

# URBAN RESIDENTIAL DYNAMICS: A NEW TREND OF EMERGING GATED COMMUNITIES IN AND AROUND KANDY CITY, SRI LANKA

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## Abstract

*This study explores the emerging phenomena of gated communities in and around the second largest city, Kandy in Sri Lanka, within the context of a larger study aimed at understanding the changing residential dynamics and their impact on the development of the city itself. Although gated communities have been a common phenomenon in Colombo, they are just emerging in Kandy at a time when rapid transformations in its spatial structure are taking place. This study attempts to identify different types of gated communities along with their residential characteristics and motives and to figure out why they are located in the rural hinterland of Kandy.*

*This study was conducted through a series of in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, informal discussions along with regular direct observations in 2018 and the beginning of 2019. The study identifies three types of gated communities in Kandy, which can be classified as ornamental, semi - featured, fully - gated community projects. Most of these gated communities are located outside the city boundaries, at a distance of about 16 -18 kilometers, in the rural surroundings. The preliminary findings of the study reveal that they are wrought by the scenery, greenery and the rurality of the locations that provide an experiential difference for those in the cities. Very interestingly, the residents (current and potential) of these gated communities are either who are residents in Colombo from wealthy business class or foreigners who have investment interests. This spatial transformation, especially in the rural hinterland, is slowly popularizing with a new urban socio-spatiality dynamic of 'outsider into an insider' and 'insider into an outsider.' In order to capture this new socio-spatial dynamic of gated communities, the study theoretically engages with the spatiality of human life and third space as developed by Edward Soja in 1996.*

**Keywords:** Urban socio-spatiality, Gated communities, Residential dynamics, Kandy, third space

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## Introduction

Urban Dynamics are the forces that shape and reshape cities over time. This process can happen as gradual natural processes or as coordinated government actions in urban spaces. Urban residential dynamics also influence in shaping and reshaping urban spaces over time. According to Benenson (2004) urban residential dynamics are an outcome of all the householders' simultaneous choices in urban areas. Globally, gated communities are becoming as modern residential types influence on urban residential dynamics of the cities. A gated community (GCs) is a form of an urban residential community with walled and controlled entrances, keeping ordinary people away. Gated communities in urban areas influence the socio-spatial structure of modern urban spaces. As elsewhere in the world, gated communities have become a new trend in high demand in Colombo, the largest city in Sri Lanka, especially in the suburban areas.

In this paper, we consider this emerging phenomenon of gated communities in the second largest city of Sri Lanka, Kandy. In the capital city of Colombo, gated communities have been developed parallel to the process of rapid urban renewal that has taken place within the last decade, in the form of high-rise condominiums, apartment complexes, housing schemes relatively secluded, and highly secluded housing schemes inside the city proper as well as in the suburban areas. However, gated communities are now emerging outside of and away from Colombo, giving a new twist to the residential dynamics in Sri Lanka. In recent years, gated communities have dispersed into rural areas, yet close to urban centers, as strictly guarded, spatially secluded neighborhoods with highly modern houses and amenities. This is clear evidence in the rural hinterland of Kandy, as most of the gated communities have emerged in a perimeter of about 10-15 kilometers from the city center of Kandy.

In this exploratory study, we examine the central locations and distribution of the gated communities (both existing and planned), their social and locational characteristics, the reasons for their emergence and the impact of this phenomenon for the development of Kandy and the surrounding local communities. We identify and examine this as a new dimension of urban residential dynamics in Kandy with implications on its rural hinterland. We also find that the gated communities in Kandy have been developed with different objectives, rather than merely the provision of a secured house/home with modern amenities for the upper-middle-class family as it is predominantly practiced in Colombo.

Generally, gated communities have been studied, highlighting their social dimension. Perera (2011) complains that gated communities in Sri Lanka have not captured the attention because of the "absence of a theoretically sophisticated interest in a sociological analysis of the city, urban space, urbanity and non-existence of an intellectually robust local tradition in critical architecture," while categorizing gated communities as "packaged fantasies of meeting of the local and the global." In this study, Edward Soja's theoretical work on the spatiality of human life and third (lived) space have been used as a heuristic schema of thinking not only to highlight the significance of spatiality but also to show that gated communities must be examined as 'spatial enclaves.' We argue that it is a 'fantasy' actualized in space; it is the experience of space that sways high where the community aspect is somewhat obscure. Therefore, we argue that the spatiality of this phenomenon should be highlighted. The study examines the nature and characteristics of gated communities in Kandy, by the aim of understanding how they impact upon the residential dynamics and future development of Kandy.

## **Gated communities: A conceptual review**

Webster and Glaszese in their Guest Editorial to the journal of Environment and Planning B: Planning and design, writes that

*“Developers, landowners, and consumers have together shaped a new genre of modern urban habitat. An increasingly sophisticated mass market has emerged in entire neighborhoods, comprising homes, community infrastructure, services, and micro-urban governance. Gates and guards are just one part of a bigger package. The phenomenon is a spontaneous one and it has spread rapidly within and between countries.”* (2002:315).

Blakeley and Snyder’s (1997) famous study amply illustrates the distribution and the significance that gated communities have gained in the United States. The gated and guarded condominiums and communities have rapidly increased in the United States since the mid-1980s. They further state that this experience seems to have now spread elsewhere in the world, emphasizing the fact that the intellectual debate on gated communities must be internationalized and contextualized.

Various studies on gated communities reveal different contextual backgrounds within which they have emerged and evolved. In South Africa, such communities have emerged as a consequence of institutionalized racism (Jurgens and Gnad, 2003; Ramoroka, 2015). In Saudi Arabia, they provide a unique sense of identity and privacy (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2003) and are built in various formats such as villa-style housing schemes and master-planned enclave developments to especially house the expatriate workforce. In Latin America, it has grown as a necessity of the growing professional class expecting a secure lifestyle.

There are three arguments put forward by Webster, Glazse, and Frantz (2002). First gated communities are identified as a form of social-spatial polarization, resulting from global economic restructuring leading towards a new class structure with growing transnational elite and those who are economically excluded. It is clear from this that the new elite looks for gated and guarded housing as an option to organize their economic, social and cultural life. Second, gated communities emerge looking for social prestige, personal security, and high-quality public goods and amenities. This has wealthy in the context of developing countries as an indulgence of Western tastes by local elites. Further, rather than seeing the residential changes in the cities as a result of macroeconomic processes, sees more as behavioral and arising out of individual and household choices of what kind of neighborhood that they would like to live. The third argument relates gated communities to new institutional dynamics, notably to proprietary developments targeting specific functions.

Grant and Mittlesteadt (2004) define gated communities as “spatially defined residential communities with shared amenities” (page 914) identifying it as a global phenomenon. Fuglerud (2017) characterizes them as emerging with the ‘globalizing standards of middle-class living and international capital, in a study relating to India and Sri Lanka. The development of gated communities in the cities of developing countries is thus associated with the changing dynamics of international capital, globalization of finance and culture, and associated changes in lifestyle.

In the late 1990s, residential arrangements and forms in Sri Lanka have taken a different direction with the active involvement of the private property development encouraged by the state itself, as evident from the mega township projects introduced with the Millennium Housing development Project (MHDL) through which the largest housing project with 1597 units in Athurugiriya (a suburb of Colombo) was built. Thus, secluded housing schemes away from the

crowded city with high-end access facilities became the target of the expanding private property developers. Gated communities in Sri Lanka can thus be considered as an offspring of the success of secluded housing schemes/mega townships away from the city simultaneously fortified by the fast-expanding private land and housing market, globalized lifestyles, new demand for housing by the investors and the expatriates and most importantly the changing housing ethos and culture to move away from the congested, crowded and unsafe city to a beautiful, safe and green environment of 'home'.

### Gated communities as an urban socio-spatial construct

We try to understand the emerging phenomenon of gated communities in Kandy with the theoretical development of spatiality and human life by Edward Soja inspired by Henri Lefebvre. Soja's theoretical developments bring two dimensions to the study - on the one hand, that spatiality is fundamental to human existence, and on the other hand, the notion of lived (third) space is where social relations and practices are played out.

The idea of spatiality as a fundamental of being was picked up and elaborated by Edward Soja (1989, 1996, 2000) inspired by Lefebvre's "Production of Space" and other French philosophers who argued for the moment of spatiality in the struggle to understand the society. Soja introduced the idea of trialectics of being, insisting that social theory and social practices must be founded upon the three fundamental dimensions of time, space and the social - each of which is mutually structured, constituted and restricted and not reducible or superimposable to one another. Soja alleges that, historically, within Social Sciences, the historical and the social dimensions have been privileged peripheralizing the spatial. Soja's intervention along with other geographers' attempt to rethink and reassert the place of the *spatial* not only elevated the status of Human Geography within the Humanities and Social Sciences but across the disciplines, it created a profound resurgence in the interest of the concept of space (Soja, 1996:71). This reflected an ontological shift by arguing for the existence of spatiality in the trialectics of being, thus reiterating the long-neglected spatiality of human existence.



Figure 1: Soja's Trialectics of Space  
Source: Edward Soja's (1996)

Once spatiality is understood and recognized as a fundamental of trialectics of human being along with sociality and historicity (see diagram 1); then the task of, mainly, the geographer, is to figure out how to capture this spatiality or to engage with the empirical world. Further elaborating, Soja argues that spatiality of human life is designed by the trialectics of conceived (first space), perceived (second space) and lived (third space). Here, the first space is directly experienced, empirically observable, mappable; second space is more subjective, imagined, cognitive, conceptual and symbolic world concerning thought processes and ideologies that shape the material space; and the third space is lived world. Soja presents the notion of third space as

an open logic transcending the binary (either-or position), transitional (in-between position) conceptualizations related to first and second space.

Very often, this tripartite spatiality is defined and understood in isolation to one another-as separate realms within various geographical approaches, overlooking the fact that three spaces are complementary in shaping human life. Further, spatialities of human life are all too often downplayed as sociological categories of identity, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, status, and class, etc. is considered as a priori conditions moving temporally, in understanding social dynamics. Thus, human identity merely becomes a matter of social and historical categories rather than the spatial. In this work, inspired by Soja's work, we insist that gated communities be viewed through the trialectics of being, highlighting the much-hindered spatiality of human life and as a third space bearing in mind the complementarity of three spaces.

Gated communities are not just a consortium of modern houses, physically laid out within an enclosed area; they represent a particular ideology of living and how living is experienced. The property developers manipulate the sense of spatiality of a specific class. The location, size, design of the house, interior designs, the landscape of a gated community is strategically and carefully composted to provide a different interpretation of life. In other words, they need to be gated-in away from the chaos of the city and the rest of the society and can be interpreted as a signification of their upper-class cum elite identity. It is clear that what they aspire is a space, not a community, to live with. Gating of residential areas has become an instrument of demarcating social positions, and they are visual reminders of social distinctions (Polanska, 2014); thus they are experienced not only by those residing inside but also those outsiders.

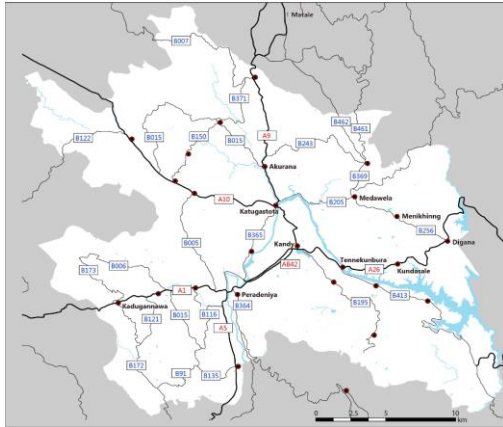
### **Gated communities in Kandy**

In focusing this study, we have chosen the Greater Kandy Area, not necessarily limiting to Kandy city itself which is the capital of Central Province and the second-largest city in Sri Lanka located 110 km to the east of Colombo. City boundaries are generally defined based on administrative criteria, although the spatial and social impacts of cities extend far beyond. Especially in understanding residential dynamics, one cannot limit to the city itself but must focus on the suburban areas, satellite towns, urban corridors, and even rural hinterland. The study area extends to a perimeter of about 18 kilometers from the city center.

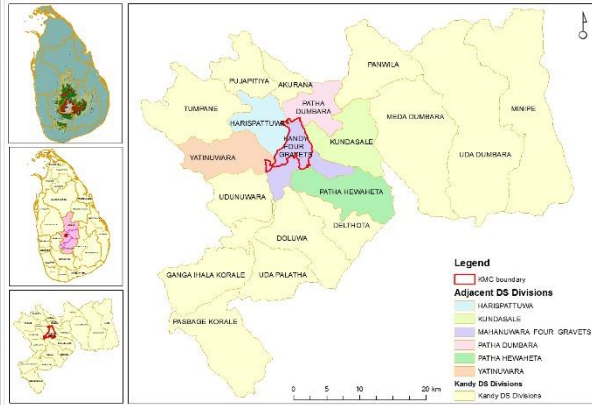
Kandy city itself has a population of 125,400 as of 2012 census and generally shows a low rate of growth both in terms of numerical increase and density of population, but receives huge regular commuter population of about 270,000<sup>2</sup> from the surroundings for employment, formal education and seeking various tertiary functions and this increases with periodic influx of visitors during religious and cultural festivals. Thus, the active population of Kandy city extends beyond the city limits, and therefore the Greater Kandy area was chosen for the study. In its composition, the population has been multi-ethnic and multi-religious in the city (Sinhalese 70%, Sri Lanka Tamils 10%, Indian Tamils 3%, Sri Lanka Moors 15% and others - Burgher, Malay, Chetti, Bharatha, etc. (2%). The same pattern of ethnic distribution prevails in the larger study area as well. The population distribution in terms of religion is as follows: Buddhists (66%), Hindus (10%), Islam (17%), Roman Catholic (5%), and other Christians (2%).

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<sup>2</sup> As estimated in the Hennayake, S.K., Department of Geography, Social Impact Assessment carried out for the World Bank in 2013.



**Map 1:** Three arteries of transport network in Greater Kandy Urban Plan Area (GKUP)



**Map 2:** Field study location (city and surrounding)

Source: Prepared based on secondary data sources, 2018

In a recent book by G.H. Peiris (2018), it is proposed that Kandy be identified as the ‘cultural capital’ of Sri Lanka in planning the future of the city. It was declared by the UNESCO as a world heritage site given its significance as a center of Theravada Buddhism housing the sacred tooth relic of Buddha and for its religious cum cultural multiplicity. Kandy is a place looked upon with a great sense of nostalgia not only for its culture and tradition but also for its natural environment with greenery, mountains, and water bodies. The religious significance, heritage assets, along with the natural environment, has made Kandy an attractive location for both foreign and local tourists. It is in the above context, we focus on the city of Kandy and the Greater Kandy area for our study.

## Methodology

For this study, primary data was collected through key informant interviews with the property developers, site managers, sales managers, and security workers, officials involved with urban planning at the national and local level. Seven major key informant interview sessions were conducted in the field. Besides, fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted on a purposive sample. Frequent visits to the field sites yielded several useful pocket discussions with a number of people, though unplanned. These informal discussions gave insightful knowledge about the urban residential development aspects and emerging gated communities and helped render the empirical evidence more concrete. Direct observation method was used continuously in the field with the help of the observation matrix in this study. Further, web pages, local newspaper articles, brochures, property advertisements, banners and billboards, online portals were also used as secondary, supplementary data sources. The collected primary and secondary data were analyzed through critical, descriptive methods and ranking and scoring techniques in order to identify major themes.

One of the main hindrances in conducting this research has been the inaccessibility to the gated communities and the unwillingness of the property developers to provide information. In some

cases, in the discussions with the managers, the recording of the conversation was not permitted. Upholding ethical considerations, researchers were careful to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's opinions. The interviews were conducted based on the convenience of the informants and all measures were taken to respect the rules and regulations of the property developers.

It should be highlighted here that this study has been conducted at a time when most of these gated communities are partially inhabited, and being constructed although entirely sold out. This also restrained the researcher to opt for the interview method for data collection. A full study, or perhaps a systematic survey, can be done only after these are completed and occupied, primarily to assess the impact on the rural hinterland and the developments of Kandy city.

### **Changing residential dynamics in Kandy**

To contextualize our study, it would be helpful to understand the history of residential patterns in the Kandy city, especially to see how the residential patterns have changed from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial. During the pre-colonial era, inner-city was demarcated as the royal residential area along with the nobility. The King's Palace (*Maha Wasala*) was located close to the temple of the tooth, and the residences of the aristocrats were located at very strategic places in the grid city. The other inhabitants of the Kingdom were scattered around in the surrounding villages.

However, a new residential pattern emerged in the late nineteenth century in the colonial period as the elite residences were built along roads such as Lady Gordon Drive, Lady McCarthy, and Victoria Drive, etc. making the Kandy Municipal Council declare this locality as a separate ward. While the scenic spots in the inner-city area were converted to the residences of British rulers, army commanders, government agents, etc., native residences were clustered in Colombo and Trincomalee streets and certain cross streets (Peiris, 2019). Peiris (2019) explains that,

*“Despite the absence of ‘class-based’ spatial segregation in Kandy, there had developed, outside the downtown area, several socially distinctive settings. The gentler hill-slopes overlooking the lake, as noted above, had become the elite residential locus of Kandy, featured by lavishly designed bungalows, each in the early decades of the century, invariably with an ornate garden. There were, also the residential areas of the more affluent among the ‘middle-class’ that stretched along the main roads radiating from the city center” (Pieris, 2019:86).*

What is noteworthy here is that 'socially distinguishable neighborhoods' had begun to emerge in certain localities outside the inner city of Kandy. While the elite took to the hill slopes overlooking the lake, those who had engaged in menial jobs and casual labor seemed to have settled in the northern and western part of the grid city which is continued up to now as a typical low-income residential locality.

The unique geographical configuration of the inner-city area does not allow any lateral expansion, and as a result, residential development along the roads radiating out of the city seemed to have been a viable option. This is identified by Peiris (2019) as 'ribbon pattern' of residential development. He further notes that the middle class opted to settle in the surrounding slopes such as Primrose Hill, Aniwatte and Hanthane range. Thus, since the colonial days, locality-based residential areas have been formed; south side of the city being more elite and middle class moving along the roads and slopes while the north and west being the residences of the poor.

In the last two-three decades, commercial developments have gained prominence along the main arteries radiating from the Kandy city. Even the residences have been converted to business ventures. This can be seen along all the three arteries (see the map no. 1 ). The newest pattern has been to move inward from these arteries for residential development, and this has been exacerbated with the active involvement of the private sector in housing development.

Recently the real estate market or the private property development has expanded in Kandy introducing new changes in the residential sector. Large extents of land are blocked into 10-15 perches' plots and sold to the middle class, and these have created a new residential form, creating unique residential localities in the suburban and the surrounding rural periphery. This tendency is not an isolated phenomenon or one that is tempted by the private housing market alone. To release the inner-city pressure, caused by heavy traffic and traffic congestion coupled with air pollution, many administrative services, and others have been shifted to the outside areas of Kandy, especially towards the eastern and northern sides of the city. As a result, various services and commercial developments have taken place along the main arteries and parallel to these new residential localities have also emerged. The phenomenon of gated communities should be explored within this broad context.

### ***Classification of Gated community residences***

Gated communities have predominantly identified as a fenced/walled and gated residential locality where public access is controlled, or the undesirables are kept away. In Colombo, gated communities have been developed in the form high-rise condominiums within the city center as well as in the outskirts, exclusive, walled, gated and guarded communities of single houses and in some cases segregated housing schemes. Blakely and Snyder's (1997) typology is one of the prominent in classifying gated communities, and they identify in three categories: life-style oriented, prestige oriented and security-oriented. This study, keeping a broad definition of the gated community as spatially segregated communities, identifies three different types of gated communities in and around Kandy. In identifying them, attention has been paid to the fact how are secluded from the adjacent areas in terms of land in terms of gates, walls, fences, housing design, spatial layout, landscape, etc. These housing developments have been rather exclusionary or have an 'othering' effect. They stand out as unique neighborhoods or as Grant and Mittlesteadt (2004) argues they 'discipline others by implication.'

This study identified three different categories of gated communities, which have been emerging slowly and '*silently*' in the recent past. This signifies the directions of change in the socio-spatial urban structure and landscape of the world heritage city of Kandy. Several prominent private property developers <sup>2</sup> have entered into the high-end housing and property market in Kandy, introducing gated communities. Some of the gated communities have emerged as private-public partnerships between the private developers and the National Housing Development Authority as a representative of the state. Three such projects have been developed as private-public partnerships (see Table 1).

Overall, gated communities have been categorized based on the structure, facilities and the aspects of appearance and thus, three categories have been identified:

- 1) Fully - gated communities
- 2) Semi – featured gated communities

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the major property developers are Nivasie Developers (Pvt) Ltd., GVR Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., JAT Holding (Pvt) Ltd., Prime Land Residencies (Pvt) Ltd., Blue Ocean Group of Companies.



### 3) Ornamental gated communities

Table 1: Classification and characteristics of gated communities in and around the Kandy city – 2019						
Type of GC	Name	Current status	Location (No. in the map)	Characteristics	Facilities	Distance to Kandy
Fully gated	1(a) Victoria Range Homes (Private-public partnership)	Existing	Digana, Kandy (rural) <i>Overlooking Knuckles Mountain Range and adjacent to Victoria Reservoir</i>	Bungalow type (301 units) Gated and guarded, Naturally fenced Horizontal development	Swimming pool Gymnasium, Security (24 hours) Restaurant & bar Squash & Tennis Courts Kids play area Nature tracks	16.7 Km 1 hour
Fully gated	1(b) Dynasty Residencies (Private)	Existing	Wattaranthenna, Kandy (urban, inside the city) <i>Overlooking Mahaweli Riverfront, Hunnasgiriya Mountain, Hanthane Range, Knuckles Range</i>	Luxury apartment type, (93 units) Gated, guarded Walled Vertical development	Security (24 hours) Infinity pool Gymnasium Rooftop jogging track Rooftop meditation garden Reading garden Open Gymnasium Restaurant & Minimart Children's play area and Kid's pool Drivers' Quarters	5Km 15 minutes
Fully gated	1(c) Luxurious living homes (Private)	On-going	Anniwatte, Kandy (urban, inside the city) <i>Overlooking Hanthane and surrounding woodlands</i>	Luxury houses Gated, Walled Vertical development	N.A	3Km 7 minutes
Fully gated	1(d) Dambarawa Villas (Private)	On-going	Dambarawa, Kandy (rural) <i>Adjacent to Dambarawa Lake</i>	Luxury homes (34 units) Gated, guarded Walled, Naturally fenced Horizontal development	Security (24 hours) Gymnasium Swimming Pool	15Km 45 minutes
Fully gated	1(e) Hanthana residencies (Private-public partnership)	Ongoing	Hanthana, Kandy (urban, within the city) <i>at the foothills of Hanthane Range, full view of surrounding mountains including Hunnasgiriya Mountain</i>	Luxury homes (103 units) Horizontal development	Gymnasium Swimming Pool	6Km 20 minutes
Semi-featured	2 (a) Prime Residencies (Private-public partnership)	Existing	Pallekele, Kandy (rural) <i>not much of a scenery</i>	Apartment type (31 units) Gated, guarded Walled	Swimming pool Gymnasium Security (24 hours)	11Km 30 minutes
Semi-featured	2 (b) Forest Hill Villas (Private)	Existing	Amunugama, Kandy (rural) <i>Overlooking a large paddy field and adjacent to woodlands on both sides</i>	Single houses (15) Gated, guarded Walled, Fenced	Security (24 hours) Swimming pool Club House	10Km 30 minutes
Ornamental	3 (a) Anniwatte residencies (Private)	On-going	Anniwatte, Kandy (urban) <i>Overlooking Hanthane and surrounding woodlands</i>	Grand luxury branded bungalow (04) Gated, Walled	N.A	3Km 7 minutes
Ornamental	Field view gardens (Private)	Existing	Kiribathkumbura, Kandy (rural) <i>Access through a paddy field, surrounded by a forest and woodlands</i>	Single houses (10 units) Gated, Naturally fenced	N.A	10Km 25 minutes

N.A – No data available

Source: Fieldwork, May 2018 – February 2019

**Fully-gated communities:** These are identified as fully-gated communities not only because of the characteristics and facilities they provide but also, they fulfill the three objectives of prestige, security and lifestyle changes expected from a gated community.



**Figure 2:** Entrance of Victoria Range Homes; Source: Authors, 2019



**Figure 3:** The surroundings nature of Victoria Range Homes; Source: Authors, 2019

The Victoria Range Homes is the oldest and the largest with 301 eco-friendly bungalow type housing units built adjacent to a Golf Court and one of the largest reservoirs, thus obtaining the maximum of natural greenery and beauty (as can be seen in the photograph above) which is now managed by one of the largest Sri Lankan companies, Abans (Pvt) Ltd. The houses are fully equipped with all the modern amenities, while a range of facilities is provided at the site itself. Only 70 out of 301 are now permanently occupied, and the majority of the other houses are either rented out or periodically occupied by the owners.

This gated community is gated and guarded with 24 hours security, reminding constantly its social distinctiveness or instead social class and fully privileged to enjoy the free ecological services offered by the adjacent Victoria reservoir, golf course, greenery, and beauty (see photograph no. 1 & 2) The Dynasty residence, the first luxury apartment complex in Kandy. It is now an iconic signature in the visual landscape of Kandy city. It has a total of 93 housing units of different sizes, with one-bedroom to five-bedroom villas.



**Figure 4:** Naturalistic adjacent appearance of Dynasty Residencies  
Source: Broacher of Dynasty Residencies,



**Figure 5:** Roof top jogging track & penthouses in Dynasty Residencies  
Source: Broacher of Dynasty Residencies.

During an informal discussion, a manager stated that

*“We have homes according to customers’ expectations at different prices... we invite our customers to “LIVE LIKE A KING” with all the luxuries of regal living. We are offering untouched housing facilities never given so far in Kandy. Now we have sold around 30 houses, and still, people are registering with us.”*

(Informal discussion with a sales manager, Dynasty residence on 09.01.2019)

This particular residence is located at a distance of fifteen minutes to the city and five minutes distance to the planned exit to the Colombo - Kandy expressway. It has introduced penthouses with private sky gardens and golf putting and has incorporated the scenic views from all sides into its design.

The Prime Lake Dambarawa Villas is a project with 34 houses adjoining the Damabarawa Lake reservation in the backside. Developed with the basic amenities of a gated community such as security, gymnasium and swimming pool, the attraction here is the scenic beauty of the lakeside and the proximity to several arteries that connect to the Kandy-Mahiyangan Road. Traditionally, Dambarawa has been inhabited by a low caste, and now as a result of this development, the land values have been increased.



**Figure 6:** A model of Prime Lake Dambarawa Villa; Source: Broacher of Prime Lands, 2018



**Figure 7:** Bird eye view of Prime Lake Dambarawa Villas; Source: Broacher of Prime Lands, 2018

The other on-going project of private-public partnership, Hanthane residences, located within the city, has used one of the most panoramic viewpoints -almost a nature reserve for their gated community of 100 houses. Two housing schemes have been developed in this area previously and according to Illangasinghe (2015), most suitable in terms of geological stability has been used for these leaving the rest as reservations. A project manager of Hanthane Residences commented that

*“We are going to start 100 houses project in partnership with the government, and this gated community project targets doctors, health specialists, surgeons, professional health officers, and nurses mainly from Kandy hospital.”*

(Key informant interview with the project manager, JAT Holdings in 23.01.2019)

In this sense, this project is unique as it targets a high-end professional resident population from the vicinity.

***Semi-featured gated communities:*** The Prime Residencies and Forest Hill Villas are placed in this category as they are constructed with the most basic facilities of 24 hours security, swimming pool, and a clubhouse. Pallekele Residencies have 39 apartment-style units with three floors, quite separated from the surrounding area with a wall and a gate with a guard.



**Figure 8:** Entrance of Prime Residences  
Source: Broacher of Prime Residences, 2017



**Figure 9:** Building complex of Prime Residences; Source: Broacher of Prime Residences, 2017

Forest Hill Villas, with 15 housing units, are built within a very rural setting, adjoining an old aristocratic house (Amunugama Walawwa) now converted to a guest house. This is a very secluded elongated site overlooking a large paddy field. Scenic beauty comes from the adjacent woodlands and the paddy field, and it is often advertised with this image of the paddy field.



**Figure 10:** Advertisement banner of forest Hill Villas; Source: Author, 2019



**Figure 11:** surrounding greenery of Forest Hills Villas; Source: Author, 2019

**Ornamental gated communities:** This study identified Field View Gardens, a cluster of ten houses, located about 10 km away from Kandy in Kiribathkumbura, along an artery from the Kandy-Colombo road.



**Figure 12:** Entrance Gate of Field View Gardens  
Source: Author, 2019



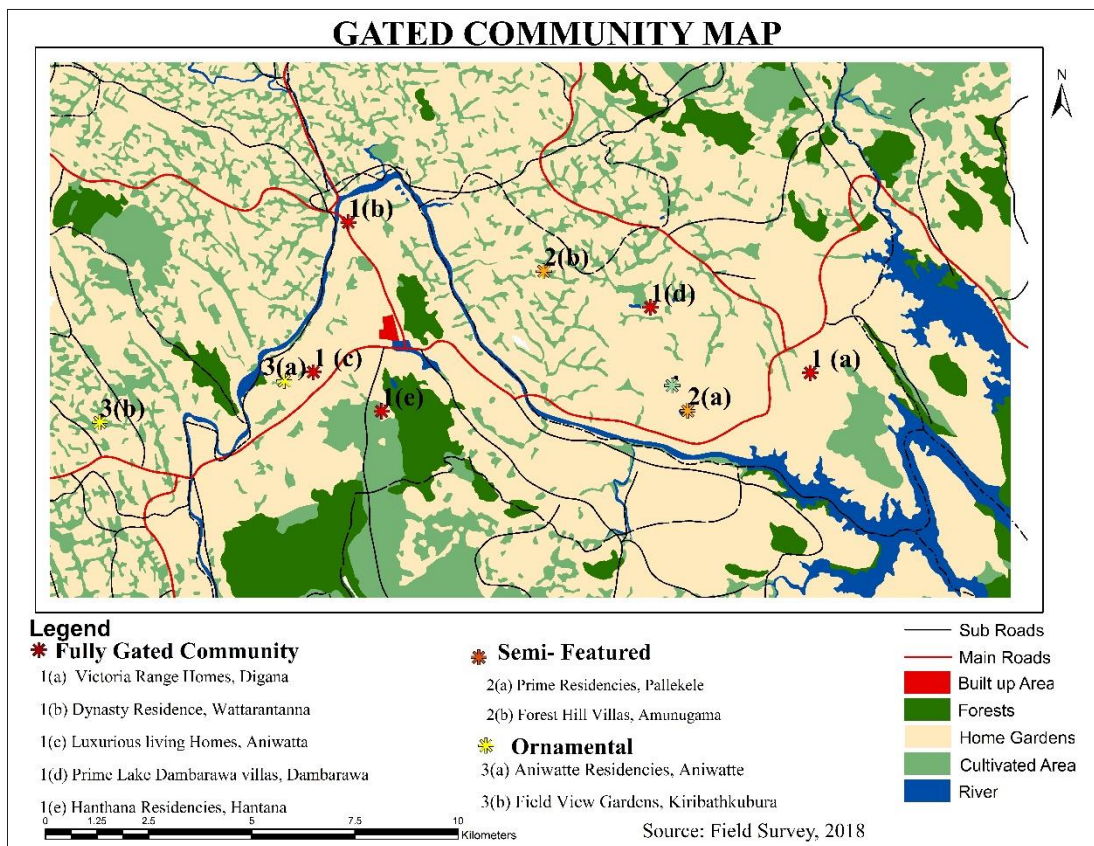
**Figure 13:** Surrounding greeneries of Field View Gardens  
Source: Author, 2019

This neighborhood is made grandeur because of its majestic gate without security, and the paddy fields on both sides of an access road. The houses are located on the hills, and the backside is well guarded with a small patch of forests and home gardens. This is, in a way, naturally gated except the main entrance. What segregates this community from others is the massive gate: as Polanska (2014) explained, 'gates are visual reminders and markers of social distinctions.

Anniwatte residences (Grand luxury branded bungalow) also is an on-going gated location consist of 4 houses inside the city in Anniwatte area. The homes are located in the valley is well safeguarded with greenery surroundings in the backside.



**Figure 14:** Greenery surrounding of Anniwatte Residences; Source: Author, 2019



**Map 3:** Spatial distribution of gated communities in and around Kandy in 2019  
 Source: Field Survey 2018 - 2019

At present, gated communities have been developed and planned in a perimeter of 10 - 20 Kilometers from the Kandy city center. Only three have been developed within the city limits; the condominium-style gated community in Wattarantenna, on-going Luxurious Living in Anniwatte and on-going Hanthane residences. The other gated communities seem to have spread towards

the eastern side of the city, where most of the developments aimed at offering 'urban' commercial and service functions have been taking place mainly along the artery from Kandy via Kundasale. In the latest development plan for Greater Kandy prepared by JICA, Kundasale is demarcated as a potential regional center or a satellite town. Three central new gated communities are being built around this proposed satellite town (See Map No.3). It is thus very clear that rural areas towards the eastern side of the city are now being earmarked for gated communities.

Among these, Victoria Range is the oldest gated community that has been functioning since 2010, and it is also the one that is located farthest from Kandy city. All others seemed to have emerged between the period of 2004-09. Within ten years, eight gated communities have been developed in and around Kandy. It is essential to understand this emerging phenomenon of gated communities in Kandy, in the broadest context of rapid urban transformations in Colombo as well as Kandy. This has been parallel to other developments in Kandy such as Kandy City Center, Redevelopment of Prison Complex, proposed bus terminal, widening of the railway line, etc, and most of all beautification of the grid city area.

### ***Characteristics of Gated Communities in Kandy***

Visual distinctiveness: All these gated communities are demarcated and can be identified in the visual landscape distinctively different from the surrounding neighborhoods and areas. Entrances are clearly defined with a gate, name of the gated community, and the details of the developer- mostly private. Modern, compact house designs signal luxurious living. Predominantly, these GCs have adopted modern architectural styles for their houses with ornate gardens adding visible attraction to the unit. It is difficult to assess the level of amenities and their management such as garbage disposal, recreation, and security measures because most of these are on-going and/or partially settled project.

As shown in the photographs above, all these gated communities powered with a gate at the entrance. "*Gating of residential areas has become an important instrument in demarcating social positions in the late-modern and post-modern world. Gates symbolizes the power to transcend boundaries*" (Polanska, 2014:232). Generally, the rural areas are more open spaces with anybody to move around; a gate in a house indicates a point of entry; it does not make others out of bound. In such an environment, gating becomes a marker of segregation. Goix and Webster explain this as "representing a form of urbanism where public space has been privatized" (2008:2). They further elaborate that, "the existence of fences, walls and security features that distinguishes gated communities as a residential form that is different from other residential forms. This becomes a new spatial experientiality for those rural residents: they become 'outsiders' in their once familiar rural surroundings. The mere physical presence of the gated communities- along with their large gates, fences and walls, suddenly make the rural inhabitants 'out of bound,' thus challenging their spatiality of life.

Resident Characteristics: One of the most exciting findings in this study is that these dwellings in the gated communities are predominantly owned by foreigners (who are either expatriates, investors or married to a Sri Lankan) or Sri Lankans outside Kandy.<sup>3</sup> Majority of the people occupying the gated communities are mostly from Colombo; these gated residences function as their holiday homes. While they do not reside in the gated community, but the houses are looked

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<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to give the breakdown exactly in quantitative terms, since the property developers are unwilling to divulge information regarding the residents.

after by caretakers or domestic helpers where the owners can monitor through CCTV surveillance. Most of the foreign residents are from Middle Eastern, European, and Scandinavian countries.

Most of the residents seem to be periodic residents, rather than permanent residents. This indicates that the demand for the gated communities in Kandy is generated elsewhere, especially in Colombo. In the Victoria Range, only 30% (70 out of 301 households) is fully occupied, while all the other houses maintain as holiday homes for the owners or rented out as guest houses for both local and international tourists. Thus, 70% of the houses in the Victoria Range are owned by either foreigners or Sri Lankans in Colombo.

However, we noted in Forest Hill Villas in Amunugama, that several single women have chosen this gated community for security reasons as they are alone. One of the interviewees from this community, a single female in the mid-50s has moved here to take care of her ailing mother, and the main reason is the security in the gated community. This new urban sociological shift of single women (unmarried/divorced/widowed) preferring gated communities for security reasons is a tendency that needs to be observed and further studied. This particular gated community is built in a land that previously belonged to the aristocratic family (walawwa) and is in the middle of the rural village. She categorically mentioned that it is not only the security provided by the gates and security personal, but she feels '*safe and cozy in this rural environment.*' This was an interesting point to rethink how the concept of gated community itself is changing in Kandy. These residents also seem to interact with the surrounding by patronizing small boutiques etc. In this case, 'the gate' has not become a barrier to human interaction.

As advertised and publicized, these gated communities cater for the upper echelons of the society - for those who aspire for a high-end living: this is invariably determined by the very high prices of the houses which are generally over twenty million. Thus, gated communities in Kandy can be identified as a clear spatial marker of social class and power of capital; a clear spatial expression of class disparity. As we talked to many people, we could not find any resident from in or around itself owning a house in a gated community.

### ***Choice of gated residential location***

The pull factor for the gated communities in Kandy appears to be the aesthetic beauty, scenic landscape, water bodies, paddy fields, green environment, mainly based on the discussions that we had with the developers of these projects and photographic evidence. It should be emphasized here that it is not the scenic beauty per se, but that such environs exist relatively at proximity to a major city (in this case Kandy) that is considered as the cultural citadel that people are fanatically nostalgic about. For example, each apartment type of the Dynasty Residence which is the only high-rise gated community in Kandy is designed to ensure a unique view combining the following: Mahaweli River, Hunnasgiriya Mountain Range, Hanthana Mountain Range view, Knuckles Range and the surrounding garden view as can be witnessed by the images from their brochure. But, as aforementioned, it is not merely scenic beauty, but as the name itself denotes, '*it is in the land of the kings*'<sup>4</sup>: nostalgia towards Kandy with its cultural and historical heritage reigns high. So far only about 40% of the residences are sold (35 out of 93), and an informal discussion with a 65-

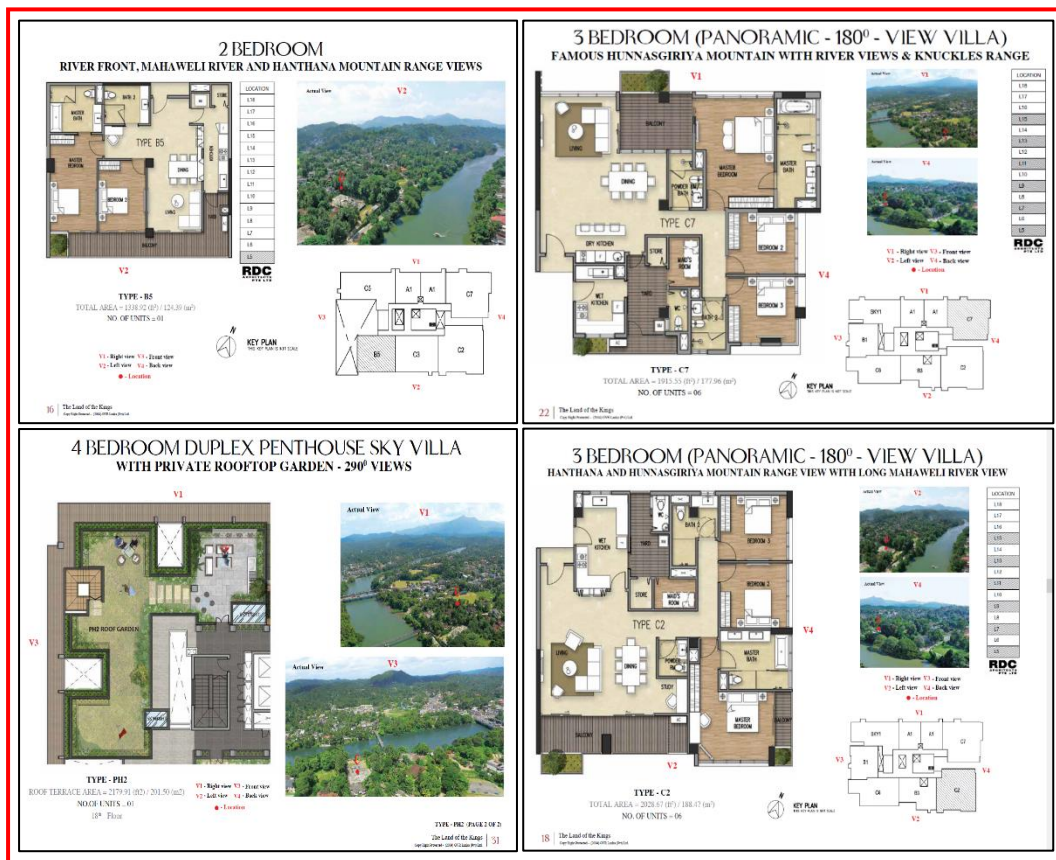
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<sup>4</sup> In their brochure, it is described as being the "last bastion of a Sri Lankan king, before it was colonized by the British... There was a strength that emanated from this kingdom that continues to reflect in the rolling green hills and blue waters that pay homage to the Temple of the Tooth Relic which houses Lord Buddha's tooth, enthroned majestically in the center of the city. Today, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site but it is a city that has transformed into a buzzing metropolis with focus on contemporary living, and yet, pays tribute to the centuries of religious and dynastic influences that envelope it in an aura of majestic magnificence that remains unique to this last hill capital of Sri Lanka.

year-old, retired public official reminded the potential threat of the solid waste dumping site in Gohagoda on the other side of the river. He categorically stated that,

*“According to my knowledge, a big American Company builds houses for rich people.... But Gohagoda ‘kunugoda’ (solid waste dumping site) may be seen from this skyway building... not only that, during the rainy season bad smell is blowing around....because of that wealthy people may be reluctant to purchase these houses. Even though the lousy smell wafting around, we are living here from our birth...”*

Informal discussion with local people, 2019



**Figure 15:** Different aesthetic views from skyway of Dynasty Residency  
 Source: Broacher of Dynasty Residency, 2017

Other gated communities have also chosen locations with the scenery and greenery (see Table 1 for descriptions). Not only the photographic evidence but also the language of advertising clearly shows that green environment and nature is a prime reason for the investment in these locations by the developers. The Victoria Range Homes offers the panoramic view of the Knuckles Range as well as the Hanthane Range along with the adjacent Victoria reservoir, and the entire landscape is enhanced with flower gardens, small lakes, ponds where ducks and other birds gather to give a sense of serenity. The Forest Hills uses this back view of the housing complex for their publicity, a lush paddy field with home gardens alongside. A careful analysis of their publicity and advertising programs show that these gated communities a space that combines a high-end lifestyle that blends with nature. Within the gated communities, the prices of the houses are



determined based on the proximity of a house to natural beauty. For example, in Dambarawa Villas, those houses at the lakefront are the most expensive.

The distribution pattern of GCs suggests that developers prefer scenic and green environs, yet in rural areas. Why would most of the gated communities be located outside the city area? The low land price in the rural areas can be considered as a factor for the developers, yet some residents in the interviews (especially in the Amunugama Forest Hills) indicated that 'rural location' was a reason for their choice. One of the female residents explained that *'there is more security by being in a village. People are extremely helpful and nice compared with the city.'* Thus, rurality is considered as a factor for location on the demand-side. This rurality refers to the social fabric and cultural ethos of the rural people that make the residents of the gated community comfortable and secure and not merely being located in a rural area. The two residents interviewed told us they are interacting with the villagers, rather than being isolated within the gated community. This is an interesting tendency because gated communities are known to be segregated from their surroundings. This aspect of gated communities in Kandy needs further study.

### ***Production of new urban spaces<sup>5</sup>***

With gated communities, a new urban space is developed in and around Kandy. This new urban space provides luxury, safe living along with nature to the affluent class, not necessarily from Kandy, but from Colombo and other countries. The state seems to endorse this as it enters into partnership with real estate developers to facilitate the process of providing such housing to the affluent, professional class as evident from the Hanthane Residencies. As argued by Fuglerud (2017), are they representative of 'globalizing standards of middle-class living and international capital'? Hettige noted as early as 1995, that, *"well-to-do could indulge in types of consumption and acquire new status symbols which clearly sets them apart from the rest of the population as never before, particularly in urban areas"* (1995:100). This new urban space has to be distinguished as a form of spatially engineered residential segregation, of course, induced by the market and the state and encoded in a strict class structure.

This new urban space, very interestingly, extends beyond the municipal boundaries. In Kandy, they have been developed as 'urban enclaves' within rural areas. These 'urban enclaves' are gated, walled and fenced in such a way to control access. This enclosure of the affluent middle class within these urban enclaves automatically affects the way people in the rural areas navigate and use space as they used to. The gates and the walls around these set the borders; borders are markers of both inclusion and exclusion. The residents in the area do not seem to understand 'class' aspect these gated communities; as usual, they would uninterestedly comment, "oh... rich people from Colombo come and buy these." The continuity of the rural space is disrupted in such a way that their spatiality concerning the area that they live is challenged. The common property before has now become inaccessible, as it is to be anticipated with the Damabarawa lake as one side of it is bounded by the Dambarawa gated community being constructed.

At each location, those who spoke to us indicated that the land values in the respective areas are gradually increasing after the construction of these gated communities. Not only that these gated communities would have an intimidating and alienating impact in the vicinity in terms of their imposing gates, walls, and designs, but it is possible that they will be pushed further away from

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<sup>5</sup> Here, we use the term 'new urban space' inspired by Neil Brenner's work (2019) that it is important to move away from the narrow-territorialized view of the urban, centered upon the spatially fixed entity of 'city.'

the city due to competing for land values. This would affect expanding the commuter zone of Kandy further away.

## Conclusion

The gated communities, as a new genre of urban residence in Kandy, will be expanding and popularizing regardless of their impact. They must be identified as a new trend and a unique phenomenon that is reshaping the residential structure in the city of Kandy and its rural hinterland. At this moment, it is difficult to envisage the externalities that these gated communities may produce, but it is evident that they breed social segregation in terms of class. As McDowell argued, *“spatial patterns are the outcomes of social processes, but also, “spatial differentiation, patterns of uneven developments themselves, have a constitutive effect”* (1996:29). These developments mark a new chapter in the evolution of socio-spatial dynamics in Kandy and its surroundings.

The affluent class, be they foreign or Sri Lankan, can experience the ‘urban’ inside the gated communities, thus making the transition from an outsider to an insider while automatically making the others beyond the gate and the walls ‘outsiders’ or the undesirable in their own previously familiar space. We consider this as a third space as it engulfs a sense of othering.

Here, we propose that gated communities in Kandy, especially those that have been developed in the rural hinterland, be identified as a site of third space, in a sense, it is *“another-way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life”* (Soja, 1996:57). Gated communities have been studied as sites of prestige, high-end lifestyle and safe living. Taken as a first space, a gated community would be a mappable, compartmentalized entity embodying modern design and landscape principles, delineated by a significant gate and walls or fences. As a second space, they would be *“packaged fantasies”* (Perera, 2016), standardizations of globalized middle class and representations of international capital (Fuglerud, 2015). Transcending such contemplation, a third space perspective invites us to see both ‘over’ and ‘beyond’ the gates and walls. This would provide *“radically different way of looking at, interpreting and acting to change the embracing spatiality of human life,”* (Soja, 1996:29) enunciated by the emerging phenomena of gated communities in Kandy. Most, importantly this emerging phenomenon in Kandy is indicative of a new trend of urbanization, or more correctly changing geographies of urbanization. This study also indicates the need to move away from the city-centered urban studies and to understand urbanization as a bundle of socio-spatial relations embedded within the broader economic and political contexts.

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