

Gated communities of India: new directions in CPTED

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ABSTRACT

Gated communities are coming up almost everyday in the ever burgeoning landscape of the Indian real-estate. While real –estate is one of the biggest players in the national economy, these communities inevitably undergo contextualization to their global prototypes.

Most metropolises of India have grown organically dealing with the spate of development and the consequent urban issues. The original character in almost all of them, dating back to the colonial era and the urban planning concepts of those times have residential communities designed on socio-economic stratifications. The original urban landowners committed to the ‘plotted residential’ style of living, oblivious of the urban evolution they would be part of.

This evolution was based upon the population numbers, economic profiles and security aspirations. Gradually, a large component of these migrated to the newer, more organised and svelte abodes with gated exclusivity. This prompted these communities to update themselves.

Most of these, in cities like New Delhi, in the face of rising crime charts and everyday fear are being encouraged by the administration to install gates, access control and e-surveillance.

While the police claim major reductions in crime levels and the resident feels a sense of calm in the exclusive address, it pricks all our CPTED sensibilities. Everything known about Gated communities tends to belie the actual experiential benefits. All the studied theories at loggerheads with the first hand findings, inspired the authors to undertake study of some of these atypical versions of the gated developments found in many hues and shades across New Delhi.

Not only they exemplify grass-root responses to modern day security challenges but also showcase some manifestations of CPTED contrary to common understanding. These may be attributed to many variable markers from socio-economics to culture and even climate. The vital point here maybe that these are not 'designed' gated communities but retrofitted versions of the organic plotted settlements.

The authors hence showcase one such settlement that they are residents of to argue and analyse. The paper is an impartial commentary including a historical background, administrative imperatives and operational aspects. Starting with its architectural and sociological evolution, we are able to identify the security and CPTED morphosis over time.

First-hand accounts supported by crime charts, findings and policing strategies help arrive at the actual multi-generation CPTED at work. Though many of these aspects are by conscious governmental push, they are steeped in the Indian tradition. Yet, while all seems to be working so well there are some glaring issues that surface on the macro level to be addressed.

The study throws up an interesting interplay of contextual and cultural CPTED with excellent evidence of what works and well. It throws a new light on the theory of exclusivity that most gated communities are accused of. It is an example of how generalizations can change per context while retaining a grip on the basic CPTED concepts and there working mechanism. Social inclusivity, social equity and social control are chief players in this happy tale of CPTED across the life of a development.