large estates is a heterogeneous group of residents. The undoing of modernist urban space has political as well as material underpinnings. Clearly, there has been a political shift away from the old model of the welfare state in the provision of housing for the people of Western Europe [87]. The neoliberal restructuring policies of housing provision have paved the way for a social-mixing paradigm that has transformed the large housing estates. Materially, the modernist urban form, in which large open spaces were provided for residents, is now being gated into increasingly smaller units. The modernist idea of open space as a catalyst for neighbourly interaction has changed to a perception of open spaces as a catalyst for crime. This perception gives rise to a determinist view of physical design that gating is part of. Research that established a determinist relationship between physical design and criminality was developed decades ago, first in the U.S. [73] and later in the UK [72]. Critics argue that poverty is part of a wider social and managerial process [84,88] and not solely a matter of physical design. In spite of this

criticism, cities and social housing landlords use the same arguments forty years later to justify gating. The withdrawal of the welfare state, the social-mixing paradigm, and the determinist view on design result in new patterns of micro-segregation, designed as a continuous social standardisation of poverty-stricken zones through gating.

In spite of criticism from scholars and planners alike, gating of housing with socio-economically contrasting positions appears to be increasing and spreading. A growing body of international research shows how gating practices need to be analysed in their respective political and socio-economic contexts [3,4,17–20] in order to deepen and expand our understanding of gating. The contexts of Sweden and France analysed in this article show similarities in policies, spatial layouts, and the consequences of gating. Whether and how gating of poor urban districts in Europe and across the globe follows a similar standardisation process, and how their residents perceive these gated spaces, are important matters for future research.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, K.G. and C.L.; methodology, K.G. and C.L.; software, K.G.; investigation, K.G. and C.L.; writing—original draft preparation, K.G. and C.L.; visualization, Edith Grundström; funding acquisition, K.G. and C.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (FORMAS) under Grant Number 2013-1794 and by La Ministère de la Culture—Direction de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine/mission du patrimoine ethnologique, 2001.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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