CLOSING THE GATES ON DEMOCRACY?

PRIVATE URBAN GOVERNANCE & ITS SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES IN SUBURBAN BUENOS AIRES

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ABSTRACT

The underlying argument within this thesis is that cities are a reflection of transformations in society which manifest themselves in spatial structures and these spatial configurations vice versa influence society. The enclosure of residential neighbourhoods is accordingly understood as a spatial expression of social processes, which itself influences society and urban civic processes.

This empirical research investigates social contacts, political engagement and civic concerns and links these processes to the following urban forms of residence: high income closed neighbourhoods; high income open neighbourhoods; middle income open neighbourhoods and low income open neighbourhoods, all situated within the suburban municipality of San Isidro/Buenos Aires. The criteria of analysis were residents' social contacts, their social and political engagement, their opinions about local government and local politics, and their values given to the public realm, collective goods and other issues of common interest.

This thesis mainly draws on two areas of literature: Firstly, interdisciplinary literature about gated communities and focusing on their implications for society, including social, legal, political and institutional perspectives. Secondly, literature from within sociology, social psychology and political theory, which comprise debates about the consequences of the privatisation of public space; contact and conflict and its impact on civic concerns; and the implications of the spread of private urban governance.

The core argument is that as civic concerns are influenced by lived experiences with others, the urban forms people inhabit have social and political implications for society. The main finding of this research is that private urban governance in the form of closed neighbourhoods, significantly impacts residents' relationships with their municipal administration and residents' opinions about local government and local politics. An increase in gated communities will thus, in the long run, have substantial consequences for urban civic processes and urban democracy more broadly.

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AMBA	Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires
CABA	Autonomous city of Buenos Aires
CAI	North American Community Associations Institute
CELS	Centre for Legal and Social Studies
CONAMBA	National Commission of the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area
HiCN	High income Closed Neighbourhood
HiON	High income Open Neighbourhood
HOA	Homeowner Association
INDEC	Argentine National Statistics and Census Institute
LiON	Low income Open Neighbourhood
MiON	Middle income Open Neighbourhood
OAM	Office for Metropolitan Planning
PRIT	Programme of Legalisation, Integration and Transformation of Informal Settlements

Aguas Argentinas	Private Water Company
Barrios Cerrados	Enclosed Neighbourhoods
Barrios Privados	Private Neighbourhoods
Cartoneros	Cardboard Collectors
Cementerios Parque	Private Cemeteries
Charter	Private Mini Buses
Choripan	Hot Dog
Clarin	Argentine Daily Newspaper
Countries	Gated Communities
Clubes de Campo	Gated Communities with larger sport facilities
Clubes de Chacra	Gated Communities with farm like plot sizes
Edenor	Private Electricity Company
Junta Vecinal	Neighbourhood Group
La Nacion	Argentine Daily Newspaper
Mega-emprendimiento	Large-Scale Urban Development
Negros	Derogative term for people with Indian descent
Nordelta	The largest gated community in the AMBA
Peso	Argentine currency
Piquete	Political protest demonstration blocking roads
Porteños	Inhabitants of Buenos Aires
Urbanizaciones Cerradas	Gated Communities

ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

Reviewing the academic debate on current urban trends and problems, it emerges that literature seems to be divided between concerns with urban poverty and its consequences. Where the lack of adequate housing and services in informal settlements are one of the major areas of interest, concerns with the impact of globalisation, deregulation and the increasing self-segregation of the upper classes, express themselves in a rapidly spreading development of different forms of private urban governance and closed neighbourhoods.

The contradiction that puzzled me when I started my PhD studies in 2002, was that regarding segregation of the poor, academic debate was about how to best integrate poor neighbourhoods into the 'normal' city, whereas regarding segregation of the rich, it was about the effects of their segregation, the reasons for it, or at the most, for its contribution to the violation of human rights (Landman, 2007). It was never, however, about how the city or local government should try to integrate rich neighbourhoods into the 'normal' city. This conclusion drawn from a review of the literature on social exclusion and segregation, led me to develop my research focus which centres on the social and political impacts of closed neighbourhoods as a means of evaluating what this urban form implies, more broadly, for civic processes and urban democracy and how it should thus be treated. Since both urban poverty and the seclusion of the wealthy are linked with increasing urban inequality, the argument, on which this study is based, is that in order to analyse the problems resulting from increasing inequality, it is necessary to look at this problem from both ends of the spectrum.

According to the World Bank, three billion people live on less than $2 per day and approximately half the World's population now live in cities and towns[1]. In 2005, one out of three urban dwellers – approximately one billion people – was living in slum conditions[2], and concurrently, private urban developments are spreading all over the World. In most parts of the World, urban areas are thus increasingly characterised by urban inequality. Latin America is the most unequal region in the World with the richest 20 per cent of the population earning 19 times more than the poorest 20 per cent (Cepal, 2010). Academics and international institutions fighting urban poverty generally agree that if urban poverty is to be reduced, inequality has to be reduced in the first instance.

There are a vast amount of urban integration programmes targeting the urban poor in order to alleviate poverty, and many urban regeneration projects have been implemented. Simultaneously, there has been an increase in social polarisation and spatial segregation, which is often explained as a consequence of globalisation. Urban segregation can be understood as a spatialisation of social divisions between distinct social groups and thus, as a manifestation of urban inequality. Although it is often argued that urban segregation is not a new phenomenon, its forms and reproductive mechanisms vary. Therefore, new forms of segregation have to be evaluated with regards to their impact on urban inequality. Gated communities can be understood as an extreme example of these new forms of spatial manifestations of segregation.

As will be explained in more detail in Chapter Two, there is ongoing debate about the link between gated communities and segregation, and most researchers agree that the proliferation of closed neighbourhoods has some kind of impact on urban segregation,

[1] In Argentina 89% of the population live within urban areas
[2] http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf

even if they do not agree on the form and the degree of this impact. Within this debate, it has been found that in the context of Latin America, where the massive development of gated communities takes place in the periphery of large cities, these seem to lead to two paradoxical phenomena: on the one hand, there is an approximation in space of opposite social-economic groups, and on the other, a reduction in the degree of social interaction between them. The question is therefore, if closed neighbourhoods can be interpreted as a form of urban segregation, that further enhances urban inequality, or if they are merely a manifestation of an existing polarisation.

The research focus of this thesis was developed in part from the argument that urban upgrading programmes and attempts to integrate the urban poor can only be successful and reduce urban inequality, if at the same time, self-segregation of high-income residents is understood as part of the process; otherwise, the latter will work against the former. This is based on the assumption that in order to integrate the urban poor, solid urban democratic processes are essential, because cities are seen to be the reflection of society. Furthermore, this thesis argues that transformations of society will always manifest themselves in spatial structures, which again influence society. Therefore, it is claimed that only well functioning democratic processes will lead to more integrated urban structures.

The focus of this thesis is thus, to analyse whether there is empirical evidence that can establish links between the proliferation of closed neighbourhoods and changes in residents' civic concerns and political engagement, which will have an impact on urban democratic processes in the long term.

This research project intends to contribute to the body of work demonstrating the significant linkages between the self-segregation of the upper classes and the limits of the positive impacts of integrative urban upgrading programmes and urban poverty reduction. While common practice in urban policy remains focussed on attempts to integrate the urban poor, the academic debate starts to shift its focus from urban poverty alleviation to questions of polarisation and urban inequality. Townsend (1993: xv) for example, claims that "what has been neglected is not so much the conditions of poverty or of exclusion, but rather those of acquisition and affluence at the other extreme of population experience, and the mechanics, or agents of the entire distribution". He further suggests that the concept of poverty draws attention only to a negative state and the concept of social exclusion to a negative process, and therefore, the focus is only on parts of the population, whereas "the concepts of inequality and social polarisation, which correspond with the idea of state and process, are all-embracing" (2002: 7). Analysing the process that took place in many countries over past decades, Townsend (1993: 10) concludes that "policies to cut public expenditure, and target welfare on the poorest … have increased inequality and perpetuated poverty, especially in countries where, because of globalised trade and growing influence of transnational corporations, there has been a particularly rapid concentration of wealth."

Academics such as Caldeira (2000), Davis (1990), Beall (1997) and Young (1990), all promote the inclusion of problems of inequality and self-segregation of the upper classes into the debate on integration of the urban poor. In order to achieve a more integrated approach, in Chapter Three, I show how the synthesis of debates from within social psychology, sociology and political theory can serve to establish theoretical links

between questions of social contact, public realm[3], and private local governance on one side, with civic concerns and political and social engagement on the other.

Conceptualising closed neighbourhoods as one of the most radical expressions of spatial segregation, this research focuses on the social impacts of closed neighbourhoods, understood as a form of self-segregation, on urban democratic processes. More specifically, the aim is to analyse the linkages between the residential urban form within which people live and their civic concerns,[4] by comparing their personal social relations, their interests and engagement in local politics, their relationships with local government and the values given to the public realm, collective goods and other issues of common interest.

Blakely & Snyder (1997) claim that exclusionary settlements have negative implications for those left outside, as the public spaces that are shared by all citizens are reduced, and as a consequence, social interaction between different socio-economic groups are reduced. They summarise this argument with the statement that there is 'no social contract without social contact.' However, these claims are not based on empirical evidence, but on ideological assumptions and therefore, lack verification. By analysing differences in patterns of social contacts, civic concerns and political engagement between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, this study is trying precisely to gain evidence for these types of claims.

[3] The term 'public realm' here refers to two types of spaces where social life takes place: public and parochial spaces. In public spaces (i.e. sidewalks, markets, parks) strangers meet; whereas in parochial spaces (i.e. neighbourhood playgrounds, churches, community centres) people sharing the same social networks come together (Beauregard & Bounds, 2000).
[4] The term 'civic concern' will be used to describe the interests and worries of residents that relate to social and political questions and other public matters which affect the whole municipality or society at large.

The initial assumption of this study was that residents of closed neighbourhoods had fewer needs and less reason to be concerned about urban issues regarding social life within the greater municipality. Their concern was presumed to be increasingly about the – mostly private – city which they use. The less they shared the public realm with others, the more they used private spaces for their social interactions, the less they would engage in debates about collective interests, the less they would be willing to engage in debates and issues concerning the whole community.

In order to develop a framework that allows the examination of these assumptions, this research is based on two different areas of literature: the interdisciplinary body of literature concerned with the consequences of the spread of gated communities; literature from within sociology, political theory and social psychology, which discusses the links between social contacts, the use of public spaces, civic concerns and political and social engagement. The aim is to achieve a better understanding of how current urban trends that are linked to urban inequality, influence urban democratic processes.

Following this line of thought, the main research question this thesis tries to answer has been formulated as follows:

How and to what extent, do social and political values and engagement and civic concerns differ within and between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods of differing income levels?

In order to answer this question, the following two sub-questions, further explained in chapter three, have been established:

- ***Do social contacts differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, and do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?***

- ***How and to what extent, do residents' relationships with local government and their political engagement differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, and do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?***

What is meant by the term 'civic concern', how it is measured, and how differences in the form of residence can be linked to differing social and political interests, values and differing civic concerns are elaborated on in Chapter Three, where the conceptual framework, which has been developed as a guide to analyse the empirical data, is explained. But first, I describe the theoretical debate within which this thesis is located.

1.2 THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The literature about gated communities includes the following areas of research: Explorations of the motivations of residents to live in gated communities; explanations for the increase in closed neighbourhoods; analysis of the legal frameworks and planning regulations regarding private urban developments and the consequences and implications for cities and society (Goobar, 2002). As the present research is located within the discussion analysing the implications of closed neighbourhoods for society, the existing theoretical debate considering these implications is reviewed in more detail in Chapter Two, in order to show where this study positions itself within the debate and how it contributes to this discussion. This section, however, briefly outlines other approaches to the topic of gated communities in order to introduce the topic more broadly, and at the same time, to elaborate why these approaches do not shed light on the questions raised within this thesis, pointing to their limitations for the analysis of the

impacts of closed neighbourhoods on urban democratic processes and the consequences for urban inequality.

The motivations of residents to live in closed neighbourhoods can be split into two categories: firstly, social motives such as fear of crime, increasing polarisation and the search for a higher quality of life and secondly, economic motives such as differences in land prices, stable property values and common locations for living, shopping centres and other services (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Coy & Pöhler, 2002; Webster, 2001; et al). The studies analysing various motivations of people to move to or live in closed neighbourhoods shed light on some of the causes for the increase in this urban trend, however, they do not explain the consequences this choice of living behind walls produces for those living on the other side of the gates, and for society more broadly. Therefore, these studies and their findings cannot deliver insights into issues concerning differences in residents' civic concerns, their social relations, their political engagement, or any other aspect concerning urban inequality. However, residents' motivations for living in gated communities are looked at within the context of explanations for the worldwide proliferation of closed neighbourhoods, which are reviewed in Chapter Two.

The second group of literature which focuses on the causes for the rapid increase of gated communities (Borsdorf et al, 2002; Coy & Pöhler, 2002; Glasze, 2002; Landman, 2002; Webster, 2001; Wu, 2005; a.o.), provides interesting conclusions about economic developments on an urban scale related to institutional frameworks and global urban trends but, similarly to the first, it does not clarify questions of how to interpret the impacts closed neighbourhoods have on the rest of the city and on urban inequality. In order to understand the importance of the analysis of social and political impacts of gated communities, Chapter Two reviews the literature concerned with the proliferation

of closed neighbourhoods, since this sheds light on the weight of the changes that are taking place as a consequence of this development.

The third group of research is mainly concerned with the legal frameworks within which closed neighbourhoods are embedded, and it is argued that the forms of administration can be understood as private forms of local government (Glasze, 2001). Some see this form of local organisation as the most responsive form of democracy but, according to Glasze (2001), this argument of democracy has to be challenged, as the decision-making processes within these administrations do not always follow democratic principles.

With regard to the consequences of such private forms of government for the rest of the city and society as a whole, Davis (1990) claims that local governments are often facilitating the privatisation of public space and accuses them of subsidising closed neighbourhoods. Questions arise about what role these private governments will play with an increase in gated developments. Therefore, there is increasing interest in analysing the impact of private local government on planning regulations and their development (Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002). Compared to the interest of this study, which looks at differences in civic concerns and political engagement, the focus of this group of research is on institutional changes and regulatory frameworks. Chapter Two explores the debate about these private forms of governance and its consequences in more detail, in order to establish how far this debate can shed light on the questions of this thesis regarding residents' civic concerns and political engagement.

Additionally, it has to be mentioned that to date, the majority of studies about gated communities have been based on evidence from the United States, but as Glasze (2001)

claims, first investigations point to a global boom of the phenomenon of closed neighbourhoods, especially within major cities of Latin America, in some African countries and in South-East Asia. Increasing numbers of these developments have also been identified over the last decade in Eastern Europe and some Mediterranean countries. The specific context of this thesis is Buenos Aires, a city in which the phenomenon of closed neighbourhoods is rapidly spreading, and which traditionally, has an urban structure and public culture that has been influenced by an urban European culture. Over the last few years, an increasing amount of research has been conducted globally, and this thesis also aims to contribute to the broadening of research on closed neighbourhoods.

The central objective of the research presented in this thesis is to examine whether the current proliferation of closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires merely highlights the city's existing socio-economic inequalities, or if these inequalities are actually reproduced and strengthened by this urban development. As explained in Chapter Four, the case study seeks to examine and compare the social relations, social and political engagement and the civic values of residents of closed and open neighbourhoods of different income levels, since these are – as outlined in Chapter Three – conceived to be essential for the development of a more equal urban society.

1.3 CONTRIBUTION & MOTIVATION

Since the specific context of this study is the city of Buenos Aires, it is important to remember that in Argentina, there have been massive changes regarding income distribution and social polarisation within the last two decades. Looking at Buenos Aires in particular, it can be noted for example, that poverty has risen dramatically with

17.8% of the population below the poverty line in October 1992, rising to 54.3% respectively in October 2002[5]. There is no official data for the years post-2002, and there are controversial numbers from the government on one side claiming that the poverty rate in the second half of 2008 had fallen to 15.4%, whereas private consultancies on the other estimated that it was about 30%[6]. However, since the data collection for this study took place in 2003 and 2004, the changes that had occurred until 2002, are considered to be more relevant.

At the same time, there has been a rapid development of new closed neighbourhoods, which highlights the contrast between the upper classes and the poor, especially since these new gated developments are mainly located in the suburban areas of Buenos Aires, where the percentage of population below the poverty line is even higher, being 22.3% in 1992 and rising to 64.4% in 2002[7]. This contrast corresponds to the data on income distribution within urban areas in Argentina, where the upper 20% of the population receive 54.3% of the total income and the lower 20% receive only 3.9%.[8]

There have been many studies over the last few decades about the problems of urban poverty in Buenos Aires and about the impact of policies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction. These studies have shown that the majority of poverty alleviation programmes were targeted programmes that were often seen to be quite successful, but only reached a small percentage of the poor and thus, did not alter the structural problem of poverty. Meanwhile, there has been an increasing amount of research conducted analysing the phenomenon of closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires,

[5] Data from the Argentinean national household survey October 2002 published in the INDEC press release of December 27th 2002 at http://www.indec.mecon.ar/nuevaweb/cuadros/74/incid_12_02.pdf
[6] Source: La Nacion, 20 march 2009, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1110587
[7] ibid.
[8] According to the World Bank

looking at the reasons for the increase of this form of residence and at the impact this has had on the urban form as a whole (Arizaga, 2005; Janoschka, 2003; Libertun de Duren, 2006; Svampa, 2001; Thuillier, 2002; a.o.). The argument here is that, in analysing the extent to which the increase in closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires reinforces and consolidates urban inequality, it will be possible to develop new ideas for a framework for urban poverty reduction, which includes the integration of the wealthy and the poor.

From a personal stance, my interest in the topics of this research is twofold: Coming from an architecture and urban planning background, I have long been interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the interrelatedness of urban form, public realm and urban democratic processes. Secondly, through my previous research projects, which focused on urban poverty and public programmes aimed at its alleviation, I became increasingly convinced that as poverty is rising and inequality and polarisation are also deepening in most societies, the focus should rather be on urban inequality and the structural reasons lying behind social exclusion and urban poverty. In my MSc dissertation[9], I analysed a governmental urban upgrading programme of the City of Buenos Aires in 2001and evaluated the success of the programme regarding its own goals. I concluded that in a country, which is experiencing increasing social polarisation and growing impoverishment, the problems of the urban poor had to be understood within a broader framework of inequality.

[9] "A Programme of Legalisation, Integration and Transformation of Shantytowns – An Evaluation of the Current Policy of the Municipality of Buenos Aires Towards its Informal Settlements" 2001

1.4 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This introductory chapter, which presents the focus and the context of the research project, is followed by a literature review of the academic debate about gated communities in Chapter Two. There, the different types of closed neighbourhoods are described, and the most common terms and definitions of this urban phenomenon are explored. The third section looks at the reasons that are commonly given as an explanation for the increasing proliferation of gated communities, and at the discussion about the consequences of the increasing privatisation of local urban governance. Lastly, the debate about the social and political impacts of closed neighbourhoods is reviewed within section 2.4.

Chapter Three consists of the conceptual framework that has been developed in order to guide the analysis of the empirical data. After explaining how and why the conceptual framework has been developed, and drawing on the interest of the research and the limits within academic debate about gated communities, the research questions are presented in more detail and the conceptual context is illustrated. The conceptual framework is structured according to two overarching topics, which can broadly be described as: first, the links between residents' social contacts and residents' civic concerns – described in section 3.3 and secondly, the links between residents' political engagement and their civic concerns, explained in section 3.4.

Chapter Four explains the research strategy that has been adopted, and the research methods employed. Subsequently, the approach that was chosen for the analysis of the empirical data is described, and the validity of the research and its limitations are discussed.

Chapter Five introduces the urban context, describing the socio-cultural background within which the case study has to be considered, with a focus on existing urban policies and the main characteristics of the urban development of Buenos Aires in the 1990s. Section 5.3 then illustrates the case of closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires, giving a brief historical background to these developments and explaining the different forms, closed neighbourhoods have adopted in Buenos Aires and the local terms commonly used. This is followed in section 5.4 by the description of the municipality where the case study is located, explaining its fragmented urban form and introducing the different neighbourhoods where interviews were conducted in section 5.5.

Chapter Six looks at the empirical findings, with regards to the linkages between residents' social contacts and their civic concerns. Here, residents' social relations within and outside their own neighbourhood are analysed, and different locations of possible social contact are examined. Following this analysis, the resulting patterns of social interaction are linked to residents' perceptions of common interests and to their opinions about other groups of society.

Chapter Seven analyses the empirical findings regarding links between residents' relationships with local government, their political engagement and again, their civic concerns. Residents' relationships with their local government are analysed in Section 7.2, followed by Section 7.3 which explores residents' outlook on local politics. Section 7.4, then examines existing linkages between residents' relationships with their local government, their outlook on local politics and their civic concerns.

Finally, Chapter Eight summarises the main findings of the research and analyses the answers to the research questions. This leads us to the debate about the conclusions that

can be drawn from this research and about the implications these should or could have for urban policy and further research within the field of this thesis.

TWO

CLOSED NEIGHBOURHOODS & THEIR IMPACTS ON SOCIETY

> *"The phenomenon is a spontaneous one and it has spread rapidly within and between countries. Its significance lies, not so much in the physical impact of gated developments, though this may pose challenges to urban designers, but in their underlying sociology, politics, and economics. In short, they challenge the spatial, organisational, and institutional order that has shaped modern cities."*
> (Frantz, Glasze, et al, 2002: 315)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As seen in the introductory chapter, the research questions that have guided this research are situated within the academic debate about gated communities. This debate is an international interdisciplinary discussion about closed neighbourhoods, which ranges from: debates on various terms and definitions of gated developments per se; discussions about the various reasons and motivations behind their continuing spread in many parts of the World; debates about the role of the State and private players in their development and spread; arguments concerning their spatial, social, political, economical, legal and environmental impact, to discussions regarding the more general consequences arising for urban policy and planning.

As this study is rooted within this field of discussion, this chapter introduces the main positions of this debate. Section 2.2 gives an overview of the various terms and definitions that are commonly used within the debate, and describes the different types of gated communities generally found. This will explain the choice of the term 'closed neighbourhoods' used in this thesis.

Section 2.3 reviews the broader debate about gated communities, looking at the explanations for the increase and spread of gated communities in Section 2.3.1 and outlining the discussion about private urban governance, legal frameworks, planning

regulations and institutional changes, which are linked to the development and spread of gated communities in Section 2.3.2.

Following this description of the diverse aspects linked to the spreading enclosure of neighbourhoods and private urban governance, Section 2.4 then explores the current debate on the consequences and impacts of this urban trend for the City as a whole. I examine in more detail, those parts of the academic discussion that explore social and political consequences, given that these are the consequences studied within this research. Section 2.4.1 reviews studies which examine the social impacts of the increase of gated communities, and analyse the links between gated developments and urban segregation, social interaction, civic concern and trust. Next, Section 2.4.2 explores the debate about the consequences of gated communities for local government and more broadly, other forms of local governance, privatisation of public services and space, politics and urban democratic processes.

Finally, Section 2.5 summarises the conclusions which can be drawn from this debate and which are relevant for the focus of this research. This will explain why the research questions within this research cannot be answered based on the existing literature on gated communities. Subsequently, Chapter Three reviews theoretical approaches from within Sociology, Social Psychology and Political Theory, which were used in order to guide the analysis of the empirical findings of this study.

2.2 TYPES OF CLOSED NEIGHBOURHOODS & DEFINITIONS

When discussing closed neighbourhoods, it is important to clarify why the term ‘closed neighbourhood’ was chosen instead of another used within the debate on gated

communities. Throughout the World, the definitions of what is commonly described as 'gated community' vary, as well as the respective terminology used to refer to these communities. In order to clarify this question of vocabulary, this section initially looks at various definitions of gated communities within the literature, and thereafter, it will be explained what the term 'closed neighbourhoods' will refer to within this thesis.

The term 'gated community' generally refers to a physical area, which is 'closed off' with either fences or walls from its surroundings, and where the access to these neighbourhoods is either prohibited or controlled through gates or booms. However, gated communities all over the World differ in their degrees of exclusivity, the amount and type of amenities they provide, and the forms of security devices that are used. Yet there are three main common characteristics that they all share and which can be used as criteria to define what is meant by the term 'gated community' within the academic debate. First, they consist of a combination of common private property and collectively used services with individual property or the rights of use of a residential unit (Webster, 2001). Secondly, gated communities have a private administration which can take different forms. Thirdly, their access is restricted, in most cases via fences and/or walls with controlled entrance gates. In light of these criteria, Blakely and Snyder define gated communities as "restricted access residential developments where public spaces are privatized" (Blakely & Snyder, 1997: 2).

Within this broad definition, various distinctions can be made between different types of gated communities according to their physical structure, their image and their location. On the basis of their physical structure, two types can be distinguished: closed condominiums and closed neighbourhoods (Glasze, 2001). Closed condominiums consist of a small set of apartment buildings, which share a limited amount of shared

open spaces, whereas closed neighbourhoods can include thousands of homes and sometimes also offer numerous services.

Within the category of gated communities, Blakely and Snyder (1997) further differentiate between three types that they have identified in the United States: 'lifestyle', 'prestige' and 'security-zone' communities. Lifestyle communities are, for example, retirement, leisure and suburban 'new town' communities, which privatise and control public space in order to make a particular social statement and which manifest exclusiveness. The suburban 'new towns' are a combination of residential and commercial areas that provide not only privately owned and controlled residential neighbourhoods, but also schools, shopping centres, offices and leisure facilities.

Prestige communities consist of gated residential neighbourhoods where the gating is supposed to achieve a sense of distinction. This is often accomplished via pretentious entrances and patrolling guards. The motivation for these prestige communities is to ensure a certain place on the social ladder and to protect property values (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).

Security zone communities mainly result from a fear of crime and strangers. Compared to the other two types, they are established by their own residents and not by developers. Another difference is that they are not built as gated communities, but residents subsequently put up the gates and sometimes hire guards in order to maintain the values and safety of their neighbourhood.

Regarding this distinction between purposely built gated communities and those which were originally open neighbourhoods, Landman (2000) distinguishes between 'enclosed

neighbourhoods' and 'security developments'. With enclosed neighbourhoods, she refers to previously built neighbourhoods that have controlled accesses through gates or booms and where the roads are public property. Security villages on the other hand, are private developments built by developers, where the infrastructure is generally also private property.

Another type of differentiation between gated communities can be made according to their location, being either in the inner city or suburban. In Latin America, for example, inner city gated communities consist of large, walled condominium complexes with strict security measures. Another type of inner city closed neighbourhood is the older, exclusive residential area that has been converted into a gated community by installing security features. The suburban gated community, on the other hand, is composed of extensive residential areas with high security and where exclusivity plays an important role. They include all the necessary amenities, services and frequently also, leisure facilities.

Coy and Pöhler (2002) suggest that following Blakely and Snyder's (1997) differentiation of gated communities in the United States, Latin American closed neighbourhoods can be described as a combination of lifestyle communities and security zone communities. They found, furthermore, that within gated communities there was a rising social differentiation leading to high-rank communities, which are comparable to prestige communities in the USA. Additionally, a new form of suburban closed development has been established recently which is characterised by its particularly large scale. They combine residential areas with places of work, shopping and leisure facilities and are usually referred to as 'edge-city-like communities' or

mega-developments and can be seen as emerging new centres in suburbia (Coy and Pöhler, 2002).

Furthermore, Vesselinov et al. (2007) point out that the access restrictions that characterise gated communities not only affect personal residences, but also the streets and other usually public spaces and amenities. This, they claim, differentiates gated communities from gated single residences and according to them "exacerbates the privatization of space" (Vesselinov et al, 2007: 112).

This thesis agrees with Townshend when he notes that the "importance of local, regional, and national situational factors in the evolution of private communities makes a universal typology unattainable if not undesirable" (2006: 105). However, analysing the above definitions used in the literature, it can be summarised that the main point of difference between the definitions lies in the importance given to the degree to which physical boundaries and access restrictions are seen as their main characteristics.

This research follows the definition given by Blandy et al. (2003: 3) where gated communities are defined as: **"walled or fenced housing developments to which public access is restricted, often guarded using CCTV and/or security personnel, and usually characterised by legal agreements (tenancy or leasehold) which tie the residents to a common code of conduct."** This definition is broad enough to include diverse degrees of boundary permeability, but restricts gated communities to residential neighbourhoods that have some form of housing association or board that manages them. Thus the two main areas of interest within this thesis, namely, the impact of physical enclosure and access restriction for the city, as well as the impact of some form of sub-communal private governance for urban democratic processes, can be analysed.

As stated above, within the literature about gated communities there is not only a range of definitions of what constitutes a gated community, but there are also a variety of terms used to describe this type of urbanisation. These terms span from describing physical aspects to referring to their legal or institutional characteristics. The most commonly used terms are: gated community, security development, closed or enclosed neighbourhood (Landman, 2007; Thuillier, 2002; Wetering, 2000), proprietary community (Webster, 2001), private neighbourhood or private community (Foldvary, 1994), gated development (Glasze, 2005), residential enclave or enclave communities (Luymes, 1997). Among academics, there is an ongoing discussion about the use of these terms, the necessity of more precise definitions, and the appropriateness of the term 'gated community,' with both the terms 'gate' and 'community' not satisfying many researchers.

This thesis argues that as long as it is clearly defined what one refers to within one's own research, all of these terms have their entitlement depending on the context of the research. Therefore, it is clarified here, which term is used within this thesis when referring to what is commonly called 'gated community'. The term 'gated community' is used within this study in reference to the phenomenon in general, not in regards to the neighbourhoods that have been analysed empirically within the case study.

In deciding which term to use for the gated neighbourhoods within the case study of this research, it is important to consider the Argentine words commonly used in the literature and the public debate. Chapter Five, where the urban context within which this study is located is portrayed, reviews these local expressions and explains the choice of the term 'closed neighbourhoods' for the gated communities within the case study. For

now, the terms ‘gated community’ or ‘gated development’ and ‘closed’, ‘enclosed’ or ‘private neighbourhood’ will be used interchangeably depending on the context of use.

2.3 AN INCREASING URBAN TREND

In the 1990s, debate about gated communities was generally split between two groups: those interpreting the increase of closed neighbourhoods as a positive urban development, mostly on the grounds of efficiency, and those evaluating this trend with regards to social equity. As the amount of empirical research in the field of gated communities increases and more theoretical approaches are developed in order to evaluate the consequences of gated communities, this rather ideological discussion has evolved into a more discriminate investigation of the various aspects to which this global urban trend is linked. This section reviews the main arguments and insights from this analysis of gated communities in order to give an overview of the research field within which this study is situated.

Based on the arguments that gated communities represent a process of ‘civic secession’ (Blakely and Snyder, 1997) there are those who argue that residents, by enclosing themselves, retreat from problems in society, privately provide for themselves with all they need and thus create a new trend which Bickford (2000) calls an ‘only in my backyard’ attitude (compared to NIMBYism). Looking at the motivations behind the move into gated developments, it has commonly been found that fear of crime, stable property values, limited traffic within the neighbourhood, reduced contact with strangers, better services and a general feeling of security and order are all of importance (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Blandy et al. 2003; Low, 2003). Other research analyses the forces behind the increasing trend of this form of urbanisation around the

World and the links between different planning regulations, legal frameworks and institutional structures and the proliferation of gated developments (Blandy et al, 2003; Glasze, 2005; Landman, 2007; Pulvirenti, 2006). Considering the consequences of the urban trend which gated communities signify, further investigation looks to whether they increase segregation and if so, to what degree (Cáceres & Sabatini, 2004; Le Goix, 2005; McKenzie, 2005; Roitman, 2003 and 2008; Salcedo & Torres 2002); whether they represent a more efficient form of local governance and service provision and what implications they have for urban democratic processes and local politics (Low et al, 2007; Walks, 2007; Webster, 2002).

In this chapter, the arguments and insights from this debate are grouped thematically into two sections. Section 2.2.1 looks at the discussion explaining the continuous spread of gated communities and analyses the factors, which drive this trend. Section 2.2.2 regards private urban governance and its consequences for local government and urban democratic processes. This includes a review of the work that analyses the legal frameworks and the planning regulations within which gated communities are embedded and the role of these in the continuing spread of gated developments.

2.3.1 THE PROLIFERATION OF GATED COMMUNITIES

> *"One of the defining characteristics of urbanisation in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the rapid spread of proprietary urban communities."*
> (Webster, 2001: 149)

Among geographers, sociologists and urban economists, many researchers have drawn attention to the global spread of gated communities around the World, emphasising the global success of this form of residential urbanisation characterised by physical enclosure and private governance. When analysing the possible reasons for the increase

in gated communities across different parts of the World, it is important to consider all their aspects, that is to say, their built form as well as their institutional characteristics. As Wu (2005: 251) points out, "an analysis of the political and economic conditions in which gating is created would be illuminating." In order to comprehend the significance of gated communities for the city, it is thus necessary to consider psychological, sociological, economic, political and institutional circumstances that might lead to this trend and possibly reinforce it. Therefore, this chapter looks at the debate concerning the diverse factors driving the proliferation of gated communities, ranging from psychological factors, such as fear of crime, arguments about consequences of globalisation and neo-liberal policies, to those that consider the impact of diverse institutional frameworks and planning regulations. But first, this section briefly introduces the academic literature that gives an insight into the global spread of gated developments.

Blakely and Snyder found that in the United States in 1997, there were approximately 9 million people living within 20,000 gated communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). According to them, it was estimated that in the 1990s, 80% of new urban developments in the United States would be gated. In other parts of the World, the phenomenon of closed neighbourhoods has also been spreading rapidly. The research carried out by Borsdorf et al. (2002), Coy & Pöhler (2002) and Thuillier (2002) describing the spread of gated communities in Latin America, Landman (2002) looking at South Africa, Glasze (2001) describing closed neighbourhoods in the Middle East, Giroir (2002) and Leisch (2002) looking at the situation in Asia, all have demonstrated that there is an increase of gated developments in most parts of the World. And as research findings concentrating on Europe show, there are some real estate markets that have started showing an increase in gated developments, for example in England (Blandy et al,

2003), Turkey (Bartu Candan & Kolluoglu, 2009), France (Madoré & Glasze, 2003), Portugal (Raposo, 2003), Spain (Wehrhahn, 2003), and Poland (Glasze & Putz, 2004).

As previously stated, the physical characteristic of enclosure is only one of the characteristics of gated communities. At least as significant, if not more, is the associated increase in private urban governance, which in the case of gated communities generally takes the form of homeowner associations (HOAs). These are contractual associations that work at a sub-communal level and take over some of the functions of the local government, mainly in the areas of provision of civic goods and services. Additionally, they administer and regulate neighbourhood-level issues. Since privately governed neighbourhoods are not always enclosed, it is interesting to look at the numbers of HOAs as well. In the United States, they increased from around 10,000 in 1970 to more than 200,000 in 1998 (Glasze, 2005). This signifies that around 42 million North Americans are living within some form of private governance (Webster, 2001). According to Webster (2001), the North American Community Associations Institute (CAI) calculates that among new urbanisations within metropolitan areas, about 50% will take the form of a community association (Webster, 2001), and thus half of all new urban developments will be privately governed.

As described in Chapter Five, which explains the urban context of this thesis, the proliferation of gated communities in Buenos Aires is similarly significant. These numbers show that private urban governance cannot be interpreted as a peculiar phenomenon unrelated to general urban trends. On the contrary, it has to be considered that, with all its implications and consequences, it is increasingly becoming the norm within some parts of the real estate market. Before exploring these consequences, the reasons for this urban trend are explored below.

As explained in Section 2.1 – looking at various definitions of what constitutes a gated community – there are immense variations among gated communities and the reasons for their spread, as we will see below, are just as manifold. The reasons can, however, be broadly divided into two categories: those which can be grouped as a result of a demand by residents and those which can be explained as consequences of the supply side. Most researchers, nevertheless agree, that it is a combination of both that drives this urban trend.

Many of the early studies about gated communities have linked closed neighbourhoods to postmodern urban conditions, especially the 'ecology of fear' (Davis, 1990), where gated communities were interpreted as a response to a fear of crime and to the inefficiency of the State to provide residents with adequate security. Further research found that it was often a fear of crime rather than an effective rise in crime rates, which led to an increase in the desire for strengthened security measures (Low, 2000 & 2003). Security is mainly found to be a motive for residents who live in gated communities among residents of big cities in the US and in many developing countries (Webster, 2001). It is often stated that there is a general growing feeling of insecurity that can be linked to a society characterised by high levels of social and economic inequality and poverty, and a government that does not provide citizens with security and where fear of crime remains high. The combination of increasing social polarisation and individualisation and the weakening of informal social networks develop fundamental uncertainties. This is further enhanced by rapid social-political transformations like in the former communist states (Glasze & Pütz, 2004) or in South Africa. Moreover, it is argued that the privatisation and the inherent scandalisation of the mass media further increase feelings of uncertainty. Thus, residents do not only choose to live in gated

neighbourhoods because of a specific fear of crime, but also because of a general – maybe even subconscious – desire for a secure environment, where not only crime is prevented, but where private contracts regulate community life and real estate values are believed to be more stable (Glasze, 2005).

Webster (2001) claims that, generally, this demand for security is only one part of the wish for better civic services and a more general desire to decide over one's own residential environment. He also notes that since gated communities are increasingly marketed as a real estate product, living in a gated community also becomes a fashionable trend, and the choice to live in such a development becomes a statement of exclusivity and class. This can, for the most part, be found in developing countries where gated communities are often marketed as places of the modern westernised elite living a globalised lifestyle (Caldeira, 2000; Glasze, 2003). Findings from empirical research in Latin America (Janoschka, 2002; Pöhler, 1998) show that the desire for high-quality civic services is often stated as a motive for residents' choice of private developments. Glasze (2005: 226) claims that, as a consequence, in some parts of the World, "private neighbourhoods substitute public supply and regulation, however, only for a clientele with sufficient means."

The motivations of residents to live in gated communities can thus be split into two categories: social motives, which include increasing polarisation, a fear of crime and the search for a higher quality of life and secondly, economic motives such as differences in land prices, stable property values and common locations for living, shopping centres and other services (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Coy and Pöhler, 2002; Webster, 2001).

Furthermore, McKenzie points out that, even if forces from the demand side explain part of the increase in gated developments, "there is also compelling evidence that the phenomenon is driven in large part by economic and political incentives operating on the supply side, where cities and real estate developers find common interest housing mutually advantageous" (McKenzie, 2006: 90). McKenzie (2006) and Libertun de Duren (2006) claim that municipalities are often interested in the development of gated communities within their boundaries due to the prospect of receiving high tax revenues from its wealthy inhabitants, whilst only having to provide minimal infrastructure for these new neighbourhoods. With the increase of these private developments, municipalities are thus able to grow and increase their revenues from property taxes, without having to invest in new infrastructure and without bearing the costs of an increase in civic services that are provided by private companies. Therefore, the decision to grant developers building applications is often influenced by these economic factors. According to McKenzie (2003), some municipal governments even oblige neighbourhoods to establish housing associations and provide themselves with civic services in order to minimise public costs. He argues that gated communities are thus often used as 'cash cows' for municipalities.

From the perspective of the developers, the establishment of private neighbourhoods is attractive, since this type of urbanisation allows them to maximise their profit by building in relatively high density since, according to McKenzie, these densities are more favourable among buyers if they are within gated communities, as the open spaces are commonly owned. Additionally, he claims "private HOA-controlled streets can be narrower than public streets, which allows builders to use land for additional units instead of streets" (McKenzie, 2006: 91).

Looking at empirical results from research across the World, it was found that gated communities can be considered to be a new real estate product that is strongly marketed and exported by developers from one country to another (Coy & Pöhler, 2002; Glasze, 2003; Raposo, 2003). According to Glasze (2005), this spread of private neighbourhoods is further enhanced by the Internet and resulting marketing possibilities for developers. "Similarly to shopping centres, private neighbourhoods are part of a repertoire to which actors of both the demand and the supply side are able to refer" (Glasze, 2005: 226).

The spread of private neighbourhoods is thus enhanced by certain socio-economic and socio-political circumstances generally considered to be the outcome of globalisation. Glasze (2005) argues that factors, which are seen as effects of globalisation, such as the move from an omnipotent state to a minimal state, as observed in Eastern Europe for example, and moves to privatisation and deregulation further drive the proliferation of gated communities. Glasze (2003) believes it is possible to identify some of the economic, political and social changes that render private neighbourhoods more attractive for developers, homeowners, and public institutions. Wu (2005: 253) claims there is a worldwide institutional shift "which treats citizens as consumers." This, he argues, is the basis for the proliferation of private governance, which manifests in many forms. Gated communities are, according to him, only one example. Furthermore, empirical research in various countries has shown that the liberalisation of real estate market regulations, the liberalisation of land markets and the privatisation of basic infrastructure, like highways, all facilitate the development of gated communities (Libertun de Duren, 2006; Raposo, 2003; Thuillier, 2002).

Considering the above-mentioned factors for the proliferation of gated communities, the question arises why this type of urbanisation does not, nonetheless, increase in certain parts of the world. According to Glasze, this can only be explained by looking at governance patterns, which vary from one nation to another. He argues that planning regulations and legal frameworks, as well as social values, influence urban development. Therefore, this path-dependency might explain differences in the proliferation of gated communities in European welfare states, like Germany, where they do not seem to be attractive for all sides concerned (Glasze 2005). Glasze further argues that the strong position of public planning, the importance given to public space as a cultural value, and a higher acceptance of public regulations and of private contractual regulations are all factors which hinder the increase of private neighbourhoods in countries such as Germany and France.

In summary, it can be claimed that gated communities increase as a result of partly demand driven and partly supply driven factors. Both factors can, to a certain extent, be linked to globalisation, if this is seen to be fostering privatisation, deregulation and a weakening state, as well as the spread of a certain Western lifestyle, of which gated communities are only one example. The studies analysing various motivations of people to move to or live in gated communities and those considering the socio-political circumstances under which private neighbourhoods spread the most, shed light on the causes for the increase in this urban trend. This illustrates that gated communities cannot be analysed, without considering the urban and socio-political context within which they develop.

This section has looked at how the proliferation of gated communities can be explained. It is, however, also important to consider that this urban trend is not only a result of

psychological, sociological, political or economical factors within society, but also has an increasing impact on these factors as closed neighbourhoods multiply. With the proliferation of private neighbourhoods, characteristics such as fear of crime, the demand for a certain lifestyle, legal frameworks and planning regulations, to only mention a few, are all impacts just as they are factors in the formation of gated developments. The next section therefore, considers what the proliferation of gated communities and the inherent spread of private governance signifies for urban development and democratic processes, while Section 2.4 more broadly looks at consequences for the City.

2.3.2 PRIVATE GOVERNANCE AT SUB-COMMUNAL LEVEL

As stated in the previous section, gated communities cannot only be characterised by their physical enclosure. Their institutional structure is just as significant. This structure can be understood as a private form of local government, which can be described as 'club-economies', where residents pay fees to gain the right of consumption of the 'club-goods' and with this right, also accept its internal rules and regulations (McKenzie, 1994; Webster, 2002). Glasze (2003) therefore uses the term 'shareholder democracy' to describe this institutional form, which according to Townshend (2006) is an exclusive form of governance, which disconnects residents from the public realm. Other terms for this form of private urban governance commonly used within the academic debate are 'micro-governance', 'proprietary community' and 'club realm' (Webster, 2001).

With the establishment of homeowner associations or residents' associations, which provide the residents of private neighbourhoods with civic goods, services and recreational facilities and manage these, an additional level of governance, usually at

sub-communal scale is created (Blandy et al, 2003). These self-governing associations – also called community associations – generally consist of an elected board, which administer common property, establishes contracts, regulates internal affairs such as building regulations and rules of conduct within the neighbourhood and uses private security to control a demarcated territory. Thus, gated communities form part of the larger category of common interest developments (CID), which comprise retail and industrial communities. According to Webster (2001: 153), these forms of private urban governance all "represent private individuals voting with their feet and forming or buying into contractual arrangements that will ensure a supply of civic goods which apparently are better acquired there than elsewhere."

Because of the spread of this form of micro-governance, various debates about the public versus private realm have gained new impetus. Among others, this includes discussions about the (in)efficiency of public service provision, public space, public planning and questions of equity, social polarisation, social exclusion and market imbalances, which might arise with the proliferation of private urban governance (Webster, 2001). Therefore, it is often argued that the spread of private governance, which is taking over parts of the role of the State, has significant consequences for society.

In 1956, Tiebout established his 'theory of local public goods', which states that many collective goods, which are normally public goods, are also characterised by the fact that they are 'local' public goods and thus can only be consumed by people who stay at a certain locality. Drawing on Tiebout's theory, there are urban economists who subsequently argue that households also select their place of residence according to their preferences, a behaviour often referred to as 'voting with their feet'. Following this

approach, Foldvary (1994) argues, in his theoretical essay *Public Goods Private Communities,* that gated communities have to be understood as a more efficient form of urban development, because proprietary communities allow for a market-led provision of collectively consumed goods and should thus be interpreted as an ideal form of efficient provision of local public goods,[10] as they solve the free-rider problem. Following this line of thought, Foldvary (1994) and others claim that private communities are to be interpreted as an institutional innovation and as the most responsive form of democracy, since they ensure a market driven efficient supply of local public goods. However, Glasze (2001) challenges this argument of democracy on the grounds that the decision-making processes within these private administrations often do not follow democratic principles. Arguing that "decision making in private neighbourhoods follows the model of stock-corporations," he reasons that there is less openness and equality in decision-making processes compared to public politics (Glasze, 2005: 228). Potential conflicts of interest between residents of gated communities or between residents and developers might develop, which signifies that "there [is] politics within private neighbourhoods" (Glasze, 2005: 228). As a consequence, he claims basic democratic principles[11], which are inherent to most democratic systems, are violated in private neighbourhoods due to their inexistence within the contractual arrangements between residents and housing associations. As an example, he sites the fact that tenants are normally excluded from any decision making process within a gated community, since it is property owners who form the board of directors of these associations. Glasze (2005) also points out that, since there is no institutionalised opposition, as there would be in any public local government, minorities risk being dominated. Therefore, he argues that it is not surprising that

[10] Collectively consumed goods and services
[11] For example, the principle of equality, the principle of the sovereignty of the people, the principles of public and pluralistic decision making.

research in the US and in Lebanon has found "a lot of clashes and frustration within the private neighbourhoods. Consequently, the commitment of the inhabitants to their homeowner association often is very limited" (Glasze, 2005: 228).

Foldvary's viewpoint, which interprets private local governance in the form of homeowner associations as the most efficient form of local governance, is mainly criticised on equity grounds. There is also widespread concern about the social and political consequences of private urban governance for the rest of the City and society at large. These arguments are analysed in the following section looking at the socio-political consequences of gated communities.

Within the public versus private realm debate, Webster (2001), argues against a polarisation of the debate and develops the concept of private urban governance as 'club realm', based on Buchanan's theory of clubs. Buchanan (1965) conceptualised groups as 'clubs' if they collectively, but exclusively, consumed specific goods and the consumption was regulated by some ownership-membership arrangement. Furthermore, he argued that excludable collective goods should thus be interpreted as 'club goods'. Following this line of thought, private neighbourhoods with their HOAs can be understood as club economies with territorial boundaries (Glasze 2005).

Webster interprets proprietary communities as a redefinition of the public and the private realm and claims that they represent club realms[12]. Based on Tiebout's model of relocating people according to the location of sufficient public goods, Webster (2001) argues that with an increase in gated communities, competition between them would be

[12] Spaces in which shared goods are supplied as tie-ins with private goods and supplied at efficient levels because they are effectively priced (see Webster 2001 for a detailed exposition)

guaranteed and thus efficiency, in the allocation of public goods within cities would emerge. As a second starting point, in his conceptualisation of gated communities as club realms, he takes Buchanan's model, which describes the necessary conditions for an efficient club size, as well as the necessary quantity of common goods within each club. Based on these two theoretical approaches, Webster (2001: 165) argues that theoretically "it is possible to imagine a city made up entirely of privately supplied communal space and local infrastructure – a patchwork of *spatial club realms* to match the patchwork of *non-spatial club realms* that have always characterised cities."

Webster believes that with the proliferation of gated communities and hence private urban governance, a possibility of governance innovation could surge and opportunities for a better provision of public goods might arise. He further maintains that the wish to create consumption clubs is inherent to the driving factors which lead to the growth of cities. This, he points out, is not in any way related to the physical enclosure of gated communities, but can be found in any housing market. Webster (2001: 159) suggests that the enclosure of neighbourhoods should rather be understood as "mechanisms for more creative community engineering and urban service and infrastructure supply." He concludes that regarding the negative effects of gated communities on equity grounds, it is important to consider that the invisible boundaries established through school catchment areas and other real estate market restrictions are much stronger and possibly more harmful mechanisms of fragmentation.

Glasze (2005) points out that the interpretation of private neighbourhoods as club economies allow for an explanation of the proliferation of gated communities, since it sheds light on the attractiveness this form of urban development comprises for all key actors involved in their spread: developers, municipalities and residents. The reasons for

this attractiveness range from economic advantages for developers, such as lower risks of degradation because of the power to exclude free-riders, and restrictions of access to common facilities and space; better marketing possibilities of the complete 'club-package'; financial advantages for municipalities with an increase in tax revenues from high-income households bundled with the reduced costs of infrastructure and services; and lastly, residents who enjoy high quality services and profit from stable real estate values (Glasze, 2005).

However, serious doubts from diverse points of view remain about the efficiency and functioning of a city composed of large amounts of private neighbourhoods. First, there are those who question the efficiency of private governance, interpreting it as a "massive transfer of authority to unpaid and untrained volunteers" (McKenzie, 2006: 91). McKenzie claims that a huge knowledge gap exists due to the difference in expertise of these private administrations compared to public local governments. According to him, private lawyers and consultants often have to be hired to provide the boards of administration with the necessary information for governing the neighbourhoods and to make up for the deficiency in know-how. But this solution, he claims, is only possible for large associations who have the necessary funds to finance these extra costs.

As a result of these and other costs, which were often not anticipated in the creation of private neighbourhoods, many homeowner associations lack the necessary financial means. This represents another difficulty that should not be overlooked when considering private urban governance as an efficient solution for cities in the long run. McKenzie (2006) points out that the 'underfunding' of neighbourhood associations leads to huge costs imposed on residents in situations where common space and

facilities have to be replaced. In his empirical research, he found that these problems result in negative press coverage, which lead to image problems of the neighbourhood and to a potential instability of real estate values. In conclusion, he remarks that "ultimate financial responsibility for deteriorating streets, roofs, and other building components rests with the individual owners, as does potential liability for debts and civil judgements resulting from director mismanagement. This financial burden will increase year by year as these developments age." (McKenzie, 2006: 91)

A further criticism of the interpretation of private neighbourhoods as innovative urban form for the future arises from the perspective that if municipalities are financially dependent on these private neighbourhoods, the choices in housing will be reduced in the long run. As a result, people will choose to live in private neighbourhoods, even if they are reluctant to become a member of a housing association. As a consequence, there will be an increase of owner resistance, and internal conflict may arise (McKenzie, 2006).

From a legal perspective, Pulvirenti (2006) explains that with the substitution of public local government by private forms of governance, regulations following public law are replaced by regulations following civil law. Municipal charters and regulations are thus replaced by contractual arrangements and club membership regulations. Pulvirenti (2006) claims that with the increase in private neighbourhoods, this legal shift is a significant development and should not be ignored, especially given that in many gated communities there exists an uncertainty about which set of rights applies within private neighbourhoods, in addition to between these neighbourhoods and outsiders. Since gated communities take over part of the role of local government, he argues that homeowner associations should be regulated by a specific set of laws concerning people

who ‘govern’ these neighbourhoods, since they fulfil a ‘quasi public’ or ‘quasi municipal’ role.

Similarly, there are unresolved issues if gated communities are viewed from a planning perspective. It is often criticised that no specific planning regulations and policies concerning gated communities exist in most countries. This includes a lack of directives concerning building applications for private neighbourhoods as well as a lack of a consistent knowledge and awareness among planners about the impacts of these developments for the rest of the city. For example, Goobar (2002) concludes after his analysis of the British planning system, that it did not consider the impacts of gated communities, and therefore, he insists that specific policies for private neighbourhoods are essential. But as Hook and Vrdoljak (2002) point out, there is also little knowledge about the role of private developers and neighbourhood administrations in the development of planning regulations for gated communities and about the impact of power structures on local decision making in regards to these often large private developments.

Private urban governance can thus be interpreted as an innovative and efficient form of urban governance but, as seen above, there are significant question marks concerning internal as well as external consequences, private neighbourhoods might produce. The next section reviews the literature on gated communities that analyses these and other consequences of private neighbourhoods, focusing specifically on the social and political consequences, which are the principal areas of interest of this study.

2.4 CONSEQUENCES OF THIS URBAN TREND

After reviewing the literature concerned with the reasons for the proliferation of gated communities and explaining the consequences of private urban governance from economic, legal and planning perspectives, Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 look at the consequences of the increase in gated communities from a social and political perspective. But first, it is explained why the position interpreting private neighbourhoods as an innovative and interesting alternative to purely public governance is criticised by other scholars on equity grounds.

Following Foldvary's arguments, Webster (2001) develops, as explained in the previous section, the notion of 'club realms' and concludes that it is possible to imagine a city that consists entirely of 'club realms'. Regarding the consequences of this development for the city, he claims that a common sense of responsibility could even enhance community integration. While this assumption is not based on empirical evidence, the two main criticisms of this interpretation of gated communities is that socio-economically weaker households do not have the same choices and therefore, would be disadvantaged, and secondly, it is argued that there would be no positive externalities as local taxes would be used only for club-goods and thus, would not allow for transfer payments from richer areas of the city to poorer ones (Glasze, 2001). But more importantly for the research problem analysed in this study, Foldvary's approach does not provide any analysis of the implications for those left outside and thus, questions of civic concern and other social and political implications are ignored. In contrast to Webster's position, his critics see the autonomy of private neighbourhoods as a characteristic that does not allow positive externalities for outsiders. However, others stress that value judgements should follow facts and that the costs and benefits of gated communities for society might differ considerably according to different local contexts.

These arguments are discussed in the following two sub-sections, which consider the international debate on the social and political impacts of closed neighbourhoods.

2.4.1 SOCIAL IMPACTS OF GATED COMMUNITIES

It is generally agreed that gated communities represent a complex urban phenomenon, which has economic, political, social and physical consequences for the city and its inhabitants. The preceding section looked at the discussion concerning institutional consequences of private neighbourhoods. It was established that some researchers interpret the increasing trend towards private neighbourhoods as a positive development resulting in more efficient urban governance. Analysing what in this thesis has been grouped as social impacts of gated communities, ranging from the impact of private neighbourhoods on the concept of public space to its impact on urban segregation and its consequences for social interaction and civic concerns, other scholars feel that focusing on an institutional perspective alone ignores these significant aspects of the city.

A variety of positions exist within this body of research, ranging from those who see gated communities as a negative development to those who claim that the increase of gated communities does not have any negative effects on its surrounding neighbourhoods and for the city at large.

Regarding the spread of gated communities and the consequential increase in physical enclosure of parts of the urban landscape, there are those who interpret the privatisation of space as an anti-urban phenomenon (Goobar, 2002; Landman, 2000; Mitchel, 1995; a.o.). They fear that if unrestricted access to public spaces is not guaranteed in an

increasing part of the city, public life will be at risk, as, in their view, public space represents an essential characteristic of urbanity in a democratic society.

Looking at the impact of gated communities from a physical planning perspective, Landman (2000) claims that with the rapid spread of closed neighbourhoods, navigating on foot or in a car through cities becomes difficult since walls and fences interrupt the fabric of the city. There is great concern among planners and researchers that, with the reduction of public spaces and the restraint of free movement in the city, citizens' equal rights to the city are in danger. Closed neighbourhoods are therefore seen as physical obstacles within the city resulting in an infringement of basic rights (Goobar, 2002). Glasze (2003) however, argues that this negative interpretation of closed neighbourhoods is based on a nostalgic idea of the city and Charmes (2005) maintains that this critique is based on a concept of public space that does not exist anymore in most parts of the world. It is also maintained that the focus on gated communities as physical barriers is not justified, since there are many other private developments[13] that can be seen as obstacles in the city as well.

Nevertheless, many researchers do interpret private neighbourhoods as a privatisation of public space and the significance of it for a well functioning democratic society has become a common theme within academic debate. Here, gated communities are seen as one of the threats to public space and therefore, a danger to all that is linked to the concept of public space like equal rights to the city and political freedom (Mitchell, 1995). Glasze (2005: 222), however, remarks that "'public space' and 'privatisation' are extremely vague analytical categories" and that as a consequence, debate about them often remains vague, since it has not been clarified what exactly is privatised with the

[13] Shopping centres and leisure parks for example

proliferation of gated communities and how this privatisation takes place. He criticises arguments against gated communities that oppose the privatisation of public space, because according to him, these arguments often "dichotomise between a public realm and a private realm," and they "focus unilaterally on material changes in space and therefore risk blocking from view a more profound and differentiated analysis of the complex socio- economic and socio-political changes which are under way with the spreading of private neighbourhoods" (Glasze, 2005: 222).

Landman (2007) on the other hand emphasises the importance of public space as a space of expression, which greatly influences our civic culture within everyday life. She refers to Madanipour (1996), who interprets the public realm as a significant part of our cities where social contact and interaction take place. He maintains that public space should be promoted as part of a larger public sphere. Because of its role in promoting social interaction, the existence of public space, he argues, is important to advance tolerance and thus social integration. These scholars maintain that even if the concept of public space might have changed and if, as some argue, public space has never been entirely free and public, it is still of essential importance for the future of our cities to allow open spaces to remain publicly accessible.

As one of the early writings considering gated communities as an increasing urban trend, Davis' *City of Quartz* (1990), represents one of the more extreme positions arguing against gated communities. He describes contemporary processes of spatial segregation in Los Angeles with the aim of bringing attention to the dilemma of those who are left outside the gates. Davis claims that gated communities are a manifestation of social divisions, difference and inequality. His arguments have been criticised for following an ideological set of assumptions which are not backed by empirical

evidence. He has, nonetheless, inspired many writers in their critical research about closed neighbourhoods.

Studying gated communities and their empirical effects on segregation in Los Angeles, LeGoix (2005) claims that gated communities have become a symbol of urban fragmentation, and he concludes that the sprawl of gated communities increases segregation. Similarly, Blakely and Snyder (1997) argue that the spread of gated communities encourages urban segregation.

However, if we look at studies which analyse the links between gated communities and segregation in more detail, there are those who argue that gated communities are a good way to bring the middle classes back into the centre and who claim that even if there are no positive social externalities such as increased employment or increased sales in local businesses, there are no negative ones either, such as the displacement of residents or conflict between residents from different sides of the wall. Additionally, it is argued that the emergence of gated communities increases the tax revenues of municipalities without producing costs for local government as they function autonomously (Castell, 1997). This argument is reinforced by the claim that traditional forms of segregation, where the lower classes live far apart from the wealthier ones[14], lead to less social interaction and possible shared benefits, than urban forms where the poor and the rich live at least within physical proximity, and there are possibilities for fiscal and environmental spill-overs to exist (Webster, 2001).

[14] Depending on the context, this can either mean wealthy suburbs like in most North-American cities and in many European ones or poor peripheries like in Latin American cities and in some European ones

Based on findings from empirical research in Chile, Sabatini and Cáceres (2004) for example, claim that rather than encouraging segregation, gated communities produce a change in patterns of segregation. They argue that by looking at the whole city, segregation is diminishing, since high-income residents move into former low-income areas within metropolitan areas of the city. They further claim that there is more of a mixture of income levels on a large scale. However, looking at a reduced scale, gated communities, according to them, lead to what they describe as an intensification of segregation. These two contradictory trends, they argue, can not be interpreted as a general increase in segregation, and they criticise the interpretation of gated communities as drivers of segregation, since this overlooks the fact that high-income and low-income residents have never lived before in such close physical proximity to each other, where gated communities are developed adjacent to poor settlements.

In order to evaluate whether the significance of urban segregation is encouraged or not by gated communities, it is necessary to analyse the social relations between the residents of closed neighbourhoods and those of the surrounding neighbourhoods. Roitman (2008), in her analysis of social relations between residents of a gated community and those of the surrounding neighbourhoods in Mendoza/Argentina, distinguishes between urban social segregation and social group segregation. Roitman (2008: 281) claims that "it is essential to consider social group segregation as a micro-scale process where the object of study is the social group that segregates itself from other groups living in spatial proximity" in order to explain more broadly, the link between gated communities and urban social segregation. With urban social segregation referring to a process of segregation within the whole city, which is reflected in different social groups living in different parts of the city, social group segregation, according to Roitman (2008: 39), refers to "the separation or isolation of a group that

segregates itself from the rest of the city or from other social groups owing to its social practices, values, power, interests and perceptions. It is influenced by individual and structural elements and the scale of analysis is at the group level." Applying this differentiation and analyzing residents' social practices and viewpoints, Roitman (2008) finds that there is a link between social group segregation and gated communities. However, since residents' social practices and viewpoints were not compared with those of residents of open neighbourhoods of similar socio-economic levels, these findings do not shed light on the research questions of this study.

Contrary to Roitman (2008), Sabatini and Cáceres (2004) find in their empirical research on Santiago, in Chile, that gated community residents' and surrounding inhabitants' social relations show signs of social integration taking place. They distinguish between four types of integration - symbolic, functional, spatial and community integration - and they claim that apart from community integration, all others are achieved at least to a certain extent. Therefore, they argue that gated communities enhance integration in these cases, since if the neighbourhoods were not closed, high-income residents would not live physically as close to poor residents as they do, and thus, no integration between these social groups would take place.

Looking at social relations, Caldeira (2000) claims that closed neighbourhoods change the character of public life and public interactions and she goes further, by maintaining that this has implications for democracy. In her study of São Paulo, she finds that different social groups are geographically closer within the city, but at the same time, the separating walls and security measures are increasing, so that these groups do not use the same spaces and thus, do not interact. Caldeira (2000) looks at the abandonment of public life, but she does not analyse if there is a difference between those living in

closed neighbourhoods and those living outside. She states that the encounters between different social groups shrink, but she does not empirically link this to closed neighbourhoods. As there is no direct connection made between people's social interactions and their form of residence, no conclusions can be drawn about the question, if social interaction is reduced by the increase of gated communities.

Looking at the findings of studies analysing social relations between residents of gated communities and outsiders, there is no agreement about the impact of this urban form. Further to the studies described above, there are those who maintain that social tensions might arise between residents of gated communities and residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods. They argue that the physical closeness of high- and low-income residents may create conflict, which would otherwise be solved by physical distance. Additionally, street closures and the resulting restrictions of access sometimes lead to neighbourhood conflicts. There is also the position that the visibility of the gate itself might provoke conflicts, since it might develop resentment against the neighbourhood and its residents by outsiders who are and feel excluded by them (Pile *et al.*, 1999).

On the other hand, there are empirical studies that find that there is no conflict between residents of gated and surrounding neighbourhoods. Studying a gated community in London and the residents' relations with the outside community, Castell (1997) finds that, even if there is no interaction taking place between residents of the gated communities he analysed in London and the surrounding neighbourhoods, there were no conflicts between them either.

Low (2003) explains in her research of gated communities in the United States, that there are 'symbolic barriers' created by the enclosure of neighbourhoods, which

reinforce the existing differences between insiders and outsiders. These barriers, according to Low, result in an image of the other that is often negative and thus might underpin a fear of strangers and a fear of crime. She maintains that gated communities contribute to segregation because people are enabled to psychologically separate themselves from outsiders, whom they perceive as potentially dangerous.

Similarly, other authors claim that residents of gated communities from their perception differentiate between insiders and outsiders, as peers and others, and associate the differences between these two categories with class and ethnic differences. In addition, regarding relations between gated community residents and outsiders, Arizaga (2005) points out that residents generally differentiate between others who are seen as the 'service proletariat' working within the gated community and the unknown others who are either seen as potential criminals or as the target group for charity by gated community residents. These are interesting observations about the social relations between gated community residents and outsiders, however, it is not clear if these relations would differ, if high-income neighbourhoods were not closed but only guarded for security reasons, where necessary. No study was found which analysed social relations between residents of closed neighbourhoods and surrounding residents belonging to the same socio-economic class.

Svampa (2001) studied the opinions of gated community residents concerning their surrounding neighbours and found that these were generally hostile. She argues that physical separation has an impact on the construction of social relations and that gated community residents have limited contact with their direct neighbours. Her findings are based on research conducted in gated communities' on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, where gated communities are generally surrounded by poor neighbourhoods. The only

contact she found was due to charity work carried out by residents of gated communities. For Svampa, gated communities produce homogeneous social circles, which do not allow for socialisation between diverse social classes.

Regarding social interaction between residents of gated communities and surrounding neighbours in Santiago de Chile, Campos and Garcia (2004) find that, even though physical proximity between diverse social classes is enhanced by the development of gated communities in the periphery, this does not lead to closer relations between these economically diverse groups. Campos and Garcia thus disagree with Sabatini and Cáceres (2004) who, as seen above, interpret gated communities as a development that reduces segregation. Campos and Garcia (2004) believe that closed neighbourhoods, on the contrary, result in greater separation of different social groups and even go further stating that poor residents are sometimes even displaced by the proliferation of gated communities in formerly poor areas of the city.

Salcedo and Torres (2002), on the other hand, argue that the spatial proximity of wealthy and poor residents, (which comes from the increase in gated communities in Santiago de Chile) results in a partial integration of poor residents since employment opportunities arise for them. They claim this integration is mainly functional integration, where gated community residents are seen to be potential clients for service provision or employers. However, differentiating between various types of integration, these authors found in their research that community integration did not generally take place. This differentiation between different types of integration is based on Sabatini and Cáceres' (2004) conceptualisation of integration which has been described above.

Researching from a South African perspective, Lemanski (2005) argues that there is a complex relationship between gated community residents and their poor neighbours, which she characterises simultaneously by connection and exclusion. Just like Sabatini and Caceres (2004), Lemanski found that employment relationships did occur between the two groups. However, she also found like Roitman (2008), negative attitudes from gated community residents towards their poor neighbours, as well as a lack of any neighbourly feelings between them.

Long before the boom of gated communities started, Jacobs (1962) was also worried about the fragmentation of neighbourhoods and the deterioration of public space. She argued that a fragmentation of neighbourhoods 'takes eyes off streets' and thus, makes them less secure. Following this line of thought, it is argued by others that the enhanced security of closed neighbourhoods is achieved at the cost of security for others. Blakely and Snyder (1997), for example, claim that exclusionary settlements have negative implications for those left outside, as the public spaces that are shared by all citizens are reduced and consequently, social interaction between different socio-economic groups is reduced. They summarise this argument with the statement that there is 'no social contract without social contact'. The main criticism of this argument is that it is not based on empirical evidence, but on ideological assumptions and therefore lacks verification. By analysing differences within social contact and civic concerns between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, this study is precisely trying to gain evidence for these types of claims.

Regarding the impacts of closed neighbourhoods on residents' civic concerns, Bayne and Freeman (1995) in their analysis of levels of civic concern among gated community residents compared to 'outsiders', found that the former had lower levels of civic

concerns. They acknowledge, however, that their research could not establish if people with lower levels of civic concerns were more attracted to gated communities or if living in such a neighbourhood brought about lower levels of civic concern found in their research. Within the next chapter, which explains the conceptual framework of this thesis, we will look at arguments gleaned from political theory and social psychology which maintain that public space and its inherent possibilities for social interaction, social contact and possible conflict among strangers are linked to citizens' value formation and their resulting civic concerns. These theoretical approaches will be used to establish a conceptual framework, which will allow the analysis of links between closed neighbourhoods and possibly reduced levels of civic concerns.

With a slightly different focus, Coy and Pöhler (2002) claim that with the increase of gated developments, fragmentation will manifest itself physically and consequently, the places of everyday activities, such as education, leisure and consumption facilities, will also be concentrated within access-controlled areas. They argue that "gated communities represent new 'exterritorial spaces' which are generally beyond public management and control" (Coy and Pöhler, 2002: 357). The point here is that this private world will, according to them, share little concern with neighbouring communities, especially if communal services are also privately provided and "'city quality' therefore refers less and less to the entire metropolitan area, but rather to individual fragments of it" (Coy and Pöhler, 2002: 368). These arguments analysing social interactions and civic concerns of residents of closed neighbourhoods are, however, not based on empirical evidence. In order to test these assumptions, it is thus important to compare gated community residents' civic concerns with similar socio-economic groups to control for differences that might be class related.

Evaluating the role of gated communities in the increasing trends of urban fragmentation and polarisation, Marcuse (1995) claims they reinforce existing hierarchies and therefore, perpetuate social disparities. Furthermore, Marcuse believes that the physical separation established with the development of closed neighbourhoods does not only reflect existing social relations and divisions, but also reinforces these. Similarly, Lofland (1998: 172) argues that it is "reasonable to hypothesise that the antiurbanism that created the privatistic built environment and life-style … is now fed by that very privatism." These claims are similar to the assumptions of my research, but as they are not based on empirical evidence they remain assumptions, which this study aims to test within a specific context.

In conclusion, it can be noted that even if there is agreement among researchers that the increase of gated communities signifies that there is a change in the urban landscape, which has some kind of impact on society at large, there is no agreement about the extent of this impact and its significance. While some claim that segregation is increasing due to the spread of gated developments, others point out that segregation at a macro-scale is being reduced and only micro-scale segregation can be linked to gated communities, while others argue that gated communities actually bring diverse levels of income closer together, effectively reducing segregation. Similarly, there are differing opinions about the impact of closed neighbourhoods on residents' social relations within their neighbourhood and their social interactions with outsiders.

There has been very little research carried out linking gated communities and its possible impacts on residents' social relations and their civic concerns. Thus it is not possible to draw conclusions from the reviewed debate for the research questions of this study. Therefore, this thesis draws on arguments from sociology, political theory and

social psychology to guide the analysis of these questions. The conceptual framework, which has been developed to interpret the empirical findings, is presented in the next chapter, but first, Section 2.4.2 will explore the debate on the political impacts of gated communities, the second area of interest of this study.

2.4.2 POLITICAL IMPACTS OF GATED COMMUNITIES

> *"Condominium and homeowner associations share mandatory-membership organizations. They make and enforce rules, collect assessments from all owners, maintain property, and in essence function as private governments for the development. This revolution in housing form is thus also a transformation of local governance, because it amounts to a large-scale privatization of the services and infrastructure formerly provided by municipalities."*
> (Mc Kenzie, 2006: 90)

As seen in the previous section, it is generally agreed that the proliferation of closed neighbourhoods has an impact on residents' social relations between those who have access to these exclusive spaces and those who do not, even if there is no agreement about the resulting consequences for the city. Considering society at large, Landman (2007) claims that closed neighbourhoods play a significant role in the production and reproduction of power structures in the city. She argues that the establishment of sub-communal private administrations "creates problems regarding democratic representation and the accountability of the micro-governments and their private security forces, which exacerbates the large inequalities in these cities and contributes to the violation of human rights" (Landman, 2007: 15). This is just one argument in the continuing debate about the political impacts of private neighbourhoods and the resulting implications for democracy.

As stated above, Glasze (2001) argues that most of the debate dealing with gated communities centres on the physical demarcation of these, while this is only the most

visible aspect of this residential form. Therefore, he focuses on the institutional framework of cities and suggests that closed neighbourhoods represent a substitution of local government provision by market-led private organisations. This, he claims, results in a change in the relationship between the residents and their surroundings as social contacts across boundaries are diminished, which again leads to a further 'desolidarisation'. Similarly, McKenzie (1994) criticises the vision of a society that is organised by property rights and exclusion and where, according to him, the social values of the inhabitants of gated developments will be adversely affected by their exclusive environments.

Conversely, it is sometimes argued from an economic perspective, that private homeowner associations are similar in how they work to public local government since municipalities are more and more inclined to provide services via sub-contracted private suppliers, just as private administrations do. Similarly, it is claimed that local government, which in pure federal systems is financed by local property or income taxes, will, just like gated communities, finance common goods within the municipality through "shared cost arrangements" (Webster, 2002: 400). Thus, wealthier municipalities are able to offer better services and infrastructure than poor municipalities, and their wealth depends on the income levels of their residents. Glasze (2005) points out that given these circumstances, wealthier residents of these wealthy municipalities "are likely to try preventing free-riding by less affluent households, who do not generate 'adequate' tax revenues. If they are able to dominate the decision making of the council, they may use legal instruments like exclusionary zoning to hinder the in-migration of poor households" (Glasze 2005: 229). Local public goods in these municipalities can thus be interpreted as 'quasi club goods' (Glasze, 2005).

Arguing in a similar vein, Charmes (2003) describes how many small, periurban French municipalities also use public policies in order to function as 'quasi clubs', and he terms the motivation driving this trend as 'municipal egoism'. Accordingly, it can be argued that the characteristic of private neighbourhoods to exclude parts of society is not limited to gated communities, but forms part of a more general trend of privatisation and that access limitations to civic goods are much more widely spread than often assumed (Webster, 2002).

Regarding this discussion, Glasze (2005) observes however, that if municipalities are not entirely financed by local taxes, for example in Germany, where the federal system is combined with a co-operative system, or in centralised systems, the quantity and quality of the provision of civic goods is not proportionate to the income-levels of residents. Thus, Glasze claims that residents will be less inclined to exclude poorer households and the decision making process of municipalities will not predominantly focus on economic criteria. An important difference between private neighbourhoods and public municipalities remains in these institutional settings, because only the latter will represent the diverse interests of its inhabitants. In conclusion, Glasze (2005: 230) remarks that "it is not appropriate to dichotomise between 'open, democratic and socially balanced' public municipalities and 'closed and secessionist' private neighbourhoods" since the reality is much more complex.

Looking at the debate regarding political consequences arising from these processes of privatisation or 'clubbisation' of formerly public goods and services in more detail, three main areas have to be distinguished: internal politics, external politics and residents' politics.

Firstly, there is a discussion about the political impacts of gated communities with regards to internal politics, i.e. questions of accountability of the resident associations towards the homeowners and legal questions considering the contracts between these. As seen in section 2.3.2, these issues are relevant to democracy, since they relate to questions of internal decision-making and equal rights within private neighbourhoods. Several studies concerned with internal politics have found that internal decision-making in gated communities is often contradictory to democratic principles (Glasze, 2005).

Secondly, there is an ongoing debate about the external politics of gated communities, regarding the impact of private neighbourhoods on their social and political environment. Here, questions about the relationship between these private sub-communal governments and the local government and questions of power and the use of political power arise. Some authors fear that social balance will be abandoned, with socially homogeneous municipalities and private neighbourhoods striving for the most efficient provision of services and goods for their inhabitants (McKenzie 1994, Frug, 1999). This vision of the future is enhanced by reports of homeowner associations trying to achieve abolition of the tax burden for their residents, a move which Reich (1991) has famously termed the 'secession of the successful'. Regarding external politics of gated communities and political impacts for democracy more broadly, Glasze (2005: 231) concludes that the "institutionalisation of a new form of a local or sub-local territorial organisation complicates the perequation between wealthy and deprived municipalities and therefore risks (further) complicating the social balance and raising new social barriers."

The third area of research that deliberates the politics of gated communities looks at the political impacts from the residents' perspective. Here, residents' political attitudes, interests and engagement are considered, and studies analyse the resulting changes in urban democratic processes and power relationships, due to the proliferation of sub-communal private governance and the privatisation of public space. As Walks (2007) points out in the introduction to his research regarding political attitudes and inclinations of gated community residents, this remains a very poorly explored field of research. It is not yet clear if the residents of gated communities differ from their fellow citizens in respect to their political attitudes, interests and engagement, and if living in gated communities has any impact on these factors.

In the literature, it is often assumed that residents of closed neighbourhoods, as a consequence of their 'civic secession', will not support policies which aim at economic redistribution and more state involvement in the provision of service and public goods (Walks, 2007). Similarly, it is often assumed that they will not support political parties that advocate collective responsibility, and that they will generally be antagonistic towards the State.

Empirically examining gated community residents' trust in the State in the context of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Cotta (2007) concludes that there was distrust by the residents of gated communities towards the State regarding its capability and efficiency concerning the provision of open recreational spaces and security. Cotta further claims that, within his case study, gated community residents view public management as being inept, whereas they regard the private administration of their neighbourhood as competent. These findings were not, however, analysed in comparison with residents of

open neighbourhoods of comparable socio-economic background and thus might only show attitudes prevalent among certain parts of society.

Regarding political engagement, residents of private neighbourhoods might be expected to participate less in politics since they solve their problems privately. On the other hand, one could presume that potential feelings of community among 'club-members' might enhance residents' political capital and thus, not impact on their level of political involvement and interests.

Trying to determine the relationship between political participation, political attitudes and the fact of living in gated communities, Walks (2007) suggests that given the proliferation of gated communities worldwide, it is essential to establish if gated communities, as Blakely and Snyder (1997) state, only represent a reflection of society or if they might produce a certain political attitude or lower levels of engagement, which would impact society and democracy at large. In order to clarify these questions, Walks (2007: 4) examines empirically "the extent to which gated community residents differ in their political orientations and level of electoral turnout from residents living in non-gated subdivisions, thus shedding light on potential political feedback effects at upper levels of government." His findings suggest that residents of closed neighbourhoods, compared to residents of open public neighbourhoods, generally lean to the right of the political spectrum when interviewed about their political attitudes. Regarding political participation, Walks found that between the two groups there was only a very slight difference, which is statistically not significant. He points out, however, that he only looked at political participation in the form of electoral turnout rates at the federal level, and that it might be expected that results would be different at the local level since, as he argues, "gating makes a very localized statement, privatizing

local resources and services, with the gates meant to keep out proximate (local) others. Thus, it might be expected that gated community residents would be more inclined to withdraw from local politics than from the national scene" (Walks, 2007: 13). In this case study which is located in Argentina, this thesis looks at residents' interest and engagement in local politics, although not analysing electoral turnout, since voting is compulsory in Argentina.

In their research comparing residents of gated communities and those of co-operative housing estates, Low and Donovan (2007) also looked at political engagement and participation. They found that given the fact that homeowner association boards made decisions concerning many aspects of community life, it was surprising how low the rate of participation was among residents of gated communities. Low and Donovan (2007) found that gated communities had a more general negative impact on political engagement. They argue that "moral minimalism, hegemonic representation and a lack of structural and procedural knowledge not only produces an environment which insulates residents from local conflicts and disagreements, but also excuses rather than promotes political participation, resulting in a tenuous shoe-string democracy." They further claim that in such a context "anti-democratic practices such as race-based discrimination are subversively expressed as a kind of "laissez-faire racism" – removing such practices from the political realm" (2007: 22). However, there has not been an empirical analysis of theses findings compared to residents of open public neighbourhoods with similar socio-economic characteristics. Thus, it is not clear if these findings could be related to class rather than type of neighbourhood.

As seen in the above review of the literature on the political consequences of gated communities, much of the debate has focused on either political consequences for the

local government or internal politics. Little attention has been paid to residents' political attitudes, their opinions concerning politics and government and their political engagement. Where it has been the focus of attention comparative data on residents of similar income-levels living in open neighbourhoods is missing.

With reference to literature from sociology, political theory and social psychology, the next chapter (chapter three) shows how residents' political attitudes, opinions and political engagement can be linked to their civic concerns and understanding of democracy. Furthermore, it explains why the analysis of residents' politics is significant for the evaluation of private urban governance and the consequences for society.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DEBATE

This section summarises the main limitations of the current debate on gated communities in relation to the research questions that guide this thesis, and shows how this study can thus contribute to the broader discussion on private urban governance. As seen above, there are authors who see private local governments as a more efficient form of urban development. These studies in general, ignore issues of distributional justice and are mainly based on economic theories and thus, often lack empirical evidence.

On the other side of the ideological spectrum, many authors who are critical of the phenomenon of gated communities focus on the equity issues of residential segregation and gated developments. It can be argued that they ignore or dismiss the benefits of closed neighbourhoods for those living within these developments. The main limitation of these studies, however, is that they are often weak on empirical evidence. Caldeira

(2000), for example, claims that social differences are perceived stronger in a society that consists of physically separated neighbourhoods and that strangers are considered dangerous because of a lack of knowledge. This is an interesting argument, but the facts on which she bases her claims are not specifically linked to gated communities, as noted before.

Independent of ideological background, a large amount of the research undertaken so far has been within the context of North American cities, resulting in a lack of knowledge and empirical evidence from other parts of the World. However, it is generally agreed that there is a global boom of gated communities, especially within major cities of Latin America, in some African countries and in South-East Asia. Also, in Eastern Europe and in some Mediterranean countries, increasing numbers of these developments have been identified over the last decade. The specific context of this research is Buenos Aires, a city in which the phenomenon of gated communities is rapidly spreading and which traditionally has an urban culture influenced by European urban culture. By basing this case study in Buenos Aires/Argentina, this research also contributes to the geographical broadening of the discussion.

Looking at the social and political impacts of the spread of gated developments, this thesis attempts to fill in some of the gaps identified within the academic debate. It is based on empirical evidence of differences in patterns of social interaction within everyday life, differences in political engagement and the analysis of civic concerns of residents of closed neighbourhoods, compared to neighbouring residents of diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Most of the literature regarding social relations has focused on the perspective of gated

community residents without comparing these with the opinions, attitudes and feelings of residents living outside of closed neighbourhoods. Cáceres and Sabatini (2004), Lemanski (2005), and Roitman (2008) deliver valuable insights in comparing residents from within gated communities with their surrounding neighbours. However, there were no studies found which compare residents of open public neighbourhoods of a comparable socio-economic level, and thus it remains somewhat unclear if differences found in residents' accounts relate to the urban form people live in or to the social class they belong to.

To conclude this section, it is important to remember that for the future of most cities, it will be of great significance "how social and socio-spatial processes of fragmentation, for which gated communities are a very distinct example, will be integrated into concepts of socially sustainable urban development" (Coy and Pöhler, 2002: 369), which is an aim stated within global political discourse. It is for this reason, that this thesis argues that analysing the consequences of the spread of closed neighbourhoods for the city as a whole, through a perspective of residents' civic concerns and urban democratic processes, is important in order to gain a better understanding of problems of urban inequality and poverty.

THREE

CONCEPTUALISING CIVIC CONCERNS LINKED TO SOCIAL CONTACT & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

"Engagement can be built-in. … So, too, can estrangement be built-in."
(Gieryn, 2000: 477)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the field of Sociology, urban places are often associated with diversity, tolerance, sociation, integration, spontaneous interaction and freedom. However, they have also often been portrayed as places of anonymity, detachment, loneliness, segregation, fear and insecurity. According to Gieryn (2000), sociologists generally argue that the question of whether face-to-face interaction results in community building depends on the number of people meeting and their differentiation, according to class, race, ethnicity, lifestyle and cultural beliefs. But Gieryn (2000: 477) proposes that there might also be a 'place effect' "in which the tight coupling of geography, built-form and subjective topological understanding mediates the effects of size, demographic patterns, and values on the possibility or achievement of community."

In his literature review on sociological studies focusing on proximity, interaction and community, Gieryn (2000: 477) found that several studies show that social interaction can be enhanced through specific urban forms and that the "presence of perceivedly public places, such as parks, plazas, … squares, libraries, … inviting and accessible to all, fosters [a] mingling of diverse people who don't already know each other and provides a setting for spectacles and communal celebrations …".

Contrasting these studies, Gieryn (2000) also finds positions within sociology that claim that estrangement could also be built-in. These viewpoints argued that residential suburban neighbourhoods connected only by car, increasing privatisation of daily used

spaces for shopping and leisure, the proliferation of gated communities and the closing off of public streets all limit the chances of people interacting with a wide range of diverse others on a daily basis. As a consequence, the divisions between different neighbourhoods become less permeable, with some ethnic or class enclaves becoming impassable. Gieryn (2000: 479) concludes "if places spawn collective action, so too can they become its contraceptive." He argues that with the privatisation of public space and the consequential stigmatisation and destruction of the places that are left public, public protest and mobilisation are discouraged. Sidewalks are less frequently used with people using cars to go everywhere, squares and markets are increasingly replaced by malls, which have opening hours and can be closed off, and armed guards and surveillance cameras allow the control of their entrances. Additionally, there are informal codes of conduct, which announce appropriate users and uses of these private spaces. All these characteristics, Gieryn (2000) claims, can be interpreted as devices that prevent public displays of political activism.

As described in Chapter One, this research questions whether the urban form we inhabit influences our patterns of social interaction; if social interaction patterns influence our attitudes and civic concerns; if they have an impact on our political interests; and if our opinions about local government and our views about local politics are influenced by the urban form we live in. Analysing the links between these topics and the question of whether there are any causal relationships between them, is thus, the aim of this research.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the main argument in this thesis is that cities are the reflection of transformations in society and that these transformations manifest themselves in spatial structures, which vice versa influence society. The enclosure of

residential neighbourhoods is therefore understood as a spatial expression of social processes, which again influence society. These impacts on society are explored in this research by analysing the social relations and civic concerns of interviewees and by analysing whether these differ according to the urban form in which they live, and by exploring if there are signs of social and political disengagement linked to specific urban forms of residence.

In order to analyse the empirical evidence which was collected and which is presented in chapters six and seven, an analytical framework has been developed that establishes how the different aspects of this research are interconnected and to what extent they influence each other. The next section describes how this conceptual framework has been developed and how it helps to interpret the empirical data.

3.2 DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Since the research questions guide the development of the conceptual framework, they are firstly reiterated and then the existing thematic links between the different aspects of these research questions are illustrated diagrammatically.

The main research question, which has led this research, is:

How and to what extent, do social and political values and engagement and civic concerns differ within and between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods of differing income levels?

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions have been established:

Do social contacts differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, and do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?

- *With whom do residents of different socio-economic groups have personal contacts, and to what extent, do residents of closed neighbourhoods differ for that matter from residents of open neighbourhoods?*
- *What type of public events - religious, cultural, social, educational, and political - do residents participate in and are there differences according to the type of neighbourhood they live in?*
- *What are the values given to issues of common interest, public collective spaces, public transport and other collective goods, and what roles do they play in people's lives?*
- *To what extent are residents socially engaged, and what are their opinions about other socio-economic groups within the municipality?*

How and to what extent, do residents' relationships with local government and their political engagement differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, and do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?

- *To what extent, do residents have knowledge about and contact with local government, and are there differences according to the type of neighbourhood they live in?*
- *What are residents' opinions about their local government, and are they satisfied with the services it provides?*
- *What are residents' opinions about the role of local government, local politics and public versus private provision of services?*
- *To what extent are residents interested in local politics, and do they participate in it?*
- *To what extent do people have trust in local politics and politicians?*

- *What do residents consider to be important problems within their neighbourhood?*
- *What do residents consider to be municipal responsibilities and priorities?*

Following these research questions and the arising thematic links, the conceptual framework is structured into two overarching topics, which can broadly be described as: first, the links between residents' social relations and their civic concerns and secondly, the links between residents' relationship with their local government and their civic concerns.

As seen in Chapter Two, in reviewing the current debate on gated communities, the findings of this literature were found to be limited in relation to answering these research questions and to explaining the thematic links between them. As shown in the concluding section of Chapter Two, it was found that in the literature about closed neighbourhoods that analysed residents' social relations, no studies were found which include a comparison of gated community residents, with residents of suburban open neighbourhoods of a similar socio-economic level. Therefore, it was not possible to draw conclusions on the impact of this particular urban form on residents' social interaction patterns, if one wants to exclude possible class effects.

Additionally, it was pointed out in Chapter Two, that where patterns of social interaction have been analysed and conclusions have been drawn, these were not linked to questions of resulting changes in civic concerns, socio-political interests and engagement. Thus, there were no theoretical explanations found which could be used to guide the analysis of the empirical data collected within this research.

After a review of the literature on gated communities, it was also found that most studies concerned with the analysis of the consequences of closed neighbourhoods for society focused on the relationship of residents with their local government from a legal or institutional perspective, but did not explain the lack of interest of residents in issues concerning local government or local politics and differences in residents' civic concerns.

Establishing these above-mentioned gaps within the literature on gated communities, it was found that it was primarily in academic discussions in the fields of sociology, political theory and social psychology that theoretical approaches considering these questions were identified. The subsequent sections of this chapter, therefore, review the literature which focuses on the impacts of social interaction and which links these with residents' civic concerns and their socio-political interests and engagement. This analysis of the literature allows the development of a theoretical framework that can guide the analysis of the empirical data in order to answer the research questions of this thesis.

3.3 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As mentioned above, this conceptual framework mainly draws on arguments from debates in the fields of sociology, political theory and social psychology. Broadly, it can be summarised that, the arguments used for the establishment of a conceptual framework are based on studies that explain the scarcity of social and political interest and differences in residents' civic concerns as a result of a reduction of contact and conflict between different social groups; a change in the way that democratic processes

take place; an increase in privatisation of spaces and services and reduced possibilities for listening, and thus, knowledge and understanding of 'others'[15] within society.

The conceptual framework used to structure the analysis of the empirical data is organised into two overarching parts which concord with the research questions. Section 3.4 looks at approaches explaining the links between social contacts and civic concerns and Section 3.5 explores the theoretical approaches which link political engagement and civic concerns.

To begin, Section 3.4.1 reviews arguments from political theory and sociology that claim informal encounters within everyday life which take place in the public sphere are important, as they can reach people who are not necessarily interested in politics, and because they take people by surprise, potentially disrupt daily routines and are ultimately, thought provoking. It will be further argued that conflict and thus contact, is necessary for a strong understanding of civil society and that the wish to avoid conflict and exposure to differing views and strangers is enabled through the privatisation of public space.

Section 3.4.2 then explores the debate from social psychology which is concerned with face-to-face contact between members of different social groups, and analysing if this contact leads to a better understanding of 'the other'. Here, it is claimed that a reduction of contact and conflict can be linked with a consequent reduction in mutual understanding, recognition and civic concerns. Additionally, it is discussed if whom we perceive as fellow citizens, is influenced by whom we regularly see and interact with in

[15] 'Others' or 'the other' here refers to social groups who are different from one's own and with which one has no or little contact. For residents of HiCNs, HiONs and MiONs these 'others' are the residents of LiONs and for residents of LiONs 'the other' are the wealthy.

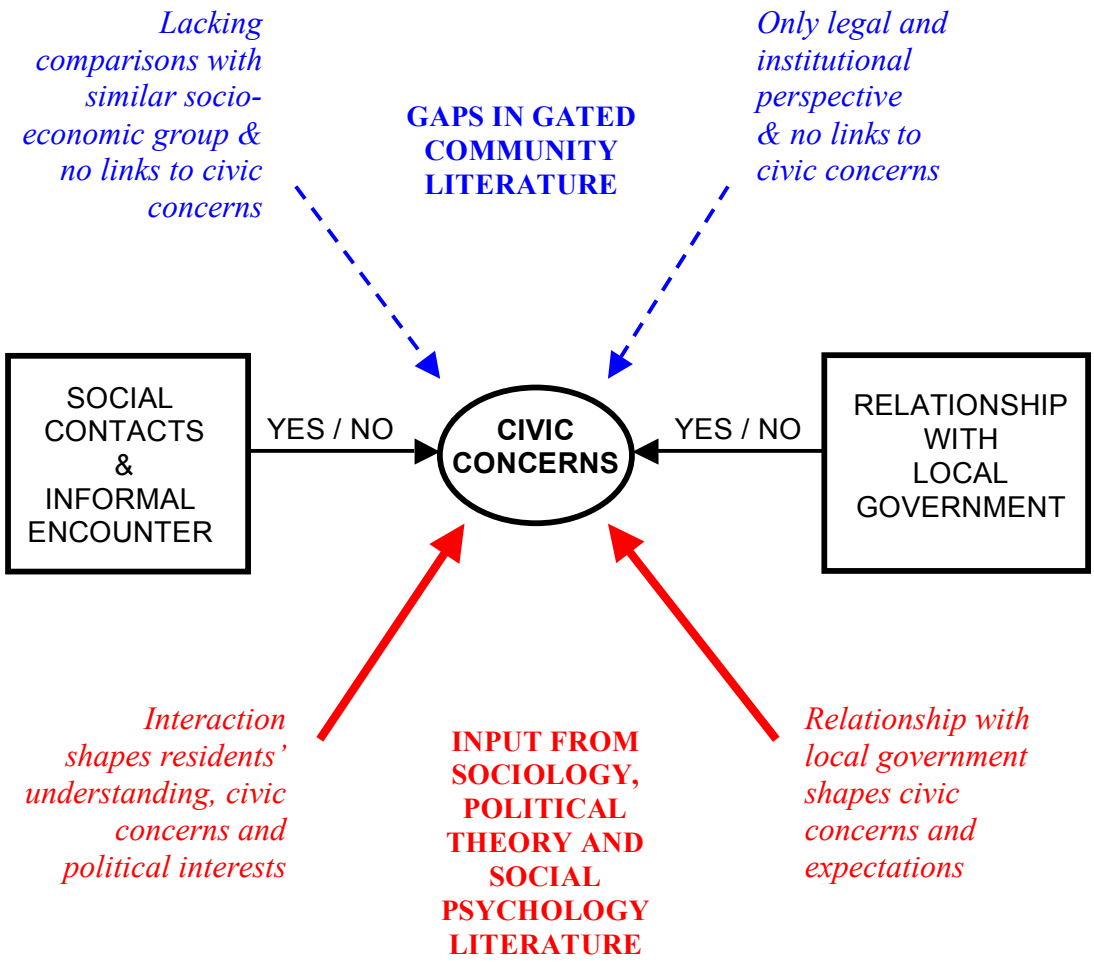
our daily lives. I illustrate how it can be argued that opinions and civic concerns develop according to lived experiences with others and thus, the urban form people live in.

The second part of the conceptual framework, presented in Section 3.5, regards the consequences of private neighbourhood associations for residents' interests and their expectations from local government and local politics.

Section 3.5.1 establishes the links between social interaction, political interests and civic concerns. Based on arguments from sociology, it is argued that public spaces offer opportunities for democratic processes and thus, the enclosure of neighbourhoods has a significant impact on these processes. Furthermore, arguments from political theory are explored that stress the importance of listening and it is claimed that the right to be listened to, is essential for mutual understanding and recognition.

Section 3.5.2 then explains why it is necessary to look at the relationships of residents with their local government through the angle of political theory. It is explained how the identification with a specific neighbourhood might lead to a reduction of interest in the city as a whole, and thus, reduced support for policies that are beneficial for residents of all neighbourhoods. Therefore, it is claimed that the lack of social contact with the municipality and a reduced interest in local issues and local politics, leads to a lack of civic concern for the whole municipality. This, it is argued, decreases people's interests in their local government and in local politics, and leads to a gradual disengagement which is further reinforced by the privatisation of other traditional public services such as education and health care.

The following diagram illustrates how the links between social contacts and civic concerns on one side, and political engagement and civic concerns on the other, have been informed by these various groups of literature reviewed within chapters two and three. Moreover, it points to the gaps in the literature about gated communities that had to be filled, drawing on literature from sociology, political theory and social psychology.



Therefore, the following areas of literature have primarily been used in the development of this conceptual framework: first, the interdisciplinary discussion regarding the spread of gated communities, its consequences for patterns of social interaction between different socio-economic groups, and the consequences of private local governance,

reviewed in Chapter Two; secondly, viewpoints from sociology and political theory that associate the privatisation of public space with a lack of democratic listening, and with a reduction in civic concerns and political engagement. This comprises the discussion about the reduction of social interaction and the impact this has on people's civic concerns. Finally, the conceptual framework draws from debates in social psychology that analyse the consequences of a reduction of contact and conflict between different groups of society. These interdisciplinary debates and their usefulness for the analysis of the empirical data collected within this research are explored in the two following sections.

3.4 LINKING SOCIAL CONTACTS & CIVIC CONCERNS

"The organization of space both provides the basis for social relations, and offers a reflection of them."
(Tonkiss, 2005: 2)

The debate about the impact of social contact on civic concerns in sociology is linked to the wider discussion about the importance of public space for society. According to Siebel & Wehrheim (2003), the main importance of public space lies in its inherent nature of being accessible to diverse sections of society and thus, allowing for the experience of difference. This encounter with difference will always lead to a feeling of insecurity, which according to Siebel & Wehrheim (2003), is the reason why public space is productive. Therefore, they further argue that the attempt to make these public spaces, secured places, will make them less public and will diminish their capacity to function as places of integration, emancipation and learning. "In public space, the city dweller learns how to deal with difference in everyday life and with the forms of stylised behaviour prerequisite for civilised coexistence in urban spaces" (Siebel & Wehrheim, 2003: 12). They conclude that "the spatial separation of functions and social

groups is producing more and more homogeneous spaces in which the experience of difference is no longer an everyday one." They claim this could erode people's capacity "to deal calmly with alienness" (2003: 13).

Lofland (1995) similarly argues that a fear of crime empirically blends in with a fear of strangers and that this fear of strangers is an inherent part of public space. However, it is important to understand that, as Siebel & Wehrheim (2003) argue, this fear of crime transposes into a fear of strangers, if these strangers are culturally and socially alien to us.

Townshend (2006: 104) further claims that, as a consequence of fragmentation and privatisation of public spaces, the remaining urban public realm "increasingly embodies the undesirable, whether it be people or places, so that people may engage in what has been called 'bubbling', a deliberate and orchestrated management of risk spaces within the public realm." Additionally, he claims that as a consequence, insecurity, mistrust and avoidance of 'the other' are on the rise and people increasingly withdraw from public responsibility.

In order to understand how the privatisation of public space can be linked to people's feelings of public responsibility, their understanding of 'the other' and their civic concerns, the next section explores the literature from sociology and political theory concerning social interaction in public space and its consequences in more detail.

3.4.1 INFORMAL ENCOUNTER

Kohn (2004) argues that encounters in everyday life that take place in the public sphere are important, mainly for two reasons: first, because they can reach people who are not

necessarily interested in politics and secondly, because they take people by surprise and may disrupt daily routines and can thus be thought provoking. Compared to the information that is sought by people out of their own initiative and in controlled circumstances, i.e. on the Internet or in other forms of media, Kohn claims that unexpected exposure to strangers within public spaces has much more potential for being transformative.

Following this line of thought, this thesis argues that the lack of contact with strangers in their own neighbourhood can therefore have an impact on residents' civic concerns, since this type of social interaction is generally based on involuntary contact with people of different socio-economic levels. In Chapter Six, analysis of the empirical data shows how informal encounters have the potential to provoke people and impact upon their opinion of 'others'.

The significance of informal encounter has to be considered in the context of the debate about the relationship between public space and public sphere (Calhoun, 1992). While this is not the place to review the debate in its entirety, I want to clarify which position from that debate is followed in this thesis. Disagreeing with Habermas' theory of the public sphere, where public space represents the place within which rational debate can take place, I follow Kohn's (2004) position, which places importance on today's public sphere in allowing dissenting views to be expressed and therefore, in drawing the attention of citizens to the irrationalities which might be the consequences of their own behaviour and their way of life. Thus, in contrast to Habermas' belief in the production of universal truth through rational debate, she argues for a public sphere, which shows "that our truths are not universal" (Kohn, 2004: 59). Kohn further maintains that the wish to avoid conflict and exposure to differing views and strangers, which according to

her, arises from a discomfort with face-to-face politics, is enabled through the privatisation of public space. She argues that this is of great importance since provocative speech, especially from marginalised groups, cannot happen in any other place.

Additionally, it can be argued that by retreating into privatised spaces, it is possible to uphold a theoretical dedication to democratic ideals and free speech, while at the same time, avoiding conflict on a personal level. A concrete encounter with 'others' is regarded to be important, in order to consider these others' interests and perspectives. Interest in common goods and in public space itself can only result from public interaction, which allows for differences to be expressed and perceived (Bickford, 1996). Closed neighbourhoods, which by their very nature inhibit the possibilities for informal encounters, can be seen as a restraint on political activity and open dissent in public spaces.

It can be argued that the residential neighbourhood is not the only environment in which people can socially interact, and therefore, the lack of this kind of informal encounter within residents' own neighbourhoods can be considered to be negligible (Charmes, 2005). But as the findings of the empirical research in a suburb of Buenos Aires show, many of the interviewees living in gated neighbourhoods are housewives, who do not commute to work, do their shopping in shopping malls or via the internet and spend their weekends in private leisure clubs. This means that almost all their social interaction takes place in private or semi-private spaces where involuntary contact with strangers can be avoided. Additionally, children and teenagers living in closed neighbourhoods, who in the context of this case study all go to private schools, since they belong to the middle or upper-middle classes, spend their whole lives in private or

semi-private spaces and are not confronted with this kind of contact either. Therefore, it is believed that since, the only contact with strangers mentioned by residents of open neighbourhoods is found to be spontaneous and often involuntary within their own neighbourhood, the lack of this contact must be considered to be significant.

In the context of the debate about closed neighbourhoods and their consequences for society, Bickford (1996) similarly argues that whom we perceive as fellow citizens is influenced by whom we regularly see and interact with in our everyday life. The greatest danger of gated neighbourhoods, for her, is the process of adaptation to the walls, whereby they become unnoticed and where as a consequence, residents' images of their world only consist of those living within their neighbourhood and therefore, a sense of the real world becomes more difficult to obtain. In essence, it can be sustained that whom we regard as fellow citizens is influenced by the built environment in which we live and by whom we interact with.

Kohn (2004) argues that although most liberal societies can rely on general support for free speech among their citizens, there is at the same time, a wide spread unease with face-to face interaction between strangers. Therefore, this thesis argues that, even if informal encounter in public spaces cannot be equated with political discussion, the exposure to 'others' in itself has a political significance, since it provides opportunities for gaining information about 'others' and for learning to accept difference. It can also often lead to conflict and aggression. It can be argued that even if presenting a negative outcome of social interaction, this is still a more democratic result than avoidance and ignorance. Being confronted with strangers might promote opportunities to reconsider one's own world and values, with a chance to critically review the existing social structures and power relations within which we live.

As explained in Chapter Two when reviewing the debate on gated communities, it was found that there are no studies which, apart from analysing the impact of closed neighbourhoods on residents' social contacts, also look at the consequences of the possible differences on residents' opinions and civic concerns. Therefore, the next section reviews and discusses arguments from the field of social psychology which look at the impacts of contact and conflict on people's opinions and value formation, in order to further develop the conceptual framework which establishes links between the differences in social contact and differing civic concerns.

3.4.2 SOCIAL CONTACT WITHIN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Following discussion about the consequences of involuntary contact with strangers, it was shown above that contact and conflict play a vital role in the formation of civic concerns. In order to understand the significance of the impact of social contact on citizens' civic concerns, it is necessary to consider the debate regarding contact and conflict from the perspective of social psychology. Therefore, this section reviews arguments from this debate and show how face-to-face contact between members of different social groups is, under specific circumstances, related to a better understanding of 'the other'.

Within social psychology, it is claimed that the emergence of conflicts and fears as a consequence of informal encounter, can be explained by looking at the connections between spatiality and psyche. According to Wilton (1998: 174), informal encounter questions the established spatial order, which is otherwise taken for granted, and it also contests the *"integrity of individual or collective identities"*. As discussed before, spatial divisions can be considered to be the result of social difference, and likewise,

these spatial divisions reinforce these differences. Similar to the arguments in political theory stated above, Wilton maintains that the reason for this is the fact that spatial divisions make it easier for citizens to keep social boundaries alive, since perceived differences between groups are strengthened by such divisions. According to him, physical proximity questions the validity of social boundaries. Therefore, it is argued that urban form naturalises social relations and that spatial configurations consolidate social divisions, since these divisions appear to be irreversible once they materialise in the built environment. Conversely, social contact can also challenge existing boundaries.

In order to sustain these claims, this thesis explores research about intergroup relations. Brewer & Miller (1996), for example, maintain that individuals are more likely to have positive (prosocial) behaviour with members of ingroups than towards members of outgroups. Therefore, it can be claimed that the creation of a defined group, which happens as a result of closed neighbourhoods, might per se, lead to the deterioration of social relations with outsiders. Within social psychology, it has also been found that there is a tendency to overstate the degree of difference between two different groups following the creation of visible, determined groups. This tendency can be explained by the fact that people are inclined to consider things to be more similar to each other, if they belong to the same category and more different, if they belong to another. Regarding the impact of contact, or lack of contact, Brewer and Miller conclude that knowledge about others is gained through contact, and therefore, they argue that the lack of contact between members of different social groups nourishes suspicion towards these others. They claim antagonistic social groups generally try to keep social distance and evade social interaction with members of the other group. This avoidance of

intergroup social interaction promotes further resentment and evasion and thus, a cycle of perpetuating hostility and avoidance develops.

This cycle is the basis of Allport's so-called 'contact hypothesis' of intergroup relations. According to Pettigrew (1998), Allport argues that if ignorance and lack of knowledge foster suspicion and negative behaviour, face-to-face contact between members of different groups should reduce distrust by increasing knowledge and familiarity. In later empirical research, the following set of conditions has been established, which are seen to be essential for a positive outcome of social contact (Pettigrew, 1998). Social psychologists generally agree that, regarding the effects of social contact on intergroup attitudes, the nature and the quality of social interaction is more significant than the frequency of interaction. The environment in which this interaction occurs is also seen to be of importance. The greatest effect of social contact is one which takes place in a cooperative environment.

Summarising their findings, Brewer and Miller (1996) state that even if the extent to which social contact between groups has an effect on peoples' attitudes, depends on a combination of these factors, and it can be generalised that "cooperative contact does seem to be the key to improving intergroup relations and changing the social psychological processes that underlie prejudice and discrimination" (Brewer & Miller, 1996: 132). They also argue that if social contact with members of a different social group, which might be perceived as uncanny, takes place over a long period of time, this interaction might overcome the perception of them being the 'other'. This process will at first, according to Wilton (1998: 182), provoke fear and aggression, but subsequently will lead to a "reconceptualization of the abject/uncanny", since the perception of the other as uncanny can only persist in the context of distance.

With regards to democratic processes within urban space, this is of great significance, as it means informal encounter will, in the long term, disturb the established social structure. Wilton (1998) claims when the uncanny becomes familiar, it is able to confuse presupposed images of reality. This process of disturbance has to be understood as a spatial phenomenon since it occurs as a result of someone being 'out-of-place'. This being 'out-of-place', Wilton (1998: 183) argues, will challenge established socio-psychological structures and lead to a "more nuanced understanding of 'difference'".

In summary, it was established that, based on theoretical approaches from political theory, sociology and social psychology, a link between informal encounter in public space and understanding of 'the other' and thus, in the long run, people's civic concerns, does exist. The next section explores the possible theoretical links between political engagement and civic concerns.

3.5 LINKING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT & CIVIC CONCERNS

Analysing the impact of political conversation on political engagement, Rojas (2008) claims that political participation is an important factor for the achievement of consensual societies. He is mainly interested in establishing how common understanding within societies can be achieved, and therefore, discusses the extent to which political conversation matters for democratic political functioning. Through his analysis, he found that discussions among people, ranging from informal talk to deliberation, have a positive impact on civil society since it generates more engaged and informed citizens. Furthermore, he claims it allows for the establishment of consensus and peaceful conflict resolution within society.

In her review of sociological literature concerned with space and its impact on social relations, Tickamyer (2000) discusses how space is linked to power and inequalities even if, as she argues, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical research within sociology regarding this question. However, she found that "the relationship between spatial and other social factors is, in fact, dynamic, with space both constituting social relations and also constituted by them" (2000: 810). With space being continually constructed, changed and impacted by diverse social factors, she argues "spatial outcomes … reflect, reinforce, and recreate power structures and relations" (2009: 810). Taking these arguments into consideration, gated communities can be seen as reinforcing and reproducing existing inequalities within society. In order to gain a better understanding of the socio-political impact of gated communities, this section tries to establish a framework for analysing differences in residents' political engagement, their political interests, their resulting civic concerns, and their relationship with local government.

The main argument in Section 3.4 was that the enclosure of residential neighbourhoods, which leads to a lack of informal encounter, has an impact on residents' civic concerns. Section 3.5 looks at the consequences that the increasing privatisation of public space, which results from the enclosure of neighbourhoods, has on urban democratic processes.

3.5.1 DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WITHIN URBAN SPACE

Following insights regarding the impact of informal encounter gleaned from arguments in social psychology and political theory, this section now explores the impact of the lack of informal encounter on democratic processes, since informal encounter in public

space is seen to be part of a democratic process, even if it is only one among many. Other political processes, like voting or backroom discussions among political elites, might be more significant for policy-making, but the impact of informal encounter on citizens' perceptions should not be disregarded. As seen above, informal encounter and the successive internal processes which it provokes, have an impact on people's awareness of 'others' and influence their image of the World in which they live. It can thus be claimed that the resulting values and opinions will inform people's choices when it comes to elections and more generally, political decision making. But this is only one of the aspects of the impact of privatisation of public space on political processes.

Analysing the significance of public space for political processes, Siebel & Wehrheim (2003) argue that, despite the important role the Internet plays today in the organisation of political protest and in the mobilisation of social movements, protest itself continues to manifest in public streets and squares, and therefore, the political importance of public space cannot be ignored. In providing public space, cities offer spaces where democratic processes, which range from political action to leafleting, can take place. These spaces can be interpreted as "an informal spatial infrastructure for political action and association" (Tonkiss, 2005: 65).

As stated above, there is an ongoing discussion about the way in which public space and public sphere relate to each other. This thesis follows Tonkiss' (2005) proposition to differentiate between three ideal-types of public space that each represent a specific part of public life. First, the square, which represents collective belonging; secondly, the café, representing social exchange; and thirdly, the street, representing informal encounter.

Looking at democratic processes within urban space, in the context of this research, it is the third type, the street, which is affected by the privatisation of space in the context of closed neighbourhoods. Elsewhere however, it is argued that the street does not represent a true public space anymore, especially in the context of suburbia where, as some claim, it merely acts as a throughway for traffic (Charmes, 2005). In contrast, following Tonkiss' definition of public space, it is argued that it should be regarded as a place of communal use, and as a space that has to be shared as a matter of fact and should not be confused with the spaces of belonging or exchange. The street can, from this perspective, be conceived as a shared public space in which citizens are obliged to interact with each other, even if only to a minimal extent. In the street, citizens have no choice but to deal with others, who at least theoretically, have the same right to be there as themselves. From a similar perspective, Bickford (1996) claims the creation of gated neighbourhoods can therefore be interpreted as a threat to democratic processes.

It is in streets, on sidewalks, at bus stops, where social differences play no role since everybody has the same right to the street. Understood as a public space of informal encounters, the street is a space where social codes are played out and potential conflict is often expected. Questions of trust and suspicion arise, and knowledge about others can be gained. This exposure to strangers, as discussed above, might provoke fear or aggression, but it might at the same time, promote mutual concern and recognition. A prerequisite for the recognition of others is knowledge about these others, which shows the differences and simultaneously shows the similarities between groups. This kind of knowledge about strangers can primarily be gained through exposure to others within public space, because, as Kohn argues, "in private we choose our companions according

to our preferences and in public we learn to share the world with those who are different" (Kohn, 2004: 204).

Sociologists have often pointed to the links between psychological processes, forms of social interaction and the urban form people live in. According to Tonkiss (2005), citizens will see no necessity or desire to share public space with strangers, if these strangers do not concern them in the first place. Therefore, the value of public space per se, is lost if social contact diminishes. The gradual disappearance of public space can thus be interpreted as an indicator of the decline of public life and at the same time as a causal factor for its corrosion. Tonkiss further argues "where public spaces are rendered inaccessible or unaccommodating or expensive, or simply are killed off by privatization, this compounds the dwindling of a public sense that makes such developments expedient in the first place" (2005: 73). Therefore, public space has a role in promoting civic concerns, or as Bauman puts it: "it is the urban environment which must be 'civil', if its inhabitants are to learn the difficult skills of civility" (2000: 95).

Another aspect of democratic processes impacted by the reduction of social contact with strangers in the public realm is, according to Bickford (1996), the process of listening. She claims that, similar to the right to free speech, the right to be listened to is essential for mutual understanding and recognition. She also argues the fact that, what people potentially perceive changes their opinions, and leads to many not wanting to listen, since it is natural to be afraid of these changes. According to her, listening within the public sphere involves taking the risk of being convinced by the other. It is very important, though, to understand that listening on its own is in no way considered to solve conflicts between differing groups; it might merely clarify existing differences. Yet, according to Bickford (1996), once these differences are perceived, it is possible to

take informed action, whereas while differing opinions and conflicts are ignored, they cannot be solved.

In the context of listening, Kohn (2004) argues that although social problems will not be solved by listening, citizens' awareness in itself is relevant. If listening is reduced, this awareness will only be achieved through media reports and not through face-to-face contact with strangers on the street. The problem with information gained through newspaper reports or televised news is that it is mediated, whereas the information gained through personal exposure to strangers and to dissenting views is direct and does not carry hidden agendas or opinions.

Another outcome of face-to-face contact between strangers, which is relevant in the discussion of urban democratic processes, is sympathy. Kohn (2004) argues that apart from the understanding of others that we can gain through knowledge about them, it is because of sympathy that we are not indifferent to the opinions others have about ourselves. To phrase another way, people generally want to be accepted by others and assess their own behaviour according to the expected opinion and reaction of an imagined spectator. This process leads to an internalisation of social norms. Therefore, it can be claimed that the capacity for sympathy is necessary for political life, because it encourages citizens to try to understand others and at the same time, to take into account others' viewpoints about us.

After having established links between informal encounter within the public space and awareness of 'others' and thus people's value formation, public space has also been seen to function as a place where political protests are carried out, where people can learn to share with 'others', and where democratic processes such as listening and the

development of sympathy can take place. The following section looks at how privatisation of local governance impacts on residents' political interests and engagement.

3.5.2 INTEREST IN LOCAL POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Regarding the debate about the impacts of gated neighbourhoods, it is often argued that those living within the gates choose to provide themselves with all the facilities they want and need, and therefore, they have no interest in paying for public facilities for the whole municipality (e.g. Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Caldeira, 2000). Others claim that participation in local government and political engagement in general are both fostered by private forms of urban governance (e.g. Foldvary, 1994; Webster, 2001), since these allow for more involvement in decision making processes. Martinotti (1999) maintains that local government institutions generally rely on the assumption that residents are naturally interested in local decision-making and in issues concerning common welfare, but that this cannot be taken for granted in a time where many cities are experiencing increased privatisation, commercialisation and surveillance of the public realm and where an increasing part of the population chooses to live within gated communities, which are privately governed.

According to Kohn, the private provision of services within closed neighbourhoods allows residents to "opt out of their obligations to the broader community" (2004: 118), particularly in reference to recreational facilities. She thus claims that there is not much incentive for residents of these neighbourhoods to approve public spending on the provision of these services for open neighbourhoods, which are often poorer. On the other hand, private urban governance can be seen as part of a long tradition of self-government, especially in the United States. The writings of Jefferson and Tocqueville

are often cited to support the claim that private urban governance, apart from having a long tradition, facilitates local political participation and thus strengthens democracy. But as Kohn (2004) clarifies, Jefferson's vision for local government consisted of wards, which functioned as forums for direct citizen participation and not like most HOAs of gated communities, which are professionally managed associations. According to Kohn, Jefferson imagined these communities as outward looking and wanted them to select jurors, to vote, and to discuss national issues, rather than only being concerned with local issues. His ward system was meant to provide residents with more opportunities to take part in the public sphere and express their political opinions. Kohn argues that Jefferson's vision was thus to promote citizenship and not to protect private interests and property values. According to Kohn (2004), current residential community associations, on the other hand, are inward oriented and give priority to the interests of the neighbourhood compared to general political concerns. Tocqueville, in contrast, as Kohn claims, proposed to encourage free circulation and to support the freedom of expressing dissenting views, since for him, the greatest danger for freedom and democracy was people's renunciation from public concern.

In sum, it can be claimed that even if privately governed neighbourhoods promote greater identification with the neighbourhood, as is described in Chapter Seven, this occurs at the detriment of residents' identification with the whole municipality. As a consequence, the disposition of residents to back municipal policies and initiatives, which benefit the whole municipality, can be expected to be reduced. And as Kohn argues, "NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) was the spector of the 1980s, the 'only-in-my-backyard' attitude is also a threat" (Kohn, 2004: 157).

Regarding the increasing proliferation of private residential neighbourhoods, it is elsewhere argued that private urban government is more cost effective and allows for a free choice of residents and thus, should be accepted as the better form of urban government (Foldvary, 1994). But the argument here is that such a consumer based approach to local government encourages a vision of the City, where services, recreational facilities, security provision and schools are perceived as private privileges, rather than public goods.

One of the effects of privatisation, which takes place with the formation of closed neighbourhoods, is that problems are solved in a privately organised communal form, while within open neighbourhoods the municipality is responsible and can be held accountable by the residents. As a result, the necessity for residents to pressurise their municipal government diminishes with the increase of enclosed neighbourhoods. Therefore, residents of gated communities can be generally presumed not to have the same expectations from their local government, as residents of open neighbourhoods.

Private local administrations of gated communities typically make arrangements with municipal governments, obtaining certain rights or additional services and taking over other services or duties from local government. As a result, they function like permanent localised initiatives, whereas in open neighbourhoods, residents either represent themselves vis-à-vis their municipality or they have to organise local initiatives, which are generally oriented at the achievement of specific goals. As a result of private administrations taking over all questions concerning local governance, there is no incentive for gated community residents to engage in broader municipal concerns. This again, it can be argued, leads to an individualisation of problems and concerns.

However, Dahlgren (2009: 106) argues that even if civic cultures do not require homogeneous citizens, they need a minimal commitment to shared visions and democratic principles and this, according to him, "entails a capacity to see beyond the immediate interests of one's own group." And he further maintains that "support for democratic values cannot cease at the moment when an individual walks in from a public space to that of a specific community enclave" (2009: 111).

Also analysing residents' relationships with their government, Cotta (2007) found in his empirical research in Portugal that residents of gated communities showed much more trust in their private administrations, than in local government in regards to provision of goods and services. However, as will be described in Chapters Six and Seven, trust in state institutions is not only low among residents of closed neighbourhoods, but also among residents of open neighbourhoods of similar socio-economic level. This proves again that, when analysing residents of gated communities, a comparison with outsiders of similar socio-economic level is essential. The important factor about residents being satisfied with their private local administrations is that this leads to a more detached view on issues concerning local public government, since they are not directly concerned by these. It is the possibility of 'opting-out', which Kohn (2004) declares to be the greatest problem concerning the impact of gated communities on local political processes.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of developing a theoretical framework was to fill the gaps discovered in the literature review of the debate concerning gated communities that relate to answering the research questions of this study, and to build an analytical tool which guides the

analysis of the empirical data used in this research. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to establish theoretical links between the different aspects of the research questions.

The first of the links, which had not been previously explained in the debate about gated communities, was the impact of informal encounter on the civic concerns of residents of closed and open neighbourhoods. As explained in Section 3.4.1, it was found that, within parts of the debate about the impact of the privatisation of public space and its consequences, such a link is explained and its consequences are discussed. Additionally, this chapter explored, in Section 3.4.2, positions from Social Psychology which discuss the impacts of personal contact with strangers and the impacts on people's opinions and value formation.

Secondly, it was found that there was no analysis of impacts of gated communities on residents' political interests and engagement and on political processes viewed from the residents' perspective. Therefore, Section 3.5.1 looked at the privatisation of public space and its consequences for political processes discussed within Political Theory and Sociology. Here, it was argued that there was a relation between the two and that gated communities could be seen to have an impact on some urban political processes. Lastly, it was then found, in section 3.5.2, that a link between private local government and residents' political opinions could be established through the exploration of discussions from Political Theory that investigate the consequences of privatisation of services and local governance.

The conceptual framework described in this chapter has been used as a guide for data analysis, serving as a starting point to establish themes and possible links between the

different topics, which have been explored in the interviews. In Chapter Four, which describes the research methods used in this study, the data analysis process is described in greater detail. However, it is important to mention that the conceptual framework is not only used in order to guide data analysis, but vice versa, initial findings of the data analysis also informed the development of the conceptual framework, which served to explain further findings. This process resulted in the establishment of general conclusions that answer the main research question.

FOUR

RESEARCH FOCUS & METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

By conceptualising gated communities as one of the most radical forms of spatial segregation, as explained in the introductory chapter, this research focuses on the social and political impacts of enclosed neighbourhoods on urban citizenship. More specifically, the aim was to analyse the linkages between this specific urban form of residence and residents' civic concerns by comparing their personal social relations, their interests and engagement in local politics, their relationships with local government, and their values given to the public realm, collective goods and other issues of common interest. Upon review of the literature on gated communities in Chapter Two, it was found that, regarding the social and political consequences of the spread of gated private neighbourhoods, some gaps have been identified within the academic debate, which this study aims at filling.

As illustrated more profoundly within Chapter Two, most of the literature from the debate on gated communities, with respect to social relations, has so far focused on the perspective of gated community residents without comparing these to the opinions, attitudes and feelings of residents living in open neighbourhoods. Among others, Lemanski (2005), Roitman (2008) and Cáceres & Sabatini (2004) deliver some insight when comparing residents from within gated communities with their surrounding neighbours. However, there were no studies found which compare residents of open public neighbourhoods of comparable socio-economic level, and consequently at times, it remains unclear if differences found in residents' accounts relate in fact to the urban form people live in or rather to the social class they belong to.

In this study, residents of high income closed neighbourhoods (HiCNs) are compared to neighbouring residents of diverse socio-economic backgrounds living in open public neighbourhoods, with the aim of providing a comparison of closed and open neighbourhoods (which is currently lacking) in order to establish if findings are still valid. As explained in Chapter One, the hypothesis that will be tested within this study is that residents of HiCNs have fewer needs and less reason to be concerned with urban issues regarding civic life in the municipality as a whole than their counterparts. Furthermore, it was presumed at the start of the research process that HiCN residents' concerns would be increasingly about the – mostly private – city which they use, and that the less they were sharing the public realm with others and the more they were using private spaces for their social interactions, the less they would engage in debates about collective interests and they would also be less willing to engage in issues concerning the whole community.

In the next section, the methodology employed to undertake this research is introduced. The methodology is explained as a consequence of the above outlined focus of this study and of the conceptual framework, described in Chapter Three. The third section describes the data collection methods, this includes the research instruments which were employed; the case selection criteria; the choice of the research population, the description of how access to the population was gained; and finally, a description of the interview schedule used. Section Four outlines the approach that was used for the analysis of the empirical data. Section Five then debates questions of validity of this study, followed by Section Six which comments on some ethical considerations. The final section of this chapter considers the limitations of this study which are due to the methodology employed.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As described in Chapter One, this study aims at achieving a better understanding of the social and political consequences of the increasing trend of closed neighbourhoods within the specific context of suburban Buenos Aires. It was found that in focusing on the specific case of closed and open neighbourhoods in suburban Buenos Aires, a qualitative research design would be the most appropriate approach, as it is considered to be oriented towards investigating concrete cases within their local context at a specific time in history and based on people's own accounts and behaviour (Flick, 2002). However, a case study approach also has its weaknesses and limitations; these are described in Section 4.7, in relation to this research project.

Following Robson who suggests that using a qualitative, or in his words flexible, approach, "the research process is viewed as generating working hypotheses rather than immutable empirical facts" (2002: 25). Furthermore, I believed it to be important to adopt a qualitative approach, since this research aims at approximating and understanding the social and political impacts of closed neighbourhoods, rather than a testable answer to a hypothesis.

In order to recall the research questions, which were presented in Chapter One, they are repeated here, as they have guided the research process and therefore, also determine the research approach presented in this chapter.

Main research question:

How, and to what extent, do social and political values and engagement and civic concerns differ within and between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods of differing income levels?

Sub-questions:

1. Do social contacts differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, and do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?

- *With whom do residents of different socio-economic groups have personal contacts and to what extent, do residents of closed neighbourhoods differ for that matter from residents of open neighbourhoods?*
- *What type of public events - religious, cultural, social, educational, and political - do residents participate in, and are there differences according to the type of neighbourhood they live in?*
- *What are the values given to issues of common interests, public collective spaces, public transport and other collective goods and what roles do they play in people's lives?*
- *To what extent are residents socially engaged, and what are their opinions about other socio-economic groups within the municipality?*

2. How, and to what extent, do residents' relationships with local government and their political engagement differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, and do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?

- *To what extent do residents have knowledge about and contact with local government, and are there differences according to the type of neighbourhood they live in?*
- *What are residents' opinions about their local government, and are they satisfied with the services it provides?*
- *What are residents' opinions about the role of local government, local politics and public versus private provisions of services?*

- *To what extent are residents interested in local politics, and do they participate in it?*
- *To what extent do people have trust in local politics and politicians?*
- *What do residents consider to be important problems within their neighbourhood?*
- *What do residents consider to be municipal responsibilities and priorities?*

In order to answer these research questions, this thesis explores residents' own accounts of their social relations, their relationship with local government and local politics and the meaning they attach to these relationships. As a result, the research design most suited was considered to be a qualitative one. Given that qualitative research provides thickly descriptive reports of individuals' habits and behaviour, as well as their motivations, perceptions and meanings given to things, it was considered to be the appropriate method to provide the information needed to answer the research questions of this study. Qualitative research is seen to be suitable for studies focusing on the understanding of phenomena, which explore their qualities, processes and meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), and as Flick (2002: 2) points out, "qualitative research is of specific relevance to the study of social relations, owing to the fact of the pluralization of life worlds."

A qualitative approach is also considered to be essential for the investigation of values given to things and opinions about issues, which within this study can be seen in Chapters Six and Seven. A qualitative research methodology is also believed to be the only means to allow for new issues arising during the research process, and as will be seen in empirical Chapters Six and Seven, this proved to be essential with regards to topics that emerged which were not originally included in the interview topic guide.

These topics, arising in interviews with one group, but not with other groups, led to some of the major insights of this study.

As pointed out in the literature review in Chapter Two, it was established that there was a lack of empirical evidence within the discussion about the social and political impacts of closed neighbourhoods, and part of the debate was found to be based on ideological assumptions. This was the foremost case in regards to the lack of evidence comparing residents of closed and open neighbourhoods. This is why this thesis maintains it is essential to gain further in-depth knowledge about these differences or commonalities, especially regarding residents of similar socio-economic levels. This research therefore aims at obtaining this empirical evidence through the adoption of a case study approach, which compares residents' own accounts of their behaviour, their opinions, their interests and concerns relating to the topics of the research questions.

A case study has been defined as "…an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context" (Yin, 1994:13). In Robson's (2002: 178) definition, a "case study is a strategy for doing research which involves empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence." Therefore, the use of a case study approach allows a development of detailed knowledge about a contemporary phenomenon like the social and political impacts of private closed neighbourhoods. Since this study explores the impact of the phenomenon of closed neighbourhoods in the specific context of suburban Buenos Aires, a case study approach was considered to be the most appropriate research methodology, accepting the limitations inherent to a qualitative case study approach as described in Section 4.7. But before discussing the limitations of

this study, Section 4.3 will outline the data collection methods used pursuant to employing a qualitative case study methodology.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process took place in two phases. Having adopted a qualitative research methodology, the fieldwork process was started before finalising most of the specificities concerning data collection. The first phase of the fieldwork was planned as a pilot study in order to determine the case study location, to discuss the project with local academics and to conduct initial interviews with the aim of reviewing the research questions and establishing the final topic guide.

The choice of the actual case was made during the pilot study, which was carried out before the main fieldwork started[16]. As Robson (2002) suggests, "the details of the design typically 'emerge' during data collection and analysis", and this was very much the case in my research. Not only was the case study location decided during the first phase of my fieldwork, but also the research questions were modified through the findings of the initial interviews, conducted with a provisional topic guide[17], with the final topic[18] guide being established after this first round as well. Drawing on the knowledge of local academics[19] working on the topic of social segregation and gated communities in Buenos Aires, San Isidro emerged as the most adequate municipality for data collection. Chapter Five will describe Buenos Aires and the suburban municipality of San Isidro in more detail, however, the choice of the municipality of San Isidro as the location for the case study is explained in Section 4.3.1 which follows.

[16] See timeframe in Appendix 1 page 347
[17] See initial topic guide in Appendix 3 page 350
[18] See final topic guide in Appendix 4 page 354
[19] Cecilia Arizaga, Monica Lacarieu, Carla del Cueto

After the interview analysis of the first fieldwork phase, (in)security and lack of trust in politics and government were identified as major concerns for all residents independent of the type of neighbourhood they inhabited. But more significantly for the focus of this research, it was found that there were differences in residents' relationships with their local government, according to the type of neighbourhood they lived in. As a consequence, the main research question, which before the start of the fieldwork was:

> *"What is the impact of the phenomenon of gated communities on urban citizenship (social interaction and civic concerns)?"*

was changed to:

> *"To what extent do residents of closed neighbourhoods show signs of disengagement with local politics and do they have different political and social values, interests and civic concerns compared to residents of non-gated neighbourhoods?"*

Therefore, the relationship of the residents with their municipality and their views on local politics became a central issue of the investigation. As a result, it was important to take into account that a specific municipality might have particularly good or bad relations with gated communities or the marginalised settlements, which again might influence residents' relationships with their local government. Thus, it was decided to include data on these two types of neighbourhoods from a second municipality.

With the revised topic guide, and taking into account the findings of the first fieldwork phase, I returned to Buenos Aires to undertake the main phase of data collection. After this second fieldwork phase and after a preliminary analysis of the complete set of empirical data, it was found that the conceptual framework, which had been developed

before embarking on the fieldwork, did not suffice as a theoretical framework to explain the established findings. The conceptual framework developed within the first year of my PhD studies and reviewed after the first fieldwork phase, was based on a debate about the different concepts of the public realm.

The argument was that exploring the use of the public realm and of private security measures in the everyday life of residents of closed neighbourhoods, compared with residents of open neighbourhoods and with residents of diverse socio-economic groups, would show the differences according to the varying degrees of privatisation and enclosure of the neighbourhoods and the motivations behind this use. By also analysing the concerns of residents, their claims towards local government, the value they gave to different public realms, their fears within the public realm and their reliance on private security provision, a link should be established between the retreat into privatised public spaces and the values given to democratic processes and urban citizenship.

Since the focus of the research had changed and the relationship of residents with their local government, and their political engagement and their civic concerns had become the central interest of the research, it was found that the thesis needed concepts used in sociology, political theory and social psychology to explain the empirical findings. As explained in Chapter Three, in borrowing concepts from political theory and social psychology, it can be argued that a recognition and understanding of 'the other' often develops through conflict and is essential for a democratic society. Thus, it can be claimed that the retreat into private urban spaces allows people to avoid political provocation and from a political perspective, the seclusion of privileged classes impedes the recognition of injustice because the reality of deprivation is kept outside.

Following from its empirical findings, a conceptual framework was then developed to understand the consequences that the spread of closed neighbourhoods might have on the internal dialogue and value formation of its residents and as a consequence, on the urban society at large. Again, this shows how a qualitative research approach allowed for changes to take place and thus, for the empirical data to influence the theoretical framework and vice versa. As a consequence, the research questions had to be reviewed again, and they were then established as those presented in the beginning of this chapter.

Describing the data collection process in more detail, the following sections explain firstly, the case selection regarding the process and the criteria used for the selection; secondly, the choice of the research instruments, which were used for data collection, are presented. Section 4.3.3 describes how the research population was defined, what the constraints in this process were and how access to the research population was achieved. Lastly, before describing the approach used for data analysis in Section 4.4, details are given about the interview topics, which guided the interviews in Section 4.3.4.

4.3.1 CASE SELECTION

Looking at the main research question guiding this study, it was determined that data collection had to be carried out in different types of neighbourhoods, since the question asks: *"How, and to what extent, do social and political values and engagement and civic concerns differ within and between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods of differing income levels?* It was considered important that these diverse neighbourhoods were located all within the same municipality, otherwise other factors,

which could influence residents' relationships and satisfaction with their local government, could not be excluded.

Therefore, the idea was to compare residents of closed neighbourhoods with residents living in neighbourhoods, which were neither gated nor closed in any way and among these open neighbourhoods, there had to be diverse socio-economic levels. Since in Buenos Aires all closed neighbourhoods are generally of a rather high income level, to control for differences (which could be due to residents' different socio-economic levels), the residents of closed neighbourhoods (HiCNs) had to be compared with residents of high income open neighbourhoods (HiONs), middle income open neighbourhoods (MiONs) and low income open neighbourhoods (LiONs). Therefore, the main criterion, for the selection of the case study municipality, was that it had to include all four neighbourhood types. As described in more detail in Chapter Five, which introduces the urban context of this research, the areas of Buenos Aires where most HiCNs are located and where most of the larger gated communities are emerging, are in municipalities where the majority of open neighbourhoods are LiONs, where there are some MiONs, but rare to find HiONs.

During the case selection process in the first fieldwork period, I concentrated on the few suburban municipalities where there were some HiCNs but also HiONs. My initial preference for the municipality of San Isidro was confirmed by all local academics working in the field of gated communities as being the most adept municipality for the investigation of my research question. The municipality of San Isidro was thus chosen as the main case study, since it includes all of the four different types of neighbourhoods which are adjacent to each other: HiCNs, HiONs, MiONs and LiONs.

In order to analyse the relationship of the residents with their local government, it was important to take into account that a specific municipality might have particularly good or bad relations with the residents and/or the administration of closed neighbourhoods. Therefore, as explained above, data from residents of HiCNs of a second municipality had to be included. According to the interviews conducted in the first phase of the fieldwork within the municipality of San Isidro, the municipality and the administration of the HiCNs had a good relationship and there were no existing political conflicts, whereas there were some ongoing conflicts with the neighbourhood representatives of the LiONs.

The second municipality, which was then selected as a comparative case, was the municipality of Malvinas Argentinas, a municipality, which like San Isidro, lies within the northern zone of Greater Buenos Aires, at a similar distance to the centre of the city. This municipality also contains some HiONs, even if not to the same extent as San Isidro. Regarding the relationship of the municipal government with the administrations of the HiCNs, there has been a history of conflict regarding road closure with at least one of the HiCNs, whereas the relationship with the LiONs appeared to be relatively good. As stated before, I chose to interview residents of HiCNs within this second municipality in order to control for specificities relating to the political relationship of these types of neighbourhoods with the respective municipality. After the first three interviews within the municipality of Malvinas Argentinas, I did not, however, continue to collect additional data, since there were no significant differences found in the relationships of the residents with the municipality or in any other relevant field of the investigation.

4.3.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

As mentioned above, the reasons for employing a qualitative research strategy were manifold and included the fact that this research was looking for residents' own accounts of their routine, opinions, interests and concerns. As a consequence, the main technique employed for data collection in this study consisted of interviews with residents of different neighbourhoods. This data was supported by socio-economic background information, field observation and informal interviews with academics and local experts.

Regarding the main data collection technique, i.e. the interviews with residents, semi-structured interviews were considered as being most suited, due to their openness and flexibility, and allows the researcher to combine theory-driven, hypothesis-directed questions, based on the researcher's theoretical presuppositions with the possibility to follow up respondent's answers in more detail where particular topics arise. This allowed me to investigate the respondent's behaviour and habits, and at the same time, to explore the meanings given to issues arising within the interview.

8 interviews were conducted in the first phase and 35 interviews in the second phase of the fieldwork[20]. These interviews generally took place in the houses of the interviewees, except for the interviews with the residents of LiONs, where the interviews were either arranged through a local NGO and took place in their office, which was located within the LiON or when they were organised by a local leader of a housing cooperative, where they took place in the office of the cooperative's administration. Most of the interviews were with one person, except for, where couples were interviewed together. All interviews were tape recorded after a brief introduction as to the purpose of the

[20] A detailed list of interviews can be found in the Appendix 2 page 349

research and a request for consent to record the interview was granted. All interviews were then transcribed by a native speaker in the original language (Spanish). Interviews were only translated where extracts are cited in Chapters Six and Seven, while the interview analysis was carried out by keeping the original language.

At the beginning of the first fieldwork phase, a topic guide was developed for the interviews with the residents, which was structured around the theoretical framework. This topic guide was based on the following themes: location of residence (description and perceptions of their own neighbourhood and adjacent neighbourhoods); residents' social relations; questions on residents' mobility; their leisure time; their daily routine; use and opinions about public space; questions about security; residents' participation in public events; residents' political and social engagement; and lastly, questions about common interests and problems[21].

Following the analysis of the interviews conducted during the first fieldwork phase and their initial findings, changes concerning the research focus were made as explained above. Due to these changes, the topic guide also had to be revised, and the following themes were included: local politics; trust in local government and politicians; relationships with local government; and knowledge about local initiatives and policies. This revised topic guide[22] was then used for all the interviews with residents in the second fieldwork phase.

[21] See first topic guide in the Appendix 3 page 350
[22] For more detail the revised version of the topic guide has been attached in the Appendix 4 page 354

In addition to the interviews with residents, I undertook one semi-structured interview[23] with a planning officer of the municipality of San Isidro. Socio-economic background information was gathered, using statistical data from the national institute of statistics[24] and from the municipality of San Isidro. This data was used to form the criteria for the case selection and to locate the interviewee population within the broader socio-economic context.

Furthermore, I undertook observations in the public spaces used by the respondents of all groups and documented some of these via photography and short movies. "The theoretical background here is the analysis of the production of social reality from an external perspective" (Flick, 2002: 138). This allowed descriptions of reality segments to be constructed, which added to the understanding of the use of public space. These documentations and observations of spaces were not analysed systematically, but rather used as information which served to further understand residents' accounts of these places. They mainly served for my own understanding of the context of this study.

In the beginning of this research project, I also thought about choosing a few interviewees and asking them to allow me to accompany them for a day in order to get an insight into their daily routine. Even though I do believe that this would have offered a rewarding technique to complement the information given by the interviewees about their daily routines, this was not carried out for two main reasons. First, once I had started the interview process, I felt that it would be too intrusive to ask the interviewees to let me spend a whole day observing their lives, since it already seemed to be quite an effort for them to spend about 45-60 minutes talking to me, who for them was a

[23] The topic guide for interview with local expert is attached in the Appendix 5 page 359
[24] INDEC

stranger. Secondly, the accounts of interviewees' social interaction patterns and their daily routines did not seem to hide any information and would have been revealing on a similar level, if I were to accompany them for one day.

In hindsight, I would have liked to use mental maps as a complementary technique, since these could have provided me with interesting insights into interviewees' perceptions of their own neighbourhood and the city as a whole. However, I only realised their potential through the presentation of Avila & Guenet's research[25] in 2011 when my data collection process had already long been completed.

4.3.3 DEFINING THE RESEACH POPULATION

Since this study is aimed at exploring differences in patterns of social interaction, the social and political engagements and civic concerns of residents of HiCNs, compared with residents of open neighbourhoods in order to specifically analyse the impacts of the phenomenon of living within gated private neighbourhoods, the idea was to choose HiCNs that are surrounded by neighbourhoods of diverse socio-economic profiles.

This signifies that not only the case per se, but also the research population, was selected according to specific criteria. It is generally agreed that qualitative research does not intend to be broadly representative and the findings cannot necessarily be generalised to other contexts of study. Therefore, the criteria to select the population can be purposive or theoretical (Silverman, 2005) and the theoretical purpose here is, as described above, that in order to explore the research questions, the research population had to be living in one municipality, but within four different types of neighbourhoods.

[25] Avila, G. & Guenet, M. (2011) Gated Communities and New Perceptions of The City and "The Other" in Reinterpretation/Transformation of Territorial Boundaries, 6th International Conference of the Research Network 'Private Urban Governance & Gated Communities' Istanbul, Sept 8-11 2011

Regarding the possibility of generalising the findings, such theoretical sampling allows a theory to be built, which can then be applied in other cases and contexts.

Thus, in this study, the research population includes residents of HiCNs, residents of open neighbourhoods of a comparable socio-economic background and residents of open neighbourhoods of different socio-economic levels, all living within the same suburban municipality. The reason for choosing the comparative residents according to their socio-economic background is based on the theoretical presupposition that the residents of HiCNs generally belong to one homogeneous socio-economic group and that if they are compared with residents of open neighbourhoods without taking into account their socio-economic level, differences found in their social interactions, socio-political engagement and civic concerns could be due to class differences, as well as to their different forms of residence. Therefore, choosing the residents according to the socio-economic levels allows for a controlling of the impact of class differences. The next section illustrates how and why the selection of the interviewees within each of the four different neighbourhood types was carried out.

4.3.4 GAINING ACCESS

As mentioned above, case selection took place during the pilot study, which was completed in order to test the research design, to start the process of gaining access to the research population and to fine-tune data collection instruments. Prior to the pilot study, contacts had already been established with academics working on similar areas of research in Buenos Aires and some socio-economic data of possible sites was gathered. In the investigation of gated communities, it is always necessary to establish some form of initial contact, since access is very restricted due to the enclosure of these neighbourhoods. Thus, case selection also depended on the possibility of access.

Therefore, one criterion for the selection was personal contacts with residents of HiCNs through acquaintances and contacts with academics, who had conducted studies concerning HiCNs in the past.

With regards to the access to the research population living in open neighbourhoods, initial contacts were also established during the pilot study period. These were established by contacting local NGOs and, as in the case of the HiCNs, through contacts of acquaintances and academics.

After these initial contacts, a snowballing technique was employed in order to obtain further contacts for subsequent interviews, with the exception of some of the contacts within LiONs, which were obtained through contacts with a local NGO. The contacts established through snowballing were sometimes within residents' own neighbourhood, but sometimes also within other types of neighbourhoods and thus a network of contacts[26] was constructed, which allowed access to be gained to all four neighbourhood types needed in order to investigate the research questions. This process resulted as the only possibility to gain access to the residents of HiCNs, since random sampling would not have been possible, due to difficulties regarding physical access to residents' houses. However, it was found that the snowballing technique led to the formation of a rather homogeneous research population with regards to age and gender. This point will be further addressed in section 4.7, which looks at the limitations of this study, but first, the following section 4.4 explains the approach that was employed for the data analysis.

[26] A diagram of contact lines is attached in Appendix 6 page 362

4.4 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS

The theoretical framework, as described in Chapter Three, was used as a guide for the data analysis and served as a starting point to establish themes and possible links between the different factors explored in the interviews. At the beginning of the interview analysis, I worked inductively. That is to say that, I first identified recurring issues and started categorising answers into groups of similar accounts and then searched for differing as well as confirming accounts. I thus developed matrixes[27] for each topic, sorting interviewees on the one hand into groups according to the type of neighbourhood they lived in and on the other hand, into the type of answer or account of their behaviour, opinion or attitude towards a certain issue. This allowed me to identify links between the types of neighbourhood and certain types of answers or accounts and also to recognise where no such linkage could be established, and other factors such as class were more relevant. Thus, the empirical data led to a further advancement of the theories used for the development of the conceptual framework.

After the first fieldwork phase, the interview analysis was only employed in order to refine the research questions and to revise the topic guide where deemed necessary. This initial analysis allowed the identification of topics that came up unexpectedly during the interviews. I thus started with some presuppositions, which directed the research process and led to specific research questions and the development of a conceptual framework, but as Silverman (2005: 99) argues, in qualitative research "hypotheses are produced (or induced) during the early stages of research." The findings and hypotheses that arose from the analysis of the first interviews, thus informed the development of the final research focus.

[27] See appendix 7 page 363

After the second and main fieldwork phase, the data analysis of all the interviews was conducted in more detail and the hypotheses were tested. This process was an open process, where new findings were used to further develop the theoretical framework, which again served to test the findings. This process resulted in the establishment of general conclusions that answer the main research questions.

The empirical data, which consists of residents' accounts of their own behaviour and opinions, is treated by what Silverman terms '*cultural stories'* (2005: 156). Contrary to using a realist approach, where accounts are treated as facts that describe an external reality, a *narrative analysis* (Silverman, 2005: 157) is employed where the rhetorical force behind the accounts of interviewees is also examined. This signifies that the frame of explanation behind an interviewees' account of their own opinion or behaviour is also considered, and thus, these accounts form *cultural stories* which are interpreted in context by taking into account interviewees' socio-cultural backgrounds.

This was considered very important, since the study aims at identifying impacts and consequences of the private and enclosed nature of neighbourhoods that do not relate to residents' class and social categories. Therefore, being aware of socio-cultural factors and taking these into consideration during the data analysis, was vital for the exploration of this research interest.

4.5 VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH

As mentioned above, this study, applying a qualitative approach, does not claim to produce findings that can be generalised and transplanted into other contexts. Therefore, its validity must be defined according to other criteria. Such criteria can generally be:

the logic of the research design and data collection; the quality of the data recording and documentation; and the logic of data interpretation. This chapter explains these processes and describes how there has been a general logic running through the research process.

During the course of my studies, I have regularly reported the results of the various stages of the research in order to keep track of the changes which took place. This has allowed me to remain aware of the flexible nature of my own research and as described above, this also led to a continuous review of the research question and the conceptual framework.

Additionally I received reassurance of the validity of my research and gained feedback through presenting the arguments and findings of my study to fellow academics at various points during the research process. I was very fortunate to find an international research network concerned with private urban governance and gated communities[28] during the first year of my studies. Membership of this network provided me a great opportunity to discuss my work with fellow researchers and the chance to get insight into the most recent research within my field of study.

This insight into current research and the discussions within the network were the main incentive for my decision to focus on a comparative study which takes into account, not only residents of gated communities, but also residents of open neighbourhoods, since at a very early stage in the research, I became aware that there was a gap within the existing literature. This focus of my research received very positive feedback after the

[28] International Research Network: "Private Urban Governance & Gated Communities" http://www.gated-communities.de

first presentation of my research to the above mentioned research network at an international conference in South Africa[29]. I also tested my theoretical framework within this research network with a second presentation at a subsequent conference in Paris[30], and I presented my major findings and chaired a panel at the next conference in Santiago de Chile[31]. Finally, I had the opportunity, together with Sonia Roitman, to organise and chair two panels in the last conference of this research network in Istanbul[32] and to present my findings about HiCNs residents' everyday practices, their relationship with the City and their perceptions of 'others'. All of these presentations and the subsequent discussions within this network of fellow researchers allowed me to verify how my research contributed to the international debate.

As Robson (2002: 38-39) argues, in being a realist, one can be content if, at the end of the research process, one produces "one or more postulated mechanisms which are capable of explaining the phenomena; that, from the research, you have good reason to believe in their existence; and that you can specify the contexts in which these mechanisms operate." Regarding this expectation, I believe my objectives have been fulfilled, despite some limitations, as I will explain in section 4.7, which I was not able to overcome.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The original names of all interviewees in this thesis have been withheld. The decision to use pseudonyms was made at the beginning of the study in order to protect

[29] Territory, control and enclosure: the ecology of urban fragmentation, Feb 28th – March 3rd 2005, CSIR, Pretoria, South Africa
[30] Private Urban Governance : Production of urban spaces, Interactions of public and private actors, Sustainability of cities, June 5th – 8th 2007, Université Paris 1 Pantheon - Sorbonne, Paris, France
[31] Redefinition of Public Space within the Privatization of Cities, March 30th - April 2nd 2009, University of Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile
[32] *Re-Interpretation / Transformation of Territorial Boundaries,* Sep. 8th -11th 2011, ITU, Istanbul, Turkey

interviewees' confidentiality, and in the beginning of each interview, I explained to my interviewees that this was going to be the case. Furthermore, I guaranteed that their addresses and contact details would not be disclosed in order to protect their confidentiality. This was explained before asking for permission to tape record the interview, and I explained that I would only use the recorded interviews as an aide-memoir to help remember the details of our conversation and serve to compare the accounts of interviewees with each other, but that the taped interviews would not be published.

In order to establish a relationship with my interviewees, I always introduced myself in the beginning of the interviews by handing the interviewees a business card and giving them some details about my personal and professional background. In addition, I explained what the research topic was and what my specific interests were. After the first round of interviews in the initial fieldwork phase, I noticed that it was important to revise this introduction of the interest in the research since interviewees tended not to mention issues, which did not relate to their own neighbourhood. Thus, the topic had to be introduced with less focus on the neighbourhood otherwise people did not talk about issues they considered to have nothing to do with my research interest. I therefore, changed the introduction of my research interest from:

> *"The research I am doing is in the field of urban sociology, and I am specifically looking at the links between forms of residence and social relations, civic concerns and value formation"*

to an introduction which emphasised the interests of the study which did not relate to neighbourhood issues:

> *"My PhD studies are in the field of urban sociology and this study is focusing on the analysis of the links between the urban form of residential*

neighbourhoods and the relationships of residents with their municipality, residents' political and social interests and values and their civic concerns."

However, within the introduction of myself and the research interest and throughout the interview itself, I tried to keep a balance between giving enough information to establish a relationship of trust, while at the same time, not contaminating the interviewee with my own opinions which could then influence what the interviewee might consider to be the 'right' answer. I am aware that this cannot always be avoided, but within the interview analysis, I tried to take this possibility into account and aimed at detecting where respondents tried to be politically correct or where I somehow influenced their accounts of their opinions and behaviour by what they thought to be my values.

Regarding my own position as a researcher and the perception interviewees could have of this, I realised that while being a foreigner might have some inconveniences with respect to a reduced understanding of cultural factors, it proved to be an advantage in this case. Often, interviewees seemed to view me as a neutral outsider to whom they could explain their situation. They did not expect me to have an opinion about local political and social issues. I also noticed that interviewees often explained opinions, especially political ones, with reference to the broader Argentinean context since they were not sure to what extent I had any knowledge of this. However, I want to point out other factors, which I consider limitations of this study, in the following section.

4.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

To begin, it is important to clarify that I am aware of the limitations a case study has itself, especially regarding the possibility of generalising findings of the research. Drawing on Stake's (2000) definition of the *instrumental case study* in which according to Silverman (2005) "a case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to revise a generalization", I argue that, within this research, the focus of the study is not on the case per se, but on the theoretical conceptualisation of the impacts of certain urban forms and thus, the question of generalisability does not arise in the sense that, the case study findings should be valid within other settings, but that the linkages between the different factors analysed would also be found in other settings. Therefore, I maintain that this is not a case study where the particularity of the case was the significant factor, and since I constructed my case through purposive sampling, the findings can provide transferable results.

Nonetheless, it has to be pointed out that a significant limitation, in regards to these findings, has been that the research population has been rather homogeneous, and it cannot be excluded that results would have differed, if interviewees had been more diverse regarding their age and gender. However, this would have been very difficult to achieve, due to the sampling method employed. As explained above, I mainly used the snowballing technique as a method to gain access to residents within all of the neighbourhoods, apart from the deprived neighbourhood. Therefore, the contact with new interviewees depended on the social contacts of the previous interviewees, and since most of my first interviewees were women between thirty and fifty years old, this remained the largest part of my interview population. Additionally, these groups were more inclined to agree to be interviewed, since they were often not in full-time employment and consequently, had more time. The homogeneity of my research

population was strongest among the residents of high-income neighbourhoods, both closed and open. However, in the very few interviews which I conducted with men of these two categories, I did not find any significant differences, but it remains unclear if other topics, for example, would have become more dominant or some issues would have been less dominant, if the research population would have been more mixed.

A second limitation to this study is that I relied almost exclusively on one data collection technique. Although I undertook field observation, and I collected some statistical background information about the population of my case study municipality, I did not properly achieve a triangulation of the collected data. This lack of triangulation was due to time constraints and difficulties in accessing further data, and I think interesting additional information would have resulted from further data obtained through focus groups, with children for example, and interviews with administrators and municipal employees. Moreover, I believe that participant observation could have provided supplementary valuable information about the issues studied within this research. However, I trust that the conclusions of the major findings would not have been altered through such data but rather confirmed, and I would therefore have had to endeavour to undertake further fieldwork, if the time and practical constraints would not have impeded this.

Regarding the main data collection technique, there is a second limitation, which is related to the technique itself. Given that the information about residents' social contacts, their social and political engagement and their civic concerns is based on self-reports, no objective measure has been made. Therefore, the empirical data is not an objective measure of these factors that can be quantified. However, since the research focus is on the linkages between these factors and more specifically, on the differences

between linkages within one group compared to the other, this lack of objective measurement is not believed to play a significant role.

These are the main limitations of this study, as far as I am aware. Now, before exploring the analysis of the empirical data collected for this research and prior to looking at the resulting findings, Chapter Five describes the urban context of the study.

FIVE

BUENOS AIRES, SAN ISIDRO & THE CASE STUDY NEIGHBOURHOODS

5.1 INTRODUCTION & SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

As explained in the previous chapter, I believe that the findings of a qualitative case study cannot be generalised without taking into account, the specific context within which the research has been carried out. Analysing possible links between the urban form of residence and residents' social relations, their social and political engagement and their civic concerns, it is therefore, important to consider the specific urban context of the case study and the political and social background where the research took place. Taking the context into account and describing the specificities of the local circumstances allows the interpretation of findings and as a result, conclusions can be drawn. As a consequence, this sheds light on the issues analysed, independent of the particularities of the case study. When looking at social relations, social and political engagement and civic concerns of residents within the suburban context of Buenos Aires, it is important to understand the socio-economic and political background of the area where the research was conducted and the urban context of the case study neighbourhoods.

Observing societal background, it is important to remember that Argentina has undergone massive changes, within the last three decades, regarding income distribution and social polarisation. Looking at Buenos Aires more specifically, it can be noted for example, that poverty has risen dramatically, with 17.8% of the population below the poverty line in October 1992 and 54.3% accordingly in October 2002[33]. There is no official data for the years after 2002, and there are controversial numbers, with the

[33] Data from the Argentinean national household survey October 2002 published in the INDEC press release of December 27th 2002

government claiming that the poverty rate in the second semester of 2008 had fallen to 15.4% with private consultancies estimating it was about 30%[34]. However, since the data collection for this study took place in 2003 and 2004, the changes that occurred until 2002 are considered to be more relevant.

Like most countries in Latin America, Argentina manifests high levels of inequality. Even in the 1990s, with a period of economic growth, and a 43% increase of per capita income, Argentine income inequality augmented, with the Gini coefficient increasing from 0.46 to 0.49 (Zanetta, 2002). In 2009, the percentage share of income of the wealthiest 10% of the population was 24 times higher than that of the poorest 10%[35].

The rise in poverty and the high levels of income inequality have often been explained (Grimson, 2008; Torres, 2001; Zanetta, 2002; et al) as a result of structural adjustment policies implemented in Argentina during the 1990s. More generally, it is often argued (Pirez, 2002; Borsdorf & Hidalgo, 2008) that in Argentina, and in Buenos Aires in particular, an increase in social polarisation has taken place as a result of the neo-liberal policies characterising the 1980s and the 1990s.

Looking at the role of the State, Bolay et al (2005: 630), in their analysis of urban governance in Latin America, found that in Argentina "responsibilities tend to pass from the public to the private sector." More generally, they argue in Latin America, structural adjustment policies have been weakening the capabilities of the State in the provision of public services and infrastructure since the 1980s. The privatisation of

[34] Source: La Nacion, 20 march 2009, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1110587
[35] World Bank

urban services and infrastructure can thus be seen as one of the main features of Latin American urban development in the 1980s and 90s.

According to Borsdorf & Hidalgo (2008), the aforementioned structural adjustment policies and the resulting privatisation of public services and infrastructure led to a new form of polarisation, replacing the traditional urban form, which was characterised by a strict division of sectors for the poor and rich. Since the 1980s, the rich and poor have moved closer together, while at the same time, reinforcing the delimitating borders between their neighbourhoods.

In addition to the rise in poverty and inequality described above, a continuous increase in the feeling of insecurity among the population was found during the 90's and the following decade. The 2001 economic crisis and recent changes in society have led to an increase in insecurity among the majority of the population (Svampa, 2001; Wortman, 2003). This can be explained, on the one hand, by the factual increase in violent crime and on the other hand, by a more general feeling of insecurity that resulted from the shock the country experienced with the economic crisis in 2001, which left the country in default and through which many people lost their savings and their trust in the State and private institutions at the same time. Looking at crime statistics, Dammert (2001) found that national crime rates in Argentina tripled in the 1980s and 90s and that reported crimes doubled in the 1990s, with 47% of these crimes being robberies. In Buenos Aires, it must be noted that the increase was even higher with an increase of 250% in the 1990s.

During the 1990s, with a severe rise in poverty and an increase in crime rates, there was a rapid spread of new closed neighbourhoods within the Metropolitan Area of Buenos

Aires (AMBA)[36]. This development slowed down slightly during the economic crisis in 2001 and the following three years, but increased again soon after with even larger gated communities being built and planned. This urban trend further sharpens the already existing contrast between the upper classes and the poor, especially since these new gated developments are for the most part, located within the periurban areas of Buenos Aires, where the percentage of population below the poverty line is even higher than average, with 22.3% in 1992 and 64.4% in 2002[37].

Taking into account the socio-political background from which the research has to be considered, an overview of the urban context of the case study is given in the following sections of this chapter. In Section 5.2, the urban development that has taken place over the last decades in Buenos Aires is reviewed and existing policies concerning urban integration and regulations directed at gated communities are summarised. The phenomenon of gated communities within the AMBA is outlined in Section 5.3. Here, different types of closed neighbourhoods are described, illustrating their history and current developments, explaining their rapid spread within the metropolitan region, and analysing the resulting consequences for the AMBA. In Section 5.4, the municipality of San Isidro where the case study is located, is introduced, describing its main characteristics and summarising its urban development and its existing policies on urban integration. Finally, Section 5.5 describes each of the closed and open neighbourhoods where the research was conducted. This leads us to Chapters Six and Seven, which both contain the analysis of the empirical data and explore the resulting findings.

[36] Area Metropolitana de Buenos Aires
[37] INDEC.

5.2 URBAN DEVELOPMENT, POLICIES & REGULATION

Over the last few years, the rapid spread of closed neighbourhoods has begun to have a significant impact on Latin American mega-cities and their suburban areas. With its 13 million inhabitants, Buenos Aires has become one of those mega-cities in Latin America. The census in 2001 shows that only approximately 3 million people live within the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA[38]), with the other 10 million living in the surrounding area. Geographically, the AMBA spreads over 2750 km^2 and forms a semicircle which borders the *Río de la Plata* River (Fig 1).

Figure 1: The Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA) Source: © 2010 Google

Looking at the urban processes that took place in Buenos Aires during the 1990s, it is important to clarify that within this thesis, Buenos Aires is to be understood as the metropolitan unit – the AMBA. Buenos Aires is legally divided into 25 municipalities, but from a functional perspective, as well as from a physical perspective, it constitutes a single urban entity (Torres, 2001).

[38] Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires

Jurisdiction over the AMBA is divided between national, provincial and local institutions, an inter-jurisdictional body, and several quasi-governmental organisations. The Government of the Province of Buenos Aires, which is based in the city of *La Plata,* administers the municipalities that constitute the AMBA, with each of them having an elected mayor and a legislative body. The CABA[39] – commonly called the *Capital Federal* – is the capital of the country. Since 1994, the CABA has the status of an autonomous city with its own local government (Torres, 2001). Accordingly, the mayor of the CABA is elected directly by the residents.

In addition, there is the National Commission of the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (CONAMBA), established in 1987, which co-ordinates inter-jurisdictional relationships between the municipality of the CABA and the government of the Province of Buenos Aires. This inter-jurisdictional body, however, lacks the power to have an important influence in the policy-making process. In 2005, the office for metropolitan planning (OAM[40]) was created by the urbanism and housing office[41] of the provincial government. Before 2005, all urban programmes and policies were either provincial and not applicable for the CABA or municipal. Therefore no common strategies concerning urban development within the metropolitan area could be developed.

Politically, the city is split into two federal units: the centre, which is the CABA and the 24 surrounding municipalities, which belong to the Province of Buenos Aires. The 24 municipalities, which form part of the AMBA, are categorised into the first ring and the second ring. The first ring consists of those municipalities adjacent to the CABA and

[39] Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires
[40] Oficina del Àrea Metropolitana
[41] Subsecretaría de Urbanismo y Vivienda

the second ring is formed by those municipalities which surround the first ring; ultimately extending up to approximately 40-50 km from the centre (Fig 2).

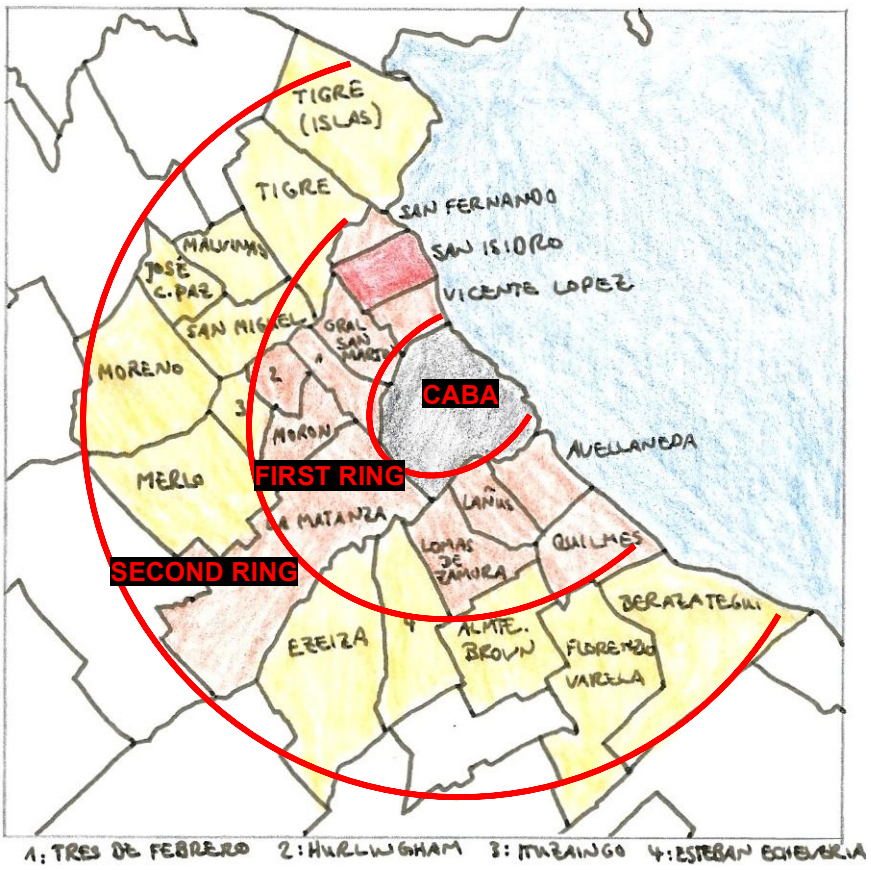


Figure 2: Political jurisdictions of the AMBA: the CABA, the first and the second suburban ring.

Generally, it can be said that the second ring is poorer than the first and the first is poorer than the CABA, which represents the wealthiest area in the metropolitan area and in the country as a whole. Furthermore, there is a third ring, which is constituted by the most recent developments outside the second ring at a distance of 50km and more from the centre. This differentiation into separate rings does not imply any institutional distinction; it is just a denomination making reference to the location of the municipalities in regards to the centre.

Historically, urban groups with more economic resources lived in the CABA where there has always been a north-south divide, with the wealthier north and the poorer

south. As a result of this geographical structure, relatively wealthy suburbs have developed along the northern access lines to the city. Apart from these northern suburbs, which belong to the first ring of the AMBA, the periphery is comprised of low-income neighbourhoods and poor informal settlements.

In the mid-1980s, when the real estate market started to allow developers to operate freely, a period of real estate speculation started. In Buenos Aires, luxury housing quadrupled in the 1990s, whereas lower-income housing decreased by more than 10% (Torres, 2001). At the same time, the suburbanisation of the elites intensified with the increase of gated communities. As a consequence, from the 1990s onwards, the upper classes and the poor competed for the same urban spaces in the AMBA, which were traditionally occupied more homogeneously by deprived and often informal neighbourhoods (Rofman, 2010).

During the 1980s and '90s, the city expanded in all directions (Pirez, 2002) with a large expansion of the built-up area being produced by massive gated developments within the periphery accompanied by large new commercial complexes. These new forms of diffused low-density urbanisation create archipelagos within the existing suburban structure, leading to an increased spatial fragmentation within the suburbs. At the same time, the lack of social housing programmes left housing for the lower segments of the population in the hands of the informal market, which lead to an increase in informal settlements. Additionally, the deterioration of public transport resulted in mobility problems for large portions of the suburban population (Rofman, 2010).

These socio-territorial transformations are, according to Torres (2001), linked to the beginning of the political approach, which he frames as an 'open economy'. The three

main features of this 'open economy' were according to him: a vast commercial and financial liberalisation, which opened the country towards foreign investment; the convertibility plan of Menem[42], which fixed the Peso[43] to the Dollar; and the privatisation of public companies. Torres (2001) argues that these changes within the economic framework further increased the existing social polarisation of the AMBA population.

Furthermore, according to Clichevsky (2000), the economic opening of the country led to a boost of foreign investment in Argentina. Clichevsky maintains that a change in the urban structure, which is linked to the lack of public regulations regarding land subdivisions and the increase in crime rates and fear of crime, resulted in the upper classes moving either into inner-city luxury towers or to closed neighbourhoods located in the periphery.

Rofman (2010) therefore concludes that at the end of the 1990s, the urbanisation processes in the AMBA were characterised by social polarisation. On the one side, the upper-middle and upper classes living in the new suburban closed neighbourhoods relying on their cars for transportation and using newly developed suburban commercial centres and leisure facilities. On the other side, the low-income and poor residents of the periphery, living in deprived and mostly informal neighbourhoods relying on the train as their primary mode of transportation and satisfying their basic needs of consumption within their neighbourhoods.

[42] Then President of Argentina (1989 – 1999)
[43] Argentine currency

If we look at existing policies and programmes in Buenos Aires concerning urban fragmentation and integration, we find singular area based initiatives, which up to 2005, were neither planned nor implemented at the metropolitan level. Within the CABA, there was a programme of urban integration called *PRIT*[44] (programme of legalisation, integration and transformation of informal settlements), which consisted of physical upgrading programmes on a neighbourhood scale based on a self-help scheme for the residents and deed regularisation by the government. This programme aimed at integrating informal settlements into the urban fabric from a physical perspective and delivering social services to the population of these neighbourhoods. Similarly, the provincial government, responsible for urban policies directed at the 24 municipalities forming the AMBA, implemented various area-based upgrading programmes. Section 5.4.2 describes the current programmes of urban integration within the case study municipality of San Isidro.

After 2003, the national government declared urban renewal and the production of housing central factors of their urban policies (Rofman, 2010). It created a federal housing programme,[45] which consists of numerous diverse programmes, resulting in the production of more than 400,000 social housing units all over the country, with approximately one third of them located in the AMBA.

It is interesting to note, however, that when examining existing urban policies on urban integration, there were no policies found which deal with the existing self-exclusion of the upper classes in the form of gated communities. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, there is also a lack of research linking urban integration and social

[44] Programa de Radicacion, Integracion y Transformacion
[45] Programa Federal de Construccíon de Viviendas

exclusion with a disintegration of the wealthy, self-seclusion and gated communities. The final chapter will come back to these questions looking at the policy implications of the findings of this study and at recommendations for future urban policies aimed at urban integration. In order to introduce the context of the case study, the next section summarises the characteristics of closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires and describes their proliferation.

5.3 CLOSED NEIGHBOURHOODS IN BUENOS AIRES

Closed neighbourhoods, known in Buenos Aires since the 1930s as *countries*[46], contained weekend homes for the upper classes living in its central areas. These new neighbourhoods arose from a culture that attempted to imitate the English way of life. The *countries* were leisure oriented and often included golf and polo courses. They started spreading during the 1970s, when political insecurity and perceptions of danger in the city motivated high-income *porteños*[47] to settle permanently in their *countries*. But the real boom of this form of urban development started in the mid 1990s, when closed neighbourhoods became a widespread form of housing, accessible also to the middle-classes (Thuillier, 2002). Between 1995 and 2000, the number of closed neighbourhoods within the AMBA more than tripled and the number of permanent residents more than quadrupled (Fig 3). According to the guide of *countries*[48] published in the year 2000, there were 351 closed neighbourhoods within the AMBA, occupying 300 km² of land (Thuillier, 2002). It is important to point out that in comparison, that the CABA only occupies 180 km². In the year 2000, one third of all plots within closed

[46] Argentine term referring to country clubs
[47] Argentine term referring to the inhabitants of Buenos Aires
[48] Guia de Countries Barrios Privados y Chacras, Publicountry S.R.L., Buenos Aires, April 2000

neighbourhoods were occupied and approximately 27,000 houses were completed, half of which were used as a primary residence.

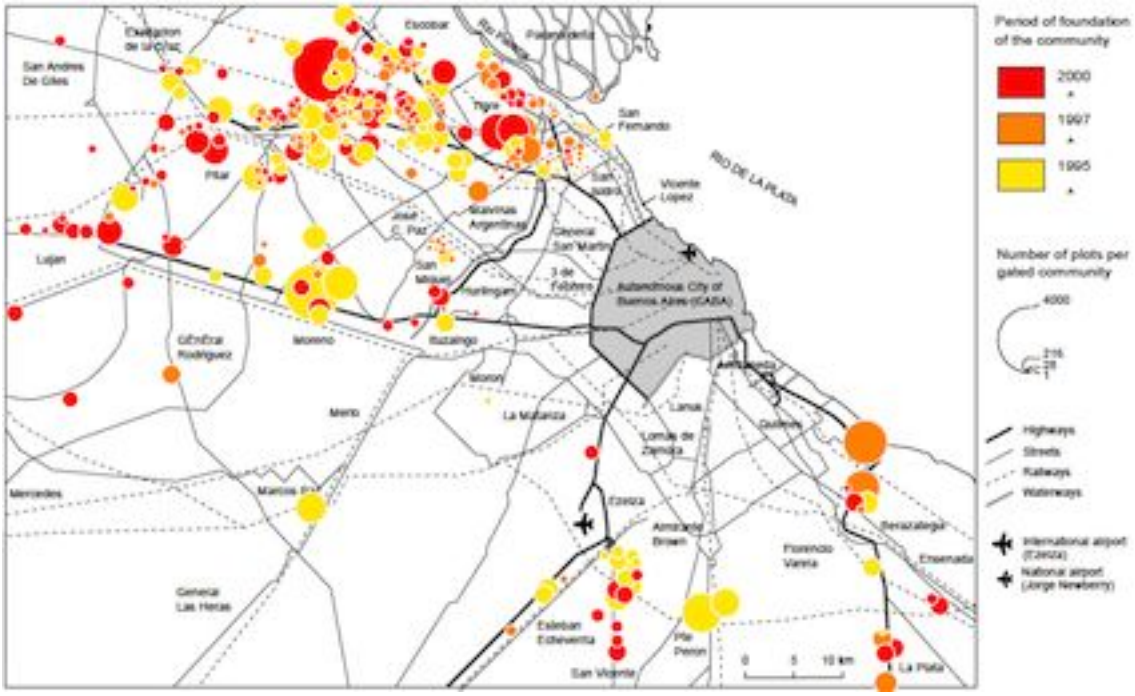


Figure 3 Increase in gated communities within the AMBA 1995-2000 Source: Thuillier, G. (2002) Les Quartiers Enclos: Une Mutation de l'Urbanité? Le Cas de la Region Metropolitaine de Buenos Aires (Argentine), in *Departement de Geographie / Institut Daniel Faucher,* Université Toulouse II – Le Mirail, p.187

It is possible to estimate that the total permanent population of closed neighbourhoods in the AMBA in 2000 was about 40-50,000, given that the typical purchasers of homes were young families. Adding the owners of secondary homes, there were between 80-100,000 people personally concerned by the phenomenon of closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires in 2000. In an article published in *La Nacion*[49] in March 2010, the number of closed neighbourhoods in the Province of Buenos Aires is, however, estimated to have reached 540 and according to Pírez (2002), the potential population that closed neighbourhoods could accommodate would be around 500,000 inhabitants.

[49] http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1242413

Before exploring the reasons behind this boom of gated communities and its consequences for the rest of the city, the next section summarises the different types of closed neighbourhoods found in Buenos Aires and introduces the local terms commonly used when referring to these various forms of gated communities. Furthermore, the choice of terms used within this thesis is explained.

5.3.1 TERMS & TYPES OF CLOSED NEIGHBOURHOODS

As explained in Chapter Two, a variety of denominations are used within the academic literature and in public debate, when referring to the urban form here described as closed neighbourhoods. As mentioned before, the decision of which term to use within this thesis, for the phenomenon generally referred to as gated community, was informed by the terms commonly used in Argentina. In the following paragraphs, these terms are reviewed and the choice of the term 'closed neighbourhood' for gated communities when referring to the case study neighbourhoods is explained.

The different terms used within the Argentine context refer to a variety of types of gated communities and thus, do not all refer to the same phenomenon. But ignoring these different types of closed neighbourhoods, it was found that the most common general terms within the Argentine context are *barrios privados* – private neighbourhoods, *barrios cerrados* – closed neighbourhoods and *urbanizaciones cerradas* – closed developments. These three types are used to describe the phenomenon without necessarily referring to one or the other type of settlement. This can be compared to the use of the term 'gated community' within the English-speaking context. They are often used interchangeably when referring to *clubes de campo* or *countries*, *barrios cerrados*, *clubes de chacra* and *mega-emprendimientos*.

As explained above, the first type of closed neighbourhoods that existed in Buenos Aires were *clubes de campo* or *countries*, which were in the main used as weekend homes and which included some sports facilities and a clubhouse. More recently, when owners started to reside permanently in the *countries*, they also began to include private schools. With the multiplication of the *countries*, different types of gated developments emerged. The majority of the more recent gated developments within the AMBA are now *barrios privados* or *barrios cerrados*, which are usually much smaller, often offer cheaper properties and provide fewer common amenities and recreational facilities than the *countries* (Thuillier, 2002). These *barrios cerrados* are also more common within old historic suburbs, where unused plots of land are only available in smaller sizes. Additionally, there are many *barrios cerrados* that were developed out of formerly open neighbourhoods, which have been enclosed and secured by guarded entrances.

A newer type of gated development is the *club de chacras*, which contains mainly secondary residences and is comprised of farm-like larger properties. These developments are located further away from the centre than the *countries* and the *barrios privados,* and are generally of a larger size, since each property is rather like a plot of farmland.

The most recent type of gated development, however, is much larger in scale and consists of semi-public services and spaces enclosed by numerous closed neighbourhoods, which are aimed at diverse socio-economic groups (Janoschka, 2003). The largest of these so-called *mega-emprendimientos* – Nordelta[50] - is projected to house 100,000 people. Its development had been slowed down by the economic crisis,

[50] http://www.nordelta.com/ingles/inicio.htm

which hit Argentina in 2001, but it has started gaining momentum since 2005 and has developed more rapidly since.

An extreme example of the extent to which the privatisation of urban life has taken place in Buenos Aires are the private cemeteries, another recent phenomenon, which, due to the high acquisition and maintenance costs involved, represents highly segregated spaces with controlled and restricted access. These *cementerios parque* are, according to Coy and Pöhler, "an almost absurd representation of the extent of the advance of group-specific separation, privatisation, and capitalisation of the Argentine society" (2002: 367).

However, regarding the choice of the term 'closed neighbourhood', this thesis follows Thuillier's (2002) line of thought, arguing that, while the enclosure is not the only characteristic which distinguishes these neighbourhoods from others, its private character is not exclusive to gated communities. Privately owned apartment blocs for example, also include common private property, even if there is a difference of scale. Therefore, I agree with Thuillier that the adjective 'closed' is a better description of the type of neighbourhood that is referred to in this thesis, since it best describes the specific differences in comparison to other urban forms, which might also be guarded, but which do not restrict public access to open spaces within the neighbourhood.

5.3.2 THE BOOM & ITS CONSEQUENCES

Coy and Pöhler (2002) argue that the boom of closed neighbourhoods in the AMBA can be explained by looking at the political and economic conditions in Argentina during the 1990s. As mentioned in Section 5.2, the dominant policies of the 1990s, which can be characterised as neoliberal style politics, led to a reduction in social public

investment and brought about a climate in favour of private, often international, capital investment. Coy and Pöhler (2002) found that during the 1990s, 40% of all private investment within the AMBA went into the development of closed neighbourhoods. The real estate market was one of the high profit markets and therefore boomed during this period. The development of gated communities also resulted to be one of the real estate businesses being minimally affected by the economic crisis of 2002 (Libertun de Duren, 2006). Apart from the lack of any unified metropolitan planning, this political framework must also be seen as one of the facilitating factors for the rapid spread of closed neighbourhoods.

As a consequence of the national economic situation, many municipal governments within the AMBA lacked the economic resources to deal with the challenges of housing the majority of the poor population. As a consequence, they turned to the private sector to develop land which lacked infrastructure and urban services. Libertun de Duren argues that, due to the legal autonomy of municipalities over land use regulations, municipalities could even "foster the development of gated communities as a strategy for local development" (Libertun de Duren, 2009: 320).

In the Argentine context, it is important to note that the increasing development of closed neighbourhoods has been taking place in the context of a lack of any metropolitan guidelines for land use and urban planning in the AMBA. This lack of planning stems from the complicated legal situation arising from the fact that the metropolitan area is located within two different provincial governments and 25 municipal governments and that planning powers were decentralised in 1977, handing municipalities the power over land use and zoning laws (Libertun de Duren, 2006).

Furthermore, as Thuillier (2002) suggests, this period of neo-liberal style politics led to a massive programme of privatisation of state owned industries and services. Private service provisions increasingly characterise gated communities, and the privatisation of motorway connections improved the connection of peripheral neighbourhoods with the city centre. But most importantly, the sectors of society that profited from this period of economic growth were high-income classes, which were involved in the privatisation and could then afford to realise their dreams of a North American way of life (Thuillier, 2002). Intense marketing campaigns promoting gated communities and the associated suburban way of life, further enhanced this trend to leave the centre.

In 2000, these private developments constituted 90% of all newly built neighbourhoods. The majority of the closed neighbourhoods in the AMBA are located within a 45-minute car ride from the city centre, as most of the residents of these neighbourhoods still commute to work. Regarding their location within the metropolitan semicircle, it can be noted that 75% of all closed neighbourhoods within the province of Buenos Aires are located in the northern and north-eastern regions (Fig. 3), and among these, there is a high concentration in three municipalities[51], which are all situated along the northern highway connecting with the centre (Libertun de Duren, 2006).

As mentioned above, a significant rise in insecurity and feelings of insecurity took place in Buenos Aires during the 1990s, but became more acute in the last few years after the economic crisis in 2001. This is partly due to an increase in violent crime, especially kidnappings, but also to the messages of the mass media, which focus on these potential dangers. As a consequence of the economic crisis in 2001, there has also been a rise in a more general lack of trust and feeling of insecurity among the Argentine population.

[51] Pilar, Tigre and Escobar (Libertun de Duren, 2006)

However, apart from all these local factors, it is important to remember that, as explained in Chapter Two, a worldwide trend towards the development of closed neighbourhoods exists, which is fostered by international real estate companies and developers who promote this urban form globally as a modern lifestyle.

Thuillier (2002) claims that the rapid spread of closed neighbourhoods to some extent, has reshaped the urban landscape of Buenos Aires, which is characterised by busy streets, squares, parks, coffee houses, restaurants and an active nightlife and is often referred to as the 'Paris' of Latin America. This traditional urban culture of Buenos Aires is challenged by the trend of central places that follow the upper classes into the periphery, where shopping and leisure facilities with controlled access emerge and office complexes start developing. Today, the wealthy residents of closed neighbourhoods and the poor residents of the suburbs live physically close to each other, but do not necessarily share the same places.

Although these new urbanisation patterns result in a loss of primacy for the traditional urban cores, Libertun de Duren (2009) argues that, rather than interpreting gated communities as a break with the traditional Latin American urban form, it represents a consequence of it. "That is, the striking contrast between core and periphery is one of the reasons why urban expansion has taken the form of gated enclaves" (Libertun de Duren, 2009: 623).

Looking at the consequences for the city of Buenos Aires, it is important to remember that it is a city that followed the Spanish growth model of a colonial city with a centre, which was organised using an orthogonal grid from which growth radiated outwards. Following the European city model, high-income residents lived in the city centre and

the suburbs were mainly occupied by poor new migrants to the city, with the exception of the two suburbs which are adjacent to the central district to the north, where wealthier inhabitants had already been residing at the beginning of the 20th century. Generally, it must be noted that, a trend to leave the city centre for a life in suburban gated communities signifies, according to Thuillier (2002a), a change in the urban culture. This trend has started to reshape the urban form of Buenos Aires as services and places of consumption have started to follow the wealthy to the suburbs. These new suburban and more recently, periurban centres, are places of controlled access, which are generally not frequented by the poorer inhabitants of these suburbs.

As seen in the previous chapter, there is an open question if this fragmentation of space results in more or less social interaction between different socio-economic groups and therefore, alters civic concerns and understandings of urban citizenship. The aim of this study is to further understand this process and achieve an approximation to answering this in the specific context of suburban Buenos Aires. The empirical research, which is presented in Chapters Six and Seven, was carried out in various neighbourhoods within the municipality of San Isidro. The following sections present the municipality of San Isidro and describe the case study neighbourhoods that were chosen for data collection.

5.4 SAN ISIDRO

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the central aim of the research presented in this thesis was to examine if the current proliferation of closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires merely highlights the city's existing socio-economic inequalities or if these inequalities are actually reproduced and aggravated by this urban development. Thus, the case study sought to examine and compare social relations, social and political

engagement and civic concerns of residents of both closed and open neighbourhoods. These factors were analysed, since they represent democratic processes that are believed to indicate the extent to which groups within society are and feel integrated or segregated.

In order to compare residents of closed and open neighbourhoods, the main criteria for selection of the municipality, as explained in Chapter Four, was that it had to include different types of neighbourhoods – closed neighbourhoods (HiCN)[52] which by their very nature, are of high income levels, open neighbourhoods of comparable income level (HiON), middle-income open neighbourhoods (MiON), and low-income open neighbourhoods (LiON) – all in proximity to each other. As HiONs could not be found in the areas where the quantitatively most significant development of large gated communities is located in the AMBA, it was decided to focus on *barrios cerrados* – closed neighbourhoods, which also exist in historical suburbs in the northern first ring of the AMBA where open neighbourhoods of all economic levels could be found.

5.4.1 GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIO-ECONOMICS

San Isidro, the municipality, which according to these criteria was found to be most appropriate for the case study, is a suburban municipality situated within the first suburban ring about 25km north of the centre of Buenos Aires (Fig 4). It is one of the few old wealthy suburbs of the city, where *porteños* used to spend their weekends in the beginning of the 20th century. San Isidro has an historic centre and is located on the coastline of the river *Rio De La Plata*. With the new highway, it can be reached in 25 minutes by car from the city centre of Buenos Aires. There are also good train connections to one of the main stations in Buenos Aires.

[52] High income Closed Neighbourhood

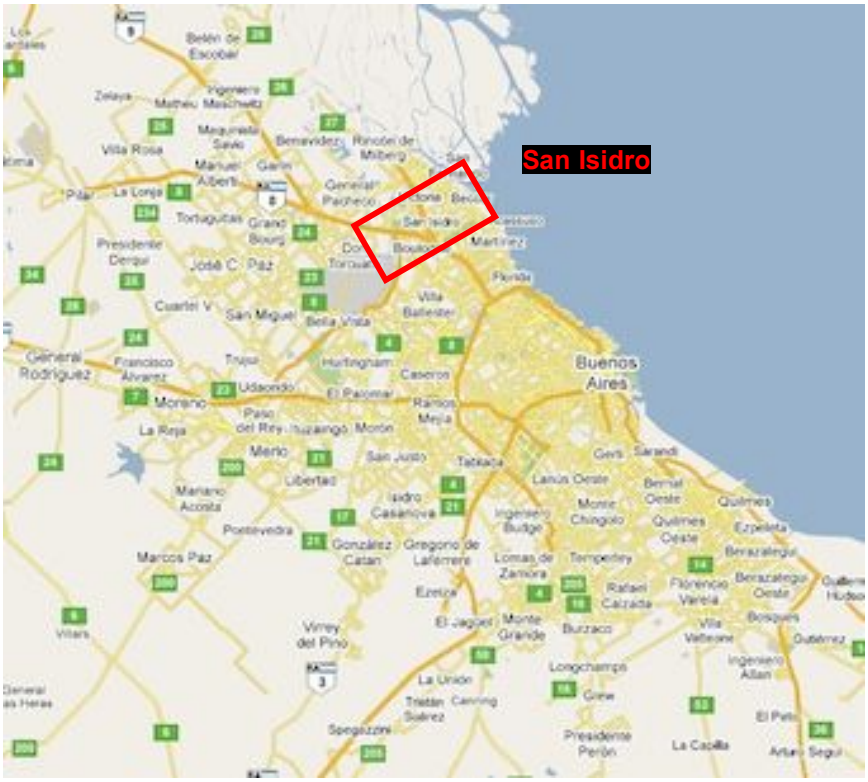


Figure 4 Map of the AMBA showing the location of San Isidro. Source: © 2010 Google

The municipality of San Isidro, which developed out of a small settlement surrounding the local chapel built in 1706, was founded in 1850. Its historic centre is well preserved and now functions as its main commercial centre. In 2001, the municipality of San Isidro had a population of 289,870 inhabitants[53] and a surface area of 51.44km^2. Compared to other municipalities within the AMBA, San Isidro is the municipality with the highest real estate prices (Libertun de Duren, 2007).

Originating in a suburban neighbourhood which was mainly populated by wealthy *porteños,* who transformed their weekend houses into their main residences, the historic centre of San Isidro lies today within a continuously built up area which is referred to as the first ring of the northern metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, and its jurisdictional borders are not distinguishable in the urban fabric (Fig 5).

[53] INDEC

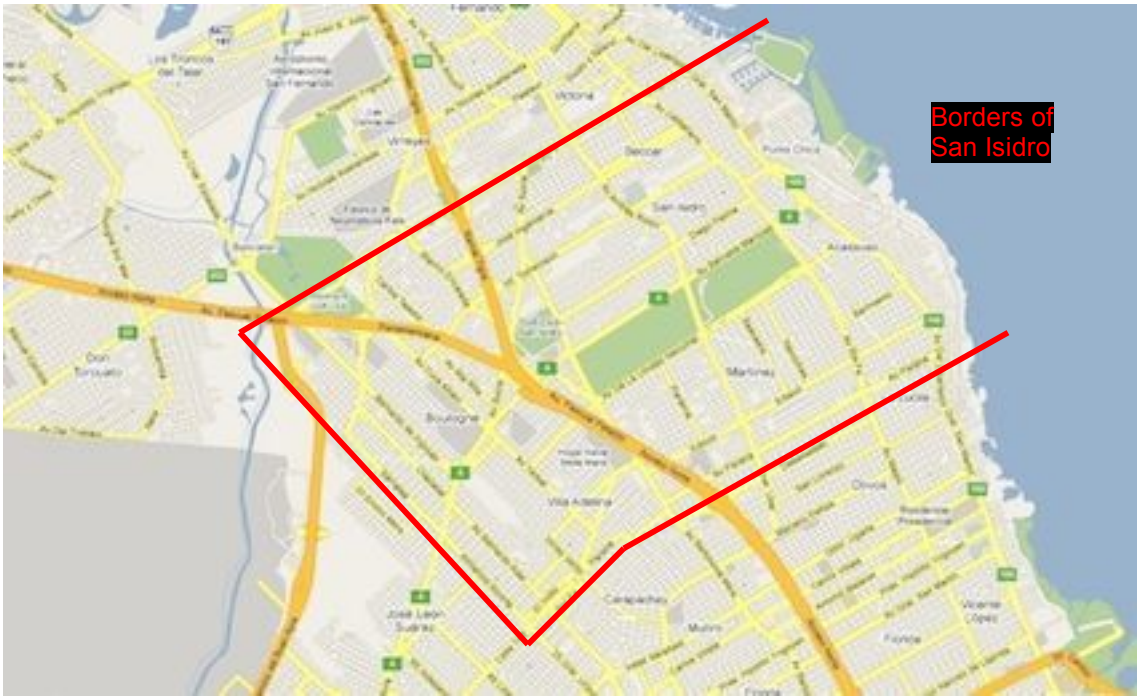


Figure 5 Map of the municipality of San Isidro. Source: © 2010 Google

Generally, the urban fabric of San Isidro consists of a traditional urban grid. However, clusters of closed neighbourhoods located along the river coast and next to informal settlements interrupt this pattern. Although its population is on average, wealthier than that of other municipalities of the AMBA, San Isidro comprises a range of very diverse neighbourhoods, from very exclusive closed neighbourhoods to very deprived informal settlements. The empirical data of this research was conducted in eleven of these neighbourhoods, which are presented in Section 5.5. But first, we will look at the current political situation and existing urban policies in San Isidro.

5.4.2 POLITICS AND URBAN POLICIES

Since 1983, San Isidro has been governed by the same political party: the *radicales*[54]. But more remarkably, municipal power has remained in the hands of one family. Melchor Posse – the father – had been in government for 16 years when in 1999, his son, Gustavo Posse, took over, and continues as the current governor of San Isidro.

[54]The major centre-left party in Argentina

The local government's approach to issues of fragmentation and urban integration consists of slowly eradicating its informal settlements by developing low density neighbourhoods for residents of San Isidro. These housing schemes are financed by the national government and take place under the umbrella of the federal housing programme, which was launched by the national government in 2005. As described above, the federal housing plan, which is a programme for the urbanisation of slums and informal settlements, has to be implemented by the municipal governments. Regarding the province of Buenos Aires, the plan included the urbanisation of informal settlements and the construction of 16,000 social housing units. In San Isidro, this affected the largest informal settlement, *La Cava,* which in 2001 was comprised of 1882 families[55]. The municipality developed a housing scheme for *La Cava*, which was presented to the committee of neighbours without any prior participation of the inhabitants of *La Cava*. Apart from this lack of consultation of all parties concerned in the process, the local government had also unilaterally decided to reduce the number of housing units to 856, due to lack of space[56]. This shows that policies aimed at urban integration remain very top down and do not comprise a political integration of the poor.

In a press conference concerning the municipality's policies on urban integration, the governor emphasised that these newly constructed neighbourhoods will have 14 metre wide streets, which allow access for ambulances, social services, police and firemen; thus, they will have open streets which are integrated into the urban fabric.[57] Furthermore, he highlighted that the government was working towards a socially and

[55] INDEC
[56] Information from the 2008 report concerning the case of *La Cava* by the CELS (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales)
[57] http://www.sanisidro.gov.ar/es/nota.vnc?id=7574

physically integrated municipality, and therefore, apart from the buildings and services that the government was providing, they also had to sanction those who were illegitimately trying to continue illegal constructions.

However, this position versus illegitimate urbanisations does not seem to have been applied in the case of road closures of closed neighbourhoods. According to Libertun de Duren (2007), local planning regulations of San Isidro do not allow for a closing off of public streets. However, special permits have been granted for the development of the existing gated communities. She argues that given the location of these closed neighbourhoods, they seem to be used as buffers between the middle and upper class residents and the economically deprived residents of the informal settlements.

5.5 THE CASE STUDY NEIGHBOURHOODS

Figure 6 Location of case study neighbourhoods in San Isidro. Source: © 2010 Google

As described in Chapter Four, the empirical data presented in this thesis, results from interviews with residents in the following four types of neighbourhoods: high income

closed neighbourhoods (HiCNs), high income open neighbourhoods (HiONs), middle income open neighbourhoods (MiONs) and low income open neighbourhoods (LiONs). This section introduces each of the neighbourhoods that form part of the case study. They are presented with respect to location in San Isidro, their size, the composition of their residents, the common facilities they contain, the characteristics of their neighbouring areas, the state of their infrastructure and other remarkable features. In total, the interviews were conducted in eleven neighbourhoods consisting of four HiCNs, two HiONs, three MiONs and two LiONs (Fig 6).

5.5.1 HIGH INCOME CLOSED NEIGHBOURHOODS (HiCNs)

Interviews were conducted in four HiCNs. The larger ones, *Boating* and *San Isidro Chico,* include approximately 150 houses each, *San Isidro Labrador* is comprised of 75 houses and *Haras de Alvear* consists of one gated street with 8 houses. All of them are enclosed by walls and have only one entrance, which consists of a guarded gate. All of these closed neighbourhoods have some form of private administration, which manages the neighbourhood and employs a private security company.

Apart from their differing sizes, these neighbourhoods also differ in regards to the common facilities they include. As explained in Chapters Six and Seven, these differences play an important role in the analysis of closed neighbourhoods and their impact on residents' civic concerns and social relations. Furthermore, the characteristics of their adjacent neighbourhoods also vary a lot, ranging from high-income residential neighbourhoods to deprived neighbourhoods.

As discussed in Chapter Six, the differences in their surroundings also prove to be an important feature when analysing differences between closed and open neighbourhoods.

First, in this section, the main features of the four HiCNs: *Boating*, *San Isidro Chico, San Isidro Labrador and Haras de Alvear* are described in some detail.

The ***Boating***, (Fig. 7 & 8) is a nautical HiCN, and is the only neighbourhood of the case study that contains sports facilities and a restaurant.

Figure 7 Boating

As a nautical neighbourhood, it comprises water canals, which allow direct access for yachts to the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it includes a gym and a playground.

Figure 8 Boating Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

The neighbouring areas consist of another similar HiCN (*San Isidro Chico*) to the south, a canal, and a Yacht and Golf club to the east, the railway line and some sports grounds to the west and an open street of middle-income houses to the north. The residents of the *Boating* have a very high-income and include many ex-pats who live in Buenos Aires for professional reasons.

The second HiCN is ***San Isidro Chico*** (Fig. 9 & 10) contains 150 houses. *San Isidro Chico* does not have any common facilities, apart from open space. Regarding the socio-economic composition of its residents, it is comparable to the *Boating*, although without yachting facilities, it has a less exclusive reputation among *porteños,* and it is less popular among ex-pats.

Figure 9 San Isidro Chico

The adjacent neighbourhoods consist of a HiCN (*Boating*) to the north, a private Yacht and Golf club to the east, private sports grounds to the south and the railway line to the west, behind which there is an upper-middle class open neighbourhood.

Figure 10 San Isidro Chico Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

San Isidro Labrador (Fig. 11 & 12) is a mid-sized HiCN with 75 houses, which does not contain any sports or recreational facilities. Its residents generally belong to the upper-middle class and thus represent a slightly lower income group than the two larger HiCNs described above. Therefore, the houses, especially their plot sizes, are notably smaller.

Figure 11 San Isidro Labrador

Its surroundings comprise of a highway to the west, a HiON to the south, an industrial site to the north, a MiON and a social housing estate to the east. Thus, the surrounding areas are much more diverse than in the previously described neighbourhoods.

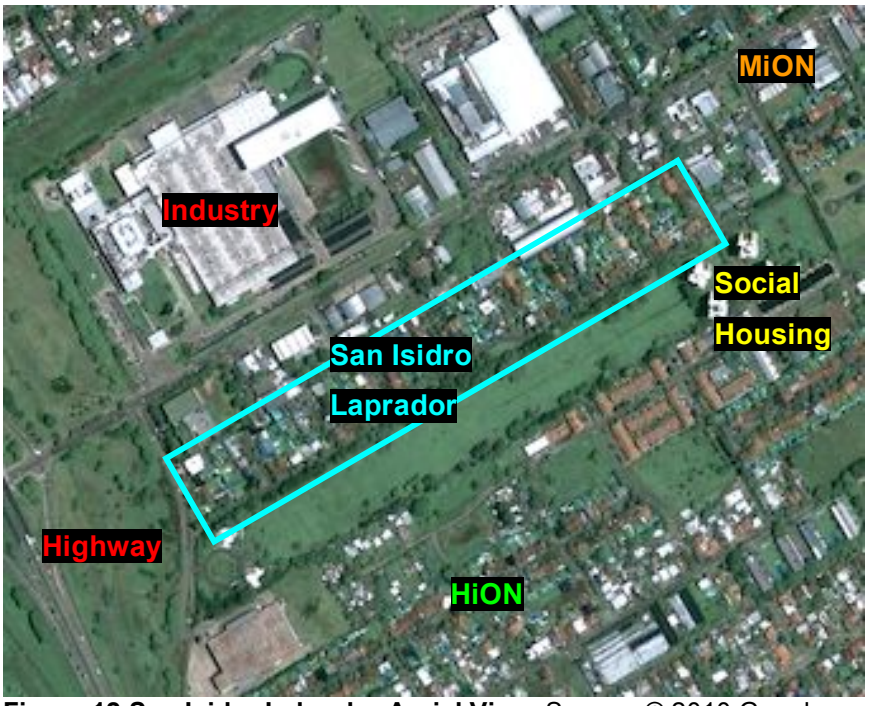


Figure 12 San Isidro Labrador Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

Haras de Alvear (Fig. 13 & 14) is a very small HiCN, and akin to a closed cul-de-sac, comprising of only 8 houses, but like the others, it has a controlled entrance gate.

Figure 13 Haras de Alvear

It does not have any common facilities, but like the larger neighbourhoods, it has a neighbourhood administration. Its residents belong to the upper-middle class, with similar levels of wealth to those of San Isidro Labrador.

Figure 14 Haras de Alvear Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

The surrounding areas consist of a HiON to the west, a sports ground to the north, a LiON to the east and industrial sites to the south. Like San Isidro Labrador, the adjacent neighbourhoods are very diverse, with the largest informal settlement, La Cava, a direct neighbour on one side and a HiON on the other. This is one of the HiCNs that appears to function as a buffer zone between the poor and the rich.

The next three sections describe the open neighbourhoods where residents were interviewed. They are categorised into high-income, middle-income and low-income neighbourhoods. However, since they are open neighbourhoods, they are slightly more heterogeneous in regards to their population than the closed neighbourhoods, and their

borders are not clearly defined, and thus in some cases, it is rather a description of an area than of a precise neighbourhood.

5.5.2 HIGH-INCOME OPEN NEIGHBOURHOODS (HiONs)

The two HiONs, which were included in the case study, *Las Lomas* and *La Horqueta,* both have private security guards on all the streets, and they comprise some smaller HiCNs. They also each include a commercial sub-centre and are larger in size. The HiONs are not as homogeneous regarding the size of the houses and plots, and in respect to the socio-economic levels of their residents, which range from upper-middle to upper class. Some houses have high fences or walls, while others have no extra security features.

The fact that their boundaries are not clearly defined leads to a different perception of the city as a whole, as we will see in Chapters Six and Seven. The significance of this difference compared to HiCNs is discussed later in this section. However, these neighbourhoods and their surroundings are described even if sometimes, it is not entirely correct to speak of surroundings as the neighbourhoods merge into each other.

Las Lomas (Fig. 15 & 16) is a very prestigious address in Buenos Aires, and it comprises some of the most impressive houses of the municipality. Within the neighbourhood, some streets are more posh than others, but the residents all belong to the upper-middle or upper class. There is no clear definition of the borders of the neighbourhood, since the neighbourhood name does not correspond to a jurisdictional entity, but rather to a broadly defined area.

Figure 15 Las Lomas

The surroundings of *Las Lomas* comprise of a Golf Club and the highway to the west, a Hippodrome to the south, a MiON to the east, and a working class neighbourhood to the north.

Figure 16 Las Lomas Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

The other HiON where interviews were conducted is ***La Horqueta*** (Fig. 17 & 18), which houses residents with similar income levels as those of *Las Lomas*, but the mix of plot sizes and houses is slightly greater.

Figure 17 La Horqueta

Its borders are clearly defined by two highways, which form a triangular shape between them, a LiON and an industrial area to the north. The adjacent neighbourhood to the east is a HiON and to the south, a MiON.

Figure 18 La Horqueta Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

Both *Las Lomas* and *La Horqueta* contain various small HiCNs within their areas which consist of just one or two streets that have been closed off by their residents.

5.5.3 MIDDLE-INCOME OPEN NEIGHBOURHOODS (MiONs)

The three MiONs: *Accasuso*, *El Bajo* and *Las Casitas* are located close to the historic centre of San Isidro, and they include schools, churches and some small shops. None of the MiONs have any private security features within their neighbourhoods.

Accasuso (Fig. 19 & 20) is a traditional homogenous middle-class neighbourhood, and its residents have lived mostly within the municipality of San Isidro for generations. All houses in *Accasuso* are single-family houses, similar to the HiONs, apart from the plots and houses being smaller.

Figure 19 Accasuso

As with the HiONs, the MiONs also do not have clearly defined boundaries. The neighbouring areas of *Accasuso* are other MiONs to the south and west, a private sports club to the west, the main commercial centre of San Isidro to the north and to the east a LiON, which is separated from Accasuso by the railway line.

Figure 20 Accasuso Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

El Bajo (Fig. 21 & 22) is a neighbourhood in transition, which is being gentrified from a lower-middle income neighbourhood into a wealthier one, with many newly refurbished and newly built houses.

Figure 21 El Bajo

El Bajo is surrounded by two small HiCNs to the north, railway-lines and a MiON to the west, a LiON to the south, and the canal and some port facilities to the east. *El Bajo* has a very low quality of infrastructure, with many of the streets unpaved, since it is situated in an area which tended to get flooded when river levels became high. Only since this problem was solved, have residents with higher income levels started to move in.

Figure 22 El Bajo Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

Las Casitas (Fig. 23 & 24) is a MiON, which was built as a working class settlement in the 1950s. It includes a School, a Church with a Community Centre and a Square. It is neighboured by other MiONs to the east and south, by a social housing estate to the north, and an industrial site to the west. Its residents are either former employees of the public company, which built the neighbourhood, or young families.

Figure 23 Las Casitas

Generally, the population of *Las Casitas* is of a lower-middle income level than that of the other two MiONs studied, but its infrastructure is in better condition than that of *El Bajo*.

Figure 24 Las Casitas Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

5.5.4 LOW-INCOME OPEN NEIGHBOURHOODS (LiONs)

The last category of neighbourhoods where interviews were conducted is low-income open neighbourhoods. One of these – *Las Angelinas* – is a social housing estate, and the

other one – *La Cava* – is an informal settlement. Both are located close to each other with a small industrial site separating them.

Las Angelinas (Fig. 25 & 26) is a social housing estate, which was built as a cooperative project with 200 units.

Figure 25 Las Angelinas

Las Angelinas houses former residents of the informal settlement *La Cava* who are thus of a similar low-income level and among whom the level of unemployment is high.

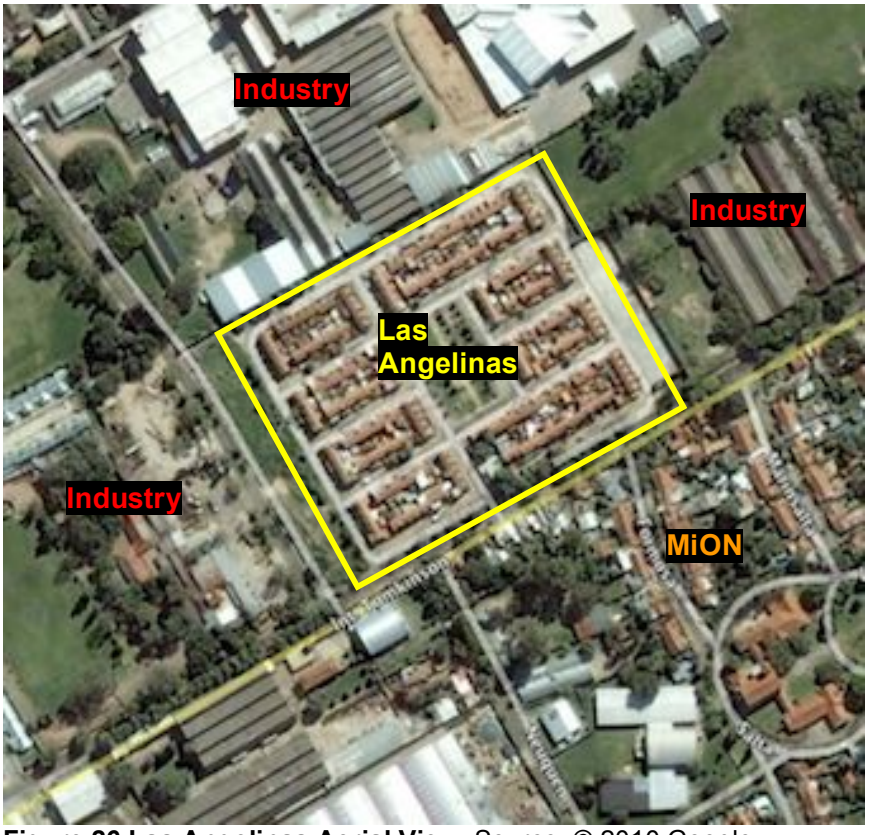


Figure 26 Las Angelinas Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

The neighbourhood includes a community centre and a community square. The surrounding areas are comprised of a partly derelict industrial area to the north, east and west and the MiON *Las Casitas* to the south.

La Cava (Fig. 27 & 28) is a very large informal settlement with around 8500 inhabitants.

Figure 27 La Cava

It includes some shops, a few bars and a School, a Church and a Square on its edge. A small part of the neighbourhood consists of houses built by the government in the 1950s, while the rest are all self-built houses.

Figure 28 La Cava Aerial View. Source: © 2010 Google

Its surrounding areas are working class neighbourhoods to the north, a HiCN to the west, and partly derelict industrial areas to the south and a social housing estate to the east.

It is interesting to note that despite the differences in income levels of the residents of all the neighbourhoods described above, there are, however, some surprising common features regarding the infrastructure. First, not only are the streets within the LiON *La Cava* partly unpaved, but also some of the streets of the MiON *El Bajo* and even some of those in the two HiONs remain unpaved or are in very bad shape. Maybe more unexpectedly is the fact that the sewage network is not complete and 30% of all households in San Isidro have no links to sanitation infrastructure, independent of the type of neighbourhood they live in.

In the next two chapters, we will see to what extent, these differences and commonalities between the neighbourhoods can be linked to differing opinions and attitudes regarding social and political questions and to differences in residents' social relations, their social and political engagement and their civic concerns.

SIX

SOCIAL RELATIONS & CIVIC CONCERNS

"After all, society is literally invisible and can only be inferred by the traces it leaves."
(Martinotti, 1999: 177)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

There is an ongoing debate about the impacts of HiCNs on residents' social relations (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Caldeira, 2000; Castell, 1997; Lemanski, 2005; Roitman, 2003; Salcedo & Torres, 2002). As described in Chapter Two, there is no consensus among researchers regarding the impact of this urban form on residents' social relations and their patterns of social interaction compared to outsiders. The arguments range from those who maintain that gated communities enhance certain types of integration (Cáceres & Sabatini, 2004), to those who find that, even though physical proximity between diverse social classes is enhanced by the development of gated communities in the sub- and periurban areas, this does not lead to closer social relations between these economically diverse groups (Campos & Garcia, 2004).

In analysing the social impacts of gated communities, there are, in addition to the research of residents' social relations, studies that explore residents' perceptions of the urban environment, their social and/or political attitudes and opinions about others (Arizaga, 2005; Low, 2003; Roitman, 2008; Svampa, 2001). As outlined in Chapter Two, these researchers claim that the enclosure of neighbourhoods in general, does have an impact on these factors.

As seen in chapter two, Savage, Warde, et al, (2003) argue that not enough is known about the experience and the encounters in everyday life of different groups of city

dwellers. Thus, they argue for ethnographic studies, which aim at examining these patterns and linking them within a wider political context. No study was found, however, which analyses social relations between the residents of HiCNs and the surrounding residents and residents' civic concerns, comparing these to social relations and civic concerns of residents of other high-income neighbourhoods. Therefore, it remains unclear if residents' social relations and civic concerns would differ if the high-income neighbourhoods were not closed, and there are also doubts if residents' social interaction patterns, opinions and attitudes are linked to their socio-economic level, rather than to the fact that they live in gated communities.

As explained in Chapter Two, it is this gap in the literature in particular that this study aims at exploring, in order to understand the interrelations between urban form and social interaction, attitudes and opinions. The next two chapters illustrate the empirical data, which has been analysed and interpreted according to the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter Three. Chapter Six examines residents' social relations and evaluates if and how these can be linked to their civic concerns, and Chapter Seven looks at residents' relationships with their local government and their political engagement in order to explore if and how these are linked to their civic concerns. As described in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five, both of these chapters compare residents of four different types of neighbourhoods: high-income closed neighbourhoods (HiCNs), high-income open neighbourhoods with private security provision (HiONs), middle-income open neighbourhoods without private security provision (MiONs) and low-income open neighbourhoods (LiONs).

The first and second sections of Chapter Six, aim at answering the first part of question one – ***"Do social contacts differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods?"*** – by answering the first two following sub-questions:

- *With whom do residents of different socio-economic groups have personal contacts, and to what extent, do residents of closed neighbourhoods differ for that matter from residents of open neighbourhoods?*
- *What type of public events - religious, cultural, social, educational, and political - do residents participate in, and are there differences according to the type of neighbourhood they live in?*

Following the structure of these questions, Chapter Six is organised into Section 6.2, which looks at whom residents have regular social contact with, and Section 6.3 which then examines the opportunities of encounter. Firstly, this chapter investigates the different types of social interaction residents are experiencing on a regular basis within their own neighbourhood and outside. This includes relations with relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbours and strangers. These contacts are explored according to the different types of neighbourhoods where people live. It examines whether differences in their patterns of social interaction can be found. Secondly, this chapter analyses the opportunities of encounter that arise in residents' daily life, looking at social interaction in their leisure time, residents' use of public space and their participation in public events. As explained in Chapter Three, the aim of this analysis is to reveal if differences in social interaction patterns can be found according to the urban form people live in.

In order to explore residents' civic concerns, this chapter then tries to answer the second part of question one: ***"…do these differences have an impact on residents' values and***

civic concerns?" In Section 6.4, this can be achieved by answering the following sub-questions:

- *What are the values given to issues of common interest, public collective spaces, public transport and other collective goods, and what roles do they play in people's lives?*
- *To what extent are residents socially engaged, and what are their opinions about other socio-economic groups within the municipality?*

In examining residents' civic concerns, sub-section 6.4.1 illustrates what residents perceive to be common interests throughout the municipality, and if they think these exist at all. Sub-section 6.4.2 looks at residents' opinions about other groups of residents within the municipality.[58]

The chapter concludes with Section 6.5 showing how residents' social relations can be linked to their civic concerns and their formation of values. Applying the conceptual framework, this section is organised into sub-section 6.5.1, which discusses the conclusions that can be drawn for the broader debate on gated communities and 6.5.2 which explores the consequences of contact and conflict, drawing on arguments from political theory and social psychology.

[58] There are many other civic concerns but I will only look at those related to contact and space/place/neighbourhood since this is the focus of this study.

6.2 SOCIAL RELATIONS

> *"'[G]ates' take a variety of forms [...] from an impenetrable wall to a simple mechanical arm, from barbed wire surrounding a housing project to red lines on a city map [... but] most significantly, gates construct and manifest social relations of segregation [... they] actively construct relations of separation."*
> (Bickford, 2000: 361)

This section analyses residents' social relations and explores these according to different places and sources of encounter, following Bickford's (1996) argument that whom we perceive as fellow citizens is influenced by those we regularly see and interact with within our everyday life. It can be argued that the creation of HiCNs can be interpreted as a threat to democratic processes since, as a result of a process of adaptation to the enclosure, the walls of gated communities become unnoticed in the long run and as a consequence, residents' images of their World will consist only of those living within their own neighbourhood.

As discussed in Chapter Three, following Habermas' (1992) model of practical discourse, the analysis of social interaction in the public realm is seen to be crucial, as the public realm is understood as an essential part of social and political urban life. Participation and engagement in the public realm and the importance, which they assume in people's everyday lives, are considered to be significant for the development of an urban citizenship that enhances democracy.

All of the studies found, which analyse the social relations of gated community residents, focus on residents' contacts with outsiders and mostly with outsiders of lower socio-economic levels. However, this research, as explained in Chapter Four, looks at their daily social relations more broadly and compares their social relations with those of residents of open neighbourhoods of similar and different income levels within the

same municipality. This is considered to be very important for the analysis and evaluation of the empirical data, otherwise, the findings might show behaviour and attitudes which are class specific and not relating specifically to life in HiCNs.

First, Section 6.2.1 looks at residents' social interactions within their own neighbourhood. These interactions comprise of contact with residents' relatives, friends, neighbours and strangers. Section 6.2.2 then examines residents' social relations outside of their own neighbourhood, but within their municipality. Here, interviewees' contacts with relatives and friends, their interaction with residents of surrounding neighbourhoods and with residents of the municipality at large are considered. This allows an analysis of whether specific patterns of social interaction can be found relating to the neighbourhood type residents live in.

6.2.1 SOCIAL INTERACTION WITHIN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The analysis of interviewees' social relations within their own neighbourhood found that only one resident of a HiCN had a family member living within their own neighbourhood. Conversely, all of the interviewees living in LiONs had at least, part of their families living within the same neighbourhood and most of their close friends lived within their own neighbourhood as well.

Among residents of HiONs, there was in general, no clear distinction made between their own and surrounding neighbourhoods, and the residents of these neighbourhoods seemed to consider the whole municipality as their own neighbourhood. Florecia for example, states: *"Yes, the majority live within the area. My brothers also live around here, except one, all the rest of us live here."* The same can be said for the residents of MiONs. Whereas the residents of HiCNs and LiONs, even if they may not identify

themselves with their neighbourhood, referred only to their own clearly defined neighbourhood when they talked about it.

The residents of MiONs stated that they more or less often visited their friends and that they were also visited by them, even if, as Clara explains, some of her friends *"... don't like it ... for example, one of my friends who lives in Martinez panics to come here at night. I might be afraid here as I might be afraid elsewhere; but I don't feel that it is more dangerous here, even if 'La Cava' is very close ..."*

This sentiment was not found among residents of HiONs, since they felt that their friends would rather come and visit them because there were more green spaces and leisure possibilities within their neighbourhood, than where most of their friends lived, and since they had a private security provision within their neighbourhoods, they also felt more secure there.

Some of the residents of HiCNs stated that they had become friends with some of their neighbours, but generally, they viewed the residents of their own neighbourhood as neighbours rather than as friends.

> Susanna: *"And my friends, well, I've made friends, actually I have many friends here but they became new friends after living here for 12 years and yes, I'd say all my friends are from the 'Zona Norte'."*
> K[59]: *"From San Isidro?"*
> Susanna: *"Yes."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Generally, this means that social interaction takes place between the residents and their families either signifies they leave their neighbourhood or their friends and family come

[59] K stands for the interviewer's name Katja throughout the whole thesis

to their neighbourhood Thus, the fact that they live in a HiCN does not have any consequence on friendships with those outside their neighbourhood.

By looking at the conception of friendship and at residents' comments, it was found that there were slight differences found between residents of HiCNs and other neighbourhoods. As can be seen when Paola says: *"no, no, I became friends afterwards, but my lifelong friends don't live here"*, residents of HiCNs often specified a difference between friends and real friends who were described as 'old friends', and friends from when they were children and thus, could be considered best friends. Compared to the comments made by residents of HiCNs, this difference between old friends, i.e. real friends, and new friends was not made by residents of HiONs. Stefania for example, explains: *"they are all from here because they are friends that we've met because the kids go to a very nice school close by."* The new friends made by contact with the parents of their children's friends were therefore considered to be real friends as well.

Considering social interaction of residents of LiONs, it was established that the impact of living in a LiON on patterns of social interaction, in regards to where their friends and family lived and thus, where the interaction with them took place was seen to be significant. This group is much more localised and has less family and friendship ties to other neighbourhoods and less ties to other areas within the AMBA[60].

However, they often emphasised that some of their friends lived outside of their own neighbourhood and that these lived in formally built apartments. Some also comment on the fact that they lived in a deprived, informal neighbourhood, and this never posed a

[60] This is not surprising since it is known that mobility rises with the rise in economic possibilities.

problem for meeting people living in other neighbourhoods or only in the beginning until people got to know them.

> Nadine: *"Yes, when I went to school here, … now almost all of the neighbourhood goes there, but it was more mixed before in that school and they came from everywhere, from La Horqueta, from everywhere and they always came to my house after school and I never had a problem."*
> K: *"And do you now have friends that you visit in other neighbourhoods?"*
> Nadine: *"Yes, yes."*
> K: *"Where for example?"*
> Nadine: *"For example in Suarez[61], here in Guido[62], where there is the area where there are more apartments, even in San Isidro, so that I never … I was always honest with where I lived and I never had any problem."*
> K: *"Do your friends also visit you?"*
> Nadine: *"Yes, yes, they come to my house."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

The residents of LiONs who, when asked about their friends' and families' residences, all stated to have friends within their own neighbourhood, but did not describe their relationships with their neighbours as friendships, which is similar to the residents of HiONs. Again, this seems to be explicable by the fact that, when asked about neighbours, these residents referred to their immediate neighbours, unlike the residents of HiCNs who referred to all residents of their neighbourhood.

There was less variety of descriptions of neighbourhood relations among residents of LiONs, compared to others. Most interviewees[63] said that they basically knew everybody, because they had been living there all their lives and that they had good neighbourly relations. Alexia stated: *"yes, yes, I know them, rather as neighbours but with good relations"* or Nadine for example, explained: *"the majority knows each other, because when the neighbourhood was just beginning to develop, before it became a slum it was workers houses … my grandmother came then and my mother remembers*

[61] Name of a street in San Isidro
[62] Ibid.
[63] Since these findings are not based on quantitative data, quantitative statements like 'most interviewees' will within this thesis always refer to matrices (see Appendix 7 page 363), which have been used during the data analysis, showing patterns of prevalent opinions or behaviour as explained in chapter four.

when it was like that … so we knew since it started. … I know most of the people who have been here for a long time; since I was born, I have never had problems".

As seen above, residents of HiCNs generally did not have most of their friends and family members living within their own neighbourhood. Looking at what kind of relationship residents had with their neighbours, it was found that, depending on the size of the HiCNs, the interviewees either said that they knew all the residents (in the smaller neighbourhoods) or that they knew some of the neighbours, mainly those in immediate proximity. Susanna for example, described: *"… yes, I know the majority … by name yes … we also visit each other, not the majority, but many."* None of the interviewees mentioned any problem with their neighbours, and many said that they had good neighbourly relations with many and some, like Nicole, had even become friends with a few of their neighbours as well: "*Yes, I know quite a lot of people. … I know them from visiting them, going out together, barbecues, birthdays, we have quite an active life in here … through neighbours I met my direct neighbour here, we are quite close friends. Because of the kids, I have about five families we're friends with and through going to the gym I have made three more friends."*

Like Nicole, there were a few residents of the HiCNs who said that through the use of the neighbourhood facilities, they had met some of the neighbours and thereafter, became friends. This shows that common leisure facilities might increase the social interaction between neighbours. This was not explored further within this research, since the neighbourhoods investigated here do not generally provide any common facilities. Only the *Boating* – one of the larger HiCNs – has a gym, a pool and a restaurant. But it hints at how relationships with neighbours might vary in large gated

communities, like the ones that are proliferating in the periurban areas of Buenos Aires, which include schools, golf or tennis clubs and other sports facilities.

Others had a more distanced relationship and described their relations with their neighbours as friendly, but without personal contact. Paola for example, explains her social relations within the neighbourhood saying: *"Generally it's a group, which visits each other a lot, not me…"* and Martina even claims: *"I almost don't know them, that is, I greet them, yes, but just a greeting."*

In conclusion, it can be said that no particularly close relationship between neighbours within HiCNs was found. Regarding residents' relations with their neighbours, statements of the residents of MiONs varied a lot. Here, residents' accounts ranged from those who said that they knew some, but not all neighbours, but that they were not friends, to those who described their relations with many neighbours as friendships. This means that with respect to the relationships residents have with their neighbours, there were no distinctions found according to residents' socio-economic class.

Looking at the above cited comments about residents' friends' and family members' living locations, compared to the residents of HiCNs, it looks like the residents of HiONs had more friends living within their own neighbourhood. But if we now look at the descriptions of their relationships with their neighbours, this difference seems to explain itself rather by a difference in regards to what residents refer to when they talk about their neighbourhood. Many of the residents of HiONs who before, stated that they had friends within their own neighbourhood, and when asked about their relationship with their neighbours, stated, like Lara: *"no, neighbourly relations only."* Or as Stefania explained: *"The neighbours that live close to us, I know their name or I recognise them,*

but we are not friends … we are well mannered, maybe I call one or the other neighbour for their birthday or for Christmas, I bring them a nougat or a bottle of champagne … but everyone stays in their own house."

Nevertheless, there were a few residents who like Flor stated to *"visit each other … I know lots of people. Mainly because all our life we have had a club life, you know the SIC, the San Isidro Club*[64] *which is just here around the corner."* Or like Mona who explained her friendships within the neighbourhoods as follows: *"… I tell you, with the people on the corner, we meet regularly for dinner, we go out, our children are friends, the people next door are doctors and we meet every once in a while, two or three times a year, with the people across the street who we have very good relations, with the people on this side we don't, … well and then we see people who live around the corner, and then many others, actually we have friends close by, two or three blocks from here."*

One of the differences found, compared with residents of HiCNs, was that generally, residents of HiONs made a difference between the relationships they had with their direct neighbours, compared to the ones they had with others within the neighbourhood. On the other hand, just like in the HiCNs, there were also some HiON residents who described their relationship with their neighbours as purely neighbourly. Looking at all these descriptions of neighbourly relations, it can be concluded that there were no significant differences found between those living within HiCNs and those who did not.

Apart from the analysis of social relations with relatives, friends and neighbours, the existing contact and encounter with strangers within residents' own neighbourhoods,

[64] Rugby and Hockey Club

were also examined, even if it is obvious that it almost cannot exist within HiCNs, because by their very nature, they inhibit this kind of contact. The reason for including the analysis of contact with strangers within the neighbourhood is that in interviews with residents of open neighbourhoods, where this contact exists, it emerged that this type of contact was often perceived to be provocative and thought provoking. Thus, it will be shown the extent to which this type of contact occurs in open neighbourhoods and what conclusions can be drawn on the consequences of inhibiting informal encounter within HiCNs.

If we thus look at residents' contact with strangers within HiONs, it was found that part of the interviewees made some comment about an informal encounter they had experienced in their own neighbourhood. These always consisted of contacts on residents' doorsteps, either with strangers asking for some kind of support or help or with cardboard collectors who passed through streets ringing bells to collect cardboard. Flor, for example, mentioned almost incidentally, *"besides, there are people all the time passing by, begging and everybody gives them, food, cloths ... actually, they ring the bell at my house and I give them what is at hand, newspapers, a pack of pasta, it won't change my financial situation if I give them a pack of pasta or a bottle of milk."*

As can be seen here, residents talk about these situations of contact as something they are used to and they perceive them as part of the reality within their neighbourhood. Additionally, it is interesting to note that all of the comments that were made in respect to contact with strangers involved some reflection on that situation and some comment on what that situation signified or how they perceived these strangers. If routine opportunities for such contact are more limited – as is the case in HiCNs – the potential for such thoughts and reflections may also be limited and the perceptions of 'strangers'

are more likely to be based on second-hand or media accounts than on direct experience.

> Stefania: *"… the fact that there are so many cardboard collectors …"*
> K: *"There are many here in the area?"*
> Stefania: *"No, very few. We have an old guy who already knows that he can ring the doorbell and during the week we keep all the things we can give him, the cartons and the rest … he's our friend. But I know that in the centre it's terrible."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Sometimes, direct contact with strangers gives abstract opinions a different face, and in a way, the stranger turns into an acquaintance. This does not mean that the opinion about the broader issue necessarily changes, but it gives people the opportunity to start understanding other people's abstract problems. On the other hand, existing prejudices might also be confirmed and thus, the opinion about strangers might be even more negative in cases where there was contact than where it did not exist.

> Anna: *"I have people here who come every Saturday to beg, one person comes once a month, the other one every Saturday."*
> K*: "Do you know where they are from?"*
> Anna: *"No, I know that they have various children … and what I was telling you about the abuse, maybe you give them a pack of pasta so that they feed the child, and that person instead of feeding the child sells it and with that money drinks or buys cigarettes. So that cannot be, it doesn't have the purpose for which you gave it, that's why sometimes it's preferable to make a donation through an institution where you know that things are organised so that it gets where it was aimed at, and not give individually."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Among residents of HiONs, the informal encounters that have been commented on refer to contact with poor people passing through their neighbourhood and do not involve any direct disturbance or actual danger within their daily life. This was found to be different within MiONs. Here, most of the comments that were made about social contact with strangers in their own neighbourhood, refer to conflicts residents had or fears they had, which resulted from these encounters. Marco for example, complained: *"Now that I'm old and I'm retired, why do I have to be mixed with these people who insult, who throw*

things on the street, they insult each other, if you tell them something like for example: 'kid, don't throw the oranges here, don't you see that they get stuck on the wall and leave a mark? Don't hang from the trees, don't play with the gun', they come with a gun and shoot the birds on the trees, ... they scratch the cars that are parked here, so I try to enter the car immediately. I have to take care all the time so I say: 'why do I get the blame? What did I do?'" Or Carlos who comments: *"... besides, the people kind of don't get in here, maybe you'll find a lost cardboard collector who doesn't know where he's going, but otherwise no, luckily it has been a long time that nothing has happened around here."*

Among the residents of HiCNs, the only interviewee who commented on possible contact with strangers within her own neighbourhood was Paola because of a very particular circumstance, which led the HiCN to open a pedestrian gate regularly. Her statement: *"there is a black gate which has a small door, which is open, they open it so that the people from the housing estates over there can pass, because otherwise huge trouble is made and we have a guard here to control the people that come in and out ..."* shows that the opening of the gate to strangers is perceived as a danger and any kind of contact is thus avoided. The people living in the adjacent housing estate were perceived as dangerous strangers and as a result, a guard was stationed to make up for the reduction of security produced by the opening of the gate. The guard should also prevent the strangers from walking through the neighbourhood no more than absolutely necessary or to stay within the neighbourhood. Therefore, it was almost impossible that residents would have any direct contact with these strangers.

Similar to the residents of HiCNs, those of the LiONs normally did not have any contact with strangers within their own neighbourhood, as even if the neighbourhood was not

physically closed off, it virtually was, since no one who was not a resident, normally entered the neighbourhood. There were exceptions, mostly social workers or members of NGOs working within the neighbourhood, but these cannot be considered to be strangers since these contacts did not occur spontaneously within public space.

In conclusion, it was found that apart from the differences regarding residents' contact with strangers within the neighbourhood, there were no major differences found in residents' relations with their neighbours and that these always varied from one person to the other and thus, could not be found to depend on the type of neighbourhood people live in. What was found to be different, however, was people's conception of their own neighbourhood and, in the case of the largest HiCN, which provides some leisure facilities, the opportunity to meet neighbours. In all other neighbourhoods, residents either claimed to know their direct neighbours and others whom they met through their children's schools, or they said that they already knew their neighbours from childhood.

6.2.2 SOCIAL RELATIONS WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY

Regarding social relations within the whole municipality, it was found that most of the residents of HiCNs said that many of their family members lived within the same municipality, but not within the same neighbourhood. Most of them also had many friends within their municipality. Others had their relatives living in other areas of the city of Buenos Aires, but they stated that they now had most of their friends within the municipality as well. Pati, for example said: *"... we do have many friends within the area, those we have met since we moved here, we came without friends."* Only one resident claimed that all her family and her real friends did not live within the municipality.

Martina: *"No, all in the centre."*
K: *"But do you also have friends here in the area?"*
Martina: *"No, no."*
K: *"And here within the neighbourhood neither?"*
Martina: *"Friend as neighbours, but no, friends no, friends I have in Pilar and in the centre, I'm originally from the centre."*
(Resident of a HiCN)

If this is compared with the residents of HiONs the difference is that all of the residents claimed to have at least part of their family within the municipality. Part of the interviewees said they also had all their friends within the municipality. Others claimed they had friends all over Buenos Aires, but generally referred to the centre and the northern suburbs when they said that.

Isa: *"Yes quite close, my mum very close, my sister lives in Las Lomas …"*
K: *"Do you have friends from all over Buenos Aires or more from here?"*
Isa: *"No, from all over Buenos Aires, or better 'Zona Norte', I don't have friends in the south of the city …I have friends in the centre, Vicente Lopez[65], here, Las Lomas …"*
(Resident of a HiON)

If we look at the differences along class lines, it could be noted that among the residents of MiONs, the picture of where their families live was more mixed. Some had most of them living in San Isidro, and these residents also stated that all of their friends lived within the municipality as well. When asked where his relatives and friends lived, Leo for example stated: *"In San Isidro but not here."*

It is interesting to note that this resident of a MiON differentiated explicitly between his own neighbourhood and the rest of the municipality, like many residents of the HiCNs did. This can be explained by the fact that the neighbourhood he lives in, *Las Casitas*, described in Chapter Five, is a former working-class neighbourhood built by a public company, which has clearly defined borders just like the HiCNs and the LiONs.

[65] Neighbouring municipality

Other residents of MiONs who had parts of their family within the municipality and parts across Buenos Aires, also had most of their friends living within the municipality. Then there were those who claimed not to have any relatives within San Isidro and who said that they had friends within the municipality and across Buenos Aires in other municipalities.

> Mara: *"Yes, well, the parents of the friends of our kids, who live all around here."*
> K: *"Do you also still have friends in the centre of Buenos Aires?"*
> Mara: *"Yes, yes we've got friends in the centre."*
> K: *"And your family?"*
> Mara: *"… No, my father lives in La Lucila … my nieces live in Belgrano, dispersed …"*
> (Resident of a MiON)

Regarding residents of LiONs, it was seen in the previous section, that most of them had the majority of their family and friends living within the same neighbourhood. Yet, many of the younger interviewees stated that they additionally had friends outside of their own neighbourhood all living within the same municipality or at most, within the neighbouring one.

> Emilia: *"Yes, I have all my childhood here, all my life."*
> K: *"Do you also have friends who don't live within your neighbourhood?"*
> Emilia: *"Yes, my boyfriend lives in Martinez[66], additionally I have a few friends in San Isidro[67], San Fernando[68] …"*
> (Resident of a LiON)

The greatest differences, however, were found looking at residents' contacts with residents of neighbourhoods adjacent to their own. Residents of LiONs mostly stated that they did not know any resident of a neighbourhood directly adjacent to their own. Maria, for example, answered with a clear *"no"* when asked if she knew people who lived in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

[66] A middle-income neighbourhood within the municipality of San Isidro
[67] San Isidro here refers to the neighbourhood San Isidro, which is centre of the municipality of San Isidro.
[68] Neighbouring municipality

K: *"Do you know people who live in the surrounding neighbourhoods?"*
Alexia: *"Yes, yes."*
Katja: *"And where?"*
Alexia*: "Let's say, I know one … who is an acquaintance of my mother."*
Katja: *"But do you have friends that you go to visit?"*
Alexia: *"Outside of the neighbourhood? No, no."*
(Resident of a LiON)

It was found mostly among younger residents, that there was a wish to have some connection to outside neighbourhoods, and thus if any links existed, these were rather overstated. As seen above, and in the following extract, links between other people the interviewee knows were described as if they were her own.

Nadine: *"Yes, I know people."*
K: *"In all surrounding neighbourhoods?"*
Nadine: *"In most, for example, when I went to the foundation*[69] *to study, where we gave with a group of young people support to younger kids, there were kids from the surrounding neighbourhoods who at the same time were friends with the kids on the other side of the wall, they had met in the foundation and they ended up being friends … so they got rid of many existing doubts …"*
K: *"You are talking about the closed neighbourhoods around here?*
Nadine: *"Exactly, next-door here, in the foundation they became friends."*
…
K: *"These people that you know who live in other neighbourhoods, do you visit them or do they come and visit you?"*
Nadine: *"It has been a long time that now I don't see them …"*
(Resident of a LiON)

When talking about the surrounding neighbourhoods, most of the residents of HiCNs also stated that they did not have acquaintances in any of these, and therefore, they did not know the directly adjacent neighbourhoods well, but they did know people in other neighbourhoods within the municipality, most of whom they knew through their children's schools.

K: *"Do you know people who live in the surrounding neighbourhoods?"*
Elisa: *"Not in this zone. My friends are on the other side of Segundo Fernandez and towards the centre of San Isidro, and then also in neighbourhoods further outside."*
K: *"But here you don't know, do you not pass through these neighbouring areas, is there nothing you use or people you visit in these neighbourhoods?"*
Elisa: *"Here right next to us, no."*
(Resident of a HiCN)

[69] A foundation for school support called 'Nuevo Horizonte'

Most residents of HiCNs thus did not know the neighbourhoods next to their own and never went there, except for those they had to drive through to get to their own neighbourhood. Others knew the neighbourhoods surrounding their own from cycling through them, but also generally did not know people living there.

> K: *"Do you know anybody who lives in the surrounding neighbourhoods?"*
> Martina: *"No, I know the area because I go there a lot on my bike … all this area I know from cycling."*
> K: *"So you know it from passing through not from visiting people?"*
> Martina: *"No, maybe some schoolmate of the girls …"*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Only one resident said that she knew people in all the surrounding neighbourhoods because she had lived in San Isidro all her life. But it must be pointed out that the HiCN she lived in, did not have any deprived or poor neighbourhoods directly adjacent, unlike the other HiCNs where interviews were conducted.

Regarding contacts with residents in poorer neighbourhoods, one resident of a HiCN mentioned that the only contact she had with residents of poor neighbourhoods was because they provided her with services like gardening. She also stated that she sometimes went to Caritas, which was on the borders of the LiON and next to the wall surrounding her own neighbourhood, because of her involvement in charity work. Others did not mention any contact with residents of deprived adjacent neighbourhoods.

> Pati: *"Yes, behind the wall we have a slum where I normally don't enter. I work quite a lot in charity so that I often take food and everything, but I don't enter to this particular part, I go where there is the school, I leave it there."*
> K: *"So you know parts of it?"*
> Pati: *"Yes, I only know a part yes, it's the part where one can enter without any protection, other parts you can't enter alone if you are a stranger.*
> *… I only have the guy who is the gardener and a painter who lives there."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Although this interviewee is one of the few residents of a HiCN who actually had some contact with the LiON next to her neighbourhood, she mentioned a lack of contact with residents of that neighbourhood. This demonstrates that a little contact might generate knowledge and understanding and be somehow thought provoking, whereas no contact at all might lead to a complete unawareness of the unknown.

For residents of HiCNs, it can be seen that the major source of contact with residents of different neighbourhoods, were the schools of their children. In contrast, most of the residents of HiONs stated that they knew residents in most of the surrounding neighbourhoods.

> K: *"Do you know the surrounding neighbourhoods, outside of Lomas de San Isidro, do you know them well, do you have friends living there …"*
> Stefania: *"Yes, many."*
> K: *"And in which areas for example?"*
> Stefania: *"Here in Beccar, and in the neighbourhood Las Victorias, I have many people who live in closed neighbourhoods close by, eight or ten blocks from here …"*
> K: *"So you go a lot to other neighbourhoods outside of your own?"*
> Stefania: "Yes."
> (Resident of an HiON)

But similar to the residents of HiCNs, there were also those who stated that most of the people they knew lived in neighbourhoods further away, but not necessarily in the adjacent neighbourhoods, since their children's school was in another neighbourhood and most of their acquaintances were through their children's school as well.

> Mona: *"Yes, I've got people. What happens is that I have more people in El Bajo de San Isidro, on the other side of the centre of San Isidro. In the historic centre I have a very close friend, then another one in the centre of San Isidro, and then another in El Bajo, that is where the school of my kids is, and I know many people from that school that live there."*
> K: *"And toward the other side of San Isidro?"*
> Mona: *"Towards there I have … some friends."*
> K: *"But do you know the neighbourhoods well or do you normally not go there?"*
> Mona: *"No, normally I don't go there because generally you go when you have people you know or friends."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

The school seems to be the fundamental point of connection with residents who are not either direct neighbours or old friends. The fact that more residents of HiONs said they knew people in adjacent neighbourhoods compared to the residents of HiCNs, could mainly be explained by three reasons. Firstly, HiCNs are often neighboured by a LiON and are generally surrounded by more diverse neighbourhoods, whereas HiONs are often surrounded by neighbourhoods of similar socio-economic levels. Secondly, residents of HiONs are slightly more diverse regarding their income levels than those of the HiCNs. Therefore, the economic differences between the different open neighbourhoods tend to blend into each other, and changes are not as abrupt as in the case of HiCNs, where behind the wall there is complete change. Thirdly, as already mentioned above, the residents of open neighbourhoods didn't have a precise territory in mind when they talked about their own neighbourhood, and when they said they knew the surrounding neighbourhoods well and that they had friends living there, they might refer to parts of their own neighbourhood which were further away, i.e. not their own street. Additionally, since the limits of their own neighbourhood are not as precisely defined as in the case of HiCNs, they often do not consider each surrounding neighbourhood when asked about them. The residents of HiCNs, on the other hand, all had a clear notion of where their neighbourhood ended, and they talked about each side outside of their neighbourhood in a very precise way.

Taking these differences into account, I found, contrary to what is often stated in the literature about the social relations of residents of gated communities compared to others (Arizaga, 2005; Lemanski, 2005; Roitman, 2003, Svampa, 2001), that there was not a significant difference in the levels and patterns of contact, the residents of HiCNs and HiONs had. All of them mentioned their children's schools as being the main source of contact with people outside their neighbourhood, and they sent their children

to the same private schools. If we look at MiONs, the majority stated that they knew residents from all of the surrounding neighbourhoods.

> K: *"Do you know people who live in the surrounding neighbourhoods?"*
> Carlos: *"Yes, yes, everywhere."*
> K: *"And do you sometimes go to these neighbourhoods?"*
> Carlos: *"Yes, yes, actually we go everywhere …"*
> (Resident of a MiON)

> K: *"Do you have friends who live in these surrounding neighbourhoods?"*
> Mara: *"Yes, in all of them."*
> K: *"Do you visit them, do you know the neighbourhoods well?"*
> Mara: *"Yes."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

Similar to HiONs, MiONs are also generally surrounded by neighbourhoods of similar or higher socio-economic level, and thus the statement that residents knew residents of all their adjacent neighbourhoods does not automatically imply that they also had contact with poorer residents of their municipality. Many of the residents of MiONs stated that they had lived within the municipality all their lives and therefore, they knew residents of many different neighbourhoods. Considering the directly adjoining neighbourhoods, it seems again, the residents did not consider their particular neighbourhood as a delimitated area and thus, the notion of 'my neighbourhood' does not refer to a precise physical territory and is often seen as a large part of the municipality. Again, it is difficult to evaluate the differences that were found compared to the residents of HiCNs in respect to contact with neighbouring residents. But on the other hand, as stated above, it shows that the physical borders of a neighbourhood influence the perception of the neighbourhood and of the surrounding ones, and living in a HiCN has an impact on the conception of neighbourhood and of the municipality as a whole.

Concluding, it is found that the only significant differences regarding contact with residents of neighbouring areas exists among residents of LiONs compared to all others. These residents have much less contact with outsiders, use different schools and are generally excluded from opportunities of meeting others. They are also the ones who are the most interested and who value any connection they have with residents of different neighbourhoods, since this signifies that they are or at least feel, less excluded. Among all other groups of residents, there are many links as long as the neighbourhood adjacent to their own is not a LiON, and existing links are generally established through either contact with old friends and family members or through their children's schools.

6.3 OPPORTUNITIES OF ENCOUNTER

As seen in Section 6.2.2, it is found that among high-income residents, the major sources of social contact within the municipality are the private schools their children attend. Also among middle-income residents, school connections play an important role for residents' social interaction patterns. The schools MiON residents send their children to however, are mostly public schools. Among residents of LiONs, these municipal schools are often described as the only connection point with residents of other neighbourhoods. Since residents of high-income neighbourhoods all send their children to private schools, regardless of the form of neighbourhood they live in and residents of MiONs do so if their resources allow it, public schools are only frequented by middle-income and poor residents. Thus, they cannot be seen as a possible source of contact between residents of all different socio-economic levels.

Within this section I analyse other locations, which could function as sources of contact, and it is examined to what extent, these are frequented by residents of all the different

neighbourhoods that have been studied. Section 6.3.1 looks at the interviewees' patterns of spending their leisure time, and at the locations they normally frequent during that time. Section 6.3.2 analyses the use of public space by residents of all four neighbourhood types and the values given to public space, since public space is generally considered to be a location of possible encounter with strangers. Section 6.3.4 then explores residents' participation in public or religious events or courses.

Looking at the literature on the social interaction of gated community residents, it was found that there are also other locations of possible interaction, which have been analysed. Roitman (2008), for example, looked at activities like shopping and the provision of jobs by residents of HiCNs to poorer residents. This research found that regarding shopping, most residents use big supermarkets within the municipality and local shops close to their houses for fresh products. Both of these vary according to income levels, rather than according to neighbourhood type. The only remarkable difference, which could be established between residents of HiCNs and HiONs, is that only residents of HiCNs stated they used the Internet for food shopping. It would be interesting to examine if gated community residents generally tend to use the Internet more for shopping than others, but this was not looked at in this study.

In regards to social interaction through the provision of jobs, it was found that there were few residents of high- and middle-income neighbourhoods, who stated they had an employee who is a resident of a LiON, but not from within the same municipality. Two interviewees living in LiONs on the other hand, stated they worked for households in high-income neighbourhoods. When HiCNs and HiONs were compared, no difference was found in their comments and reflections concerning this type of social interaction, and in resulting opinions about the 'other'. Therefore, it can be presumed that living in a

HiCN does not generally influence one's opinions and attitudes towards employing residents of LiONs, nor could it be shown that this type of social contact changed interviewees opinions about specific LiONs located in the same neighbourhood, nor about their residents.

Before looking at social interaction during residents' leisure time, I want to explain why I did not look at interviewees' social interaction at their work place more generally. First, as described in Chapter Four, most of my interviewees are women, many of whom are housewives and most of the men are pensioners, and therefore, not working. Secondly, most of the working interviewees work in the centre of Buenos Aires and thus, there is no difference between those who live in closed or open neighbourhoods. The social contacts which resulted from their jobs and their shopping activities were not further analysed.

6.3.1 SOCIAL INTERACTION IN LEISURE TIME

As mentioned above, this section looks at how interviewees normally spend their free time, whether they spend their weekends in some sort of sports or leisure club, if they use public facilities for their leisure activities, or if they mostly spend their free time at home and thus, within their neighbourhood or at their friends' and relatives' homes.

Analysing the empirical data, it was found that among all neighbourhood types, there are those who state that they spend lots of their leisure time at their own home or at the homes of their relatives and friends. Elisa (resident of a HiCN) for instance, stated that: *"this Sunday for example, all my friends came for lunch here at home. Normally the whole family gets together, we are a very close family, we meet at my oldest son's house, who has the largest house ... we like to meet on weekends, since during the week*

we don't see each other as they all work." Similarly Susanna, also a resident of a HiCN said: *"well, we don't go out a lot because my husband is very homey let's say, he's out all day and he prefers to receive guests at home than to go out, but we do go out sometimes*." Also Mona who lives in a HiON claimed *"... generally we do something here at home on Sundays with my husband's family."* Also, among residents of MiONs, there are many who like Marco, mostly spend their weekends at home or at their friends' and family's homes. *"We're almost always here and sometimes we visit each other ... or I go to my sister in law's house who lives in San Fernando, the sister of my wife, or to my brother's house who lives in Moron, or maybe to the house of some family we're friends with, a couple we're friends with, or they come here."* Nadine, a resident of a LiON, describing her leisure time, similarly stated that: *"On the weekends we try to stay at home, sometimes we go to a friend's house and generally on Saturdays we go to visit his mother, since he otherwise never sees her, and we stay at her house with his brothers."*

Most of the residents of HiONs, however, said apart from spending lots of time at their home and receiving friends, they also regularly go to their sports club. Stefania for example, described her weekends as follows: *"We are very homey. We receive many people at home; all those who live in the centre spend their weekends here. But apart from that we sometimes meet friends around here or go to watch the kids playing rugby. ... yes, the golf club ... the kids also play golf ..."*

However, it is the residents of MiONs who more than others, state they spend their leisure time at home or at the houses of their friends and relatives, with Carlos saying *"... we do barbecues here and everybody comes, that's much more comfortable. We used to spend Christmas here, everybody came, we had fifty people for dinner and*

lately, we do it at my brother in law's in Del Viso, where there is a pool and more space. It's a country house, so it's more comfortable there." And Leo simply described their options as follows: *"Sometimes we're here and sometimes we are at a friend's house."*

Receiving friends or family at home or visiting them is the traditional way to spend the weekend in Argentina, and there seems to be no class divide and no difference between open and closed neighbourhoods. However, looking at the accounts of residents' leisure time in more detail, it is found that among the residents of HiCNs, only about half of the interviewees stated that they spent most of their leisure time within their own neighbourhood, since it offered all the facilities they needed. These residents were all residents of the *Boating*, the HiCN that includes some leisure facilities and a restaurant. Martina, for example, when asked if they spend most of their leisure time within their own neighbourhood or outside, replied: *"Both things ... there are times when we stay here a lot, especially in summer."* The extract of the interview below demonstrates this reliance on the person's own neighbourhood for leisure activities in more detail:

> K: *"Do you spend your weekends mostly here or elsewhere?"*
> Nicole: *"Yes, we're either here in the Boating or in the area, but generally we like to be here, in the garden or walking through the neighbourhood."*
> Katja: *"Are you members of any other club?"*
> Nicole: *"No."*
> Katja: *"So to do sports or so you stay here or …"*
> Nicole: *"Or here … Martin who would be the one most in need of a club has the whole sailing part solved very well here because he has the boat here … and then the girls, I go to the gym or play tennis, they have a vacation club which takes place in here, with a swimming teacher, it's quite complete so …"*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

All of these residents are not members of any leisure or sports club, whereas the other half of the interviewees who do not mention spending their free time in their own neighbourhood, all state they are members either of *El Nautico*, which is the local

sailing and golf club or of the *San Isidro Jockey Club*, which is a prestigious social club that offers various leisure facilities.

> K: *"What do you normally do in your free time, on the weekends, do you stay here or do you go out?"*
> Elsa: *"We're here or across the road in the club."*
> K: *"And other places, when you go out for dinner for example?"*
> Elsa: *"To the club … yes, because the reason why one lives in a place like this is because it implies that one doesn't have to go out on weekends. Moreover everyone wants to have some quiet, and this is quiet."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Similarly Pati, also a resident of a HiCN, stated: *"We go out quite a lot, we make family life on weekends and go to the club. The kids play tennis and my husband plays golf. On Sundays, we almost always go to visit my family in Bella Vista or some friend."* Also Paola (resident of a HiCN) and her family mainly go to a private club on weekends. She explained: *"we are members of the sailing club and we go there a lot, because the one who is 15 now sails a lot and so we always went and we formed a group of parents, very funny … he stopped sailing and now the one who is 10 started sailing, so we take him there and we have an active club life, although we do not do any sports there ourselves, but we go there a lot."*

Among residents of HiONs, all but one of the interviewees stated that they were members of a club. Many had very similar patterns of spending their free time as those residents of HiCNs who were also members of one of the clubs of San Isidro. Their weekends generally consisted of going to the club and spending most of their leisure time there, if they did not stay at home or visit friends or relatives. Flor, for instance, described: *"Yes, I go there [to the club] often, generally once every weekend. It's so close by and often I go with the little ones during the week so that they can play there."*

Contrary to residents of the HiCNs, residents of HiONs often mention the club as one of many possibilities for spending their leisure time and not so much as the main place to go to. Mona for example, said: *"When we go out, it can be Patio Bullrich[70], where we go to watch a movie, or we go to the theatre. We have a subscription at the Colon, or we go to the Avenida sometimes, and otherwise, we also go to the Nautico de San Isidro, where we are members."*

Among residents of HiONs, there were also some who went to the club to practise sports or because of the facilities it offered for their children, but at the same time, claimed that they did not like the club life per se. Anna for example, replying to the question if they went to a club in their leisure time, said *"only to play golf, we're not people who like the clubs."*

Most of the residents of MiONs, on the other hand stated that, apart from spending their leisure time in private houses, they did use some kind of public leisure facilities or public space in their free time. Clara said that *"... on Sundays we sometimes go out ... sometimes also on a Saturday if there is some kind of programme. ... sometimes we go to the countryside, we try to go out all together every once in a while, to do some programme together, the rest of the time we stay at home and do things here."*

> Mario: *"We often go cycling on Sundays. A big road, the Thames is closed off on Sundays for walking and cycling, so lots of people go, it's a social event more than a sports event. We don't go walking a lot, it's a shame because around here there are good places to go walking, but we do not go often. … Yes, all in San Isidro, and sometimes we go to a club close to Pilar."*
> K: *"What kind of club?"*
> Marina: *"A club for commercial employees, which I've got through my social security."*
> Mario: *"We started going on Saturdays with the kids to play volleyball, basketball, paddle, you can do all the sports there."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

[70] A well known upper scale shopping centre in the centre of Buenos Aires

This was not at all found among residents of HiCNs and HiONs, but some of the residents of LiONs made similar statements. Nadine (resident of a LiON) for instance, said: *"... we go to church, because I go a lot to church, so we go to the local church, or I study."* And as seen below, some also stated they used public spaces.

> Maria: *"Yes, we go out."*
> K: *"Where do you go to?"*
> Maria: *"To San Isidro."*
> K: *"To the centre?"*
> Maria: *"No, to the Bajo de San Isidro, to the river."*
> K: *"Do you use the coastal walkway there?"*
> Maria: "Yes."
> (Resident of a LiON)

This shows that, similar to public space and education, public leisure facilities are not used by upper-middle and upper classes. Thus, it might be argued that resulting social divisions are related more to class-based consumption choices, than to the effects of urban form. Furthermore, as will be argued in the concluding section of this chapter, the provision of private leisure facilities within HiCNs has an impact on residents' social interaction patterns, enhancing contact within the neighbourhood.

However, the leisure activities which all residents reported to do outside of their own neighbourhood, the club or the home was going to the cinema or other similar events, which they reported to do either within San Isidro or in the centre of Buenos Aires. Looking at these descriptions of the habits of going out, residents of HiCNs almost exclusively stated that they remain within the local area. Elisa for example, described: *"I go to the cinema at Unicentre[71], or, the other night for example we went for dinner here at Libertador and Martinez[72], I also go to the yacht club of San Fernando[73], which*

[71] A shopping centre in San Isidro
[72] An intersection of two main roads in San Isidro
[73] Neighbouring municipality

is a bit irresponsible, because we come back late at night but …". The interview extract below shows how the centre of Buenos Aires almost seems to be avoided by some of the residents of HiCNs:

> K: *"If you go out at night, to the cinema or elsewhere, where do you normally go?"*
> Pati: *"We go to Unicentre or to Soleil or to Showcentre, always here within the area."*
> K: *"Not to the centre of Buenos Aires?"*
> Pati: *"No, not often, almost never, once or twice a year."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Also, residents of MiONs stated that it was mostly places within the area where they went out to in the evenings.

> K: *"Do you sometimes go out at night, to visit friends or to the cinema?"*
> Mario: *"Yes."*
> Marina: *"We do not go out a lot though."*
> K: *"But if you go out, do you stay here in the area or do you also go to other places?"*
> Marina: *"Yes, generally we go out around here."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

> K: *"And if you go to the cinema, or the like?"*
> Carlos: *"To the cinema, it's Unicentre or Tren de la Costa. … In summer we go to Del Viso, to the country house of my brother in law."*
> K: *"Do you go to the centre of Buenos Aires sometimes."*
> Carlos: *"We escape it a lot, the kids yes, because they study there, but we try not to."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

Similarly, some residents of HiONs stated that they spend much of their free time within the area. Lara for instance, said: *"If we stay here, we go to the cinema or we make plans with friends."* But there are also some residents of open neighbourhoods who claimed to go to the centre of Buenos Aires more regularly.

> Leo: *"It depends, sometimes we go to the centre [of Buenos Aires], sometimes we go towards Tigre, sometimes we go out in San Isidro, sometimes we go there for dinner."*
> K: *"Do you go to the centre of Buenos Aires regularly?"*
> Leo: *"Yes, yes, two or three times a month."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

Alexia: *"… or I go out to dance."*
K: *"Where do you go to?"*
Alexia: *"To Olivos to the Sunset, otherwise to the centre of Buenos Aires, quite far away. … to the Coyote in Palermo for example."*
(Resident of a LiON)

It can be concluded that there was no major differences found between residents of HiCNs and HiONs regarding their ways of spending leisure time. The only exception being that all the residents living in the *Boating,* the HiCN which offers some leisure facilities and a restaurant, do not generally use other private clubs for sports or leisure and that in that case, the HiCN takes over the function of the club. This is significant for the broader discussion about the impact of gated communities, since many HiCNs elsewhere offer similar or more facilities for their residents only.

6.3.2 PUBLIC SPACE

As seen in the previous section, residents of all four neighbourhood types rarely mention public spaces as a location where they spend their leisure time. This section explores the use of public space within everyday life by the residents of HiCNs, compared with the residents of open neighbourhoods of diverse socio-economic levels. Furthermore, this section looks at the concerns of these residents regarding the public spaces they use or would like to use, the value they give to public space and their fears within public space, in order to explore if there are links between the retreat into privatised public spaces by residents of HiCNs and their civic concerns.

As explained in Chapter Three, there is a long history of debate about what constitutes public space. Most commonly, it is defined as a space which allows unrestricted access to anyone, but at the same time, it is difficult to maintain that "any space has ever held such status" (Atkinson, 2001: 3). Nonetheless, I here use the term 'public space' to refer

to physical locations which are freely accessible to all citizens, and which are owned and maintained publicly. The relevance of public space for the analysis of residents' civic concerns and social engagement, lies in the fact that it is often in public spaces that people gather to interact, to observe others, to shop, to talk and to play or as Beauregard and Bounds put it: "It is where people of diverse backgrounds engage each other on a daily basis in a variety of activities and associations. There, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are exercised, civic sentiments are formed and identities are formed and identities are realized" (2000: 243).

As I describe in Chapter Three, when discussing public space, I follow Tonkiss' differentiation of three ideal-types of public space: First, the Square, which according to her represents collective belonging; Secondly, the Café, which represents social exchange; and thirdly, the Street, representing informal encounter (Tonkiss, 2005). In this section, in looking at the use of public space, it is the first and the second types, the Square and the Café, which are analysed. The third type is explored in Section 6.4.1, where the significance of informal encounter and its impact on residents' civic concerns are examined.

Looking at the empirical data, it is found that residents of MiONs use public spaces the most. That is to say, they use more public spaces on a more frequent basis, than all of the other groups. Asked about the use of public space, all the interviewees of MiONs stated that they used some public space, and many of them said they used various public spaces on a regular basis. When asked about the public spaces they use, Mario for instance said: *"The club would be one, because Commercial Employees is a public thing. I used the public swimming pool here in San Isidro for a while, and the space that we go to on Sundays is a municipal path, apart from that no others."* Or Marina for

example, described: *"When we lived in Torcuato (neighbouring municipality), I did not come home for lunch and there is a long path along the river, which is shared by Vicente Lopez and San Isidro. Everyday, I went there for lunch and I went down by car and had a picnic. It's a nice place, it's done like a park, it has playgrounds, it's generally clean."*

All of the residents of LiONs also stated that they used public spaces regularly, but it is interesting to note that they seem not to use the same public spaces as the residents of MiONs. The public spaces they use are rather commercialised public spaces like open markets. Nadine (resident of a LiON) for example, said: "We *almost always go to the fruit harbour which is very nice. Now the 'Tren de la Costa' has become nice as well. There are events for the people; not long ago they started this kind of street theatre …"* and similarly Emilia (resident of a LiON) described the public spaces: *"In summer we went a few times to Aguas Verdes, and we stayed there Saturday and Sunday. … and sometimes when we're here we go to the fruit harbour, to Coelo, there in Tigre."* In addition, Alexia (resident of a LiON) mentioned only markets in public spaces when referring to the public spaces she uses: *"Yes I like to go to San Isidro, to the hippy market … Yes, in the central square. … So yes, to that square I always go there or otherwise I go to Tigre, to that market in Tigre."*

Apart from these commercialised public spaces, residents of LiONs generally also use the local squares within their own neighbourhood as Emilia described: *"The square of San Isidro, then here, the little square of the school, the square Gardel … we used to go there when it was hot."* This is not so much the case among residents of MiONs, where the only users of local public spaces are mothers of small children who use local public

playgrounds, such as Clara, who said: *"Within the neighbourhood, the 'mast post square', the little square over there. When I'm alone, I go there with the kids."*

As outlined in the conceptual framework, public spaces can be understood as a major source of social encounter, and it is often argued in the literature on gated communities, which was reviewed in Chapter Two, that the privatisation of public space is responsible for less social mixing (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Landman, 2006; Madanipour, 2003). But as this study shows, social mixing between residents of MiONs and LiONs does not seem to take place in public spaces anyway, because even if they use public space, they do not use the same public spaces.

If these patterns in the use of public space are now compared to the use of public space by residents of HiONs and HiCNs, the most significant finding is that these do not generally use public spaces at all, and many residents gave very plain and categorically negative answers to the question of whether they use any public space, with Stefania (resident of a HiON) simply saying *"No",* or Mona declaring:

> Mona: *"No, if you are saying a square … no, generally not."*
> K: *"The children neither?"*
> Mona: *"The children neither, no, unfortunately no."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

These negative statements were found among residents of HiONs as well as among residents of HiCNs, where many interviewees said they did not use public spaces at all, with Pati even claiming: *"No, I can't think of any now."*

However, some of the residents of HiONs, even if they do not use any public space, either complain that there are no public spaces within their neighbourhood or comment that they would actually like to use some, but that the existing public spaces are not in a

condition to be used safely. For instance, Flor said that *"there are no squares here, there is nothing to use collectively … no."* and similarly Lara explained: *"The squares for example, I would love to take my daughter to the square, but I'm afraid to tell the truth. There is a very nice square close by … very nice that square, it even has a merry-go-round … but I'm scared, I don't like that …."* When asked if she would like to go there if she wasn't afraid, she replied: *"Yes I'd love to."*

Only one of the interviewees of the HiCNs, Paola, said that she and her family did not use any public spaces, and further commented *"… No, we don't use them, there are public spaces, like when you leave the neighbourhood, there is kind of like a park that is a space that is filled with people on the weekends, they use it a lot. I don't take advantage of it; I don't know how to take advantage of things, which the municipality offers"*. This gives the impression that she was reproaching herself on the lack of using public space.

The most significant difference between the answers of the residents of HiCNs, compared to those of HiONs, is that even if they both do not use public spaces, the latter partly complains about a lack of public space or about the fact that they think it is dangerous to use them. Some residents of HiONs feel they must give a reason for not using public space, or at least feel it is a shame that they don't use it.

Regarding the impact of HiCNs on urban democratic processes, this apparently minor difference in value given to public space is significant because with an increase in HiCNs, it can be expected that there will be less and less pressure on the local government to provide public spaces, which are accessible and attractive to all

residents. This would in the long run, be a disadvantage for those who cannot afford to use privately provided open spaces.

According to Tonkiss (2005), citizens will see no necessity or desire to share public space with strangers, if these strangers do not concern them in the first place. Therefore, she argues that the value of public space per se is lost if social contact diminishes. It is important to remember however that there exists a difference in options of open spaces. Residents of HiCNs have the possibility of letting their children play in front of their houses, whereas residents of HiONs suffer from the fact that open spaces within their neighbourhoods are not considered safe enough to be used by their children. Nonetheless, as Tonkiss goes on to argue, "where public spaces are rendered inaccessible or unaccommodating or expensive, or simply are killed off by privatization, this compounds the dwindling of a public sense that make such developments expedient in the first place" (Tonkiss, 2005: 73). It is thus a vicious cycle, which reinforces itself.

Looking at the values given to public space, it is also important to note that the descriptions of the public spaces used by residents of MiONs were much more detailed than those given by residents of HiCNs and HiONs, and descriptions about the quality of these spaces were often given.

> Carlos: *"Yes, behind here on the other side of Marquez you've got the other side of the hippodrome, Sundays they close off the whole avenue, from Santa Fe or Centenario up to Rolón. Then you've got two lanes for cyclists, skaters and all others, dog walks or just to go for a walk."*
> Marina: *"The river, the kids use the river paths a lot."*
> Carlos: *"The river walks, there is also an ecological reserve close by."*
> Marina*: "They have done some beautiful paths now. Still quite safe."*
> Carlos: *"Yes, that's right, they are calm. And then the weekends we spend cycling and strolling about."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

Those residents of HiCNs who say that they use some kind of public space, all mention only one specific public space, like the local public library, referred to by Elsa in her account of the public spaces her family uses: *"The civic centre of Beccar, which is right here, yes, the kids mainly have taken courses there, it is good, the kids use the public library of San Isidro."* Another is the cycling path along the river coastline, which is for example, mentioned by Nicole, when she stated: *"Yes, we use the cycle path a lot for example. It's the path to go by bike that goes from San Isidro up to Olivos, all along the Tren de la Costa."*

This shows that public spaces are not only used more often by residents of MiONs, but they also seem to be given more importance. Public spaces therefore, play an important role in their everyday life, and residents of MiONs generally feel that there are many or at least enough spaces for them to use.

In summary, it can be deduced that, even if there might be slight differences in the values given to public space between residents of HiCNs and HiONs, the actual use of public space seems to depend on socio-economic class, with high-income residents generally not using public spaces.

It is often argued that urban public spaces are everyday spaces and they are the sites of encounter with diversity and strangers; where different worlds overlap and different identities meet. Following on from Lefebvre and others, public space can thus be conceptualised in an empirical way as the spaces "where people experience the world: homes, streets, neighbourhoods, workplaces, public parks, 'the city.'" (Tajbakhsh, 2001:7) But as we have seen with the analysis of the empirical data on the use of public space in the case study of the residents of San Isidro, the argument that social mixing

within public space will diminish because of the increase in gated communities. cannot be supported. The empirical findings of this research show that social mixing does not seem to take place within public spaces in general. That is to say residents of high-income neighbourhoods generally do not use public spaces regardless of the form of neighbourhood in which they live. Residents of MiONs and LiONs, who use various public spaces on a regular basis, do not use the same public spaces and thus do not mix. This is valid as explained above for the two categories of public space, namely the Square and the Café, following Tonkiss' differentiation of public space. Yet, as we have seen in Section 6.2.1, the importance of the public space understood as the third category, the Street, is significantly influenced by the closing off of neighbourhoods if we look at residents' social contact with strangers within their own neighbourhood.

When collecting the empirical data, I also looked at the use of public transport, since this could also be a location for encounter with strangers and can be considered as a form of public space. Asking interviewees about the modes of transportation which they regularly used apart from their own cars, it was found that among all neighbourhoods, some residents walked or cycled within the neighbourhood and within the municipality. The use of public transport, however, like the use of public space, was found to be very similar among residents of HiCNs and HiONs. Some of them stated they walked or cycled within their neighbourhood or to go to nearby shops, but most interviewees stated they used their car whenever they left their neighbourhood. It was only residents of MiONs and LiONs who stated they used public transport on a regular basis. However, there are some residents within all neighbourhood types who claimed that their teenage children used public transport to go to school, even if they themselves do not use public transport at all. Paola (resident of a HiCN) for example, stated: *"... the only one who sometimes goes anywhere alone is the oldest who is fifteen and on certain*

occasions he takes the bus." And similarly, Elsa (resident of a HiCN) explained: *"The kids go little by car because to go to the centre [of Buenos Aires] they can use the train, and I pick them up at the station so they don't walk ... especially at night, during the day they can go walking."* Mona, who lives in a HiON, also described her son's use of public transport *" the 14 year old, Juan, who already goes out alone, he takes the school bus in the mornings, he takes it three blocks from here and he comes back on a normal bus together with a friend. And then Pablo, no, he comes and goes with those carpools ..."*

In addition to this use of public transport by the teenage children, there were a few residents among HiONs and one resident of a HiCN, who use public transport sporadically; mainly the train to go to the centre of Buenos Aires. These cases are either people who have slightly less financial means or who are ecologically motivated.

However, a difference in the image of public transport held by residents of HiCNs and HiONs was found. Generally, there is not the same positive association with public transport and its use as there is with the use of public space. On the contrary, some residents of HiCNs even openly stated that they would never want to use public transport, and they did not feel bad about not using it.

> K: *"Do you normally use public transport?"*
> Elisa: *"Never."*
> K: *"And before living here, did you then?"*
> Elisa*: "As far as possible, never, I preferred to walk a hundred blocks."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

In analysing the way the residents of both high-income types of neighbourhoods talk about public transport, it was found that even though there were no positive comments made by either group regarding public transport, there were also no negative remarks

made about the use of public transport by residents of HiONs, whereas, as seen above, residents of HiCNs had negative feelings towards public transport.

The only collective transport system that was used by residents of HiONs and HiCNs on a regular basis for commuting was a type of collective taxi, called *charters*. These are privately run minivans that have fixed routes and fixed stops. Some charters only stop within HiCNs to pick up residents who commute to the centre of Buenos Aires, and others have fixed stops and are theoretically available for everyone, but since the prices are much higher than municipal buses travelling on the same route, they are, in effect, quite exclusive and therefore only used by high-income residents.

In conclusion, there were no significant differences found with regards to the use of public transport between residents of HiONs and HiCNs, and it can be concluded that public transport is only used on a regular basis by residents of middle- and low-income neighbourhoods.

6.3.3 PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC EVENTS

After analysing where residents spend most of their free time, and to what extent they use public spaces and public transport in order to see if, and to what degree, residents spend time in locations where they could have social contact with strangers, the last category in this section about the opportunities of encounter is presented, which is the participation in public events. This section explores if residents participate in public events like municipal courses or other freely accessible activities, including community or church related events, in order to see if they spent time in places which different socio-economic groups have access to.

It was found that residents of HiCNs mostly stated that they did not participate in any public events organised either by the municipality or any other public institution. Interviewee responses to the question of whether they participated in public events were generally answered with a simple *"No, no";* or as Susanna explained: *"... things from the municipality ... no, depending from the municipality, I always do things, but privately organised, even if all that is offered by the municipality is excellent ..."*

The patterns of participation in municipal events were found to be very similar among residents of HiONs, who for the most part, also stated that they did not attend municipal courses or any other public event, with the exception of activities organised by the Church. Stefania, for example, when asked the same question similarly just replied, *"No, not for now";* and Isa further specified, *"organised by the church nothing ... and by the municipality neither."*

People with high-income levels in general did not participate in events or courses offered by the municipality on a regular basis. Also, among residents of MiONs, there were some who stated that they did not participate in any public event or course, but the reasons for not participating were more often, a lack of interest or time and not the fact that they would rather take privately run alternatives. Clara for instance, clarified, *"... I do not participate in anything because I do not have the time, but if there was something interesting I would."* Also, some residents of LiONs said that they did not participate in any public event.

Many of the residents of HiCNs, who stated that they did not participate in any programmes offered by the municipality, pointed out that municipal courses were of very good quality. Some would be interested or thought that it was a shame, that up to

now, they had not managed to organise themselves to use more of what was offered. Thus, contrary to what was found analysing residents' values given to public transport, positive values were associated with public courses and events. Paola for instance, explained *"... I'm starting to find out about all the things the municipality is offering, from talks, courses, if one would be better at making use of it, they are all for free ..."*

Similarly, many residents of HiONs who did not participate in any municipal events also stated that they believed or knew from friends that the events offered by the municipality were of very high quality and that they were generally interested in them. Mona described her situation saying, *"... we don't take any courses there, and I tell you, we do not because it is sometimes a question of timetables, because the timetables are so inconvenient. I believe they have good teachers, I have one or another friend that has taken some courses there, I even have one who takes quite a lot of them but she lives almost in the centre of San Isidro."*

The opinion about municipal courses was also very positive among residents of MiONs, even if again, this was often not based on their own experience as can be seen with Clara for example, saying, *"my nieces do, they take lots, and really, I tell you, because they came here to San Isidro where they went to a place where they did lots of things, music, many things."*

However, there were also a few residents of HiCNs who did attend public events or participate in some activities offered by the municipality. For example, Elsa said they used *"... the civic centre in Beccar"* and *"the church, yes, many things, yes because we are catholic."* And similarly, Nicole explained: *"I have taken courses supported by the municipality, computer courses here at the municipality of Beccar, and then when there*

is for example the winter vacations, the municipality organises a series of theatre plays for the community and we go there…"

Likewise, some residents of HiONs knew of the programmes the municipality offered for children during vacations and a few had also participated in a course organised by the municipality at some point. Yet, they also did not regularly participate in municipal events. Remaining impersonal, Anna elucidated, *"... during winter vacation, the municipality organises events like theatre for children and the like, that sometimes one attends in that period."* Lara had also participated in some municipal courses, but as can be seen below, this activity was not a permanent, regular participation either.

> Lara: *"I have done many courses at the municipality of San Isidro, they have very good courses and very cheap ones."*
> K: *"So you have participated in some in the past."*
> Lara: *"Yes I did."*
> K: *"And how were the people who participated there?"*
> Lara: *"All kinds of levels, very diverse. But all people who want to do things."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

It can be summarised that there was little use of municipal events by residents of HiCNs and HiONs and that, even where residents stated as having participated in some activity organised by the municipality, these were rather short episodes and single activities. Looking at the use of municipal courses and participation in public events, the picture among residents of MiONs and LiONs is more mixed. Some of the residents of MiONs and LiONs also stated that they only participated in public events on a sporadic basis, like Marina (resident of a MiON) stating, *"No, normally we don't. Sometimes single events, when we find out that there are fireworks in some place, but rarely";* or Nadine (resident of a LiON) remembering: *"When I was little, I participated in a local dance group. One of the girls who lives here in the neighbourhood taught us, and we danced*

together for more or less five years … when we got older, the group dissolved, but we once even got to be shown on television, it was good."

There are, however, more residents of MiONs and LiONS who participated in one or more activities on a regular basis as the following extracts of interviews show.

> Clara: *"Nazarena plays hockey."*
> K: *"And where does she play?"*
> Clara: *"In Olivos[74]. She goes to the catechesis and she also takes English around there in La Lucila[75], which is almost in Olivos."*
> K: *"Who organises the English classes?"*
> Clara: *"It's a little school where she goes twice a week with other kids."*
> K: *"Is it a private school?"*
> Clara: *"No, it's public."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

> Martha: *"Yes, we participate in everything."*
> Carlos: *"Yes we are involved in everything. From the church there are every year four or five events, which we in the past participated in with the scout group, and this year we participate individually. There are additionally Easter events, where we help at the church, there is the day of the family where there is a barbecue in the sports field of the Marin school …, in October there is parade which goes from Las Lomas de San Isidro to the chapel; on May 15th there is another parade …"*
> Martha: *"I go a lot to the events which they call the United Nations, where the main street is closed off, organised by the municipality, and they put up stands from all the countries."*
> K: *"And do you take any courses?"*
> Martha: *"At the house of culture for example …"*
> Carlos: *"Yes, Marianna did a computer course there …"*
> Martha: *"And I did a course on soaps, I try to do lots of things."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

> Mara: *"Yes, the kids take tennis lessons."*
> K: *"Municipal classes?"*
> Mara: *"Yes."*
> K: *"And church events?"*
> Mara: *"No, we go to mass only."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

> K: *"Do you take any courses, the one you mentioned before,[76] is it organised by the municipality?"*
> Julia: *"Yes it's municipal."*

[74] A neighbourhood in the adjacent municipality of Vicente Lopez
[75] A neighbourhood in the adjacent municipality of Vicente Lopez
[76] Advanced training course

K: *"And apart from that, are there other municipal things you participate in?"*
Julia: *"… I went swimming here in the municipal pool … a very nice Olympic pool, heated, beautiful, but I don't know yet if I'll go this year again."*
K: "Is that a municipal pool?"
Julia: *"It's municipal and they charge 12 pesos per month."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Additionally, it is important to remember that most children who are residents of MiONs and all of those resident in LiONs attend public schools and municipal nurseries. Clara (resident of a MiON) for instance, referred to this when she explained that *"... Valentino for now goes to a municipal kindergarten, where he luckily has a great teacher."*

Many of the residents of LiONs take part in events or courses organised by the church, either through the local parish or through Caritas, which has its office next to *La Cava*, one of the LiONs within which interviews were carried out.

Nadine: *"Yes at church I am taking classes. Now that I have finished high school in 1999 I am thinking of continuing to study at college and in the meantime, since I go to church regularly I am studying to become a primary teacher in religion. It's a three year course of bible studies."*
K: *"Is that organised by the church?"*
Nadine: *"Yes, I go to the evangelist church, they have lots of things, they teach the guitar, music, and I enrolled there."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Alexia: *"No, no, here there are meetings once a month with all the people who work here with the neighbourhood*[77]*, and there are also meetings to treat issues like violence …"*
K: *"And who organises those?"*
Alexia: *"That's organised by the parish, it's organised by the coordinator of Galilea*[78]*, Edith and other people organise some, when I can I come …"*
(Resident of a LiON)

A few of the residents of HiCNs do, however, also participate in events organised by the Church, and this participation is on a regular basis. Susanna for instance, explained: *"... we are Catholic but not practising, now a bit more because my daughter is taking*

[77] Various NGOs working with the people of the LION.
[78] One of the NGOs working in the LION.

her catechesis course so we have to participate a bit more." Church events are thus the only events accessible to all socio-economic levels, which some residents of all neighbourhoods attend and therefore, participation is only dependent on personal interest and religious affiliation[79]. But generally, interviewees who participate in events organised by the church do so within their own neighbourhood or at the church of their children's Catholic private schools and these events rarely provide opportunities to interact with residents of neighbourhoods of diverse socio-economic levels.

To conclude, it was therefore found that the level of participation and interest in public events, which were not organised by the Church, varied along class lines, whereas events or courses organised by the Church were the only type of event that was frequented by residents of all four neighbourhood types. But as seen above, these events, however, did not constitute locations of encounter between diverse social classes.

6.4 CIVIC CONCERNS RELATED TO SOCIAL INTERACTION

As explained in the conceptual framework for this thesis in Chapter Three, the concrete encounter with others is seen to be an important factor in the recognition of these others' interests and perspectives. As previously argued, interest in common goods and public space can only result from public interaction, which allows for differences to be expressed and perceived (Bickford, 1996). In order to understand the significance of the impact of social contact on residents' civic concerns, the debate from social psychology concerning contact and conflict has been considered. In this debate, it has been argued that face-to-face contact between members of different social groups is, under specific

[79] All interviewees were either catholic, protestant or atheist

circumstances, related to a better understanding of others.

Having analysed the residents' social contacts and the locations where social interaction might take place, and having searched for similarities and differences which might exist between residents of diverse types of neighbourhoods, this section, based on the above arguments, looks at residents' civic concerns in relation to their social interaction. The civic concerns, which will be examined, are the concerns that might be influenced by residents' patterns of social interaction and by their contact or lack of contact with other groups within society. These will be divided into concerns relating to common interests throughout the municipality, analysed in Section 6.4.1 and concerns about other social groups within their municipality explored in Section 6.4.2.

But before looking at these concerns, the findings about: interviewees' personal social engagement; their opinions about social engagement and charity; and their levels of involvement in social issues (either through charity or any other social work according to the neighbourhood they live in) will be briefly reported. This was thought to be important since, as explained in Chapter Three, sympathy and empathy are qualities that are formed and influenced, among others, by social contacts people have on a regular basis.

It was found, however, that there were no significant differences between the residents of HiCNs and those of open neighbourhoods. Among all of them, a minority is socially engaged, mainly through NGOs or church initiatives. Even if many residents are not particularly interested, most of them claimed that they contributed to some kind of charitable work through their children's schools. These contributions generally consist of donating food or clothing, which is then distributed by the schools. Others further

contribute with their voluntary work on a regular basis in projects organised by their children's schools. Generally, interviewees believed that charity and social work was a good thing.

It can be concluded that even though, as described below, opinions about others and perceptions about common interests differ between residents of different neighbourhood types, active social engagement could neither be linked to the neighbourhood type nor to the social class residents belong to.

6.4.1 COMMON INTERESTS

After finding that there were no differences in relation to residents' social engagement linked to the neighbourhood type they live in, this section explores residents' viewpoints regarding the existence of common interests and preoccupations of all groups of residents within the municipality. Furthermore it is analysed to what extent the content of these common interests is the same according to residents of different types of neighbourhoods.

All the interviewees of the open neighbourhoods believed that there were common interests between residents of their own neighbourhood and others. Even though there were some interviewees among the residents of HiONs, who stated that they did not believe that there were any common interests, they immediately continued saying that maybe security could be a common interest as seen below:

> Stefania: *"No, I think they are all quite diverse."*
> K: *"But do you think there are interests that are the same for everyone? What could they be?"*
> Stefania: *"Yes I think so … the lack of security and the poor governance."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Flor: *"I believe it's as diverse as the people that it is made up of."*
K: *"But do you think there are things that are important for everybody?"*
Flor: *"Important for everybody would be the question of the security, the question of the sewage system which does not exist."*
(Resident of a HiON)

There were no residents among this group who did not see any common interests or concerns. The same was found among residents of MiONs who all clearly stated that they thought common interests between different neighbourhoods existed. Carlos for example, said *"I would say yes, at this moment, everybody is asking for security on one side, health on the other side, I don't know if they have other requests because really, San Isidro is quite a particular municipality."* And Mara went even further stating, *"yes, there are no differences."*

Also among residents of LiONs, all interviewees said that they believed that there were common interests between all neighbourhoods. Nadine explained, *"... I think there are interests, one is security, because they do not only rob the people ... at least until before the provincial police force came ... the people outside, but also the same people within, sometimes it's people from other slums who come and rob here and they go from here to another, so the interest is security, that's the main point."* Again, as among the residents of HiONs, there were some who, despite initially stating that they did not see any common interests, continued to state that security might be the one common interest of all.

K: *"Do you think that there are common interests of residents here with the surrounding areas?"*
Maria: *"No, not at all."*
K: *"But do you think that there are issues that you worry about and that also others in San Isidro worry about?"*
Maria: *"Yes, the issue that they sometimes rob."*
K: *"You think that is an issue that everybody worries about?"*
Maria: *"Exactly, yes, because let's say there are three delinquents and all the rest is hardworking people, because of one person you will be discriminated by everyone."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Among the residents of HiCNs, when asked if residents believed that there were common interests concerning residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods as well as their own, and if they thought that the preoccupation of residents within their neighbourhood were broadly the same as those of other residents of the municipality, only part of the interviewees answered with a straight yes. Paola for instance, clarified her view saying, *"Yes, because I believe that it's all a question of cohabitation in any neighbourhood."* Some residents also believed that there were common interests between residents of different types of neighbourhood, but initially pointed out that the neighbourhoods were very distinct from each other as Elsa's statement shows: *"They are all very distinct from each other, this closed neighbourhood has residents of very high-income levels, then there is one which is more or less, another one which is less, but we all still live together, we send the children to the same schools, we walk on the same streets, and we have the same municipal government which administers this district, and we feel as a group in regards to what is happening within the municipality, it doesn't matter where one lives."*

Among those who thought that there were common interests between residents of different types of neighbourhoods, when asked what they considered to be the major common interest, security was always either seen to be the only or the most important common concern. Also all the interviewed residents of LiONs believed that security was the one common interest and preoccupation that all residents of San Isidro shared.

Similarly, among the residents of MiONs and HiONs, all of them believed that security was one of the common interests, but in contrast to the residents of the HiCNs, this was not seen as the only common interest. Mona (resident of a HiON) for instance, when

asked about common interests, replied: *"Yes, I think so, the common interest is the care for the children, the security, the social thing that is mobilising us Argentines slowly, as we have to move all together and pull into the same direction."* Things like the sewage system, living quietly, work opportunities, social problems and social differences were, as can be seen below, all mentioned to be common interests.

> K: *"Do you think there are any common interests between the people living in this neighbourhood and those living in the ones next to it?"*
> Lara: *"Yes, completely."*
> K: *"And what would they be?"*
> Lara: *"The security. In this moment it's the principal interest, security, which you do not have in any place. And it costs us a lot because we have to pay for it separately. The people want to work and live quietly, this I can assure you, in all neighbourhoods. I realised that when I went to the manifestation of Axel Blumberg[80] at the municipality of San Isidro, and you could see that there were people of all social levels of San Isidro. The people want to have work and be able to go to work and there not to be roadblocks[81], we all want the same, that's it."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

> Clara: *"I cannot tell you because I don't know all the people, but it could be … maybe the slum, maybe the things that I worry about, everybody is affected by."*
> K: *"Yes, and what do you think are the interests and worries common to all residents of San Isidro?"*
> Clara: *"I believe that … did you see that they always have this slogan 'San Isidro is different', it seems like a joke … I think people want the hospital, they want infrastructure, security, yes, that's always the issue, more than anything, these things."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

But more remarkably, some of the interviewees of HiCNs stated they believed that there were no common interests among residents living in the surrounding neighbourhoods and their own. But if they could think of anything in common with other neighbourhoods, it would be the concern about the lack of security, clearly stated by Nicole when she said: *"No, I believe that the only thing that ultimately could unify us all is the issue of the insecurity, but nothing else, there are no shared activities and*

[80] Resident of San Isidro, father of a kidnapped child who became famous because of his public action during and after the period in which his son was kidnapped. He later became politically active.
[81] There are many roadblocks - the so-called 'Piquete' – organised by social movements fighting for a variety of social rights.

people don't know each other well …" Also, the following extract of an interview shows how common interests do not seem to exist for some of the HiCN residents.

> K: *"Do you think there are any common interests between the people living in these [neighbouring] areas and the people living here in the Boating?"*
> Martina: *"No, I don't think so."*
> K: *"None?"*
> Martina: *"Common interest, to develop something?"*
> K: *"In any sense, problems, preoccupations"*
> Martina: *"Problems I know there were some with people from outside, with people from over there, but don't ask me what kind of problems or with whom exactly, I don't know, I know there were problems with people. Here where the Boating ends, the part behind it and the other houses, which I mentioned before, I know that there was some problem, I also know that some people made friends with them also."*
> K: *"But are there common interests in the sense that they have the same preoccupations or something like that?"*
> Martina: *"I don't think so. I think that the level of this neighbourhood is a very high one."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

The differences between the answers of the residents of HiCNs, compared to those of HiONs, are not very obvious. But if the answers are examined in detail, firstly, it can be seen that there are some residents living in HiCNs who did not see any municipality wide common interests. This demonstrates some kind of distancing from the rest of the municipality which does not take place among residents of open neighbourhoods, even if they sometimes stated they did not see any common interests in the first place. Secondly, there was more variety in what people considered to be common interests among residents of open neighbourhoods, which shows that they either felt that they actually had the same unresolved issues as others within the municipality, or that they had more knowledge and interest in what the concerns of others could be.

Regarding the first point, it is interesting to note that those residents of HiCNs who did not believe that there were any common interests between them and the surrounding neighbourhoods, are all residents of *the Boating*, and thus, the same group which was found to spend most of their leisure time within their own neighbourhood (see Section

6.3.1). As explained above, this can be explained by the fact that it is the only neighbourhood which functions more like the larger gated communities, with leisure facilities included within the neighbourhood.

The second point, the fact that there was a greater variety in what residents considered to be possible common interests of all residents of San Isidro, can be explained first by the difference in their conceptualisation of what their own neighbourhood consists of as seen in Sections 6.2 and 6.3 and thus, a broader perspective on the possible problems of issues of discontent of people could emerge. Secondly, this could also hint at a better knowledge of problems throughout the municipality. However, this is explored further in Chapter Seven, where residents' relationships with their municipal government, their views on municipal responsibilities, their priorities within their municipality, and issues of discontent within their own neighbourhood are analysed.

6.4.2 OPINIONS ABOUT THE OTHER

This section analyses residents' opinions about 'the other' in order to explore, if there are differences in their perceptions of groups of society that are different to their own. Two major aspects are examined: first, to what extent residents made any comment about 'others' in order to see if these 'others' appeared in their picture of their own municipality, and secondly, what kind of opinions they had about them. The reason behind this analysis is that, as explained in Chapter Three, it is often argued that the opinion about 'others' is related to the amount and type of contact, people have with 'others'. Having in mind the differences in social interaction, it is thus analysed if differences in residents' awareness of 'others' and diverse opinions about them can be linked to differences in their contact with 'others'.

In order to explore residents' opinions about 'others', comments made about these 'others' have been explored, which interviewees made without having been explicitly asked about them. This was done to avoid having interviewees consciously talk about the 'other' and thus, controlling their answers. The presumption, which lies behind this approach, is that people have opinions about 'others' which they might not express openly, because they believe they are not politically correct, and they do not want to give a negative impression to the interviewer.

First, it was found that a section of the residents of HiCNs did not comment on 'others' at all, whereas, almost all of the residents of HiONs and MiONs made some comment. This suggests that the lack of informal encounter within HiCNs has an impact on residents' awareness of 'others'. The arguments from academic debate claiming that life in gated communities is a form of escapism from society can therefore, be partly supported.

However, if we look at the comments made about 'others', it was found that most of the comments made by residents of HiCNs and HiONs describe the residents of LiONs as an unknown group, which is perceived as a potential danger, which residents of HiCNs and HiONs therefore, try to avoid. Paola (resident of a HiCN) for example, said: *"With the people from the housing estate it is all an issue, because there are people who say it's a slum, it's all an issue because it's very humble people, it's like any slum: there are good people and there are bad people, there are very bad people really, and there are very poor people who are very good … I personally try to avoid the people from the housing estate, not because of the good people, but because I don't know who's who there."* Speaking about new security measures in the municipality, Nicole (resident of a HiCN) explained: *"Yes, they have put the provincial police on the street in the area of*

La Cava in order to control, Martin says it won't help, but I feel safer, at least I pass without so much fear when I pass by there. It's true that when they put the provincial police there they go somewhere else to rob, but ... I believe that something had to be done, so I think it's alright, because otherwise saying that they will go somewhere else, nothing will be done, but something has to be done. ... I mean, we know very well where the crooks are, where things happen ..." Commenting on the problems within the municipality, Mona (resident of a HiON) also commented on strangers saying: *"... also that there is so much social difference between those who have most and those who have least, because this also creates resentment, anger, things that at the end do not help anyone, and that leads to you enclosing yourself always more and telling your kids 'don't go out, don't look, and if you see someone who looks like that run as fast as you can', that's not good."* All these residents did not say anything explicitly negative about the residents of LiONs, but they did not differentiate between them either and they generally perceive them as a dangerous unknown group. The residents, who share this opinion about residents of LiONs, all previously stated not to have any contact with residents of LiONs.

If we look at those residents who reported to have some contact with residents of LiONs, the picture is different. There are two different types of opinions, which seem to result from this social interaction. First, there were those who argued that everywhere there were good and bad people, LiONs included, and that if there were more problems in LiONs, this was due to a lack of resources and education. Elsa (resident of a HiCN) for instance, explained this saying: *"Sometimes it depends a bit of the culture, in more cultured neighbourhoods there is a bit more social responsibility, but maybe not, because our experience shows that the kids who do their campaigns about the protection of the environment, when they go to schools within the deprived*

neighbourhoods, those little kids, once they've learned, they don't want to throw away anymore paper, any bottles, so what happens is that there is a lack of information, lack of information and once they receive information, there is a lack of resources to realise things, because maybe they know that they shouldn't throw away plastic packaging, but they don't know what to do with it, and the state does not take its responsibility for that." This view of the residents of LiONs exists among residents of all neighbourhood types, which shows that the defining factor for the opinion about strangers is a personal experience through contact with 'the other', rather than the type of neighbourhood one lives in. Clara (resident of a MiON) who through her work as a landscape gardener, works with residents of a LiON explained: *"... what happens is that here they have lots of prejudices about the kids or the people who come from La Cava or from other poorer neighbourhoods ... they talk to them in a certain way ... which I think has to be that way, one has to talk to them a bit harsher so they understand because they are used to that code ... but yes, I don't know, one has to put oneself in the place of everyone, they also come and invade you ... I've been robbed here once. ... All the houses here have been robbed at some point, thus the people are fearful because of concrete experiences, but not all the people from there are the same, I think you've got everything there."* This shows that contact with the 'other' leads to more differentiated opinions about these 'others'.

> Lara: *"I sometimes pass by La Cava, it's not my favourite way but I sometimes pass there. Before you would see much more people hanging around, I see it much quieter. I know people who live in la Cava and I know that they are very good people."*
> K: *"Where do you know them from?"*
> Lara: *"Because they are people who work in friends' houses where they clean. Very honest people, you've got everything in La Cava."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

However, there were also further opinions of 'the other' that can be argued, result from existing contact with strangers. Here 'the other', in this case the poor, are generally seen

as lazy people with no self-esteem and no ambitions. Anna (resident of a HiON) for example, stated: *"What happens in these deprived places, I'll explain to you: there were always poor people in Argentina, and there are many people for whom it is easier to go to a place where they know they will receive food, than try to organise it for themselves. Because I think that anyone who has the will to do something can do so and what is lacking here is this conviction of progress of the human being. As a result, it is easier to ask at a canteen for food for four children, where they take the food for the evening as well, than to offer to do some kind of job. Because I always say that even if it is to sweep the sidewalk, you can be an expert in cleaning sidewalks, do you understand? … I think we could improve great parts of the poverty with education, these people don't have self- esteem, they have no ambitions, they have not been educated to have it, they live like that because they don't know anything else, because they are not interested in anything else, because as long as they have enough for the day, they have not been taught this internal spirit, I believe that the problem is an educational one…"* Similarly, Marco (resident of a MiON) explained: *"So these people who live in slums, they don't have many resources, since they do not have work, they come from the countryside and the government has built them an apartment building neighbourhood and has put it just here, which has resulted in a loss of value for this neighbourhood. … It's people who are not well educated, there are scuffles, the kids pass by and also those who are not so little, they hang from the trees, the trees which are orange trees and have been here many years, and the kids hang from the trees, the kids from the other side, and they tear the oranges off and throw them at each other. There is no education, so now we, at least I do, consider that I have been disadvantaged because of the fact that the government has had this neighbourhood built here."*

This opinion was held by residents whose only contact was informal contact with strangers in their neighbourhood, which as seen in Section 6.2.1, can be considered as the most thought provoking contact, often leading to conflict, since it does not arise from a voluntary decision, but is often perceived as invasive. This more radical opinion about the 'other' was only found among residents of open neighbourhoods, since informal contact with strangers within the neighbourhood, as see above, does not exist in HiCNs.

Looking at the other side, it was found that residents of LiONs generally felt that 'others', in this case, wealthy people, did not care about their problems and generally discriminated against them, as can be seen when Nadine said: *"I don't think they feel responsible because everyone lives their own life and ... obviously there are people who are nice and help lots of people, give them work, because people from this neighbourhood, who live in the slum work behind there, they pass the wall and work in the gated communities. They give them work and trust them, but they live their life, I don't think that they feel any responsibility."* And referring more concretely to discrimination, Maria explained: *"One thing is that if you look for work and they know that you live in La Cava they don't want you, because they say that you are a dishonest person, what do you want to say, for one or two people who are like that they look at you like ..."*

Similarly, as in the case of the residents of HiCNs and HiONs talking about the poor without having had personal contact and thus not differentiating 'the other', there was no difference made by almost all of the residents of LiONs when talking about the wealthy, who seem to be perceived as a homogeneous entity. This again could be explained by the lack of personal experience with these 'others'. It is very interesting to

find that the comments made by one of the residents of a LiON, who works as a gardener at a house in a HiCN, are much more diversified. Talking about the 'others' Antonio said: *"... maybe yes, among those people there are good and bad, just as not everyone is good in my neighbourhood, there are also bad people, like everywhere."*

In conclusion, it was therefore found that existing contact between groups generally alters people's opinions about the 'other'. However, it was also found that this is the case, regardless of the neighbourhood type people lived in. It can be argued that in order to achieve more tolerance towards the 'other', contact has to be promoted, and this contact should be voluntary interaction, since spontaneous informal encounter within residents' neighbourhoods does not necessarily improve residents' opinions about the 'other'.

6.5 SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to what is sometimes claimed in the debate among researchers analysing social impacts of gated communities (Arizaga, 2005; Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2003; Svampa, 2001; a.o.), the findings of the interview analysis show that there were no significant differences found between the four groups, in regards to social interaction with friends, family, neighbours and acquaintances. Most of the social interaction of residents, which is not within family circles or among old friends, takes place among groups of parents through their schoolchildren. Thus, there is a general division between those who send their children to private schools and those who send them to public schools. These social contacts are not across diverse socio-economic classes. There were, however, slight differences found in residents' conceptualisation of their own neighbourhood, the importance given to public space, informal encounter within the neighbourhood,

residents' view on common interests within the municipality and opinion about 'the other'.

This concluding section first looks at the conclusions that could be drawn from the empirical data analysed above. This is looked at more broadly, in regards to the existing debate about social impacts and consequences of gated communities. Secondly, the findings about the relevance of contact and conflict for residents' civic concerns and the results concerning these issues are discussed, coming back to the theories developed in the conceptual framework in Chapter Three.

6.5.1 VALUE ADDED TO THE DEBATE

Before looking at the differences and commonalities regarding interviewees' social interaction patterns, it is important to note that it was found that residents of HiCNs as well as those of LiONs, conceptualise their own neighbourhood in a different way than residents of HiONs and MiONs. The latter generally did not differentiate clearly between their own neighbourhood and surrounding neighbourhoods and when referring to their own neighbourhood, they considered a larger part of the municipality. Residents of HiCNs and LiONs on the other hand, all referred to a precisely defined area when talking about their neighbourhood. This is not surprising, since HiCNs and LiONs by their very nature have clearly defined borders, but it is important to keep this difference in mind when comparing residents of gated communities with outsiders, since this might impact the findings of such a comparison.

If we look at the main conclusions from each of the sections above, it can be summarised that social interaction between residents of HiCNs and their families, friends, acquaintances, neighbours and residents of surrounding neighbourhoods does

not generally differ from that of residents of HiONs. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed in the literature about gated communities, the fact that interviewees live in HiCNs is thus not found to result in residents having most of their friendships within their own neighbourhood.

However, there are some residents of the largest HiCN in this case study who stated that through the use of neighbourhood facilities, they had met neighbours who thereafter, became their friends. This shows that common leisure facilities within HiCNs have an impact on residents' social interaction patterns. Some of the residents of this HiCN also state that they spend most of their leisure time within their HiCN, whereas all others also use private sport or leisure clubs. This shows that it is very important in the debate about the consequences of gated communities on residents' social interaction patterns to consider the type of gated community referred to, since it is not so much the fact that a neighbourhood is enclosed, which might alter residents' social interaction patterns, but rather the question of whether the neighbourhood includes leisure facilities or not.

Similarly, regarding interviewees' contacts with residents of surrounding neighbourhoods, it was found that only one resident of a HiCN stated knowing people in all the surrounding neighbourhoods. Yet, it must be pointed out that the HiCN she lives in does not have any LiON directly adjacent, unlike all other HiCNs where interviews were conducted. Thus, if we analyse social relations between neighbouring areas, the relevant factor does not seem to be the enclosure of a neighbourhood, but rather the type of neighbouring areas. Since most of the more recent gated developments in Buenos Aires are located in poorer periurban areas, it is not surprising that little contact between the residents and the surrounding population is found.

Moreover, it was also found in this study that residents of LiONs generally have much less contact with outsiders, they frequent different schools and are generally excluded from having the opportunity of meeting residents of wealthier neighbourhoods. For the discussion on social interaction between residents of gated communities and the surrounding population, this is considered to be very relevant, since part of the lack of social interactions can be explained by the patterns of social interaction of the low-income population generally surrounding HiCNs.

Between all other neighbourhood types, there are many links as long as the neighbourhoods adjacent to their own are not LiONs. The links are found to be established, either through contact with old friends and family members or through the schools of their children. Just as the division, which results from attending private schools, rather than public schools, it was found that public parks, public transport and public leisure facilities were only used by lower and middle classes. This leads to a social division, which is linked to income and not the urban form within which people live. Even events organised by the Church, which are the only events frequented by all groups of residents, are not found to constitute locations of encounter with residents of different neighbourhood types, since they are generally organised by neighbourhood parishes and thus attract only residents of their own neighbourhoods.

However, if we look at the use of public space and at the values given to it, it emerges that even if the use of public space depends on residents' income levels, with high-income residents generally not using public spaces, slight differences exist in the values given to public space between residents of HiCNs and HiONs. The latter partly complained about the lack of public space or about the fact that they considered existing public spaces to be dangerous, whereas the former did not seem to miss the use of

public spaces. Some residents of HiONs moreover felt they had to explain or excuse the fact that they did not frequent public spaces.

This point is considered to be very important, even if it only constitutes a minor difference, since it shows that concerns for public space, which are civic concerns, are not the same for residents of HiCNs and HiONs, even if there is no difference in their use of public space. In academic debate about the social impact of gated communities, public space is generally looked at in regards to its use, whereas this study shows that the comparison with residents of open neighbourhoods of similar income-levels demonstrates that it is the values given to public space which differ.

Even if public space is often conceptualised as a location of encounter with diversity and strangers (Tajbakhsh, 2001), the findings of this study show that social mixing rarely takes place within public spaces, since residents of high-income neighbourhoods did not generally use public spaces, and residents of MiONs and LiONs, who both use various public spaces on a regular basis, did not use the same spaces.

However, the lack of discontent with the non-existent use of public space by residents of HiCNs shows that there are consequences of gated communities which have been so far ignored and which relate to residents' differences in civic concerns and the resulting differences in political interests. Residents' relationships with their local government and political interests are looked at in more detail in Chapter Seven, since it is believed that these differences are relevant for urban democracy more broadly.

Coming back to the differences in social contact, it was further found that even if too much importance in the literature on gated communities is given to public space, too

little attention is paid to what Tonkiss (2005) understands as the third category of public space, the Street. This type of public space is significantly impacted by the closing off of neighbourhoods, as seen above, looking at the residents' social contact with strangers within their own neighbourhood. The next section discusses the consequences of the resulting lack of informal encounter within HiCNs and the differences found in residents' understanding of common interests between residents of their own and other neighbourhoods.

6.5.2 CONTACT AND CONFLICT

As shown in Section 6.2.1, involuntary contact with strangers of different socio-economic levels within a resident's own neighbourhood – like for example, with cardboard-collectors or other people begging at doorsteps, does not take place in HiCNs, since they are not allowed to enter. This involuntary contact with strangers of different socio-economic levels within a resident's own neighbourhood, also does not occur in LiONs, since only the people who live there, or those living in a similar neighbourhood, enter these neighbourhoods.

As described above, the only difference between residents of HiCNs and HiONs regarding social interaction exists in relation to these involuntary contacts. It has been argued above, that these contacts are generally disturbing but thought provoking where they take place, as can be seen in the following interview extract.

> K: *"If you were to be a politician here in San Isidro tomorrow, what would be the first you would do?"*
> Anna: *"The topic of education seems to me to be principal, and it is linked to good alimentation, I think that a well-nurtured child, not having any problems with alimentation, will not have any problems in school."*
> K: *"With the topic of education do you refer to the infrastructure of schools or the content, the teaching?"*
> Anna: *"No, I think that there are children that do not go to school, that is the serious problem. I consider that a child should not do anything but go to school, not beg in the street, as it is seen, not … here I have people who come every*

Saturday to beg, one of them comes once a month, the other comes every Saturday."
K: *"Do you know where they are from?"*
Anna: *"No, I know that they have various children … and what I was telling you about the abuse, maybe you give them a packet of noodles so that he really feeds his child and that person, instead of feeding the child, sells it and with that money, drinks, or buys cigarettes. So that does not work, it doesn't have the aim for which you gave it, that is why sometimes it is preferable to donate through an institution where you know that things are organised so that they reach the real aim, and not give individually."*
(Resident of a HiON)

Confirming the arguments developed in Chapter Three, the lack of social contact with strangers within one's own neighbourhood would lead to a reduction in the possibilities of developing an awareness of 'the other', the interview analysis found that part of the residents of HiCNs did not comment on 'the other' at all, whereas almost all of the residents of HiONs made some comment. This suggests that the lack of informal encounter within HiCNs has an impact on the residents' awareness of 'others'.

Additionally, it was found that some of the residents living in HiCNs did not see any common interests for the municipality as a whole, whereas all residents of HiONs believed that there were common interests for all residents of the municipality. Therefore, it might be argued that residents of HiCNs partly distance themselves from issues concerning the wider municipality. And among those residents of HiCNs who mention some common interests, the variety in what people consider to be common interests among residents of HiONs is greater. Firstly, this could be explained by the difference in their conceptualisation of what their own neighbourhood consists of, as seen in Sections 6.2 and 6.3 and their resulting broader perspectives on possible problems and issues of discontent of others. Secondly, this could also hint at a better knowledge of municipality wide problems, because they either felt that they had the same unresolved issues as others within the municipality or because they had more

knowledge and interest in what the concerns of others within the municipality were. However, this is further looked into in Chapter Seven, where residents' relationship with their municipal government, their views on municipal responsibilities, priorities within their municipality, and issues of discontent within their own neighbourhood are examined.

However, if we analyse the statements of one of the few residents of a HiCN who actually has some contact with residents of the neighbouring LiON, it is very interesting to find that she mentioned the lack of contact with residents of that neighbourhood as a problem. Thus, it could be argued that the existence of some contact does generate knowledge and understanding, whereas, as seen above, no contact at all might lead to a complete unawareness of the unknown 'other'.

In conclusion, it was found that existing contacts between the residents of different groups of society have the potential to alter people's opinions about the 'other'. However, it also emerged that this is true regardless of the type of neighbourhood people lived in. Therefore, it can be presumed that, in order to achieve more understanding between different groups of society, contact has to be promoted. The reduction of social contact with 'the other', which takes place through the enclosure of neighbourhoods, can thus be seen as a conscious or unconscious escape (and in the case of the residents of LiONs involuntary escape or better exclusion) from an essential democratic process.

Looking at the empirical evidence, it was found that the residents of HiCNs, who did not believe that there were any common interests between them and the surrounding neighbourhoods were all residents of *the Boating*, the same group, which as seen in

Section 6.3.1, was found to spend most of their leisure time within their own neighbourhood due to the private leisure facilities provided. As seen above, this is the only neighbourhood in this study, which functions more like the larger gated communities with leisure facilities included. Therefore, it can be deduced that if we more generally discuss the impact of gated communities, the relevance of this finding would be greater.

It is also important to remember that the findings concerning informal encounter could only be found, because of the examples of involuntary contact that emerged during the interviews with residents of HiONs. Since most other studies analysing social impacts of gated communities do not use a control group of residents from open neighbourhoods, informal encounter within the neighbourhood could never result as a significant factor.

SEVEN

RESIDENTS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, POLITICS & CIVIC CONCERN

"NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) was the spector of the 1980s, the 'only-in-my-backyard' attitude is also a threat."
(Kohn, 2004: 157)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

After looking at the links between residents' social relations and their civic concerns in the previous chapter, this chapter examines if and how residents' political engagement, their relationship with their local government and their civic concerns are interrelated. As explained in Chapter Two, there is a worldwide trend towards private forms of urban governance, where private administrations take over parts of former municipal responsibilities. As we have seen in the discussion of the academic debate, the arguments about the consequences of this development range from those who claim that a common sense of responsibility, which arises from this new urban form of governance, would enhance community integration (Webster, 2001), to others who argue that the establishment of sub-communal private administrations *"create[s] problems regarding democratic representation and the accountability of the micro-governments and their private security forces, which exacerbates the large inequalities in these cities and contributes to the violation of human rights"* (Landman, 2007: 15).

As seen in the review of literature on the political consequences of gated communities in Chapter Two, much of the debate has so far focused on the political consequences for local government or on its internal politics. Little attention, however, has been paid to residents' political attitudes, their opinions concerning politics and government, and their political engagement. Among the small number of studies analysing the political impacts from the perspective of the residents, Walks (2007) argues that private urban

governance will, among other things, lead to changes in urban democratic processes and power relations. However, it is not yet clear if residents of gated communities differ from their fellow citizens in respect to their political attitudes, interests and engagement, and if living in gated communities has any impact on these factors.

Walks' (2007) findings suggest that residents of gated communities, compared to residents of open public neighbourhoods in general, lean to the right of the political spectrum, and regarding political participation, Walks found that between the two groups, there was only a very slight difference, which was statistically not significant. In his research, he only looked at political participation in the form of electoral turnout rates at the federal level, he therefore suggests that, results could be different if analysed at the local level, since "gating makes a very localized statement, privatizing local resources and services, with the gates meant to keep out proximate (local) others. Thus, it might be expected that gated community residents would be more inclined to withdraw from local politics than from the national scene" (Walks, 2007: 13). Consequently, he encourages research that analyses engagement at the local level in order to gain a clearer picture.

Examining gated community residents' trust in the State empirically, within the context of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Cotta (2007) concludes that there is distrust from the residents of gated communities towards the State, regarding its capabilities and efficiency concerning the provision of open recreational spaces and security. Cotta further claims that, in his case study, gated community residents view public management as being inept, whereas they regard the private administrations of their neighbourhood as competent. However, these findings were not analysed in comparison

with residents of open neighbourhoods of comparable income level and thus, might only show attitudes that are prevalent among certain parts of society.

Regarding political engagement, residents of private neighbourhoods might, however, be expected to participate less in politics since they solve many local problems privately. According to Kohn, the private provision of services within gated neighbourhoods allows residents to "opt out of their obligations to the broader community" (2004: 118), particularly in reference to recreational facilities. As a result, she claims that there is not much incentive for residents of these neighbourhoods to approve public spending on the provision of these services for poorer neighbourhoods. By analysing residents' civic concerns related to local government and local politics, the aim of this case study is to establish if these claims can be supported empirically.

In order to explore these hypotheses, the following sections, 7.2 and 7.3, try to answer the first part of question 2 - ***"How and to what extent, do residents' relationships with local government and their political engagement differ between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods?"*** by answering the following sub-questions:

- *To what extent, do residents have knowledge about and contact with local government, and are there differences according to the type of neighbourhood they live in?*
- *What are residents' opinions about their local government, and are they satisfied with the services it provides?*
- *To what extent are residents interested in local politics, and do they participate in it?*
- *To what extent do people have trust in local politics and politicians?*

Following the structure of these questions, this chapter is organised into Section 7.2, which explores residents' relationships with their local government. This section is structured into Sub-Section 7.2.1, which illustrates residents' knowledge about their municipal administration and examines their experiences of direct contact with local government and Sub-Section 7.2.2, which analyses their opinions and satisfaction with their local government. Subsequently, Section 7.3 explores residents' outlook on local politics, with Sub-Section 7.3.1 looking at residents' interests and patterns of participation in local politics, with Sub-Section 7.3.2 more generally examining residents' opinions about local politicians and residents' trust in local politics.

The second part of this chapter consists of Section 7.4, which analyses residents' civic concerns in relation to local government and local politics by answering the second part of question 2: ***"…do these differences have an impact on residents' values and civic concerns?"*** This will be achieved by answering the following questions:

- *What are residents' opinions about the role of local government, local politics and public versus private provision of services?*
- *What do residents consider to be important problems within their neighbourhood?*
- *What do residents consider to be municipal responsibilities and priorities?*

These questions are approached by examining residents' interests in local issues and public goods in Section 7.4.1; their issues of dissatisfaction within their neighbourhoods in Section 7.4.2; residents' opinions about municipal responsibilities in Section 7.4.3; and residents' evaluation of municipal priorities in Section 7.4.4.

In applying the conceptual framework, Section 7.5 shows how residents' interest and engagement in local politics and their relationship with their local government can be

linked to their civic concerns and value formation. This final section is divided into Section 7.5.1, which discusses the consequences of the lack of contact with the municipality, due to the introduction of private administrations which take an intermediary position between residents and their local government in the case of HiCNs and local leaders in the case of the LiONs; and Section 7.5.2, which explores the impact of the private provision of public services on residents' interests in local politics and local government, more generally.

7.2 RESIDENTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In this section, I look at residents' relationships with their local government. As seen in Chapter Two, there are no studies within the research on gated communities which analyse this relationship in detail, and therefore, there are so far, no findings regarding the possible impact of private local governance and urban enclosure on residents' relationships with their municipality. However, as seen in Chapter Six, residents of HiCNs tend to be less aware of the common interests of all residents within the municipality and have less knowledge about or interest in the concerns of others and can be seen to distance themselves from the municipality as a whole. Therefore, I consider it to be important to analyse their relationships with their local government in more detail.

Section 7.2.1 analyses residents' direct personal contact with their municipal government, looking at the frequency and the type of this contact, residents' reasons for contacting the municipality and their experiences with this contact. Additionally, residents' resulting satisfaction with the responses towards their claims or requests by their municipal government is explored and more broadly, their expectations and

opinions about the functioning of their local government are analysed. Subsequently, Section 7.2.2 further examines residents' evaluations of their local government, looking at what interviewees consider being the most important local problems and deficiencies of their municipality. Here, the amount and the type of criticism with respect to the type of neighbourhood people live in is explored, in order to analyse how residents' interaction with the municipality, their perceptions of deficiencies of their local government and the type of neighbourhood they live in, all interconnect with each other.

7.2.1 CONTACT & SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the debate about the impacts of gated neighbourhoods, it is often argued that those living within the gates choose to provide themselves with all the facilities they want and need, and therefore have no interest in paying for municipal public facilities (e.g. Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Caldeira, 2000). Others claim that participation in local government and political engagement in general, are both fostered by private forms of urban government (e.g. Foldvary, 1994; Webster, 2001). Martinotti (1999) maintains that local government institutions generally rely on the assumption that, residents are naturally interested in local decision-making, and in issues concerning common welfare. Yet, he argues that this cannot be taken for granted, in a time where many cities are experiencing increasing privatisation and commercialisation of the public space and where an increasing part of the population chooses to live within gated communities, which are privately governed. Analysing the contact that residents have with their local government and their resulting satisfaction or criticism of their municipal administration, shows how political interests and opinions are related to the urban form within which people live.

In this research, it was found that the interviewees could be divided into two general groups of residents: those who had experiences of personally contacting their municipal government, and those who had never contacted their municipality directly. This section looks at who these different groups consist of and if this difference in contact is reflected in the diverse expectations and levels of satisfaction with the municipal government.

The residents who have had direct contact with their municipality are all residents of MiONs and HiONs. When asked whom they would contact in case of any problem within their neighbourhood, they all named the municipality as their first point of reference. Seba, a resident of a HiON for example, explained: *"Directly to the municipality, there is a sector dedicated to complaints, they again have a subcontractor, they outsource the sewage and electricity services, and they then contact that company, the company comes and does ... all that in 30 days."* As can be seen below in interview extracts, residents also give examples of how and why they had contacted the municipality in the past.

> Lara: *"You can talk about it with the neighbour, but everything is very slow here. We had the pavement broken for six months, with huge holes and it took them one year to come and six months to fix it."*
> K: *"How was that organised?"*
> Lara: *"The municipality is called, who calls another person, who calls another person …"*
> K: *"So some neighbour calls the municipality …"*
> Lara: *"Yes, exactly, it's spontaneous, one says 'I'll take care of it and he goes."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

> K: *"If you are worried about something in the neighbourhood, the trees or something that you want to be done, whom do you contact?"*
> Mario: *"The municipality."*
> K: *"Do you know whom to contact there?"*
> Mario: *"At the municipality they serve you very well, from there to be taken seriously is a different thing."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

These are examples of residents who have had some experience of contacting the municipality because of a neighbourhood issue. As a result of their experiences with the municipality, these residents generally have very specific opinions about how efficiently or not, the municipality works. Seba (resident of a HiON) pointed out that *"To contact the municipality there's no problem, there is a problem in the response ... yes, yes, I had a case that was solved, but the time that was involved was quite exaggerated and after complaints and at loud voices."* Similarly, Lara (resident of a HiON) found that *"... now it is easier, but sometimes they ignore you."* These residents' level of satisfaction with their local government is therefore, directly related to their personal experiences with the municipality. In the case of HiONs, the residents generally believed that contacting the municipality was not a problem, but that the response was either insufficient or not fast enough.

> Anna: *"It depends on the topic, if it's something relating to a tree I contact the parks and gardens department of the municipality, if it is something relating to a street or lighting, the municipality. In reality, I enter the Internet where they have a website to get the phone numbers or the sectors and call. I don't know if everybody does that the same. Now you can actually pay the local tax through the Internet and that helps a lot."*
> K: *"So there are many possibilities to contact the municipality?"*
> Anna: *"I think that through the Internet it's easy, but I don't know if everybody has access."*
> K: *"You said that in the past the problems, things you've complained about, were resolved."*
> Anna: *"What I told you about the pavement … at least they looked for a compromise, not to charge the neighbours with the costs, do an improvement that was not asphalt."*
> K: *"And regarding the issue of the water, something was done?"*
> Anna: *"Yes I think there is a response, but we pay too much tax for this type of response."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Among the interviewees of MiONs, there were many comments made about the problems of corruption in the sense that 'important' people got treated differently from others. This seems to be a more general class issue, since only people from MiONs and

LiONs believed that this was the case. Some of the residents of MiONs even went as far as to say that nothing was ever done by the municipality.

> Marina: *"Yes, but it was also the municipality where we went to request that they cut the trees two months ago and today expires and they did not come."*
> Mario: *"No, no, if I were a judge I would have called once and the second time I say: 'I'm judge so-and-so and I want you to come!' and they come immediately, that's San Isidro."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

> Mara: *"The municipality, they don't do anything."*
> K: *"Did you ever request something?"*
> Mara: *"Yes with this building in front, millions of times, they don't do anything."*
> K: *"Are there problems of communication or is it easy to know whom to talk to at the municipality?"*
> Mara: *"No, they all serve you, they are all very nice but nobody does anything."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

Similarly to the residents of HiONs, they also all agreed that the contact per se was not the problem. However, compared to residents of MiONs, the necessity to contact the municipality in order to request things was seen as a hassle by some of the residents of HiONs. As can be seen in the following interview extract of Isa (resident of a HiON), the necessity to contact the municipality directly was often not seen as a democratic right, but rather as a burden: *"No, I think there is no problem, what happens, it's like everything, you have to make the effort, if you call because they are parking illegally, they come and tow the cars but it is that you are at thousands of things, I return from school with the kids, I have to start calling, that they serve, give the address, I don't know ..."* This helps to explain that, when the opportunity arises to hand the contact over to a neighbourhood administration, for example within HiCNs, as illustrated below, residents are happy to do so.

The main difference that could be found between residents of MiONs and those of HiONs was that, the latter mainly complained about the fact that they actually had to make the effort and that the things they complained about shouldn't exist in the first

place, since they lived in a wealthy municipality where people paid high local taxes. In contrast, middle-income residents complained about the lack of response by the municipality and felt less well served than wealthier residents. This shows that, to a certain extent, the disposition to engage in local issues is lower among high-income residents per se and thus, the assumption that residents of HiCNs disengage and trust private administrations to take over the responsibility to look after otherwise public issues might be explained by the social class they belong to.

Looking at the second group, for those who stated they had never contacted their local government directly when they had a problem and/or complaint, it emerged that they were either residents of HiCNs or LiONs. It is important to remember, as described in Chapter Five, that the private administrations of HiCNs partly take the role of local government or at least negotiate any conflict, request or complaint with the municipality for the residents. While the reasons for contact with the municipal government within HiONs and MiONs were mainly local problems, for example with the sewage system or with the cutting of trees in public spaces, in the case of HiCNs, these issues are either resolved directly by the neighbourhood administration or transmitted via them to local government.

> Paola: *"In this neighbourhood there is an administrator, there is a person who manages all the neighbourhood and through whom things are channelled. It's she who asks for the offers, yes …"*
> K: *"Are there meetings regularly?"*
> Paola: *"There are meetings every once in a while."*
> K: *"Do you attend them?"*
> Paola: *"Some yes, others not."*
> K: *"So you would not contact the municipality directly?"*
> Paola: *"No, it goes directly through her."*
> K: *"And are you happy with that?"*
> Paola: *"Yes"*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

In exploring the ways in which residents of HiCNs deal with problems and concerns regarding their own neighbourhood, it was found that they never directly contacted their municipality, and were rather happy with this situation. In addition to contacting their private administration, which manages all neighbourhood related issues, including complaints or demands regarding the neighbourhood, residents also used the option of contacting the security guards in the first instance, who then either contacted the private administration or directly addressed the municipality as can be seen in the next interview.

> K: *"But was there ever, did you ever have some contact with the municipality for some problem?"*
> Pati: *"Yes, yes, we have called for, generally it is the guy from the security lodge who does it, Rubén, you call him and he automatically calls the municipality so that they come and do things."*
> K: *"In those moments where something like that happened, were things done, was the problem solved?"*
> Pati: *"Yes, for example once there was … now it has been a long time that the electricity has not been cut, the services are working well … so it was cut for a good hour and we started all calling here and he talked to the municipality to see what was happening and well, from the municipality they referred him to Edenor[82], but well at least they answered him and referred him to whom they had to refer him to."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

It is interesting how the interviewee, when asked if she ever had any contact with the municipality, said yes and then clarified that it was actually the security guard who talked to the municipality. Therefore, she can also be expected to take his opinion about how the municipality dealt with the request as her own, without being fully aware of this. Although HiONs also have security guards whom residents often know well, these are never contacted regarding issues apart from security.

It is important to consider that in HiONs, neighbourhood groups exist, which deal with common requests towards the municipality. They work as a mediator between the

[82] Edenor is the private electricity company

residents and the municipality. These so called 'junta vecinal', act in response to specific claims or demands made by the residents and are carried forward as a common project. These neighbourhood groups consist of residents who get together and organise around a topic, not like the administrators of HiCNs who are paid for managing all neighbourhood related issues. Therefore, it can be argued that the fact that these neighbourhood groups exist, leads to more involvement in local issues by each resident, since they approach all the residents when there are problems raised by one, or some of the residents. Whereas in the HiCNs, all problems regarding public services and goods are dealt with by the administration team, and although there are meetings where all residents may participate, the residents often rely on the administration to do their job well and don't feel the need to attend these meetings. This system of neighbourhood groups exists within all open formal neighbourhoods, and Anna (resident of a HiON) described how they function: *"Actually, the neighbourhood group is an entity between the municipality and the neighbour, which you can resort to, for example, there were moments in the other neighbourhood where I've lived, where the streets were improved, they did not have paving stones, they were out of soil, so what we wanted was that they were asphalted, but since the neighbours would be charged the asphalt as well, not everyone was able to pay it. So the neighbourhood group was contacted to see if somehow the transit could be organised in those nine or ten blocks … so meetings were held … what they finally achieved was to organise the traffic direction of the streets and put in an improvement without it being asphalt and therefore, charging the neighbours. That's what the neighbourhood facilitates; through the neighbourhood group, it is easier to reach the municipality."*

If we now look at the other group of residents who do not contact the municipal government directly, the residents of LiONs, it was found that residents were used to

solving their problems often in the form of self-help, and they did not expect solutions from the municipal government in the first place.

> Emilia: *"No, people know, electricity, people themselves, my father put the water for our house, the neighbours got together, they bought the pipe, they put the electricity …"*
> K: *"But if there is some complaint, whom do they talk to?"*
> Emilia: *"With Edenor I think, or…?"*
> K: *"Ah, directly with the company, not with the municipality."*
> Emilia: *"Exactly, I think so."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

However, if the municipality has to be contacted, there is a structure of neighbourhood representatives in place who deal with complaints from residents. Thus, just like the residents of HiCNs, residents of LiONs also defend their interest vis-à-vis local government as a group.

> K: *"If something in your neighbourhood worries you, if there's a problem in the neighbourhood, whom do you contact?"*
> Maria: *"Our representative."*
> K: *"Who exists per zone?"*
> Maria: *"Yes."*
> K: *"But have you ever contacted the municipality directly for some problem?"*
> Maria: *"Nothing."*
> K: *"And when you contact the representative, are the problems generally solved?"*
> Maria: *"No."*
> K: *"How does it work, is the representative elected?"*
> Maria: *"Yes, since I'm here it has always been the same."*
> K: *"But how is it decided who it is?"*
> Maria: *"They say by vote."*
> K: *"But there hasn't been an election since you've been here."*
> Maria: *"No, no."*
> K: *"Do you feel represented by her?"*
> Maria: *"Yes."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

In analysing residents' awareness of how local problems are solved within their neighbourhood, it emerges that, within HiCNs, the structure of the private administration taking the role of sub communal government, which manages the rules and regulations specific to the neighbourhood, results in a detachment of residents from the responsibility to manage local issues by themselves. Some residents of HiCNs don't

really know if the municipality has been contacted in certain cases or not, since the administration takes care of things. If, in the end, the administration is only transmitting problems or solving them, it is not always clear to the residents, and they don't seem to care about it either.

> Elisa: *"The administrator actually, first person the administrator, if a tree falls and I don't know what to do, the administrator, if I can solve it with my gardener I'll do it with my gardener."*
> K: *"But if it's something …"*
> Elisa: *"Well, I don't know if you know that a few years ago this wall collapsed. … Well, I was sitting here and suddenly I saw that it folded like a leaf of paper and it all fell down, there the administration intervened, not the municipality, the administration, we all, the whole neighbourhood worked on that."*
> K: *"But was the municipality contacted?"*
> Elisa: *"I don't know, I really don't know, I never found out, who might know is Pablo."*
> K: *"Did you ever contact the municipality for something of yours?"*
> Elisa: *"It would never occur to me."*
> K: *"So you cannot say if it is easy to know whom to contact or not because you have never done it."*
> Elisa: *"I do consider that it is not easy."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

However, with the privatisation of public services taking place also within open neighbourhoods, there are similar developments of detachment from the municipal government occurring, since residents feel that the municipality is no longer responsible for some of their service provision. As a result, residents often seem to feel insecure, since they are not sure whom to hold accountable and if private providers can be trusted.

> K: *"Also with the sewage system, the fact that they are doing them now, was it through the neighbourhood group?"*
> Mona: *"Exactly, that's part, yes, yes, in part it was the neighbourhood group but then later, the work is being done by private companies."*
> K: *"But for example the question if one pays for it or not …"*
> Mona: *"No, no, the neighbourhood does not get involved there."*
> K: *"So that is directly between you and the municipality?"*
> Mona: *"No, between us and those private companies, that's also why we didn't want to pay it, because we didn't know where these companies had come from, if they would finish the work, they demanded that we should pay them before the end of the work, that doesn't exist."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

As explained within the conceptual framework, one of the effects of the privatisation, which takes place with the formation of HiCNs, is that problems are solved in a communal, privately organised form, whereas in open neighbourhoods, the municipality is responsible and can be held accountable by the residents. As a result, the need for residents to put pressure on their municipal government diminishes with the increase of HiCNs. Therefore, as seen above, residents of HiCNs do not generally have the same expectations from local government and are less aware of problems with local government than residents in open neighbourhoods.

The administrations of HiCNs often make arrangements with the municipal government, if they require some additional service or if there are any other unresolved claims by the residents. Thus, they function like permanent localised initiatives, while in other neighbourhoods, common initiatives are normally temporary and only relate to a specific subject. HiCNs can therefore be understood as a form of localised syndicate. As a result, there is no incentive for residents of HiCNs to publicly engage in concerns that affect the municipality as a whole. Again, it can be argued, this leads to an individualisation of problems and concerns.

As further explained in Chapter Three, Kohn (2004) claims that privately governed neighbourhoods might promote identification with the neighbourhood, but this, she argues, occurs at the detriment of identification with the whole municipality. As a consequence, it reduces the disposition of residents to back municipal policies and initiatives that benefit the whole municipality. And as Kohn argues, "NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) was the spector of the 1980s, the 'only-in-my-backyard' attitude is [now] also a threat" (Kohn, 2004: 157).

Regarding the satisfaction with their local government and residents' opinions about the municipal administration, it is interesting to note that most of the interviewees in HiCNs, nonetheless, do have an opinion about how easy it is to contact the municipality and how efficiently the municipality works, even though they don't have any personal experiences of direct contact.

> K: *"If here in the neighbourhood something worries you, if there is a problem in the street, with the electricity or something, whom do you contact?"*
> Susanna: *"The management and the management contact the municipality."*
> K: *"So you never contact the municipality directly?"*
> Susanna: *"No because I can rest on the management to do it."*
> K: *"Generally this type of issue has been solved without problems?"*
> Susanna: *"Yes, yes, they are solved, sometimes there are things that are slow, because I know the municipality from another perspective because I am a lawyer and thus sometimes I work with the municipality and I know people. So, it is bureaucratic, it's slow, but it works well."*
> K: *"It works well?"*
> Susanna: *"Yes, yes, you could say that from the municipalities that exist it's the best."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Or as the following interview abstract shows, the contact is seen to be their own experience, even though it was another person who actually went to the municipality. Yet, the experience the other person had was still seen as the interviewee's own experience and from that, the interviewee constructed her opinion about the municipality's work.

> K: *"There you talked to somebody from the municipality or how…?*
> Martina: *"Yes, you go to the municipality … I did not personally, another person went, but yes, yes."*
> K: *"But do you think it is easy to contact the municipality?"*
> Martina: *"Yes, I remember that yes, they serve very well."*
> K: *"Do you think that also when you need something there is a response from them?"*
> Martina: *"There I don't know because I've never asked for anything. I do know that they have good customer service if one goes to the administrative part, let's say, paper works of payments or delayed quotas that you might have."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

As seen above, and similar to the residents of HiCNs, the residents of LiONs do not have any direct contact with the municipality even though theoretically they could, like

any other resident of the municipality. Some of the LiON interviewees, just as some of the residents of HiCNs, mention the possibility of contacting the municipal government directly, nonetheless this option was not put into practice by any of my interviewees.

> Alexia: *"We've representatives, this representative, you go and you get in touch and you tell him."*
> K: *"But that is at the level of neighbourhood group, or how does it work?"*
> Alexia: *"Yes, no, the neighbours don't get together, it's more personal, you go …"*
> K: *"Is there a person who is the representative, let's say?"*
> Alexia: *"Exactly, you go to the house of this representative and you tell him 'look, I've got the problem that my bath is blocked, I need them to come and free the drain, and that person writes down your name and then they come and free the drain, they charge more."*
> K: *"But you don't have direct contact, or you've never had with the municipality, you never went directly to the municipality to claim something?"*
> Alexia: *"No, like that, claim … well, one can go personally oneself, if one manages things like that, if it happens that in social services they don't take you seriously, you go to the municipality and otherwise, well to the ministry."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

However, as the last sentence illustrates, the option to contact the municipality directly is a very hypothetical one and rather unlikely to be carried out, and just as unlikely as someone taking their personal problem directly to the ministry. Similarly, one of the residents of a HiCN sees the direct contact with the municipal government as an option that is voluntary and that if one wants to, one can always bypass the administration and contact the municipality directly. The following interviewee has never done so – like all of the other interviewees within the HiCNs, but she is convinced that some of her neighbours do contact the municipality directly.

> Nicole: *"If it is within the 'Boating' I'll contact the administration."*
> K: *"They then afterwards if it is something that the municipality has to solve, contact the municipality?"*
> Nicole: *"Yes, anyway, one can directly go to the municipality."*
> K: *"Did you ever do that, did you ever go for any issue, for a request, anything?"*
> Nicole: *"No, but I know that the people here do go there."*
> K: *"Do you know if there was any general request from the 'Boating', if the issues were solved or if it was difficult to receive from the municipality or not?"*
> Nicole*: "No, I think the administration reaches the municipality in a good way, so when there has been any problem I think it has been solved quickly."*
> K: *"Do you remember some issue that existed with the municipality?"*
> Nicole: *"No, to tell the truth, no."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

As indicated above, the fact that residents do not directly contact their municipal government in the case of neighbourhood related issues which need to be solved, results in a form of detachment from their municipal government. If these statements are compared with those of residents of MiONs and HiONs, who all have direct contact with their municipality, two aspects stand out.

Firstly, the lack of direct contact with the municipality results in a lack of experience with the way the municipality works, and with the quality of their response to requests and claims. This missing experience leads to a lack of knowledge and understanding of residents' local government. Thus, their opinion about how well their municipality works is not based on personal experience, but on accounts by others and on knowledge gained through the media.

The second aspect is that both residents of HiCNs and those of LiONs access the municipality as a group, the first through the private administration and the latter through neighbourhood representatives. Hence, their interests are always presented as group interests, which might lead to an asymmetry in power relations compared to single interests by residents who represent only themselves. Therefore, their voice might be louder and their contact with the municipality in a way, professionalised. As a consequence, however, it is more difficult for residents of HiCNs and LiONs to defend personal claims which are not supported by their neighbours and their representatives.

7.2.2 OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

As seen in the previous section, which looked at the differences in residents' personal contact with their local government, this contact varies according to the type of

neighbourhood people live in. It was found that, relative to these differences in contact with the municipality, residents also had varying perceptions of how efficiently the municipality reacted to demands by residents and how approachable the municipal government was. In order to further explore residents' opinions about their local government, this section analyses if these differences are also linked to differences in residents' more general opinions about problems within their municipality.

In looking at residents' opinions about their local government in this case study, it is important to remember, as described in Chapter Five, the municipality has been governed for decades by one family. Melchor Posse – the father – held office for sixteen years, and then his son, Gustavo Posse, succeeded him as local governor in 1999. Many of my interviewees commented on this situation and independent of their opinions about the quality of work accomplished by either the father or the son, it led many to believe that the system is not fully democratic.

The main topic, which results from the questions about the most important problems of the municipality among residents of HiONs and MiONs, is the inefficiency of the municipality. This criticism is directly linked to residents' experiences with personal demands or requests made to the municipality and with the response they had received.

Among residents of MiONs, this inefficiency is mostly criticised with regards to the comparably high taxes which the municipality collects and which they do not believe is fairly reflected in the level of services they receive. They are very disillusioned and have had a lot of negative experiences resulting from their demands towards the municipality. They are very aware that they live in a wealthy municipality, and they feel that, even if their income is not huge, they have to pay proportionately high taxes and

do not get back enough from their municipality. Marina for instance, believed that *"... partly it's the bad administration of the funds, because the way they collect taxes, you don't see reflected such a collection in, for example a hospital. ...".* And reflecting on the quality of the services provided by the municipality, Mario explained: *"... it's everywhere, but here it's easier to see because you know that here they collect lots of money, the people here pay their taxes and they are very high, whereas you go to La Matanza*[83] *and maybe not all taxes are paid, maybe yes, but here fortunes are paid and the restitution to the people cannot be seen. Besides, you can see that it is political problems, seeing that you have a huge hospital, with all the money and everything, and a machine breaks and they don't repair it for weeks. ... So, it's the municipality that lets these things happen, it's because of political problems because otherwise it would defend us ..."* Martha also demonstrated her very critical view of the municipality when she recounted her experiences: *"Look, do you want me to tell you something? Many people that go to the municipality of San Isidro, they write letters, we've made requests, they do like this, they archive it and that's it, they ignore people, I tell you that many people, I work in a school where they all make the same comment, they ignore you, directly. We want them to cut our tree, how long has it been? The tree has to be taken away and there we continue with the tree that is falling down ..."*

This group of MiON residents all felt that the municipality was not providing the services it should. Some blamed it on inefficiency, some on politics, but they all agreed that there was a problem and that they were the ones who, as a result, did not get what they deserved. Just like the residents of MiONs, those of HiONs had a lot of criticism about the way the municipality worked, mostly in relation to the lack of infrastructure

[83] Poorer municipality in the South of the AMBA

and inefficiency, which they generally blamed on the bureaucracy of the local government and its lack of capability.

> K: *"What do you think is the greatest problem of the municipality?"*
> Lara: *"They do not do any public works, that's very serious. In San Isidro everybody does what he or she wants. … They would need to deliver better services, more infrastructure."*
> K: *"And do you think this is a problem all over Buenos Aires in general or is it specific of San Isidro?"*
> Lara: *"Vicente Lopez, which is here next to San Isidro, has much better infrastructure than San Isidro. Tigre also. San Isidro generally has never been good, but well, now it's getting better, I admit it's getting better."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

> Flor: *"The bureaucracy, the inefficiency."*
> K: *"Of the government?"*
> Flor: *"Of everything. I went, I tell you … I don't understand how they work … I arrived at a floor which was social services, the municipality is full of little places where you have to go through, I don't know what for, but you kind of have to announce your presence 'I'm so-and-so from XY, I come for this and that', 'ok, go to desk or to section five', so … I arrive at social services and it was worse, because it was a house, I want to say building-wise it was huge … I get there, an empty floor on one side and on the other side there was like a reception with three desks. It was awful. There were, so you know … you'll end up horrified of what I tell you (laughter) but well, it's terrible, I wish it was all better … there were three desks, in two of them there were people talking on the phone who did not stop. I must have been there around two hours and they were talking to the same person the whole time, two others chatting about life and drinking mate[84] with sweets and what have you, but really! And there was only one person serving and we were 30, 40 people … and I was saying: 'like this, how does it work?' I couldn't understand, I went with my request … I said 'here, no one will take notice of me', because all these … the telephone of the lady is paid by us, the mate we pay it and I kept looking and … disaster, a disaster, it depressed me."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Even if not as common as among residents of MiONs, the residents of HiONs also commented on the lack of transparency, and there was also some criticism of the politics involved in the decision-making processes within local government. Mona for instance, commented: *"... and a bit also with the things that sometimes don't result in being very clear. Now there's all this problem in, it's not in the historic centre of San Isidro, but apparently they want to do, I don't know, a building or apartment complex,*

[84] Mate is an infusion, prepared by steeping dried leaves in hot water. It is the national drink in Argentina and drinking it is a common social practice.

maybe you know, and it is in a place where there are 200 year old trees and it looks like they are going to cut some trees but they will plant others. Well all these things that never come out clear, and in that obviously the municipality is involved and is responsible. It's the municipality that has sold these lands or given permission so that these people make their business. The business can be very good but these lands should not have been sold." And referring to the how problems were being solved within the neighbourhood, Stefania stated: *"... it is supposed to be the neighbourhood group who transmits the problems upwards, but ... the streets are only asphalted when elections are about to take place."*

Looking at the second group, where residents did not have any experience in personally contacting the municipality, there was no such general criticism of inefficiency found. Both residents of HiCNs and LiONs did not state any specific criticism about the bureaucracy of local government or about the general lack of public services. The difference found between them, though, was that residents of the LiONs only mentioned problems concerning their own neighbourhood and the way the municipality dealt with their problems, whereas residents of HiCNs did not seem to expect the municipality to solve their problems in the first place.

Residents of LiONs mainly criticised the local government for not providing them with enough help, or the abuse of help, and more generally, for not keeping its promises. Emilia for example, put it this way: *"What they do? I up to now remember that Posse, if you look, you'll see there are some flagstones that say 'Posse, Municipality of San Isidro" from '95, that was the only thing they've done, because afterwards when they wanted votes, they went and they bought the people, the people that needed it, they gave*

them a kilo of milk or they gave them a choripan[85] *and the people they were like 'yes, we'll vote for this one', thus sometimes these humble people are abused."* And she continued: *"The greatest problem is that they always promise and they never deliver."*

Surprisingly, some residents of LiONs also criticised that the municipality gave indiscriminately to residents of LiONs. But here the criticism was not directed towards the help per se, but the manner in which the municipality helped and that the residents were not listened to and their actual need not considered. When asked about the greatest problems of the municipality, Alexia for instance, replied: *"That they give, that they don't ask."*

It's interesting that among residents of LiONs there are, just like among residents of HiCNs, those who consider informal settlements to be the greatest problem of the municipality and believe the municipality does not do enough, or does not do the right things to help its residents.

> K: *"What do you think is the greatest problem of the municipality?"*
> Nadine: *"For me it's the slums, because it's the part where they have to help most, those who have most shortcomings, because all in all, they receive quite a lot of help, more than the middle classes, maybe they also need."*
> K: *"You are saying that they receive more than other people, the people who live in slums?"*
> Nadine: *"Yes, it depends in what respect, because maybe they receive help but at the same time, they are discriminated, whereas with the middle-class people it's different because they don't have help but they are not discriminated like those of the slums."*
> …
> Nadine: *"I tell you what they told me because I never had flooding in my house, … but the thing was that with the people who had water in their houses, there were always problems. They sent the stuff, they sent blankets, mattress, but there were always problems that some received, the ones who did receive items was maybe the ones who had not got wet and the ones who really needed things didn't get anything."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

[85] A very typical popular lunch similar to hotdogs

The LiONs are also seen to be a major problem by residents of HiCNs, but here they are rather seen in the context of a more general security problem, which according to them is the main problem of the municipality. Susanna for instance, believed *"... that the municipality of San Isidro is the wealthiest, did you know that it is the wealthiest, and nonetheless I think, being the one that can collect taxes also, it seems to me, if I'm not wrong, statistically it is the place with most slums and thus I think it does not deal with the social issues as it should, taking into consideration all it collects."* As the following interview extract shows, some also believed that there were political interests involved.

> K: *"What do you think is the greatest problem of the municipality of San Isidro?"*
> Paola: *"I think a very important issue is … here in San Isidro we have a very big and very strong slum, which is 'La Cava', it is like powerful … in this moment it is quiet this slum because they are controlling it a lot, but it is a heavy burden that the municipality has, because I think, in a certain way, that there continues to be a slum, the municipality has a lot to do with, it seems to me."*
> K: *"Do you think it is for the political power it has?"*
> Paola: *"Or not … I think that the municipality, ours is very efficient, we are in the hands of people who do a lot, but that … it gives me the impression, that if the guys don't work, that if they continue to be thieves … but that the municipality could improve that situation. In this moment, it is calm because all around that slum there are people from the provincial police force who have controlled it a lot, for a few months and as soon as they leave, the whole rotten thing will start again, and I think that if they don't work and they continue to think they are thieves, the municipality cannot do anything."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Also among residents of HiONs, security is one of the recurring issues mentioned when asked about the greatest problems of the municipality. Mona, referring to problems within the municipality, believed *"... that at the moment it must have something to do a bit with that issue of security ..."*, and similarly, Isa thought *"... that it is the security, but I don't know if I notice that there is any change, or that the municipality is really doing something on this issue. In reality, I think it should be an issue of inclusion, or I don't know how it should be called, with the marginalised neighbourhoods, with the people who have less and who have more, it's like we always isolate ourselves more. It's like there is a panic that if you are from a slum they will rob you, all the time this is*

happening to us, we are separating." However, Anna rather saw the problem in *"the contrasts, you've got very residential areas and ten blocks away you've got a slum."* Comparing these statements with those of residents of HiCNs, it can be seen that among HiON residents, security problems were seen as social problems and not as problems of who was guilty of the existing insecurity.

Regarding opinion about the way the municipality works, the residents of HiCNs were rather favourable and did not comment on its inefficiency, not even regarding issues that concerned their own neighbourhood. Thus, it can be seen that they did not have any expectations from public services, since they had opted out of these and provided for them privately. Even when there was some critique of the municipality, in regards to its transparency for example, the general tone was rather positive about the way the municipality functions. For instance, Nicole commented on the municipality as follows: *"That they are not transparent in their policies, maybe they are doing things very well but since they are reluctant to give information they generate doubts about 'what is it that is going on?'"* Pati for example, in a way, excused unsolved issues of insecurity with the positive results in other areas: *"The security, it's also, well, I don't know, it's what worries me and therefore I think that it worries them as well, they were very occupied with the issue of health because they did an important change of hospital, they changed to a super-hospital, … It is very important, yes, nice, really very well done, everything, I don't know how it works because I don't use it but it seems nice, so I think they have been with that and lately also what can be seen is that they are repairing the streets a lot, widening and repairing, they were also working with the issue of the flooding where there had been problems years ago that when it rains the water doesn't run, what I see are these things."*

When asked about the problems of the municipality, residents of HiCNs generally either did not think that the municipality had any specific problem, apart from some minor issue that annoyed them personally, or they remained very general in their comments.

> Martina: *"I don't know, it's a municipality, which works quite well, also administratively it works well, no, no, …"*
> K: *"Don't you think there is some specific problem of San Isidro compared to other places?"*
> Martina: *"No, I don't see … no, the only thing that disturbs me and my husband is the transit system on weekends, where, obviously many people come to spend the day and if you go to the centre you have the disadvantage that when you want to go home and get to Libertador[86] … you have to wait hours and hours in Libertador because they have made it a one-way street all the other way, for the people who come … for the tourists, that really annoys you, for what one pays but then …"*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

Referring to municipal problems, Elisa's comment *"I would say that the streets are all in bad shape, that the street lighting does not work and obviously, even if I don't think this depends from the municipality, a great problem is the insecurity"* shows that expectations from local government refer to a limited list of things and even the provision of security is not included. Only one resident (Elsa) who works in social work has a very critical opinion about what the municipality does and how it works. *"Even if Argentina is said to be a democratic country, it is ruled by many regulations that make it that it doesn't seem to be so. I refer to the fact that in San Isidro, the same family has been in government for 45 years. 5 years ago, the father resigned and the son who was re-elected continued and probably, he will stay there for the next 30 years. The law does not help, because there is so much impunity. Here, it exists that votes are bought with the same money that is collected from taxes. It's very difficult to get rid of them. So this generates a lot of disorder within the municipality, so that makes this a very rich municipality, maybe one of the richest in Argentina, and anyway there are very few public works done. It is unbelievable that there are so many kids without education, that*

[86] Main access road to the centre of Buenos Aires apart from the highway

don't go to school, that for me is the first and more serious though, source of many other things, that there is no housing, and that is not the responsibility of the national government; it's that of the municipality." This shows that the urban form people live in is obviously not the only characteristic that has an impact on people's understanding of local government, but it definitely has a significant impact, since it is only exceptional cases where residents work in areas where they have some connection to their own local government.

In summary, it can be said that this case study found that the type of neighbourhood residents live in significantly influences opinions about local government and their expectations from local government. In order to analyse if this has an impact in the long run on urban democratic processes, the next section analyses residents' outlook on local politics.

7.3 RESIDENTS' OUTLOOK ON LOCAL POLITICS

As seen in Chapter Two, there were no studies found which analyse possible differences between residents of HiCNs and open neighbourhoods regarding their interest and engagement in local politics. As pointed out by Walks (2007), who in his research looked at the political attitudes and turnout rates at federal elections in Canada, it is important to explore politics at the local level, since the impact of private urban governance and gating might be more visible here than in the context of national politics.

This section therefore examines residents' interests in local politics, their level of active involvement in local politics, their opinions about local politicians and their trust in local politics more generally.

7.3.1 INTEREST AND ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL POLITICS

As pointed out above, within the literature on gated communities, it is often assumed that the enclosure of neighbourhoods leads to a 'civic secession' and that residents will generally be antagonistic towards the State (Walks, 2007). Regarding political engagement, residents of private neighbourhoods might be expected to participate less in politics since they are able to privately solve their problems.

When analysing the interviews with residents of San Isidro, it was found that regarding their interest in local politics, they could be divided into two main groups: There are those who stated that they were interested in local politics and those who claimed not to. These two groups were found among all neighbourhood types. Independent of the type of neighbourhood, the largest section of the interviewees stated not to be interested in politics in general. However, there were slight differences found in residents' explanations for being interested or not and in their opinions about politics. But before illustrating these subtle differences in residents' political interests, visible patterns of active political engagement will be analysed.

A small portion of those residents who claimed to be interested in local politics also stated that they were currently active in some sort of political engagement or had been in the past. Regarding these accounts of active involvement in local politics, there are differences according to the type of neighbourhood residents lived in. The interviewees who have some sort of experience in local politics are all either residents of MiONs or

LiONs. Juan (resident of a LiON) for example, recounted: *"Exactly, so we didn't have to ask permission neither at the municipality nor at the province, the program was national. I'm a menemista*[87]*, I've worked for Carlos Menem, so I had political backing, I've never used it for me personally, otherwise I wouldn't be here. I wanted the project, the programme, that's what I had dreamt of, I had dreamt it and I wanted to see it realised and it was my only fight. That and working for other organisations, we had a roundtable which we called the provincial table of settlements, where we gave each other support. There were 80 neighbourhoods of the provinces of Buenos Aires taking part in the programme, and we got together regularly. We worked for national regulations on land rights ..."* Similarly, the following extracts of interviewees give an insight into the experiences of politically active residents.

> Felix: *"I'm interested in local politics and generally, I do politics."*
> K: *"In what do you participate?"*
> Felix: *"To start with, I will tell you that I'm a member of the Justicialist*[88] *party, I have participated a lot within the party with Justicialist candidates, I worked, directly worked with that."*
> K: *"In the municipality?"*
> Felix: *"No, no because the municipality has always been on the other side, but I worked with candidates for the municipality."* …
> Felix: *"All my life, since the year '55, I was 15 when I got into politics."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

> Marco: *"Yes I've been interested during the elections in the year 1983 … Well during that time I collaborated with a political party to try that that party wins and I collaborated … I had my work, I didn't do it with the ambition to obtain a job within the municipality because I had my job."*
> K: *"Out of interest in what the party was doing …"*
> Marco: *"Exactly, without personal interest, I say that because there are many who want to obtain a job and get into politics to make a career and achieve to get some municipal post, I since I already had my job, I did it without any interest and I liked it. I collaborated when the mayor came to power here in San Isidro, he was called, he has passed away already, Melchor Posse, and now there is his son. Well, I collaborated for a period, let's say the years, '83, '84, '85 up to the '90 something I collaborated with the people."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

[87] Supporter of Carlos Menem, a former president of Argentina.
[88] The Justicialist Party (Spanish: Partido Justicialista, PJ) is a Peronist political party in Argentina. The current president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and former presidents Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner are members.

The residents of HiONs, when asked if they were generally active in local politics, simply answered "no" and were also not interested in becoming more engaged.

> K: *"So you've never been active in politics."*
> Lara: *"No, never."*
> K: *"Could you imagine a circumstance in which you would become active?"*
> Lara: *"In politics? No, never."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

The same picture was gained among residents of HiCNs, none of whom actively engaged in local politics and all interviewees stated not to be interested in participating in any way. Susanna for instance replied, *"No, never",* and Elisa further emphasised, *"Politics obviously not."* Thus, none of the high-income residents claimed to be actively engaged in local politics, independent of the type of neighbourhood they lived in. These findings suggest that contrary to what is sometimes assumed in the literature on gated communities, the differences in political engagement seem to be linked to social class and not to the urban form people live in.

By exploring in more detail, the statements of the majority of interviewees who stated not to be actively engaged in local politics, four subdivisions regarding their interest in local politics could be established: First, residents who are interested but not involved in local politics because of the negative image of politics more generally; secondly, those who are not involved, but feel they could or should be more engaged; thirdly, those who are generally not interested in politics without any specific explanation; and fourthly, those who claim not to be interested in local politics out of a frustration with politics more generally.

Above all, it has to be pointed out that regarding these subdivisions of political interest, residents of MiONs emerged to be the most mixed group, whereas residents of HiCNs

were the least diverse group. It could not, however, be determined if this homogeneity of political interests is rather a result of similar thinking people moving into HiCNs or conversely, if life within a HiCN impacts residents' political attitudes.

Analysing the link between the urban form and residents' political attitudes, the first group – residents who claim to be interested in local politics but who also state not to be themselves active in politics – were found to be almost exclusively residents of MiONs, who justified their lack of involvement with a generally negative opinion about politics.

> K: *"Are you interested in local politics?"*
> Carlos: *"Yes, yes."*
> Martha: *"Yes, in La Nacion[89] they've got 'Zona Norte'[90] which …*
> Carlos: *"La Nacion and Clarin."*[91]
> Martha: *"… from Tigre up to Vicente Lopez it informs about everything that's happening."*
> K: *"Have you ever participated in local politics?"*
> Martha: *"Politics no."*
> Carlos: *"No, Politics in particular, I don't like, we are involved in neighbourhood events, requests …"*
> (Residents of a MiON)

In comparison, it is interesting to note that among residents of LiONs, the only other group in which some residents claimed to be politically active, all of those who stated to be interested were also actively engaged in politics. This difference between residents of MiONs and LiONs could be explained by the difference in their patterns of personal contact with local government. As seen in the first section of this chapter, residents of LiONs did not have direct personal contact with their local government, whereas residents of MiONs did, and as a result of their experiences, they were also more critical of the functioning and the efficiency of local government. Thus, residents who were generally interested might be disillusioned by their personal experiences and not prepared to engage actively in politics.

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[89] National newspaper
[90] Local newspaper supplement
[91] National newspaper

If we now compare these findings with the second group, that of interviewees who had no direct contact with the municipality, among the residents of HiCNs, there was only one interviewee who showed an interest in local politics. She, however, can be interpreted as an exceptional case, since her interest is related to her professional activity. She stated that she was not involved in politics, because of the negative image of politics which she had gained through her professional experience. *"I made a brief incursion into politics in 2001, and during that year, I noticed that it wasn't for me. You need to have a vocation for politics. I've got lots of vocation for social issues, all my life I worked in that, in Colombia, all over I worked in social projects, but I'm used to working with people who are only interested in the common good. The politician has always some kind of personal ambition, which does not work with the way I am. I don't criticise the politicians because they are a necessary evil, we need them."* (Elsa)

Among the residents of HiONs on the other hand, it is interesting to see that there were a few residents who claimed to be interested in politics. None were found to be actively involved in politics, like their counterparts in HiCNs, but they did not justify this inactivity with a negative image of politics, they rather felt a bit guilty for not being more engaged or actually claimed to be interested in becoming more active in the future. Flor, for instance, stated that: *"I would like to participate, but to tell the truth, I don't know how because I don't see many people that … there must be, what's happening is that I have not found, I haven't actively done anything though. … But I would love to … what's happening that in reality I cannot, I've got five kids."* This feeling of guilt or bad conscience was only found among residents of HiONs.

K: *"Are you interested in local politics?"*
Anna: *"Very little."*
K: *"Have you ever participated in some political or social organisations?*

Anna: *"No, to tell the truth, no."*
K: *"Do you think things can be achieved through local initiatives?"*
Anna: *"Yes."*
(Resident of a HiON)

For those residents of HiONs who were interested and willing to be active, there appears to be some kind of barrier, which might be a class barrier, keeping them from becoming more involved. This was not found among residents of MiONs, LiONs or among residents of HiCNs, where most interviewees simply stated not to be interested at all. This general disinterest in local politics could also be found among residents of all other neighbourhood types, but it was only among residents of HiCNs that this was the most prevalent opinion. Apart from the resident who was working in social work, all of the residents of HiCNs stated that they were not interested in local politics. To the question of whether they were interested in local politics, they all gave the same answer: *"No."* The disinterest was often stated as a general disinterest in politics, as when Pati (resident of a HiCN) stated: *"I'm not interested in politics"* adding *"No, I have never been interested in politics and I never will be."* Or as Paola (resident of a HiCN) put it: *"No, I can't bear politics."*

If we compare these answers with those of residents of HiONs, we find that the majority also stated that they were not interested in local politics, like Mona for example: *"No, no, definitely not."* Or Seba who clarified: *"No, neither local nor general nor anything else, nothing, nothing political."*

Most of them stated that they were generally not interested, but looking further into their opinions about local politics and politicians, results show that they all had a very negative image of politics as illustrated in the next section. It stands out, however, that among these residents of HiONs who stated not to be interested in politics, some had a

relatively apologetic way of stating their disinterest. Isa, for instance, when asked about her interest, replied *"No, to tell the truth, no."*

Additionally, there were also comments made about local political initiatives, which residents of HiONs were aware of, even if they were not personally interested in them.

> Isa: *"In 2001, when the people started to go to the square[92], and the one of San Isidro was very well organised, because they people split up in committees …"*
> K: *"Did this happen spontaneously, was there not one person or …"*
> Isa: *"It was organised spontaneously, I think they were lucky that there were people involved that, there was a person working for an NGO, there was my mother[93], there was … that is to say that it happened, a working methodology was searched, that's where my mother was involved. So the methodology they chose was to divide themselves into committees. So there was the youth committee, a health committee, my husband who is within the environment one, and to tell the truth … the one I hear most about is the environment one, they do lots of things, now they will form an association, and what you can notice is that it's as if it starts to bother the municipality."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Just like the residents who stated being interested in politics but felt bad about not being actively involved, this kind of bad conscience and excuse for not being interested was only found among residents of HiONs. There is only one resident of a HiCN who tried to explain her disinterest in local politics. All other residents, as we've seen above, simply stated their disinterest without justifying it.

> K: *"Are you interested in local politics, at municipal level?"*
> Susanna: *"No, really, I don't get into politics."*
> K: *"Generally, or only at local level?"*
> Susanna: *"Generally, I'm interested, I read the newspapers from A to Z and I listen to the news because all of us Argentines are politicised because things are happening to us …"*
> K: *"Apart from national, do you read about local politics as well?"*
> Susanna: *"Yes, yes, yes but I'm not interested in it because, well, politics in Argentina is so dirty that it has directly generated a generation of apolitical people, that's my generation, the generation of the thirties that I belong to."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

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[92] In 2001 there were a number of grassroots movements after the collapse of the national government with people meeting in public places to organise themselves, forming groups which tried to solve local problems on a participative basis.
[93] Ana Hardoy, director of IIED America Latina in Buenos Aires and one of the editors of Medio Ambiente y Urbanizacion.

But compared to residents of HiONs, this explanation shows that there is no feeling of guilt or bad conscience, but rather, a justification, which argues that no one can expect to remain interested in politics, with the way politics is run in Argentina. There were also no comments made about some specific local political initiative or problem by any resident of a HiCN.

Additionally, it was found that part of the residents of MiONs who stated that they were not interested in local politics, immediately justified their position by blaming politics in Argentina as being a dirty business, similar to the responses of some of the wealthier residents.

> K: *"Are you interested in local politics?"*
> Mario: *"No."*
> Marina: *"No, me neither. It's great to complain, isn't it? (Laughter)"*
> Mario: *"No, what happens is that I think that no one likes politics because you know that here politics goes hand in hand with the evil and the perverse …"*
> Marina: *"Right, everything is so rotten that you say 'why should I be interested if they all rob and …"*
> (Residents of a MiON)

But there were also those who were generally not interested without giving any explanation but just giving a clear *"no"* as the answer to the question if they were interested in local politics. Some, like Clara (resident of a MiON), when asked if they were ever interested before, replied with a simple *"never."* Whereas, among residents of LiONs, it stands out that they seemed to be either interested in local politics and also actively engaged or not interested at all and not actively engaged.

> K: *"Are you interested in local politics?"*
> Maria: *"No."*
> K: *"Have you ever participated in something political?"*
> Maria: *"No."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

> K: *"Are you interested in local politics, here in San Isidro?"*
> Emilia: *"No, not a lot, you know, for example when you see the news and you see that, let's say they accuse a guy who they say has killed somebody and*

later they say that it was the police, it's then that we start talking about it, discussing, but otherwise …"
K: *"Have you ever been active in any political or social organisation?"*
Emilia: *"No."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Thus, among the LiONs, there were a few politically active residents, fighting for their local interests and using politics to achieve their interest; all others stated not to be interested in politics at all.

In summary, it has to be noted that, contrary to what is sometimes assumed in literature on gated communities, none of the high-income residents in this study were actively engaged in local politics, regardless of the type of neighbourhood they lived in. The differences in political engagement were presumably linked to social class and no link between urban enclosure and political engagement could be established.

However, it was only among residents of HiONs that some interviewees sounded apologetic about their lack of political engagement. The fact that this was not found among residents of HiCNs, might be a sign of further disengagement with local issues and a more general detachment from the municipality. Regarding residents' interests in local politics, it can be concluded that the main finding was that residents of HiCNs were the only group where most interviewees stated not to be generally interested in local politics.

7.3.2 OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL POLITICIANS

Regarding residents' trust in politics and their opinions about local politicians, a similar pattern was found. Overall, there is little trust in local politics, which is linked to

national politics, which seems to be considered as a rather dirty business, full of corruption.

> K: *"Do you think the local politicians know the problems of the people who live here or in other neighbourhoods?"*
> Susanna: *"Yes, I think they know, I think they know them very well."*
> K: *"Do you think that if they are not solved it is out of lack of interest?"*
> Susanna: *"No, I think it is actually because of politics."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

> Lara: *"I hate politicians, they are not interested in anything, just in themselves."*
> K: *"Do you think they are not capable or they don't know?"*
> Lara: *"They are not interested, they have their own interests and nothing else, I don't like politicians. But Posse, who is the mayor here, I view a bit better, but generally I don't trust politicians."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

There appears to be a general disbelief in politics, which is not related to any specific local problem, but rather linked to a general distrust in politics and politicians, and as seen above, local politicians were sometimes even seen in a more positive light than politicians generally.

However, regardless of the neighbourhood type people lived in, most residents thought that local politicians were not really interested in local problems, but rather followed their own interests and opportunities. As a consequence, many residents had doubts about the interests of politicians in solving existing local problems. Mona (resident of a HiON) for instance, reflected: "I suppose that they must know them, but I think they don't care, unfortunately they are not interested." And similar statements can be seen below:

> Flor: *"I think they know."*
> K*: "And do you think they are not interested or they don't know how to solve things?*
> Flor: *"I think both. Some things I understand are expensive, but there are others that they are also not interested in solving."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

K: *"Do you think the politicians know the problems of the people?"*
Mario: *"Yes, because they are among us."*
Marina: *"It's not that they don't know, it's that they don't care."*
(Resident of a MiON)

Alexia: *"Yes they know them, but well, they are blind, deaf and mute."*
K: *"You are saying they are not interested but they know what the problems are."*
Alexia: *"Yes, yes they know."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Others went further and doubted if politicians were at all interested in solving problems, and also doubted if they had the knowledge of local issues concerning the residents.

Stefania: *"I think the politicians look at their own bellybutton, they don't look further than their own bellybutton."*
K: *"And you think they don't want or they are not capable."*
Stefania: *"I think they don't want and I think that they are quite incapable."*
(Resident of a HiON)

If we analyse the statements about local politicians in relation to different types of neighbourhoods in more detail, some particular differences according to the urban form of residence were nonetheless found. First, when asked if interviewees thought that local politicians knew the problems of the people within the municipality, residents of HiCNs stated that yes, they believed politicians were aware of existing problems. Martina (resident of a HiCN) for example, stated: *"They must know, I don't know if they are interested, but they know, yes."* And similarly, Pati reflected: *"... the mayor and his family which have been governing are from here since always and usually they can be seen at mass so I suppose that yes. But as I said before, since I'm not very involved here and I'm not from the area, I don't know much, I could tell you more about Bella Vista*[94] *than about here."* In all other neighbourhoods, there were some who doubted the knowledge of local politicians.

[94] Another municipality in the AMBA

This general belief in politicians' awareness of local problems is, however, never specified, and rather seems to result from little engagement with local issues. Whereas among residents of all open neighbourhoods, there were some who believed that politicians, apart from maybe not being interested in solving local issues, were actually not aware of the real problems of people within the municipality.

> K: *"Do you think that local politicians know the problems of the people?"*
> Isa: *"No."*
> K: *"They don't know, or …"*
> Isa: *"No, I think they don't know, and they are not interested."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

> K: *"Do you think local politicians know the problems of the people of the neighbourhoods?"*
> Mara: *"No."*
> K: *"They don't know them and they are not interested either?"*
> Mara: *"They are not interested either, no."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

> Nadine: *"No, I think they don't know the problems of my neighbourhood, and if they know them they pretend to misunderstand them."*
> (Resident of a LiON)

Conversely, in regards to the interests of politicians in solving local problems, it was among residents of HiCNs that the most critical voices were found. For example, Elsa stated: *"Yes they know them, that doesn't mean that they respond to the needs but that they know them. But the personal interest is always above the interest of the community, because otherwise it can't be understood why they don't give more education. They don't give more education because it's a way of keeping them dependent, so that in the future they need them and with a gift, with a bit of money, they buy their vote."* These residents presumed that local politicians actually had an interest in preserving some of the problems, especially those related to poverty.

> Nicole: *"I think they know them, what happens is that I don't know to what extent they want to do something. All I know that there is poverty, that the slums are getting bigger, that there is truancy, that there are drugs, there is*

robberies, crime, abuse, but I don't know if someone can or wants to do anything."
K: *"You are saying that it is a lack of interest or do you think they don't know how to solve things?"*
Nicole: *"No, I think it is not convenient for them to solve things, I think there's an abandonment."*
K: *"Other interests?"*
Nicole: *"Yes, there are more important things for them, or maybe it's that as we say: 'troubled water, is good for the fisherman'*[95]*…"*
(Resident of a HiCN)

These are extreme positions, but overall, none of the residents of the HiCNs believed that politicians were actually interested in solving local problems. Whereas among residents of all open neighbourhoods, there were some who thought that local politicians were either actually solving some local problems, or at least trying to solve them.

K: *"Do you think politicians know the problems of the neighbourhoods?"*
Anna: *"I think so."*
K: *"Do you think they are able to solve them?"*
Anna: *"They should be, I think that the Argentinean per se does not lack capability, people who are at a certain level, I'm not talking about people who lack education, what's happening is that there are many interests that lead to things not being sufficiently transparent to allow people to enjoy the benefits."*
(Resident of a HiON)

Carlos: *"The politicians of the area of San Isidro, councillors and others, possibly they know because it all gets to the municipality, sure, because the letters arrive, the demands get there, the e-mails arrive. I had a drama here in front of the door with the issue of the pavement, that the water was not passing, well it took them six months but they've fixed it."*
…
K: *"But they know what the problems are, they are not always solved …"*
Carlos: *"They don't always have a solution or it is not always tried to solve them, for example the issue of the sewage in San Isidro is a drama and nonetheless, well, now they have started the sewage system from that side, we stayed isolated again, we are the only ones who don't have sewage but well, slowly holes are being closed. There have been many things done in San Isidro … "*
(Resident of a MiON)

K: *"Do you think local politicians of San Isidro know the problems of your neighbourhood, of the people that live here?*
Julia: *"Yes, perfectly well."*
K: *"Do you think they are interested in them?"*

[95] Popular saying in Spanish

Julia: *"Yes I think so."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Concluding, it can be said that firstly, residents of HiCNs were the only group in which every interviewee thought that politicians knew about local problems, whereas among all open neighbourhoods, some interviewees expressed some doubts about politicians' awareness and knowledge. Secondly, residents of HiCNs were also the only group where none of the interviewees believed that politicians were actually interested in solving local problems. And thirdly, it was only among residents of HiCNs that some had an even worse opinion about local politicians, stating that they believed that politicians were actually interested in not solving problems, since the status quo was more convenient for them.

7.4 CIVIC CONCERNS RELATED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In order to analyse if civic concerns in relation to local government and politics differ between residents of HiCNs and open neighbourhoods, the findings regarding residents' views on local problems, public goods, municipal responsibilities and municipal priorities are looked at. In addition to analysing residents' relationships with their local government and their opinions about it, it is important to explore residents' opinions concerning their municipal government, public goods and services, since it cannot be assumed that the direct contact and satisfaction with their local government shows all aspects of residents' civic concerns relating to their local government.

According to Kohn, the private provision of services within gated neighbourhoods allows residents to *"opt out of their obligations to the broader community"* (2004: 118), particularly in reference to recreational facilities. This section tries to establish to what

extent, this claim and similar criticism of the increasing trend of private urban governance, can be supported by the findings of this case study.

7.4.1 LOCAL PROBLEMS & PUBLIC GOODS

As illustrated in Chapter Six, the use of public space and other public goods seem to correlate to socio-economic class. Residents of wealthier neighbourhoods, by and large, did not use any public goods like public parks or public transport, and they did not attend municipal courses or events. They used a private provision of public goods where there was the option. Reinforcing this pattern, privatisation in many fields has led to a split in society in relation to public goods, more broadly. This section analyses if residents of different types of neighbourhoods show different levels of concern and interest in public goods and local public issues..

Looking at comments made by interviewees regarding their opinion about public goods and their interest in them, it is interesting to note that even if the use of public goods were similar among residents of HiCNs and HiONs, their comments varied significantly. Both groups generally did not use public goods and opted for privately provided goods where possible. Moreover, it was found that residents of HiONs were quite concerned about lacking or inadequate public services and/or infrastructure. Compared to residents of HiCNs, they were more concerned with public goods, especially with urban regulations, a lack of public infrastructure and deficiencies regarding public services, especially within their neighbourhood. Lara (resident of a HiON) for example, complained: *"They do not do any public projects, this is very serious. In San Isidro everybody does what he wants to do. Apart from all the other things we talked about, they would need to provide better services, more infrastructure."* And regarding a different aspect, Anna protested: *"... you cannot cut*

the trees on the pavement, now, the funniest thing is that the trees that you have on the pavement are yours, because this one I have planted, but if I want to cut it, I have to ask the municipality for permission, it's ridiculous, but as they are with the ecological issues, only when the tree touches a cable do they come and cut it, but without giving it a form, only to prevent that it touches the cable. If you say 'but the tree is mine'... it cannot be understood."

Conversely, there were not many comments made about public goods by residents of HiCNs, who only exceptionally mentioned any opinion about anything public. Looking at concerns about neighbourhood issues, it was also generally found that there was less interest in these issues by residents of HiCNs. Accordingly, fewer comments were made in the interviews about problems with public infrastructure or services. This is not surprising, since the residents of HiCNs are provided with private services and infrastructure and thus, do not depend on public provision, especially, since the comments made by residents of HiONs almost all referred to problems concerning their own neighbourhood and not the municipality at large. Within both groups, only one resident of each neighbourhood type mentioned the new public hospital for example, as a positive development within the municipality, with Anna (resident of a HiON) stating: *"There are things that have changed, for example, the new hospital of San Isidro has been finished, which was an issue over the years and there was a time when work was stopped. Now the schools that use the Cathedral make contributions because the Cathedral of San Isidro is being renovated externally, the roofs, the walls, so through the schools, they do the collections. There are things that have changed in those ten years that I have lived here, but in which I have also contributed, I've seen myself involved",* and Pati (resident of a HiCN) stated *"... they've been very busy with the issue of health care because they have made an important change of hospital, they've*

built a super hospital … It is very important, yes, beautiful, really well done, everything. I don't know how it works since I don't use it but it seems good. So I think they have been busy doing that and lately what could also be seen, is that they have been repairing roads, widening and repairing them They've also worked on the problem with the inundations, where there've always been problems from years ago, that when it rains there was not enough possibilities for the water to flow, so what I've seen changing are these things."

Among residents of the MiONs, on the other hand, many commented on the new hospital as a positive development within the municipality.

> Clara: *"Yes, lots has changed, already the fact that the provincial police force is there, lots has changed."*
> K: *"What has changed?"*
> Clara: *"Medically, the hospitals have improved, there are more health centres, there is a completely different planning system for medics, for health care … there are local centres everywhere, it is working."*
> K: *"Apart from that are there other issues that have seen change?"*
> Clara: *"I've remarked mostly this, and the workshops, which are interested in youth … I see it with my nephews, that they've done good workshops. Other things I am unaware of."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

> Leo: *"See for example the hospital of San Isidro."*
> Mina: *"It is great."*
> Leo: *"Of course, it has lots of people to treat, but it's great how they treat people, maybe they give you an appointment … not sure when, but once you get there, they treat you perfectly, and everything, we have sports grounds filled with children playing, and there are many sports grounds here in San Isidro, so I don't know …"*
> (Residents of a MiON)

But as can be seen below, some also viewed the new hospital more critically, because they had a negative experience when using it.

> Mario: *"They've just finished a hospital which is worth millions, which took about 20 years to finish, obviously for economic and political reasons … mostly political ones, but it continues to have a bad service. They've transferred the same team from the old hospital to the new beautiful, impressive big hospital … but to make an appointment it takes fifteen, twenty days …"*

> Marina: *"He went once and they let him wait, no one pays attention to you, the same as in the other one, in the new hospital which has cost a fortune and we have been waiting for years … you call the hospital and nothing happens, so he went to the hospital and he was still not treated. They did not help him regardless of the urgency of his situation …"*
> Mario*: "It exhausts you, you become tired of waiting."*
> Marina: *"They gave you a diagnostic which was wrong, this is serious … There are people who were kept at the hospital for a week because the scanner was broken, so you go to hospital because they need to operate on you, but before the operation they need to make a scan, since the scanner is broken … they keep you at hospital, occupying a bed, a place for a week! And what is more, after all that, they tell him to go home because they did not know how long it would take until the scanner would work again … "*
> Mario: *"And this is in one of the most prestigious places …"*
> Marina: *"In San Isidro, where you pay an enormous amount of taxes."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

The difference that was found between interviewee's accounts regarding the new hospital is not only the amount of comments made by residents of MiONs, but also the quality of description regarding health care provision. This can be explained by the fact that residents of MiONs are generally users of public health care, whereas those of high-income neighbourhoods – open or closed – use private health care provisions.

There were also comments made about the new hospital by residents of LiONs. Emilia for example, stated: *"No, I think, the hospital, the only thing that was done, the big hospital which I'm not going to say that it has not been well done, because it's a beautiful hospital, but it should have already been done years ago."* Or Alexia commenting: *"No, I think on the contrary, I think that in the time that Posse was here lots of good things have actually been done, the hospital, the maternity centres ..."* But it is interesting that these comments were just as general as those of high-income residents. This can be explained by the following interview extract of Chris (resident of a LiON) who explained: *"not long ago they built a very good hospital here in San Isidro ... moreover the people from the neighbourhood are not treated there, they have to go to the local medical centre ..."*

Apart from the comments relating to the improvement of the healthcare situation, residents of the LiONs did not comment on anything related to public services concerning the whole municipality or more general public services such as education. The only other public good that was commented on was security provision, where opinion varied a great deal. There were those who believed that the situation had improved, since the provincial police force was present in their neighbourhood, like Nadine recounting: *"Yes, here for example, in the neighbourhood more or less the last two years there has been the provincial police force, who are within the neighbourhood, more or less at the entries and, let's say, things still happen, because sometimes things happen, but not as often as before. For example, people who come in with stolen goods can't do that anymore, maybe there is trouble between neighbours or you can hear shots, but not like before."* Then there are those who thought nothing at all had changed or as Emilia states: "No, the police continue to kill and there continue to be thieves and all stays the same …"

Among residents of LiONs, the question of security was considered to be a neighbourhood issue and not a more general problem regarding the whole municipality. It was seen as a public good, which according to some interviewees, was well provided and not, according to others. Also among residents of MiONs, there was discontent with the public provision of security. Felix, for instance, complained:
"Then the municipality has put in place a fleet of cars which they say are for crime prevention, which does not help because they drive around, there is no effectiveness, they just drive around. When they talk about prevention I would think they would mean real prevention. When someone is in a place where obviously he should not be, I think

that if I were a policeman, I would have to come up to this person and ask for his documents. Ask what he is doing there since it is not his home. Because if someone is at the corner of his house, great, because he is at the door of his house. Yet if I'm a policeman I have to know, walking the streets I have to know well, I have to know that those individuals who are standing around there should not be there, that I call prevention."

If we compare these accounts of local problems with the responses of the residents of HiCNs, it is found that for the latter, it seemed to be normal and accepted that anything public did not play a major role in their life. Only one of the residents complained about the lack of some kind of communal public leisure possibilities offered by the municipality.

> K: *"Your kids, the things they do in their free time, the sports or other activities, are they all in the club or at school?"*
> Elsa: *"Everything, lots at the club, lots at school, lots they organise themselves, championships, they are all sportsman, the guys are all, the girls more or less, some more some less, but yes, a bit everywhere, there's not much municipal organisation, more exactly yes, there is municipal things organised, by some sports centres close to the poor neighbourhoods, very good centres, but there is nothing else at a more communal level that is like 'we'll do a championship for the whole community over a football tournament', swimming championships, maths Olympics, whatever."*
> K: *"So, it's quite divided between what is organised by the municipality, this is more for the marginalised neighbourhoods, the poorer …"*
> Elsa: *"No, yes, there are some good sport fields but is not thought as something communal but as something punctual for that, which is quite well organised but it does not respond, there is nothing communal, there could be something more for everyone and there is not, well, that's what I wanted to say."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

This comment is interesting since it directly contrasts a comment made about public youth facilities by one of the residents of a MiON and thus suggests that, it falls outside of the interviewees' perspective that there were no offers of activities. As Clara (resident of a MiON) stated: *"... and the workshops that they organise for young*

people, I see it with my nephews, they went to very good workshops." there does not seem to be an actual lack of public youth facilities.

The only other public good that was commented on by a resident of a HiCN was the public coastal pathway, which was being contested by private developments along the river coastline.

> Nicole: *"Then, maybe those of us who live more around this coastal area are more sensitive regarding the topic of the policies that are being implemented at municipal level about the use or non-use of the coast, about selling them or not, to keep it as public space or not, but it's relatively few people that get involved, it's more mouth to mouth …"*
> K: *"How are the municipal policies concerning this? Is there a general policy towards one direction or does it depend on each site?"*
> Nicole: *"I think that the municipality is doing it depending on the economic value of each zone. The cost is highly valuated and the areas achieve high prizes they are generally trying to commercialise it without the individual taking notice. It's like slowly they are closing off places, that actually, if you protest you know that you can pass but in general people, the Argentine, does not protest, in ten years it will be all closed off and no one will have access and it will be taken for granted that it is a private space when in reality it's public, but there is a big neighbourhood movement to try …"*
> K: *"Of neighbours from this neighbourhood or of the whole area?"*
> Nicole: *"Of neighbours of all of San Isidro basically, and of people who live in this area who pass every day and see that there is a little fence, a sign, that … and there is people who have gone to the municipality and it is very difficult to have access to the information about … what is it? Is it a bit? Is it an authorisation? A submission? … Who does it? Who regulates it? These kinds of things are almost inaccessible for the public."*
> K: *"Here in the Boating, how is it? Is it also that if someone claims that he wants to pass along the cost, could he? Or how is it legally?"*
> Nicole: *"I think if someone goes to the entrance and says 'I want to pass' the security won't let him in, but if he says 'I want to pass because it is ours' yes, they cannot say no, what happens is that it's these things that are acquired through time, like San Isidro Chico, like tons of other neighbourhoods that are in these conditions."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

This comment about the gradual privatisation of the coastal zone, which according to the interviewee should be used as an open public space, is very interesting since it was made by a resident of a HiCN, which is situated on the coast and thus represents itself as one of those examples of privatised public space along the coast. It is the only comment made about public space by a resident of a HiCN, whereas many of the

residents of HiONs commented on public space within the municipality. Also, one of the residents of a MiON commented on the issue of contested public space along the coast.

> Mario: *"San Isidro has a walkway which goes from the centre of San Isidro … it's a complex that was done by the 'Tren de la Costa'[96], that starts more or less at the railway station of San Isidro and goes all the way along the rails and goes to the border with Vicente Lopez[97], … there they have things on the beach … the coast does not all belong to the municipality, there are many private things, there is no coast … Yes, now San Isidro is retaking the coast, it is regaining ownership of the coast that it had given away with contracts and I don't know what else."*
> Marina: *"Public coast you've only got from Pacheco[98] up to Paraná[99], nothing else."*
> Mario: *"No, here you've also got all that is down there …"*
> Marina: *"But it's clubs"*
> Mario: *"No … you've got Barisidro[100] and there are many sailing clubs that are private, you've also got the municipal sailing club, there is the Boating..."*
> Marina: *"That's why, it's clubs, it's not public."*
> (Residents of a MiON)

Residents of HiONs, on the other hand, talked sentimentally about the past when public space and other public goods were used by everyone. Lara for instance, stated: *"For example the squares, I would love to take my daughter to the square, but to tell you the truth, it frightens me. There is a very nice square close by ... it even has a merry-go-round ... but I'm afraid, I don't like that."* In more detail, the interview extract below demonstrates a similar view on public space.

> Seba: *"No, the issue of security changed everything. … Before, some time ago there was the carnival, I was little but it was normal that in the street, it was like they closed the street, they put on music, hamburgers were made, we dressed up, we danced … until I was twenty, for Christmas and New Year's Eve we already knew that there were certain places where public parties were organised … This got lost slowly or now it is organised in semi-public places … for example, my brother has a restaurant on the coast, it's a place where there are two restaurants, it's like a complex, but the entry is like private, so you get there by car and there is a big park on the river coastline."*

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[96] The Tren de la Costa is a light rail line in Greater Buenos Aires, between the central station at the heart of the city and Delta station in Tigre on the Río de la Plata. It is primarily a tourist service. The line and its stations offer multiple forms of entertainment and are also used by commuters. Each station has history and art displays, and the stations at Maipú, Libertador and San Isidro have substantial shopping areas.
[97] Neighbouring municipality to the south
[98] Street name
[99] ibid.
[100] Leisure club

K: *"But can anyone get in?"*
Seba: *"Yes, that day yes, but being kind of a club there is some kind of control, it's not possible that twenty guys with sticks come in without being stopped by someone first, there is a semi-control, what I was saying before it was on the streets and anyone could come, there was no entry or control, nothing, so now people try to organise these events with some kind of control because the issue of the security nowadays is the issue which worries everyone."*
(Resident of a HiON)

Apart from these comments relating to public space, residents of HiONs also mentioned potential conflicts between their neighbourhood and others within the municipality. They see their own interests and requests versus the municipality in competition with residents of other neighbourhoods and sometimes feel disadvantaged. Stefania for instance, complained: *"... and you don't know what kind of taxes we pay in San Isidro, it's impressive. But you know that here close by we have a very big slum, La Cava, and there are many votes there, that's why the people who pay a lot do not count. Because the votes from La Cava are the votes that in the end count, the politicians give the 'Planes Trabajar'*[101]*, they give money and they have the amount of votes they need to go on. Not of the people who pay ..."*

This type of reflection is never found among residents of HiCNs. Therefore, it could be concluded that the relations between neighbourhoods are less competitive, if one of them is a HiCN. But on the other hand, this also shows that there are less common interests for which pressure might be made vis-à-vis with the local government. Therefore, it proves to be revealing to look at what residents of HiONs comment on regarding public goods, since when looking at residents of HiCNs, nothing particular stands out. Compared with residents of HiONs, the lack of comments relating to public goods turns out to be the significant result. Thus, similarly to interviewees' comments

[101] A national labour funding programme for the realisation of community projects, which satisfy socially relevant needs of the poorest parts of the population. To become a beneficiary, a person has to be above 16 years old, be unemployed and be under the poverty line. The benefit is 160 pesos per month, for a maximum period of six months, for six daily working hours.

on residents' political engagement in Section 7.3.1 and on informal encounter in Chapter Six, these missing remarks show how important it is, in the debate about the socio-political consequences of gated communities, to compare residents of HiCNs with those of open neighbourhoods of similar income levels.

Regarding residents' civic concerns in relation to local problems and public goods, it can be concluded from the findings of this study that, even though the use of public goods was mainly along class lines, residents' concerns with public goods did nonetheless differ to some extent, according to the type of neighbourhood they lived in. As demonstrated above, residents of HiCNs were not only less concerned with public services, since they are provided with private services, but they were also less concerned with public space than residents of HiONs, although the latter do not use public spaces either. This shows that there is a further disengagement with public services, which were not used by residents of HiCNs, whereas residents of HiONs remained concerned about these goods and services, even if they did not use them either.

7.4.2 DISSATISFACTIONS WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Following the analysis of residents' views on public goods and services, this section analyses if there are any differences regarding the issues residents are not satisfied with within their own neighbourhood and if their levels of satisfaction with their own neighbourhood differ. This has been looked at, since the level of satisfaction with one's own neighbourhood might have an impact on residents' expectations from their local government and thus impact upon their political opinions and in the long term, their political inclinations.

First of all, it emerged that many of the residents of HiCNs stated that they were happy with everything concerning their own neighbourhood and that there were no specific issues with which they were dissatisfied. Regarding a resident's own neighbourhood, Elsa for example stated: *"I'm happy with how it is, yes."* Martina was also happy with her neighbourhood and explained: *"No, no, I'm a very simple person, for me it's fine, I don't get too involved either, I don't like to and I know that there are people who manage things and I don't even know who they are, I don't even read the newsletter or the monthly or weekly information sheet that we receive, so no … I'm content, I'm fine, I don't have problems, the administration people are always friendly."* Asked if there was something within her neighbourhood that she did not like, Elisa replied: *"No, nothing, absolutely nothing."* This satisfaction with a resident's own neighbourhood was either stated as a general feeling of contentment or in comparison with other neighbourhoods, as we can see in the following interview extract:

> Susanna: *"Yes, highly privileged, due to the issue of security."*
> K: *"And is there nothing that is lacking, does the neighbourhood not have any disadvantage compared with others?"*
> Susanna: *"For me it has no disadvantage, for my personality, there are people who tell you 'no, I would never live in an enclosed neighbourhood because the contact with your neighbours is much more fluid', but this doesn't disturb me, on the contrary, I love it, I find it positive, I like it. I think that in the 'barrios', and I repeat 'not like it was in my time', in my time it was like that, people had contact with their neighbours, nowadays you live fenced in, you live rushing in and out of your house because you're afraid that someone is going to rob you, so the contact is zero, your kids don't meet up on the sidewalk to play with their little neighbours as I did when I was little, but they can do here. In those other neighbourhoods, the kids miss going out to take a bike ride around the block, which I always did."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

This shows that there is a high level of satisfaction with one's own neighbourhood among residents of HiCNs. This was not found among the interviewees of all other neighbourhoods. Stefania is the only resident of a HiON who stated that there was nothing she disliked within her neighbourhood: *"No, no, I'm happy, we've got security on all corners, I don't know if you've seen the security-lodges and for us it's a great*

reassurance because additionally, everybody knows you within the area, which means when you arrive with the car and the guy from the lodge four blocks away lets the other one know that you are arriving … we live in a microclimate, we don't know what's happening in the rest of the country." But when asked about advantages and disadvantages of her neighbourhood, even this resident, who sounded just as content with her neighbourhood as many of the residents of HiCNs, complained about it lacking public infrastructure *"Well, here we are fighting to have a sewage system … which although, we pay very much here in Las Lomas de San Isidro, taxes and the like, we do not have a sewage system. It's a disgrace, but well…"*

A lack of or bad infrastructure was one of the most commonly mentioned complaints of residents of all open neighbourhoods. Among residents of HiONs and MiONs, this generally relates to the sewage system or to the condition of the streets. Anna (resident of a HiON) criticised: *"… from my point of view, in regards to living facilities, the neighbourhood does not have a sewage system, that's quite annoying, we are about to … the neighbourhood group is doing the first stage of the sewage system, a contract has already been made with companies that do this kind of work, but coming from Rolón*[102] *up to Panamericana*[103]*. This zone would be the second stage and they are just doing the first."* Similarly, Carlos (resident of a MiON) joked: *"Yes something very particular, it's a really exclusive neighbourhood, because it has very small blocks, very close to the centre, very special for many things, and … there is no sewage system."*

There were also complaints about similar public infrastructure problems among residents of LiONs. Juan for instance, remarked: *"… for example there are things which*

[102] Street name
[103] Ibid.

are structural, we would for example need a large drainage system, a precarious one had been installed some time ago and we are also fighting for the opening of the street." More generally, when looking at the answers from residents of LiONs, the complaints almost exclusively are concerned with the quality of the houses, and often did not regard personal interests, but concerns for the situation of the neighbourhood as a community, as can be seen when Nadine stated: *"What I don't like in respect to the houses is that they now get flooded when it rains. The poor people who live there now, since four years. Before that, when I lived in that part, it never happened, we never had the house flooded. But four years ago all got flooded. It was in a time when all over Buenos Aires, there were floods and since then it gets flooded whenever there is very strong rain. There are parts that get flooded that never got flooded before. There are problems maybe that they open and lock gates in some places and it all gets flooded. That's what I feel sorry about; people always lose stuff."* Similarly, Emilia commented on what she would like to change saying: *"I would like it if they took the slum itself away, that they built houses, because there are people who do not manage by themselves and there are others who are used to live from donations. I would like it if houses could be built."*

Compared to the other neighbourhoods, there were more fundamental issues of discontent among the residents of LiONs, which are related to the conditions of housing within their neighbourhood. These issues of discontent are not elaborated on in particular within this context, since they are not related to the issues of discontent concerning the formal neighbourhoods and thus, they do not shed light on the evaluation of existing similarities or differences.

When asked about the advantages and disadvantages of their neighbourhood, residents of LiONs also stated the negative reputation that they had in the eyes of others, as we've seen in Chapter Six. This shows that, aside from the structural housing and infrastructure problems, residents of LiONs also considered the negative image of their neighbourhoods as an important disadvantage. It can also be seen that it is mainly among residents of MiONs, that LiONs were considered to be a problem. Marco (resident of a MiON) in this context, stated: *"Unfortunately I have to say that what I don't like is that they have, here in front, they have built a neighbourhood consisting of apartment blocks for people who came from the provinces and who, since they had nowhere to live, they lived in slums. So these people who live in slums, they don't have many resources, since they do not have work, they come from the country side and the government has built them an apartment building in the neighbourhood and has just put it in, which has resulted in a loss of value of this neighbourhood. This was 4 or 5 years ago, or 6, before then they had a value, now that value has gone down vertically, extremely, so this means that if I thought of selling to go live somewhere else 5, 6 or 7 years ago, I could sell it for a large sum, but now they won't give me not even a quarter of that, why? Because there is this neighbourhood in front of here and the atmosphere has changed."*

Also among residents of HiONs, there were some who considered that the neighbouring LiON was one of their greatest problems. Seba (resident of a HiON) commented on this as follows: *"Actually, we have about 5 or 6 blocks from here, a small slum, which is one of those things one can't understand, because the land this slum occupies is worth more than a whole enclosed neighbourhood, because it's the size of one or two entire blocks … if this house alone is worth what it's worth, there you can put 20 of these houses. Therefore, it's unbelievable that the municipality can't stop it and always when*

they are about to do something 'that yes, that no, that they will do it, that they won't', and unfortunately the problems that we've got here are fundamentally from that slum, because ...". There were, however, no comments made by residents of HiCNs about LiONs and any resulting problems of crime or vandalism.

Neither did they mention other disturbances like vandalism, traffic problems or noise as problems within their neighbourhoods. Similar to the discussion about informal encounter seen in Chapter Six, this lack of conflict within one's own neighbourhood seems to have an impact on residents' civic concerns. These issues, however, do not seem to be related to social class, since there are many statements of discontent with these issues made by residents of HiONs as well as MiONs. Anna (resident of a HiON) in this regard, commented: *"When I built the house I already knew: I live in the same block where there is a school, so I have to accept that there are certain noises during school times, that there are end of year parties where they have loud music."* And Isa (resident of a HiON), complained *"... what I don't like is that here on Libertador,*[104] *there is a school, and there is a church and two health centres ... so there are many people who come to park here, in the second row, which is illegal, and who drive in the opposite direction which is dangerous for the kids. In the centre of San Isidro, they have now put in parking meters so the people, to avoid paying, come to park here, and it's a residential zone, what I want to say is that I have nothing against people parking, but they should park where they are allowed to park, which is not the case here. The cars come very fast, all these signs that you've seen were organised by my husband with the neighbours, because the municipality was not doing anything."* Also with respect to local disturbances, Clara (resident of a MiON) stated: *"What most bothers me are the*

[104] Ibid.

kids who spoil too much, some teenagers come pass and they seem very aggressive, they rip off things from the trees, they tear off the oranges …"

Out of all of the residents of open neighbourhoods, there were none that had no complaints about something regarding their neighbourhood, which is the most obvious difference to the findings from the interviews with residents of HiCNs, where some of the interviewees stated not to have any issues of dissatisfaction concerning their own neighbourhood. This can be explained by the fact that HiCNs tend to solve local issues privately through their local administration. Within HiONs, the only service which is catered for privately is the provision of security, but the rest depend on the municipality and even though they are wealthy neighbourhoods, they have the same problems with public services as poorer neighbourhoods.

Among the residents of MiONs, the lack of security was a common complaint and Clara explained *"... the problems more than anything concern security, there is a neighbourhood commission, the neighbour across the road is the president and he is trying to organise that there be some private security, but well, there are some problems because on the other side, they don't like him and all that ..."* Even if within HiONs, the issue of security is solved by contracting private security companies, the residents of HiONs often complain about the fact that they had to pay for security, because they thought it should be provided by the municipality or the State.

> Seba: *"… so for me the negative side here is the security problems, which is not only a problem here, unfortunately it's a rise all over the country."*
> K: *"So what you would like to change is the slum?"*
> Seba: *"I think with this security … and I wouldn't only blame the slum, but I think it's an attractive zone for robberies and the like, so I think the municipality could provide a car which patrols, taking rounds and have a bit more … not bring the military, but putting in place a bit more control … because here we had a little hut built which is here in front, which now is empty, because within this block we all pay for private security, but with all the problems which we had in Argentina,*

> *the private security cost x amount of money, which divided by the number of houses made x pesos, after a year everyone was paying double the amount, because as there were less families who were still paying, we had to absorb even more and there came the point where it couldn't be paid anymore."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Compared to residents of HiCNs, those of HiONs additionally all complained about either the condition of a public service or the state of a piece of public infrastructure. This was generally put in relation with local taxes, which were perceived as being much too high for what was delivered by the municipality.

> Lara: *"That there is no sewage system. I pay high taxes and I don't have a sewage system, I don't have good municipal services, but well, it's getting better, this is getting better. But the streets … when I moved here the streets were dirt roads, I had to pave it."*
> K: *"Was it not paid for from the taxes?"*
> Lara: *"No, all the neighbours, I paid 1000 dollars, everyone paid 1000 dollars to pave their street."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

Elsa is the only resident of a HiCN who also complained on the one hand, about the combination of high taxes, and on the other, the lack of public services, explaining: *"What happens is that in this country, people pay their taxes, high taxes, maybe because I'm in a good economic situation I have to pay much higher taxes, but I don't have education, because I send my kids to private schools, I don't have a health service because I send them to private hospitals, I don't have security because I pay for security apart, but it is the responsibility of the State, and I'm aware of that and I claim this from the State whenever I can."*

The combination of high local taxes and the lack of a sewage system was one of the most frequently mentioned issues of discontent among residents of HiONs and MiONs. Flor (resident of a HiON) for example, complained: *"... there are various things that I don't like. One of those is that there is no sewage system, the taxes here are very high and we don't have any kind of sewage system."* And she further explained: *"Within*

almost all of La Horqueta, a few years ago they did all the pipe work, all the infrastructure to build a sewage system, but now, they've stopped with all the problems that we had in 2001, the work stopped. But one of the things that I would change is this, the issue of the sewage. Then, all that has to do with the streets, they get flooded … there are many infrastructure problems, I don't know why, I don't know the history. The water, there are many who have a well like myself, others have Aguas Argentinas[105] *which is the company that is in charge of the water provision."* Similarly, Mario (resident of a MiON) also criticised: *"… this is a residential neighbourhood where you must have a sewage system, the best services … and as a matter of fact, we've ordered the cutting of trees two months ago because the trees touch the cables, and today, the deadline of two months for them to come to cut expires, while it is the municipality where the highest taxes within all of Argentina are paid, they should have cut them the following day, not after two months and they still haven't come."*

It is interesting to note that, even though residents of HiCNs have additional costs from their administration fees, they complained less about the lack of services from the municipality, than the residents of the HiONs. These have to pay for their private security provision, but they complained a lot about the fact that they had to pay for services, which the municipality should, according to them, cater for.

However, there were some complaints from residents of HiCNs about their own neighbourhood. Three topics arose from their accounts of dissatisfaction, and all three notably considered issues that residents of HiONs did not complain about at all. Firstly, some residents of HiCNs were to some extent, dissatisfied with the undecided status, in regards to the legality of the enclosure and the private status of their neighbourhood.

[105] Recently privatised water supply company

Due to either not liking the way the legal situation was dealt with, as demonstrated in the interview below, or as in the following citation, because of the uncertainty that arises out of this ambiguous situation.

> Elsa: *"… because this is not a closed neighbourhood, nonetheless we enjoy the privileges of a closed neighbourhood without being one, because … legally it is not. Because certain neighbours keep adulating the mayor, and well, I think it's hypocrisy, let's say, things wouldn't change much if they wouldn't, I would like that they demand more from the mayor and that he did other things, but well …*
> K: *"But what is the difference if this is not a private neighbourhood?"*
> Elsa: *"We would have the obligation to let anybody in, who wants to, just like that, otherwise nothing. But nowadays, actually all of San Isidro is full of barricades … but this is an arrangement of some neighbour at some point, I don't really know how it was, to tell the truth, I don't know much more because this was a long time ago, it's with the father of the actual mayor that this arrangement was made."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

> Paola: *"As far as I know, someone, the owner of this land closed it off and sold sites."*
> K: *"So it has been like this since the beginning?"*
> Paola: *"I think so, I haven't been here since the beginning, but I think so … but since this is so, if we have a broken light bulb and when they call the municipality they are told 'it's a closed neighbourhood, it's your business', here the street cleaner passes like in any other neighbourhood …"*
> K: *"The one from the municipality?"*
> Paola: *"Yes, the waste collection passes, these things yes, but I hear that for some things the municipality charges fees like for a closed neighbourhood but they do not recognise it as a closed neighbourhood, there is this whole confusion, so that … now we're fine, but it could be that someday the municipality says 'no, the neighbourhood has to be opened' or pay for the streets, become owners by paying a fortune … I found out about this after buying, three years later, and I didn't like it at all."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

It was only among residents of LiONs that the legal situation was also a point of dissatisfaction. Nadine (resident of a LiON), in this context remarked: *"There are advantages and disadvantages because, maybe there are deficiencies with regards to the houses, maybe there are more floods. It's not the same to have your own house with your deed, with your things, as living in a slum - as it is called. ... for example, if there's a problem between neighbours or somebody bothers you, you go to the police and they ignore you because you don't have your property deed, your things, whereas if*

you live in a [formal] neighbourhood it's like you've got more rights." Although these concerns with legal issues affecting one's own neighbourhood regard different legal problems that are not related with each other, it is still interesting to see that the legal situation of a neighbourhood that is not formally a public neighbourhood, has an impact on residents' levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhood.

A second topic, which arose among residents of HiCNs as well as LiONs, was the question of privacy. Pati (resident of a HiCN), complained *"... that there is a lack of intimacy, which happens in small gated communities, well, also in the big ones, decisions which normally you would take in your privacy with your husband and no one else, here you have to open up a bit because everyone is so close, things like the salary of an service employee or of a gardener, or washing your car in front of the door maybe disturbs someone, so they are things that maybe do not depend on so much of yourself because you have to respect the person next door since they are very close."* Talking about what disturbs her within her neighbourhood, Paola (resident of a HiCN) stated: *" ... what I don't like about the neighbourhood, it's not the neighbourhood, it's the people that live here, it's the behaviour of the kids, the small kids ... no, it's not all the kids, it's the ones where the mothers or nannies are not on the street and that really disturbs me there is a real gang of kids where if you want to pass with your car and they are on their bikes they don't move ... but it's an issue of living together which you have to put up with."* Also complaining about problems which arise from living together, Alexia (resident of a LiON) remarked: *"I think there is a bit of ... by being so close together the houses, I think that people kind of live a lot among each other. Not having the space to get out. Moreover I think that people here live and die here, they don't get out to know other places. So by spending lots of time here, it's kind of that people talk about each other, these things of gossip, that maybe exist everywhere, but here it happens*

much more because it is much more … the houses are closer together." Regarding questions of privacy and conviviality, it is similar to the legal issues. It is not that residents of HiCNs and LiONs complained about exactly the same problems, but the lack of privacy is an issue within these neighbourhoods, whereas it was not mentioned by any of the interviewees of MiONs or HiONs.

Additionally, there is a third topic, which only came up in interviews with residents of HiCNs and LiONs, which is a criticism of internal politics and the way they are handled. Chris (resident of a LiON) in this context, criticised: *"… the lack of responsibility and commitment from the local leaders, they talk about lots of things but they do nothing for where they live."* The interview abstract below also refers to dissatisfaction with the way internal politics functions:

> K: *"Are there things you don't like about here?"*
> Nicole: *"Yes, I don't like the manipulations that are made at the level of the board of directors, which, well, I believe everywhere, where there is a board of directors, there are always people who are in favour and those who are not, so it's like saying it's like little Argentina, it would be better if it would all be more transparent, more democratic, but well …"*
> K: *"But otherwise, regarding the neighbourhood …"*
> Nicole: *"Generally about the neighbourhood, no I love it, I feel like I'm privileged to live here."*
> K*: "Is there nothing you would change, things that do not work or something …"*
> Nicole: *"No, if I could, I would actually love to not have to live surrounded by a wall and by security personnel, that I would really love to change on a national level, on a country level and take away those barriers, but once I accept that point, I think everything works well."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

As the last sentence shows, to a certain extent, it can be claimed that there is a general desire by some of those who live in HiCNs to live in a 'normal' open neighbourhood. The same desire is stated by many of the residents of LiONs, whose greatest wish is to have proper houses built and to also have a 'normal' neighbourhood.

In conclusion, it was thus found that while residents of MiONs and HiONs were mainly dissatisfied with single public services or infrastructure deficiencies, residents of HiCNs and LiONs were rather unhappy with the intrinsic characteristics of their neighbourhood. The concluding section of this chapter discusses the significance of these findings, looking at the consequences of a certain detachment from local government.

7.4.3 MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

After having explored residents' views on their own neighbourhoods, this section looks at residents' opinions about what they considered to be the responsibilities of their municipal government regarding their neighbourhood and about what they believed these should be. There were no studies found which looked at the question of municipal responsibilities and people's opinions about these, in relation to the question of urban form and private urban governance.

In analysing the empirical data of this case study, it was found that the interviewees mentioned four main areas of municipal responsibilities: security; public services such as street cleaning, lighting, garbage collection, the provision of infrastructure, healthcare and education. There are differences with regards to which of these areas were mentioned by which group of residents, and the extent to which residents were happy with the fulfilment of these responsibilities. It has to be clarified that interviewees did not always list all the services and duties which they may consider to be municipal responsibilities, but often only mentioned those they believed to be the most important ones or those that they were least satisfied with. However, this nevertheless sheds light on their priorities, and on how far they identify with the whole municipality as is explained below.

The provision of security was considered by most residents of all neighbourhoods, apart from LiONs to be a service that the municipality should provide. Among residents of LiONs, this was not mentioned, but this could be explained by the fact that, as described before, there was the provincial police force in place surrounding the LiONs for security reasons and thus the issue of insecurity was generally considered to be resolved. All other interviewees, who considered the provision of security to be a municipal responsibility, thought however, that this responsibility was not at all or not sufficiently met. Anna (resident of a HiON) criticised the public provision of security stating that *"... the municipality offers a car which circulates, which generally belongs to the neighbourhood groups, to patrol the areas. I think that is not enough, that's why the people resort to the private, it could be the responsibility of the municipality."* Asked if she reckoned that security should be the responsibility of the municipality, Nicole (resident of a HiCN) replied: *"I think so, yes, I think they have the means and we have given them the power so they can implement, they kind of have our permission, and to tell the truth, not much has been done in this respect",* and similarly Elsa (resident of a HiCN) stated: *"Obviously it should be, because one pays one's taxes in order to have security, the State in this country does not assume its responsibility."* The link between high local taxes and the lack of the provision of security, which was pointed out in this interview was a common criticism among residents of HiONs as well.

It is, however, among residents of MiONs that security was mentioned the most. The majority of the residents of MiONs thought that, more than anything, that the provision of security should be the responsibility of the municipality. Marco (resident of a MiON) for example, stated that he *"... would like it if the municipality took the necessary steps to try to provide maximum security for those who live here, in this neighbourhood, that*

there were some kind of security, I don't know how though." Also Clara (resident of a MiON) claimed: "*the security, they could send the provincial police force here ... they could help with that, given that they are already at La Cava so close by, that yes."* Regarding the provision of security, it can thus be concluded that it was generally considered to be a municipal responsibility which was not met, and the lack of it was mainly criticised by residents of MiONs, since they are not alternatively provided with private security and felt most vulnerable, due to the lack of security.

In relation to the topic of municipal services like street cleaning, lighting and garbage collection, it emerged that these were the services mainly considered as a municipal responsibility by residents of HiCNs. They generally thought that the existing municipal responsibilities within their neighbourhood were the same ones as in any other neighbourhood. Elsa (resident of a HiCN) for instance, explained: *"What happens is that this neighbourhood belongs to the municipality and the municipality looks after everything, from street-cleaning, the lighting, everything is done by the municipality. Not by us."* Also Susanna (resident of a HiCN) pointed out that *"... they've got responsibilities, yes because ... well, especially in this neighbourhood, others have different regulations, let's say if you go to those in Pilar*[106] *there is no interference, here yes, it's the municipality who cuts the trees, who collects the waste, fixes the pavement, the street lights, so to say as if it was a neighbourhood outside of a closed neighbourhood. But that's because of the societal contract this neighbourhood has, so that the municipality has lots of points of interference."* Some considered that the municipality complied with these duties and others believed that it did not, as seen in the interview extract below.

[106] Municipality within the AMBA where there are most of the new gated developments with many large gated neighbourhoods.

K: *"What do you think are the responsibilities of the municipality here in the neighbourhood?"*
Elisa: *"Those, which it doesn't meet."*
K: *"These would be?"*
Elisa: *"They would be, for example, I found out that the street here belongs to the municipality, this I didn't know, I found out yesterday and that to fix it, we need the permission of the municipality, which means lots of paperwork, I didn't know that we pay for lighting and street-cleaning which does not exist."*
K: *"So that would be the responsibility …"*
Elisa: *"of the municipality."*
(Resident of a HiCN)

It is very interesting to note that among the comparable socio-economic group, there was no mention of these public services when residents were asked about municipal responsibilities. Also, among residents of MiONs and LiONs, only one resident of each neighbourhood referred to these services as a municipal responsibility which they considered was met. This suggests that the lack of comment on these services by others signifies that residents of open neighbourhoods generally believed that these services were fulfilled and therefore not worth mentioning, whereas residents of HiCNs mentioned them, since these were the only services they actually obtained within their neighbourhood from the municipality.

Most of the residents of HiONs, however, thought the municipality should install a public sewage system, and they were very unhappy about the lack of this service. Some residents mentioned only this as a municipal responsibility, sometimes in combination with public road works, but made no comment on other services that might be working well. Stefania (resident of a HiON) for example, complained: *"Well, here we are struggling to have a sewage system … that, in spite of paying very much in Las Lomas de San Isidro, taxes and all the rest, we don't have a sewage system. It's a disgrace but well."* As seen in this comment and the interview abstract below, the dissatisfaction with municipal services was again linked to the fact that residents felt that local taxes were comparably high.

Mona: *"The responsibility of the municipality is to put in a sewage system and that one doesn't have to pay for it."*
K: *"Do you have one here, or not?"*
Mona: *"Now there are installing it here but each property owner has to pay for it."*
K: *"But you think it should be their responsibility to do it."*
Mona: *"Yes, I think so, yes, besides I think that this is the district that collects the largest funds because the taxes are very high, no matter if people can pay them or not. But if you compare the money that you pay for taxes with what the municipality gives you back, there is no balance, it's quite unfair, I think."*
(Resident of a HiON)

There was also dissatisfaction with the provision of infrastructure among residents of MiONs and LiONs, but their expectation of better provision was never justified by the taxes they had to pay.

K: *"The problems that you have here, like for example with the sewage system, do you think that should be the responsibility of the municipality?"*
Martha: *"Yes."*
Carlos: *"The municipality has to do it together with Aguas Argentinas, that is to say formerly Obras Sanitarias[107], but it is all so disproportionate that I really don't know how it will end."*
(Residents of a MiON)

Antonio: *"The water"*
K: *"And do you have electricity?"*
Antonio: *"No, electricity as well, which now in winter is real trouble, cables burn, that's another thing, the issue of the ditches, for years they keep talking about it, because around here it's nothing, but have you seen down there what the ditch looks like? They start smelling bad, all these things."*
K: *"You think these types of things would be municipal responsibilities?"*
Antonio: *"Yes, always, … once Mrs. Amalia came to my house to tell me that they were going to install everything, there is the issue of the electricity, the water and the sewage. She always comes 'yes, we've got it, we've got it', but … and one sometimes just listens to them, since they are older people they never listen to you."*
(Resident of a LiON)

Residents of HiONs thought that the municipality did not perform the way it should in regards to the provision of public goods. If we look at the levels of residents' satisfaction with how the municipality complies with its duties generally, residents of HiONs were the least satisfied, whereas residents of LiONs were quite mixed and

[107] Name of water supply company before it was privatised

satisfaction was highest among residents of MiONs. Clara (resident of a MiON) for example, stated: *"I think San Isidro is doing quite a lot. Maybe they cannot reach everybody, I think there is always the attempt to improve the neighbourhood. ... Also they could give us a hand with the little square."* This last sentence shows that residents of MiONs seemed to be more understanding with regards to the possible constraints of their municipality, and they were more prepared to organise things on their own than high-income residents who, as already shown above, felt that for what they paid in taxes they did not receive enough from the municipality.

Residents of HiCNs were quite a mixed group regarding their satisfaction with how well the municipality meets its responsibilities. It is important, however, to consider that among residents of HiCNs, there seemed to be some confusion about who was actually responsible for public services within their neighbourhoods and therefore, there were some residents who were undecided about what to expect from the municipality.

> K: *"And the waste here …"*
> Martina: *"No, it's impeccable, the service."*
> K: *"Do they come in from the municipality?"*
> Marcela: *"I don't think so, that there is something ours, I think it's something the Boating pays for and they take it out, I think so, I'm not sure."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

> Nicole: *"What happens is that … I think it's all quite an artificial situation, since there is so much insecurity, the neighbourhood closes itself off and we start managing ourselves almost within a bubble, we have … the municipality almost doesn't enter here because the area, for example relating to the green spaces that the municipality would be the one responsible for the lighting, the cleaning, we do it privately and we pay for it, security also."*
> K: *"But is it done like that because you prefer it this way or because the municipality does not want to enter because the street is closed off, or why?"*
> Nancy: *"I can't tell you."*
> Katja: *"But do you think it should be the responsibility of the municipality?"*
> Nancy: *"I can't say to what point … I find it hard to say if living here, one should also continue to demand things from them or would it be better actually that, what we were saying before, that if there wasn't so much insecurity we all had access to the same, I don't know very well how the public is differentiated from the private here, because these streets in reality are from the area, they are public and I don't know."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

No similar doubts among any of the interviewees of other neighbourhood types were found. They all were quite sure about what municipal responsibilities should be. This shows that the private administrations of neighbourhoods seem to lead to a particular uncertainty about government responsibilities and thus possibly to lower expectations from the Government.

Additionally, it stands out that among residents of HiCNs, there were no comments made about public services which did not concern their own neighbourhood, whereas among residents of HiONs, there were those who saw the responsibility of the municipality as a much broader issue of the provision of basic public services like healthcare, education etc. and also security.

> Lara: *"Security, gives you health and education. It's elemental, but no municipality in Argentina will provide you with this."*
> K: *"According to you, what are the issues that could be solved privately?"*
> Lara: *"No, I think the State should take care of certain things. I waste a lot more money, I pay for a private school, I pay for security, I pay for everything. The State does not give me anything and I pay lots of taxes, a lot is paid."*
> (Resident of a HiON)

> K: *"What do you think are the responsibilities of the municipality in this neighbourhood?"*
> Isa: *"Security, that we don't have, what I was telling you about the traffic, what never happens, on the coast all that contamination which is terrible and that they are filling up the river and it's the municipality that is filling it up, education which I don't know if it is national or has to be municipal, health, …"*
> (Resident of a HiON)

This shows that residents of HiONs saw the municipality much more negatively relative to the services it delivered, whereas some residents of HiCNs were happy with the way the municipality complied with its responsibilities. Additionally, it can be noted that the former considered themselves much more as being part of the whole municipality and commented on lacking public services concerning not only their own neighbourhood,

but also education and healthcare, whereas the residents of HiCNs did not mention these public services as being a municipal responsibility, with the exception of the provision of security.

Similar to the residents of HiONs, residents of MiONs also thought that, apart from security, other public services, like healthcare and education, should be the responsibility of the municipality and that the municipality did not deliver those services satisfactorily.

> Mario: *"…our security is dire, our education is dire, our health services are dire …"*
> K: "Out of all of that what are the things that the municipality should take care of?"
> Mario: *"It would be ideal if we did not need these private people, we would need policeman, but real* policeman … Then looking at municipal services, all should be much better: the floor, the street, the cleaning of the trees, the waste collection, all those are subcontracts from the municipality, if they were done by the municipality … or maybe, for some reason they were subcontracted, the municipality did not comply …"
> (Resident of a MiON)

Since residents of MiONs actually used public education and health care, they did not see it as a public service that was completely lacking, as did most of the residents of HiONs. However, some of them did complain about the state of it, as seen above regarding the comments made about public services like the new hospital.

Similar to the opinions of residents of HiCNs, residents of LiONs only mentioned issues regarding their own neighbourhood and they did not mention more general public services as being the responsibilities of the municipality. Apart from the local public services and infrastructure provision mentioned above, there were those residents who thought that the responsibility of the municipality should be to help the very poor within their own neighbourhood and to offer more opportunities for work. Nadine (resident of a LiON) for example, would expect the municipality to *"... take care more or less, I'm*

not saying they should make presents, but see who are the people who really can't cope. Conduct a census, try to help those who do not have work, not only economically, not give presents, but provide work so that people, even if they have to work 6 hours, give them dignified work and pay them." And Alexia (resident of a LiON) explained that she thought *"... the municipality should take some more responsibility. ... like opening streets, like treating them all the same ... here what is needed is less idleness and more work, I think what is missing here is that people are stimulated ... that they give them work, because I think that by giving them a bag of goods or giving them a mattress, I think is, not that it's bad, but I don't think it's the way to help them ..."* The question about the responsibility of the municipality regarding employment opportunities is looked at in the next section, where residents' views on municipal priorities are explored.

In conclusion, it can be seen that apart from the obvious differences in residents' opinions on municipal responsibilities, which are linked to the urban form and the degree of private provision within each neighbourhood, residents of MiONs and HiONs identified less with their small neighbourhood, but rather with San Isidro as a whole. And therefore, even when asked about municipal responsibilities within their neighbourhood, they mentioned public services that concerned the whole municipality, whereas residents of HiCNs only referred to responsibilities related to their neighbourhood. This could be explained by the enclosure of neighbourhoods which strengthens the perception of one's own neighbourhood as a definite area, whilst within open neighbourhoods, the concept of one's own neighbourhood is very flexible.

7.4.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

This sub-section discusses the analysis of the interviews regarding residents' opinions about what they considered to be the most important issue to improve within their municipality. This is explored in order to examine, if the urban form residents live in, has an impact on their image of their municipality and what they regard as being the priority of things that could and should be changed by their local government.

After having spoken about local public goods and services, the levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhood and municipal responsibilities, the interviewees were asked about what they would improve within their municipality, if they were local politicians themselves. This was asked in order to see if the priorities of what residents mentioned as municipal responsibilities would shift, once people were asked about the whole municipality. This was seen to be important since, as stated above, the residents of HiCNs had a very narrow concept of their own neighbourhood and could thus be expected to make more comments on issues regarding the whole municipality when directly asked about them.

The topics that were mentioned by all interviewees in response to this question can be divided into four different categories: first, those who declared that the priority would be to improve the situation within their own neighbourhood; secondly, those who stated that they would improve public services in general; thirdly, those who thought that the priority would be to provide more employment opportunities; and fourthly, those who claimed they would first of all, listen to the people in order to find out what the real needs were.

Analysing how these four categories of priorities are spread among the four types of neighbourhoods, it clearly resulted that residents of LiONs declared that they would, as a priority, improve the situation of their own neighbourhood and that of its residents. Nadine for example, claimed: *"... the first thing that I would do is a census to see the people, the possibilities, who has work, who hasn't and I would for example try, I'm not saying to take away the whole slum, but start giving the people who can and those who can't, the possibility, without donating anything, in quotas, to try to get rid of the slum, ..."* Also, Emilia would like to improve the conditions within her neighbourhood: *"First I would build houses, because I think every person wants to have their own house ..."* Thus, the residents of LiONs are the only group of residents that stated that the priority for the municipality would be to improve their own neighbourhood directly. This is no surprise, since their neighbourhoods were the ones most in need within the municipality.

Regarding all other answers to this question, most residents of open neighbourhoods stated that if they were in power tomorrow, they would improve some public services. This was often a very general desire to improve the provision of public healthcare and education. Asked about her priorities, Lara (resident of a HiON) stated *"First I would provide services according to the taxes that are collected, I would improve the schools, I would forbid private security services, security, has to be guaranteed. What is happening is that San Isidro is connected with the whole country, the hospital of San Isidro is used by many people who are not from San Isidro, thus, I am paying the hospital for them as well. I would change a lot of things ..."* The interview abstract below also demonstrates this desire to improve public services.

> Mario: *"I would do the hospital and the schools first of all, because I think that that education and culture are very important."*
> K: *"Within education you mean the infrastructure or …"*

> Mario: *"Everything, above all, the infrastructure, because with the poverty that we have now all over the country, you have to give those kids something to eat so that they can attend, because they fall asleep from the hunger they have."*
> (Resident of a MiON)

These measures were often also seen as a way to reduce poverty and to improve security within the municipality as a whole. Interviewees thus often regarded these improvements not only as a social action, but also as a way of improving security for themselves in the long run, which can be seen when Seba (resident of a HiON) pointed out: *"The first thing I would do here would definitely point at what is social development, education and security. I believe that among these three little issues ... I'm not a politician, I don't have the capability but ... I don't know, I would look for people who know these topics, I would sit down with them and say 'I want that within these three little things, work starts now'.* Regarding this general feeling that the priority within the municipality should be to improve public services and thus reduce poverty and increase security, there were no differences found between the residents of different socio-economic levels. However, there was only one resident of a HiCN who thought that public healthcare should be the priority of things to tackle.

> Elisa: *"I would try to give more things to the poor, the poor people who lack lots of resources, the hospital for example … my cleaning lady who has a daughter with a neurological problem, she had to get an appointment at the hospital and they give her one a month from now, in that month, the girl could die, I think these things have to be solved, the public schools, the hospitals, deliver better services, improve the quality of life in the slums because for the people, it's terrible how they live, …"*
> K: *"But this would be what you think is the most important thing to do?"*
> Elisa: *"Yes, because all this also generates security."*
> (Resident of a HiCN)

It is very interesting to note, however, that this concern with the improvement of public health care resulted as a consequence of having personal contact with a person of low-income who suffers from the adverse conditions of current public health provision.

Furthermore, the last sentence shows how this concern for 'others' is explained by a very selfish desire for improved security.

Regarding comments on public services as priorities, it stands out that while residents of MiONs stated healthcare and education as equally important, residents of HiONs mainly stated education as being the top priority to be improved. Flor (resident of a HiON) for example, believed *"the most important ... actually there are lots of things that should be done, firstly, put the municipal schools, which are terrible, in a good condition ... I don't know if you have seen, next to the slum there is one that is falling apart, next to the SIC, there is another one, there are many schools that should be fixed ... yes, I think I would firstly tackle education from all points of view, be it building wise as well as the contents and everything."* Also, Anna (resident of a HiON) prioritised the improvement of public education saying: *"The issue of education seems to me to be fundamental, and it's linked to good nutrition, I think the kid who is well nourished and doesn't have nutritional problems won't have problems at school."* Whereas, only one of the residents of a HiCN (Elsa) considered education as the most important thing that should be tackled within the municipality, stating: *"I'd give education."*

Generally, the residents of HiCNs believed that the priority of the municipality should be to improve the situations of poor people in their municipality. However, they believed this should be done, not by improving public education or healthcare, but through giving employment opportunities to the poor within their municipality. Paola (resident of a HiCN) for instance, stated as her priority: *"Do the impossible and give work to the people of my municipality, not to the Bolivian who comes and is paid two pesos in cash. As a first measure, I would try to give work to many people who don't have work."*

Creating employment opportunities can be seen either as a measure to solve the problems of poverty, crime and the existing informal economy, or as a way to restore the society with a large middle-class, that Argentina was once famous for, and by which it distinguished itself from other Latin American countries. Susanna (resident of a HiCN) explained for example: *"First, I'd try to promote employment at a municipal level, which I think is possible, so that those people that we have, we have Argentina's richest and we have the poorest as well, so I would get together with people to see how to create employment for all these people. Because it's not enough to tear down the slum with a bulldozer and build flats, because these people still don't have work and what they'll do is take the toilets out and sell them, or take the floors out and sell them, so that doesn't solve anything. Also, I would of course, end the political game of buying votes … well, it's very complicated, but the first thing I would do is try to give work to those people so that a middle class which doesn't exist anymore can be re-established."*

Although the existing poverty within the municipality seems to be a preoccupation for many middle- and high-income residents regardless of the type of neighbourhood, only one resident clearly stated that the first thing she would tackle would be the increasing polarisation within the municipality. All others believed that it was important to reduce poverty as a result of other measures. This interviewee considered the fact that society kept becoming more and more polarised, and thus, the greatest problem within her municipality stating: *"I believe I would look for the way to bring together or see how to solve the issue that we keep separating, I know it's much bigger but, if I had a magic wand, I would like it if we could return to having a large middle class and not 'poor and rich'."* (Isa, resident of a HiON)

Very interesting is the fact that it is only among residents of MiONs that some believed that the most important thing would be to first investigate and listen to the people, in order to find out what the real problems within the different neighbourhoods actually were. Clara (resident of a MiON) for example, emphasised: *"First, I would have to see with the people that I meet, how they are, what they do, if the work is real, then I would try to found a group and tackle the principal problems of the demands of the people, that is what you live, what everybody sees ... you can be up there but you also have to be inside, to live it and to know. For these things which are complicated, it is necessary to get involved and to look, one must investigate."* And similarly, Carlos (resident of a MiON) stated: *"I wouldn't change anything from the start, I would listen to the tragedies of the people. ..."*

This shows that some of the residents of MiONs believed that the municipal government did not know the actual problems and that part of the problem was this lack of knowledge and maybe also, the missing interest by politicians and local government. This is in line with the findings of Section 7.3.2, which showed that it was among residents of MiONs, that there were mostly expressions of doubts about politicians' knowledge and awareness of local problems.

In conclusion, it can be noted that, regarding the measure that was considered to be the most important one to be tackled within the municipality, the major difference between residents of HiCNs and HiONs is that, while the former believed that it would be an increase in employment opportunities, the latter thought the improvement of public education would be most important. Both groups, however, agreed that the final aim would be to reduce poverty and as a consequence, insecurity. This shows that residents of HiCNs did not expect their local government to directly improve the situation of the

poor but rather, believed in a system where economic improvement solves problems of disintegration. Whereas residents of HiONs did not only criticise their local government for not providing good public education, on the grounds that they had to pay for private education as a consequence, but also because they believed that a municipality should actually be able to deliver good public education for everyone.

7.5 SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Reviewing the debate about the political impacts of the increasing trend towards gated private urban developments, we have seen that it has not yet been established if political attitudes, interests and engagement of residents of these neighbourhoods are impacted by the characteristics of these developments. Following the analysis of the empirical data collected in this case study, this section summarises the most significant conclusions that can be drawn regarding the academic debate and the research questions which have guided this study.

As already pointed out in Chapter Six, and also in regards to social and political attitudes, interests and engagement, it proved to be very important to look at the statements of the residents of open neighbourhoods as a comparable group, because many findings resulted as a consequence of what was omitted by residents of HiCNs, rather than from the statements they made. This shows that in analysing the socio-political impacts of gated communities, it is crucial to compare gated community residents with others, not only to verify if attitudes and behaviour are not class related, but also in order to detect issues that would otherwise not come up. Thus, the omitted comments were found to be just as significant as any exceptional comment. In this case study, this was specifically found in respect to comments made by residents of HiONs

about informal encounter and public space (discussed in Chapter Six), and concerning comments about public services and municipal priorities (explored within this chapter).

One of the clearest differences between residents of HiCNs and HiONs is the fact that, while residents of open neighbourhoods have some experience in contacting their municipality directly, those of HiCNs do not. Section 7.5.1 looks at the significance of this difference and at the consequences it has for residents' relationships with their municipality, their socio-political interests and attitudes, and their civic concerns.

Section 7.5.2 then analyses if as a consequence of these findings, residents disengage from their local government and to what extent, this results in a detachment from the municipality, from issues regarding local government, and from local politics. Moreover, the consequences of this detachment for the city and society at large are discussed.

7.5.1 LACK OF CONTACT WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Looking at how residents' relationships with local government differs between residents of HiCNs and open neighbourhoods, it was found that residents of HiCNs have no direct contact with their municipality, whereas others did and consequently, their opinions about local government also differed. Regarding residents' opinions about local government, it could be established that residents of HiCNs did not only have less expectations from their local government, but that they were also less aware of problems of their local government than residents of open neighbourhoods.

While the main problem of the municipality, according to residents of HiONs and MiONs, was the inefficiency of the municipality, there was no such general criticism of

inefficiency found among residents of HiCNs. Due to the lack of direct contact with the municipality and as a consequence of this missing experience with the way the municipality works and responds to requests and claims, residents of HiCNs have a lack of knowledge and understanding of their local government. Their opinion about how well their municipality works is therefore, not based on their own experience, but either on accounts of others or on knowledge gained through the media.

It emerged that residents of LiONs also did not have direct contact with their municipal government. Thus, just like residents of HiCNs, residents of LiONs defended their local interest vis-à-vis with the local government as a group. With their interests presented as group interests, it can be expected that there might be an asymmetry in power relations compared to single interests by residents who represent only themselves. Since their contact with the municipality is professionalised, either through private administrations or through local representatives, their voice might be louder. On the other hand, it could also be argued that it is more difficult for a single resident of both HiCNs and LiONs, to defend a personal issue against group interests of its own neighbourhood.

When looking at the question of disengagement from local government, it was found that both groups who had no personal contact with the municipality, residents of HiCNs and LiONs, were less critical of the way the municipality worked and of its efficiency. It is interesting, however, that residents of HiCNs additionally had almost no expectations from their local government, which is not the case for the residents of LiONs. This can be explained by the fact that the former draw on private services and goods, while the latter have to cope with the deficiencies within their neighbourhood.

The second parallel in their accounts regarding major problems of the municipality is that both groups considered the informal settlements to be *a*, if not, *the* major problem of the municipality, and both groups believed that the municipality did not do enough or the right things to improve these problems. Also, some of the residents of HiONs mentioned informal settlements as a problem within the municipality but, rather than seeing these LiONs as a cause of the problem, they believed that they were a result of social problems like social exclusion and lack of integration, which the municipality should tackle.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the increasing trend of private urban developments presumably results in a greater part of the population having no contact with their local government, and thus, being less aware of how well their municipal government functions and as a consequence, being less critical of their municipality. Once the majority of the population of a municipality lives in a HiCN or a LiON, the pressure on local government to provide adequate public services and goods will diminish. Moreover, it can be expected that the criteria, which influence residents' voting behaviour will also change, since the concerns are not the same among residents of HiCNs, compared to those of open neighbourhoods.

In the case of this research, it is thus found that the detachment from the municipal administration leads to a less critical view on local government, and it can be expected that less pressure will be put on the government to change things that do not work well. Further, it can be assumed that this is even more the case in municipalities where HiCNs are rapidly proliferating and where large parts of the residents have no direct personal contact with local government. This will be the case even more in municipalities, where the surrounding neighbourhoods of HiCNs are LiONs – like in

many peripheral areas of Buenos Aires and other Latin American cities – since residents of both types of neighbourhoods normally do not have any direct contact with their municipal government.

7.5.2 DISENGAGEMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Reflecting on the conclusions that can be drawn regarding engagement and interest in local politics within the context of suburban Buenos Aires, most importantly, it was found that political engagement is along class lines and could not be linked to the urban form of the residences of interviewees. Contrary to what is sometimes assumed in the academic discussion on gated communities, there are no findings in this study suggesting any particular pattern of active political engagement by residents of HiCNs, if compared with interviewees of similar income levels within the same municipality.

The differences that were found concern distinctions in interviewees' political interests and opinions. Firstly, it was only among residents of HiCNs that many residents stated that they were generally not interested in politics, whereas other groups gave more mixed responses. Secondly, of those who were not interested in local politics, none showed any sort of remorse, whereas some of the residents of HiONs felt guilty for their lack of interest and political engagement.

Thus, it can be argued that, even if there was no difference in active involvement between residents of HiCNs and HiONs, residents of HiCNs disengaged further, since they had no bad conscience about their lack of interest and involvement and showed fewer feelings of responsibility and belonging for things happening within their municipality.

This kind of detachment can be further supported by looking at the findings regarding interviewees' opinions about politicians. There was more trust in politicians' knowledge about local problems among residents of HiCNs than among other interviewees, but this belief in politicians resulted rather from a lack of engagement with local problems. At the same time, there was less trust in politicians' interests in solving these problems than among other groups. This distrust mainly resulted from a generally critical attitude towards politicians. Thirdly, it was only among residents of HiCNs that some believed that politicians were actually interested in not solving problems, since the status quo was more convenient for them. Among all other groups, some residents showed some signs of understanding and even sympathy for the problems politicians faced dealing with local problems.

There were also differences found with regards to residents' concern for local public space between residents of HiCNs and HiONs, with the first showing less concern. This lack of concern for public space, which neither residents of HiCNs nor those of HiONs use, could again be interpreted as a sign that residents of HiCNs show higher levels of detachment from their municipality. This finding is considered to be highly significant because of two points: First, it shows how important it is not only to look at the use of public space, but also at the values attached to it and at the way residents talk about public space. Secondly, it shows that even if upper classes, in the context of this case study, did all not use public space and instead, used private recreational spaces, there was, however, a difference in their expectation about what a city should provide. Thus, it can be concluded that to a certain extent, HiCNs solidify existent structures since residents of HiCNs seem to stop considering public goods and services as an option.

A second indication of this solidification of the status quo is that residents of HiCNs complained less about the fact that, although they privately provided themselves with most goods and services, they still had to pay very high taxes, while among residents of HiONs, this was a very common complaint, although residents of HiCNs used public services even less than residents of HiONs. It could therefore be concluded that residents of HiCNs seemed to have accepted the fact that they relied on private provision of services and thus, no longer expected their local government to provide any of those.

Moreover, it can be argued that private HiCNs seem to reinforce the acceptance of the privatisation of public services and decrease the inclination to question this trend, since it was found that residents of HiONs commented on lacking public services concerning the whole municipality, like education and healthcare, whereas residents of HiCNs did not mention any of these public services as being a municipal responsibility, with both groups not being consumers of these services.

In addition, it was found that, regarding residents' level of satisfaction with their neighbourhood, residents of HiCNs, on the one hand, were the only group where most interviewees stated that they were satisfied with their neighbourhood, while those who had some complaints, all complained about inherent neighbourhood issues. That is to say that, in contrast to the residents of MiONs and HiONs, who mostly complained about the lack or the deficiency of the provision of some public service or infrastructure, and thus, some issues regarding local government, the complaints of residents of HiCNs concerned some consequences of private HiCNs per se, namely their legal status, the perceived lack of privacy and internal politics; all issues which were never mentioned

by residents of MiONs and HiONs. But, all of these issues were also concerns mentioned by residents of LiONs.

This leaves us with two possible explanations: First, it could be concluded that the fact that both neighbourhood types, HiCNs as well as LiONs, due to their defined boundaries, lead to a stronger identification with the neighbourhood, whereas residents of the other neighbourhoods often considered the whole municipality as their neighbourhood, or at least, did not have such a clear picture of what actually belonged to their neighbourhood. Secondly, it could also be concluded that both types of neighbourhoods, due to their non-public legal status and the resulting sub-communal level of administration or local leadership lead to a stronger sense of community and thus, for some residents, a perceived lack of privacy.

Linked to the uncertainty about the neighbourhood's legal status, it was additionally found that residents of HiCNs were sometimes uncertain about what the responsibilities of the municipality within their neighbourhood were. However, this was not found among residents of LiONs. This might explain why the expectations from local government were also fewer among residents of HiCNs than among residents of LiONs. Moreover, this shows that, even if residents of LiONs often seemed to be mainly concerned with their own neighbourhood, and considered the improvement of their own neighbourhood as the main priority within the municipality, residents of HiCNs were anyhow more detached from their municipality.

In conclusion, it can be presumed that with the increasing trend towards private urban governance, private local administrations are taking over much of the role of local government and thus, many of the conflicts and expectations of residents are also

shifting to this new level of governance. The concluding chapter discusses what this might signify for the rest of the city and for urban democratic processes, more broadly.

EIGHT

CONCLUSION

> *"For democracy to happen, citizens must be able to encounter and talk to each other. They need access to each other to develop their collective political efforts, and contexts in which they can act together. Citizens also must be able to contact those who represent them, and to enter into the communicative spaces where policy and decision making are discussed."*
> (Dahlgren, 2009: 114-115)

8.1 CLOSING THE GATES ON DEMOCRACY?

After an empirical analysis in the preceding chapters of the differences between the accounts of residents of HiCNs and those of open neighbourhoods of varying income levels, it emerges that the most revealing findings are actually the similarities between residents of HiCNs and LiONS. Such similarities were found in four areas of discussion: firstly, their perceptions of their own neighbourhoods, which were much more precise due to the fixed delineation of the borders of their neighbourhoods; secondly, the non-existence of informal encounter with strangers within their neighbourhoods and consequently, a reduced knowledge of the 'other'; thirdly, the lack of direct contact of the residents with the municipal government and the consequential uncritical opinion about the functioning of the municipality; and fourthly, common points of dissatisfaction with their own neighbourhood which were exclusively mentioned by residents of HiCNs and LiONs, namely the undecided legal status of their neighbourhoods, the perceived lack of privacy within their neighbourhood and problems or conflicts resulting from internal politics (private administration/local leaders).

In asking: *"How, and to what extent, do social and political values and engagement and civic concerns differ within and between residents of closed and open neighbourhoods of differing income levels?"* this thesis shows how, in focusing on social and political engagement and civic concerns, one can identify the differences and similarities between accounts of residents of diverse social classes and types of neighbourhoods

which link self-segregation of the upper classes with the problems of urban poverty. The similarities between the opinions, perceptions and civic concerns of residents of HiCNs and LiONs not only highlight the existing problems of urban disintegration, but also clearly define areas of urban policy which should be tackled in order to achieve a more integrated city.

As detailed in Chapter Five, the current policies aimed at urban integration in San Isidro consist of area-based initiatives, which focus on the eradication of informal settlements through the construction of low-density social housing schemes. However, the existing urban policies in San Isidro do not consider the physical barriers caused by HiCNs. Furthermore, they also ignore questions of social and political disintegration of the inhabitants of both groups, that of residents of HiCNs and LiONs.

If we consider the impact of the increase of HiCNs and informal settlements in the periphery of Buenos Aires and add to this the fact that some municipal governments foster gated communities, since they attract wealthy residents to otherwise poor urban areas, one can easily imagine what the future peripheral city looks like.

A city composed mainly of residents of HiCNs and LiONs who strongly identify with their own neighbourhood at the expense of the whole municipality. A city consisting of neighbourhoods with clearly marked delineations within peripheral municipalities, with the resulting impact on residents' civic concerns and its consequences for urban integration. Theses municipalities have residents that demonstrate a strong sense of community within their neighbourhood due to the non-public legal character which results from the private administration or local leadership structure. As the findings of this study show, the existence of private local administrations in gated communities and

of local leaders in informal settlements has a great impact on residents' civic concerns and their political integration in the municipality. This shift towards a new level of governance was found to have a significant impact on residents' relationships with and their expectations from local public authorities. As a result, direct pressure on local government concerning public goods and services would be minimal, with residents giving up on the concept of the State providing them with adequate public goods and services. Thus, the demand for better public services and transparent local administration can be expected to diminish. As a consequence of the introduction of such a new level of governance at a sub-communal level, residents would therefore rely on this intermediary level of governance. With the proliferation of these urban forms, decision-making processes would become less transparent and less democratic, and the power of public administrations would diminish.

Residents of this imaginary city would have no contact with strangers within their neighbourhood and would, as a result, have less contact with these 'others'. They would not be concerned about vandalism, traffic noise or similar disturbances within their neighbourhood. Also, residents of this city would not have any direct contact with their municipal government and consequently they would have little awareness of how their local government functioned.

Regarding their civic concerns, residents would not believe that there were any municipality wide common interests which they shared with residents of all other neighbourhoods within their municipality. Thus, they would withdraw and distance themselves from the rest of the city. The avoidance of conflict would be combined with a partial retreat from public life and as a result, residents would have less points of connection with outsiders since they would not be aware of the common problems and

concerns of ‘others’ within the municipality.

The existence and even more so, the proliferation of HiCNs and LiONs, does have consequences for social and political integration within the city. Therefore, it can be concluded that the increase in gated communities will lead to a solidification of existing urban power structures.

This thesis shows that if urban integration is not tackled differently and if current developments in the periphery of Buenos Aires are not regulated, this is what the city will look like in the future.

Section 8.2 will argue that the current debate on gated communities does not help to understand how one could achieve a more integrated city and Section 8.3 claims that the findings of this study could only be established by drawing on academic debates within the fields of Sociology, Political Theory and Social Psychology and shows how using a theoretical framework based on these disciplines, allows us to gain new insights into the discussion about gated communities. Section 8.4 reflects on policy implications that result from this study, which point toward failures of existing policies in Buenos Aires and propose a different approach to urban integration. Finally, Section 8.5 discusses a set of open questions for further research.

8.2 CRITIQUE OF THE LITERATURE

Not only do current policies in Buenos Aires fail to tackle urban integration in a holistic manner, there is also a lack of academic research that combines questions about the impacts of gated communities with wider problems resulting from urban disintegration

and exclusion. Even if there are, as mentioned earlier, studies which analyse the social consequences of gated communities, the debate about the impact of gated communities on segregation for example remains unresolved, with some (for instance, Le Goix, 2005; Roitman, 2008; et al) arguing that segregation is increasing and others (for example, Sabatini & Caceres, 2004) claiming that it is actually decreasing on a macro-scale.

The interview analysis of this research shows that one of the reasons for different findings among researchers concerned with the social impacts of gated communities lies in the very broad definition of the term 'gated community' itself. For example, in this research, the provision of leisure facilities within closed neighbourhoods was found to have a significant impact on residents' social interaction patterns with outsiders. Residents of HiCNs which contained leisure facilities spent most of their leisure time within their neighbourhood. In contrast, residents of closed neighbourhoods that did not include such facilities did not show any differences in their social interaction patterns compared with residents of HiONs. This demonstrates that it is essential to clearly define what type of gated community one refers to, since findings can vary considerably depending on the characteristics of gated communities. Therefore, research results might not be transferable if the types of gated communities analysed are not the same.

Furthermore, this study also found that differing characteristics of HiCNs could also be linked with diverse opinions of residents about municipality wide common interests. Residents who did not believe that common interests between residents of diverse neighbourhood types existed, were all from a HiCN that had leisure facilities and thus functioned like a larger gated community, whereas those living in HiCNs without leisure facilities believed that common interests with outsiders existed. Apart from

demonstrating the importance of a precise definition of the examined neighbourhood, this finding also shows that the existence of leisure facilities in gated communities plays a significant role for the discussion about their impact. Regarding Buenos Aires, this is an important finding, since the majority of newly developed suburban gated developments do include such facilities.

A third indicator of the importance of precision in the description of gated communities concerns the discussion about residents' contact with neighbouring residents. In analysing the claims within the academic debate concerning residents' opinions about 'others' and their relationship with residents of adjacent neighbourhoods, Low (2003), for example, explains in her research of gated communities in the United States that there are 'symbolic barriers' created by the enclosure of neighbourhoods, which reinforce the existing differences between insiders and outsiders. These barriers, according to Low (2003), result in an image of the 'other' that is often negative and thus might underpin a fear of strangers and a fear of crime. Thus, she maintains that gated communities contribute to segregation, because people are able to psychologically separate themselves from outsiders whom they perceive as potentially dangerous.

This thesis also found that residents of HiCNs had less contact with the surrounding population than those of HiONs. However, the fact that closed neighbourhoods were often located amidst poor neighbourhoods, whereas HiONs were generally surrounded by neighbourhoods of similar socio-economic level, must be taken into consideration. As established in this study, the lack of contact between residents of closed neighbourhoods and neighbouring outsiders could be explained by the sharp differences between neighbourhoods, since in the case of one HiCN whose adjacent neighbourhoods were of a more similar socio-economic level, the same amount and

type of contact with the surrounding population as between residents of HiONs and their neighbours was found. Conversely, in the rare cases where sharp socio-economic differences existed between HiONs and their surrounding neighbourhoods, a similar lack of contact was found as that between residents of HiCNs and neighbouring areas.

As pointed out in Chapter Two, the analysis of the literature on gated communities found a lack of comparative studies which explore residents' social relations, their opinions and civic concerns, when compared with residents of open neighbourhoods. The comparison of these groups within this study was essential for the findings of this study, and therefore, considered to be very important to increase the amount of comparative research, which looks at residents of a similar socio-economic level.

The significance of comparative studies does not only lie in the above mentioned findings, but also in the fact that some of the most revealing results of this study could only be established due to the 'non-spoken' issues, the omitted topics by residents of HiCNs, which came up in interviews with residents of HiONs (namely the absence of spontaneous encounters with strangers within the neighbourhood and the differences in perception of municipality wide common interests). Comparative studies with outsiders of a similar socio-economic level are thus not only essential in order to avoid research results that can actually be explained by residents' socio-economic background, but also because they allow issues to be detected which would otherwise not arise.

Since the debate on gated communities does generally not consider the city as a whole, but focuses on the self-seclusion of the upper classes and furthermore, does not deliver any answers to questions of political disintegration which this study focuses on, the next section reviews the limitations and benefits of having used an interdisciplinary

conceptual framework, and illustrates how this adds value to existing knowledge on the impacts of gated communities and the broader field of urban studies.

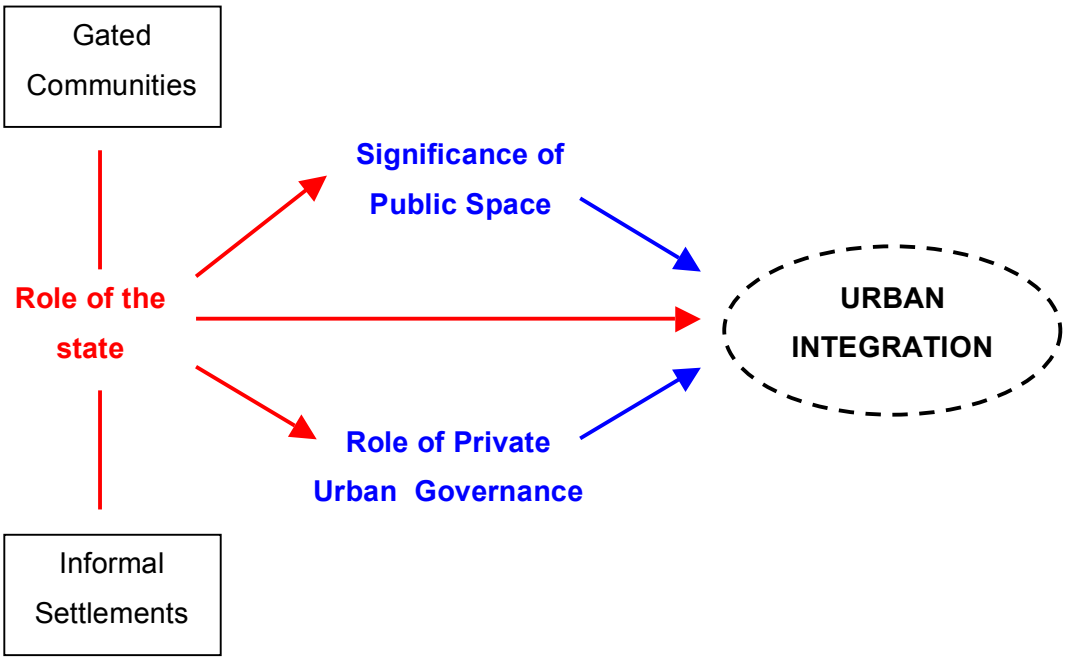
8.3 RESEARCHING CIVIC CONCERNS

> *"It is also ideas of public space, involving seemingly superficial contacts, which are so important to any final constitution of a political public realm: superficial engagements in these urban spaces are the first tentative steps in speech and street communication towards any fuller citizenship in an emancipatory city."*
> (Bridge, 2004: 136)

As a result of the limitations found in the academic debate about gated communities in regards to the focus of this study, this thesis borrows arguments about the impact of contact and conflict and about the meaning of public space from the fields of Sociology, Political Theory and Social Psychology in order to develop a theoretical framework that allows an interpretation of the empirical findings. Throughout the research project, these theoretical arguments proved to be very enlightening since the research question could not have been answered by drawing only on debates about gated communities. Developing an interdisciplinary conceptual framework was found to be very useful in order to understand the meaning and consequences of the empirical findings of this research. However, I am aware that working with arguments across disciplines always carries the threat of overlooking counterarguments, since it is not possible to entirely cover all the diverse fields of discussion. Yet, I believe that even if leaving one's own field of expertise always bears this risk, the insights gained in this study by drawing on theoretical debates from Sociology, Political Theory and Social Psychology outweigh this danger.

When starting this research project, my interest came from a perceived lack of integration of two parallel discussions, one on the urban integration of the poor and the other on gated communities. As a consequence, I tried to develop a conceptual framework which had at its centre, residents' civic concerns and which therefore looked at urban integration from the viewpoint of democratic processes considering these to be essential for a sustainable approach to urban integration. It was only through the research project that I became interested in the role of local government and more broadly the role of the State.

Retrospectively, I would shift my focus on the role of the State, the role of private urban governance and the significance of public space for urban integration. I can imagine a theoretical framework that could be constructed around urban integration and the role of the State with regard to public space on one side and private local governance on the other, bringing together discussions about informal settlements and gated communities and exploring the consequences for urban integration. The diagram below illustrates how such a framework could be structured.



It is not my intention here to further develop and discuss a different approach in detail, but I believe that it is important to reflect on where the research started, how it proceeded and how it could have developed alternatively. However, using a theoretical framework which centres on residents' civic concerns, this thesis establishes links between social interaction, socio-political interests and civic concerns and therefore, adds value to the existing debate about gated communities and urban integration.

Contradictory to what is often claimed in the academic debate about gated communities (see, for example, Arizaga, 2005, Caldeira, 2000), findings of this research show that social interaction patterns between residents of HiCNs and their family, friends, acquaintances, neighbours and residents of surrounding neighbourhoods, did not differ in the main from those of residents of HiONs. Only social interaction with strangers was found to be different, since informal encounters with strangers within the neighbourhood were completely absent in HiCNs and LiONs. These contacts with strangers belonging to a different social class, which take place in open middle-and high-income neighbourhoods, were generally perceived by its residents to be thought provoking and/or disturbing. As a consequence of this lack of contact (and thus also lack of conflict within the own neighbourhood), it was found that residents of HiCNs had a reduced awareness of marginalised people within their municipality and gave less importance to issues concerning these 'others'.

As explained earlier, this thesis was driven by questions asking: if the urban form people live in influences their patterns of social interaction; if social interaction patterns influence their attitudes and civic concerns; if they have an impact on residents' political interests; and if opinions about local government and views about local politics are influenced by the type of neighbourhood people live in. In order to analyse the links

between these topics and to establish if there were any causal relationships between them, a conceptual framework was required.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the absence of informal encounters within residents' neighbourhoods could be expected to have an impact on interclass relationships, especially on the rapport between the wealthy and the deprived groups of society. Considering the conclusions that could be drawn from empirical findings regarding residents' social contacts, the lack of informal encounters within gated communities proved that it led to a reduction in knowledge about the 'other' and to a reduced awareness about their problems and concerns. It was found, however, that the lack of informal encounters also led to a reduction in concrete fear and aggression towards these 'others', with less negative comments made about 'others' by residents of HiCNs than those of HiONs.

It could therefore be deduced that gated communities, by excluding strangers, leads to a reduction in conflict between diverse groups of society, since part of the contact that leads to conflict is avoided. The argument here, however, is that in the long term, it is – among others – precisely this type of contact and potential conflict that enhances recognition of groups of alien parts of society and hence the problems and concerns of 'others'. Exploring the meaning of public space from the perspective of possible contact and conflict, this research adds value to the debate about gated communities, which generally regards public space as a location of possible social interaction only in the positive sense. This thesis argues that the value of public space also lies in its potential for disturbance of daily routines. In analysing everyday encounters happening during bus travel, Wilson (2011) found that encounters with strangers work to format perceptions of 'others' and also therefore have the potential to put these opinions into

question or to lead to an initiation of dialogue across differences.

The potential of this type of informal encounter to instigate social integration is, however, contested. Matejskova & Leitner (2011) argue, according to their findings from their recent study of social interaction between immigrant groups and Germans in Berlin, that there is no positive effect of unmediated contact. On the contrary, these contacts can sometimes even reinforce pre-existing stereotypes. Moreover, they claim that even if sustained encounters can change existing prejudices, this positive outcome on the individual level, however, does not scale up to the in-group to which the individual belongs.

These findings are in line with the findings of this research, which show that sometimes, existing encounters within the neighbourhood did lead to negative feelings towards the 'other'. It was found that interviewees of HiCNs made quantitatively and qualitatively less negative comments about the 'other'. This can be attributed to the lack of confrontation within their daily lives. There are no comments made about residents of LiONs and the connected problems of crime or vandalism, by any of the residents of HiCNs. Similar to the discussion about informal encounters seen in Chapter Six, this shows that the lack of direct confrontation within the residents' own neighbourhood has an impact on the residents' civic concerns. As discussed in Chapter Three, it can therefore be argued that the absence of informal encounters within residents' neighbourhoods has an impact on interclass relationships, especially on the rapport between the wealthy and the deprived groups of society. This point is very important if policy recommendations are to follow from the findings of this study. Section 8.4 will further explain how policies aiming at urban integration should therefore be designed

In analysing the locations of encounters and the use of public space, a second difference in residents' concerns was found. Even though, as seen in Chapter Six, the use of public space did not differ between residents of HiCNs and HiONs, the latter partly complained about a lack of public space or about the fact that they considered these spaces to be dangerous, whereas residents of HiCNs did not miss the use of public spaces at all. Some residents of HiONs additionally felt they had to explain or excuse the fact that they did not frequent public spaces, whereas this seems to be self-evident for residents of HiCNs.

Taking these two differences in awareness and preoccupation together demonstrates that residents of gated communities did in fact retreat from some of the issues of concern of the rest of society. As previously argued, with the increase of gated communities, this withdrawal has political consequences for the city as a whole. It also shows that the interests of high-income residents to achieve an integration of deprived parts of the city will be impacted with the spread of gated communities.

The interpretations of the empirical findings of this research show that instead of focusing on the use of space and patterns of interaction when researching the social impact of gated communities, it is also essential to analyse values given to public goods and opinions about 'others', since this is where significant differences were found. This thesis stresses that the focus on civic concerns and its links with residents' social relations and private urban governance adds value to a debate about the impacts of gated communities which focuses either on social relations per se or on the impacts of private urban governance on urban economics and planning. The fact that concerns for public space are not the same for residents of HiCNs and HiONs, even if no differences were found in their use of public space, is a significant finding of this study. This might

appear to constitute only a minor difference, but it shows that there are consequences of gated communities, which have been ignored so far. These consequences relate to residents' differences in civic concerns and the resulting differences in political interests, rather than to their social practices.

Moreover, these differences have to be analysed in more detail, since they have an impact on what residents expect from their city and on what they consider to be the 'normal' city. This in turn, will influence what residents demand and expect from their local authorities and whom they will vote for in local elections.

At the inception of this study, it was presumed that residents of closed neighbourhoods would have fewer needs and less reason to be concerned about urban issues related to social life within their municipality, than their counterparts living in open public neighbourhoods and that the concerns of residents of closed neighbourhoods would be increasingly about the – mostly private – city which they use. In other words, residents of gated communities were expected to share the public realm with others to a lesser extent, to use only private spaces for their social interaction and, as a consequence, to be less interested in debates about collective interests and less willing to engage in issues concerning the whole municipality.

If these assumptions were to be proved right, it was further presumed that integrative urban policies concerning deprived neighbourhoods would be limited in their success, since the open public city would be diminishing and the spread of private urban governance would hinder attempts of integrating the urban poor and designing more integrative cities in the long run.

Webster (2001) argues that the negative effects of gated communities on urban fragmentation might be weaker and possibly less harmful than invisible boundaries established through school catchment areas and other real estate market restrictions. Furthermore, there are certainly many other urban processes and structures that enhance exclusion, segregation and fragmentation. However, this thesis shows that gated communities should be understood as an urban structure, which contributes to further urban inequality and disintegration of the city through their impact on certain civic concerns of their residents. Since gated communities are not singular developments, but represent an increasing urban trend, this will have an impact on urban democratic processes at large. As pointed out in the introduction of this chapter, in following the findings of this thesis, one can imagine what the city will look like if gated communities are not regulated and if urban integration is not approached in a holistic manner. Therefore, the next section presents the policy recommendations, which follow from this research.

8.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The similarities which were found between the interviews with residents of HiCNs and LiONs all relate either to the physical or the legal characteristics of their neighbourhoods. In other words, the fact that HiCNs and LiONs have clearly defined boundaries and a different legal status compared to HiONs and MiONs, is the reason why its residents resemble each other in their accounts of certain areas of discussion. As seen above, these areas of discussion, which demonstrate the disintegration of the residents of these neighbourhoods can be categorised into four groups, of which two are related to the neighbourhoods' physical features and the other two to their legal characteristics.

Firstly, it is evident and not surprising, that the physical form of HiCNs and LiONs leads to a physical disintegration of these neighbourhoods. However, this research further shows that residents of HiCNs and LiONS not only have a very clear picture of the delineation of their neighbourhoods, but also identify more with their own neighbourhood at the expense of identifying with the whole municipality, which is perceived as an 'outside'. Secondly, the impenetrable borders of HiCNs and the fear of trespassing LiONs for outsiders, lead to a complete lack of informal encounter with strangers within these neighbourhoods. The impacts on residents civic concerns of the lack of social interaction with strangers within the own neighbourhood have been discussed earlier, but it is important to remember that these are also related to the physical disintegration of these neighbourhoods.

Thirdly, residents of HiCNs and LiONS do not have any direct contact with their municipal government and instead rely on an intermediary level of governance to defend their interests vis-à-vis local government. This is related to their specific legal status, which is in the case of HiCNs, the private nature of the neighbourhood and in the case of LiONs, their legally informal character. Fourthly, the residents of HiCNs and LiONs were both found to be dissatisfied with the legal character of their neighbourhoods. Consequently, residents experience an uncertainty about their rights and about the role of local government in regards to their neighbourhood. Furthermore, they perceive a lack of privacy within their neighbourhood and they attribute problems and conflicts regarding internal power structures to the legal status of their neighbourhoods.

When considering the first two similarities among residents of HiCNs and LiONS in regards to possible policy implications and analysing current policies on urban integration in San Isidro, it was found that not only did these policies not include HiCNs in their approach, but also gated communities were not even mentioned in relation to urban integration. As described in Chapter Five, the governor of San Isidro, for example, stated that there was a necessity to urbanise informal settlements and to integrate them physically into the urban fabric, allowing access to ambulances and fire engines. However, this criterion was not applied to closed neighbourhoods which physically close off their entrances, and local government did not seem to consider the interruptions of the urban fabric that they cause a problem. Apart from obstructing public access and thus hindering public interests in the city, this thesis points out that living in closed neighbourhoods did have an effect on its residents' perceptions of the city and of 'outsiders' as a result of the impenetrable boundaries of these neighbourhoods. Therefore, the proliferation of gated communities should not be ignored by policy makers.

Analysing the extent to which the increase in closed neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires reinforces and consolidates urban inequality shows that new ideas for a framework for urban integration, which include the integration of the wealthy and the poor, are needed. Therefore, it is essential that local governments acquire and increase their knowledge of the specific impacts of private urban governance on their cities in order to develop more inclusive policy programmes. As a result, they could and should depart from tackling poverty and deprivation solely as punctual problems, and instead envisage the city as a continuous flow of fragmented parts, which are all linked on various levels and which should therefore be treated as a continuum.

It is naive to believe municipal governments would or could forbid the development of gated communities since economic and political pressures are very strong. However, it should be possible to restrict closed neighbourhoods in regards to their size and regulate their characteristics. As discussed earlier, the presence of leisure facilities in HiCNs for example has an effect on residents' perception of common interests with outsiders and consequently on their civic concerns.

In regards to social integration, this thesis argues that, in order to foster contact between diverse groups within society, it is not sufficient to provide public spaces for interaction. It is necessary to approach social integration in a proactive manner by organising events which foster contact between diverse groups of society. In order to obtain a more integrated city, local governments should address questions of diversity and polarisation by actively designing strategies to tackle prejudice and intolerance. This can be done in cooperation with the private sector and NGOs who already work in these fields.

Following the empirical findings, this study argues that municipalities should initially develop strategies that consider an integration of the whole society, rather than just the poor. And secondly and even more importantly, integrative urban programmes should contain policies on physical integration as well as social and economic integration and, very importantly, political integration. This was found to be the most neglected part of urban integration in existing urban policies in Buenos Aires.

Current policies on urban integration in San Isidro fail to tackle issues of physical self-seclusion of the wealthy, and more importantly, they completely miss tackling political integration of both residents of gated communities and those of deprived

neighbourhoods. Political integration is not happening, neither in the form of participation, including the inhabitants of informal settlements which are currently being urbanised, nor in any type of consultation process during the development of new social housing schemes, nor in the form of political integration of residents of closed neighbourhoods, which are politically distanced from local government as a result of their private administrations.

The governor of San Isidro declared that his government recognised that, in order to achieve urban integration, it was not enough to eradicate informal settlements through building social housing schemes, but that these had to be accompanied by educational and health care programmes, vocational training and the development of community networks[108]. The municipality further stated that it intended to integrate the urban poor not only by physical upgrading and housing programmes, but also socially[109]. However, as seen by the findings of this study, social integration does not seem to be showing results since residents of LiONs were found to have only minimal contact with residents of other neighbourhoods. Furthermore, as described in Chapter Five, there has been a lot of discontent with the lack of participation and consultation of residents of LiONs in San Isidro. This shows that even if local governments are aware of the need for integrative policies, these are often not implemented since there are either contrary political or economical interests or simply because it would require greater effort.

In relation to political integration, two approaches seem to be necessary. Firstly, in order to integrate marginalised groups of society, it is important to integrate them into the decision making process when policies regarding their neighbourhoods are being

[108] http://www.sanisidro.gov.ar/es/nota.vnc?id=7574
[109] http://www.sanisidro.gov.ar/es/nota.vnc?id=8376

discussed, developed and implemented. Furthermore, municipalities should seek contact with these groups otherwise, local leaders take an intermediary role, and political interests might lead to a manipulation of residents. Similarly, local government should regain the interest of those parts of society that are disintegrating as a result of drawing on private services and private local administrations. This is very important since the risk of this process of disintegration for local government, and for society more broadly, is that economically powerful parts of the population do not feel connected to their local government and to their local surroundings. As a consequence, their disposition to engage in and support policies and issues that are not in their own direct interest will continue to diminish, and the concept of solidarity within a municipality or within society at large becomes more difficult to be accepted by these parts of society.

The question that emerges from these conclusions is in what way, and to what extent, can differences in civic concerns be expected to have an impact on what residents expect from their city and on what they consider to be the 'normal' city. This will also influence what these residents will expect from their local authorities and whom they will vote for in local elections. Further research analysing voting behaviour and residents' political opinions, linking these with the results of this study would be very interesting.

8.5 REFLECTIONS ON FURTHER RESEARCH

Understanding gated communities as one of many factors in the continuous decrease of sites of everyday public encounter, opens up the debate about the impact of this form of development. Questions about subject formation and the development of residents' opinions and concerns in light of diminishing contact with strangers arise. It would be

very rewarding to develop further research in this direction, since there are many parallel developments in modern societies that enhance the decrease of personal encounters with strangers. The impact of these changes on the future of cities, on existing power structures, and on democratic processes remains to a great extent unclear. As this study shows, an interdisciplinary approach combining, for example, theoretical concepts from social psychology, political theory and sociology can be very rewarding when researching these urban questions.

Looking back on the research process, there are always things that could have been done differently, errors that could have been omitted, or additional data that could have been collected. In hindsight, I believe that in trying to answer the same research question and using the same theoretical approach, it would have been very enlightening to enrich the empirical data with the use of mental maps[110] drawn by the interviewees. This would have allowed an exploration of the effects of urban fragmentation, in the form of either closed neighbourhoods or informal settlements, on interviewees' perceptions of the city. I was very inspired by the presentation by Avila & Guenet (2011), of using mental maps for the analysis of the impact of gated communities on the perception of the 'other' in their research in Mexico. It would have been very interesting to see how these maps would differ between the residents of the four types of neighbourhoods which formed part of the case study for this thesis.

Furthermore, I am very intrigued by whether the research question, which has guided this study, would lead to the same findings if the research setting were a different one. I believe it would be very rewarding to look at this in the context of the city where I live

[110] Mental maps are used in psychology as a tool to explore people's consciousness (Avila & Guenet, 2011)

now, Marseille. This would be interesting on two grounds: firstly, because the socio-economic setting and the political circumstances are very different and secondly, because the type of closed neighbourhoods that exist in Marseille resemble those investigated in this thesis, even if generally the urban structure is very different. In addition, it would be interesting to see how different urban regulations influence the impacts of closed neighbourhoods that were examined within this thesis.

Following up from the previous question and as a consequence of the findings of this study, I consider that it is necessary to look at the relationship between the increase of gated communities on the one hand and the type of political system on the other. Since in this study, it was found that living in closed neighbourhoods had an impact on residents' civic concerns, it is argued that democratic processes will be impacted by the spread of gated communities. Therefore, it would be interesting to analyse if a link can be established between the degree of development and the type of a democratic system and the level of proliferation of gated communities.

As a result of this research, it seems necessary to bring the attention of the discussion about gated communities back to the role of local government in order to be able to use the existing knowledge about gated communities and their impact for the establishment of policy recommendations. As illustrated in Section 8.3, by exploring the role of the State in regards to urban integration and more specifically its role as provider of public space and as regulator of private local governance, discussions about informal settlements and gated communities could be combined and thus inform broader debates about successful urban integration.

In Buenos Aires, there is an ongoing discussion among urban researchers about how to tackle urban inequality and the growing problem of a lack of housing. Researchers and policy makers now commonly agree that urbanisation programmes of informal settlements need to incorporate policies which foster social and economic integration of their residents and that they should also include participatory mechanisms. In recent years, however, there has been a growing number of professionals[111] working in the field of urban research and human rights (see, for instance, Wagner, 2011 and Fernandez, 2011) who argue that the problem of urban poverty cannot be tackled by the production of housing by the State, but should rather be approached as a problem of an unregulated real estate market, which, as a result of land speculation, sees land prices rising. They argue that the continuous rise of land prices leads to increasing urban inequality and that the State should use its powers to regulate the free market and guarantee affordable land for all sectors of society.

Moreover, it could prove enriching for the development of well functioning urban policies to analyse what local government could learn from private urban governance and how the State could regulate private urban governance in order to achieve more integrated cities. It was interesting that in the last of four international conferences about private urban governance and gated communities which I have attended over the last few years, the need to discuss the role of the State vis-à-vis the spread of private urban governance and the longing for the development of a vision for urban planners and policy makers was formulated for the first time by various participants.

[111] see: http://sur.elargentino.com/notas/hay-que-reconstruir-el-derecho-al-espacio-habitable and http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/cash/17-5510-2011-10-16.html

The fact that the greatest part of urban growth in Buenos Aires – and many other Latin American cities – consists of either gated communities or informal settlements highlights the significance of the findings of this study. The consequences for urban democracy, especially within the periurban municipalities where these neighbourhoods are located, will be considerable and irrevocable to the point that one will have to ask: are these cities closing the gates on democracy?

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APPENDIX 1 – TIMEFRAME

APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW LIST

APPENDIX 3 – INITIAL TOPIC GUIDE

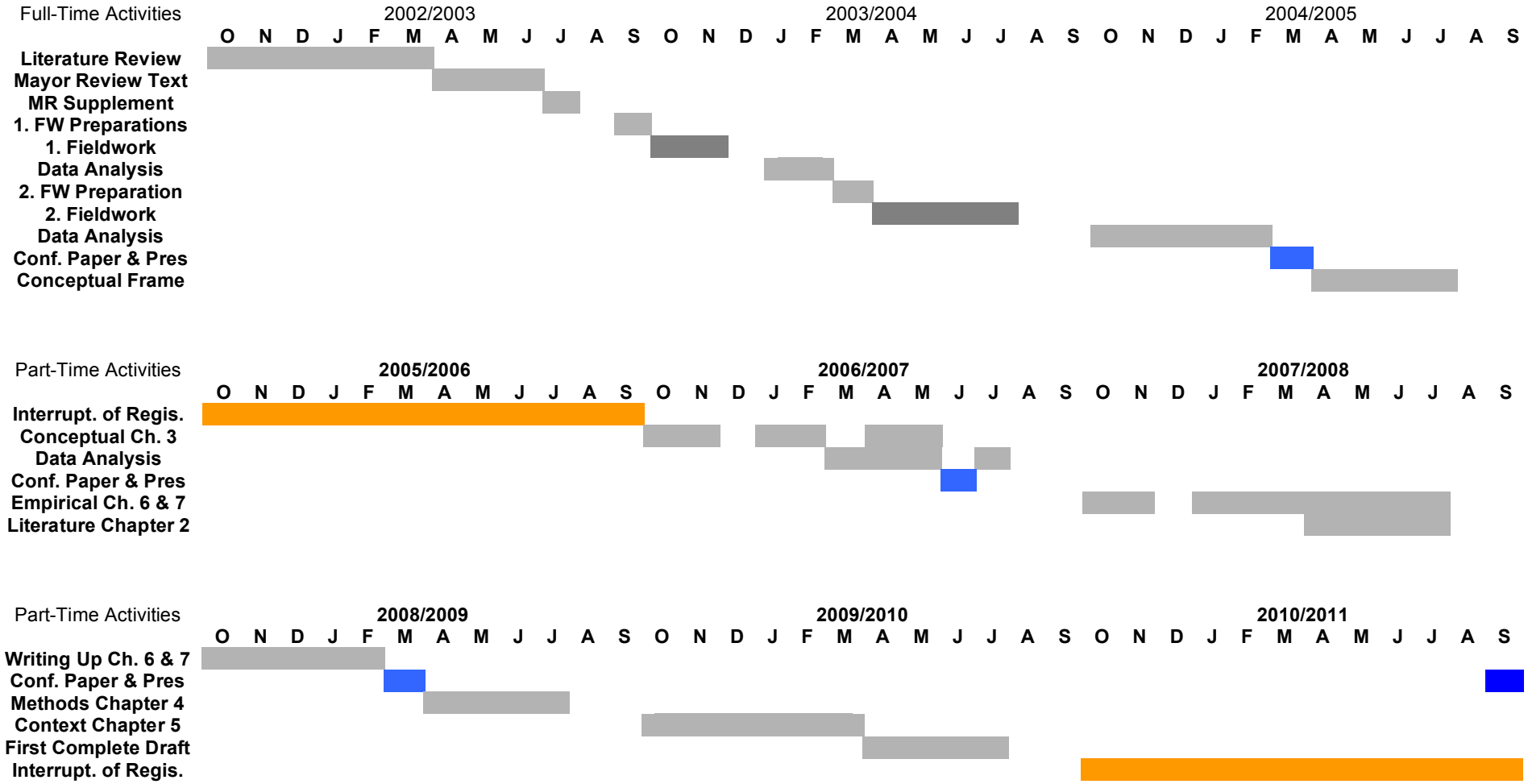
APPENDIX 4 – FINAL TOPIC GUIDE

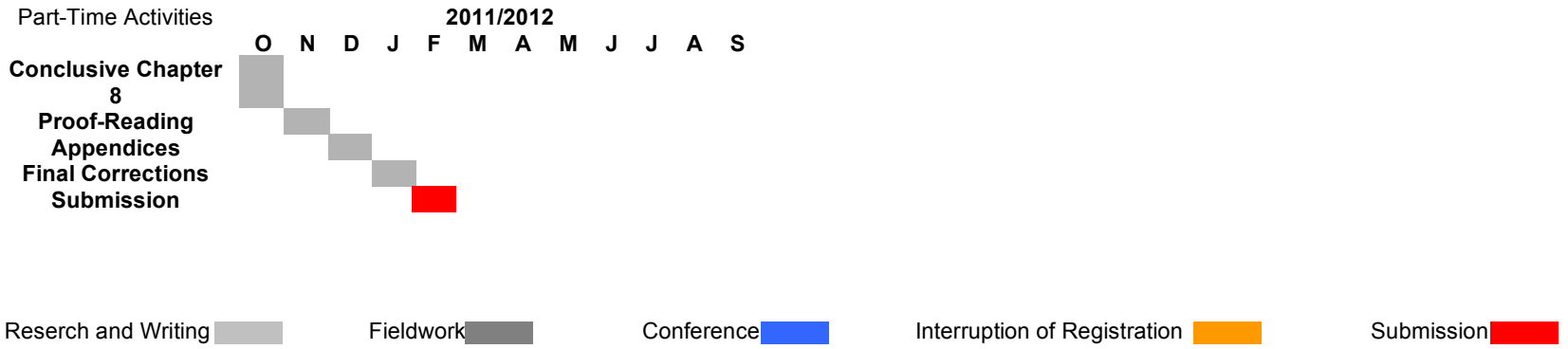
APPENDIX 5 – EXPERT TOPIC GUIDE

APPENDIX 6 – CONTACT LINES

APPENDIX 7 – MATRICES

APPENDIX 1 – **TIMEFRAME**




Part-Time Activities
2011/2012
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Conclusive Chapter 8
Proof-Reading
Appendices
Final Corrections
Submission
Reserch and Writing
Fieldwork
Conference
Interruption of Registration
Submission

APPENDIX 2 – **INTERVIEW LIST**

FIELDWORK PHASE 1:

Type	Neighbourhood	Name	Sex	Age	Children
HiCN	San Jorge Village (Malvinas)	Maria Luisa	F	20-45	2
	San Isidro Catedral	Miguel	M	60+	
	Boating	Beatriz	F	20-45	3
	San Isidro Joven	Iris	F	20-45	2
HiON	La Horqueta	Maria Jose	F	20-45	4
MiON	El Bajo	Coco	F	45-60	3
LiON	La Cava	Ricarda	F	20-45	1
		Fabianna	F	45-60	2

FIELDWORK PHASE 2:

Type	Neighbourhood	Name	Sex	Age	Children
HiCN	Haras de Alvear	Loretta	F	20-45	2
		Pati	F	20-45	1
		Elisa	F	60+	
		Hugo	M	20-45	
	Boating	Martina	F	20-45	2
		Susanna	F	20-45	2
		Nicole	F	20-45	2
	San Isidro Labrador	Paola	F	45-60	4
	San Isidro Chico	Elsa	F	45-60	7
	Pato Verde (Malvinas)	Omar	M	60+	5
		Matias	M	45-60	2
HiON	Las Lomas	Stefania	F	45-60	3
		Lara	F	20-45	2
		Anna	F	45-60	2
		Mona	F	45-60	3
		Daniel	M	45-60	
		Isa	F	20-45	2
	La Horqueta	Flor	F	20-45	5
		Seba	M	20-45	2
	Bella Vista (Malvinas)	Ingrid	F	20-45	2
MiON	Las Casitas	Clara	F	20-45	2
		Felix	M	60+	
		Leo	M	60+	
		Marco	M	60+	
	Accasuso	Marina & Mario	F&M	20-45	2
		Martha & Carlos	F&M	45-60	3
	El Bajo	Mara	F	20-45	3
LiON	La Cava	Antonio	M	20-45	2
		Nadine	F	20-45	
		Emilia	F	20-45	
		Alexia	F	20-45	
		Maria	F	45-60	9
		Chris	M	20-45	
	Las Angelinas	Juan	M	45-60	5
		Julia	F	45-60	2

APPENDIX 3 – **INITIAL TOPIC GUIDE**

Fill in Documentation sheet

- Date:
- Place:
- Duration:

Word of thanks

First of all I want to thank you for agreeing to do this interview, I really appreciate that you take the time.

Introduce myself

I am a research student doing a PhD in Social Policy at the London School of Economics in London (show letter if they want to see).
I am German but my mother is Argentine, therefore I have been to Buenos Aires many times before. I am trained as an architect and urban planner and I live now in London.

Introduce the research

The research I am doing is in the field of urban sociology and I am specifically looking at the links between forms of residence and social relations, civic concerns and value formation. Therefore I interview residents of different types of neighbourhoods, that is: of traditional suburbs, informal residential areas, gated communities and central areas of Buenos Aires.

Explain confidentiality and how material will be used

The questions will be mainly concerning your daily routine, your thoughts about the neighbourhood and the surroundings and some background information.
I will not use your name or address in the research, that is you will stay anonymous and so will also the name of the neighbourhood, as the interest of this study is not this specific neighbourhood, but the generalisable results of it. Also, for security reasons, it is common practice in this kind of research, not to identify the interviewees, not the locations. I will just compare the answers and thoughts and see if there is any correlation between the urban form and the issues we will be talking about.

Ask for permission to tape

Since Spanish is not my first language and is difficult for me to take notes while we are talking I would like to ask for the permission to record our conversation. This is only as an aide-memoire and will only be used by myself to help remembering the details of the conversation.

Switch on tape recorder

Content page

I. Questionnaire
II. Location
III. Transport
IV. Leisure Time
V. Public Space
VI. Safety
VII. Community Functions
VIII. Local Politics

I. Questionnaire:

1. Gender: M F
2. Age: 14 – 25 26 – 40 40 – 60 60 +
3. Family status: single married married with children (number)
4. Profession:
5. Years of residence in the neighbourhood: 0 – 3 4 – 10 10 +
6. Residential background

Body of questions / topics

- *start with straightforward questions / opening topics like definitions and descriptions of the place*
- *then introduce conversational style and go from behavioural and experience questions to motivation, attitudes and feelings questions*
- *ask for further topics / considerations and end on positive note like thoughts about the future, or overall summary*

II. Location

How would you describe your neighbourhood?

- What do you consider to be your community?
- Why did you move to this neighbourhood?

How would you describe the surroundings?

- each side

Do you know people in your neighbourhood?

- many?
- where do you know them from?
- what kind of relation do you have?

Do you know people in the surrounding areas?

- many?
- describe the area they live in
- where you know them from?
- what kind of relation do you have?
- do you visit each other?

Do you think there are any common interests between your neighbourhood and the surrounding ones?

- what are they

Where do your family and friends live?

- describe their neighbourhoods
- do you visit each other regularly?

III. Transport

How do you move inside and outside your neighbourhood

- your family
- before?

Where do you (or your family) work / go to school?

- how do you get there
- happy with that?

IV. Leisure Time

What do you generally do in your leisure time

- satisfied
- which locations
- how are the other people you meet there

Where do you do your shopping

- how are other people you meet there?

V. Public space

Do you use public spaces?

- which
- when
- why / why not

VI. Safety

How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood, in the surrounding areas and in the rest of the city?

VII. Community Functions

Do you participate in any community functions in and/or outside the neighbourhood (church, education, sport, politics, cultural)?

- what kind
- since when
- before

VIII. Local Politics

Are you interested in local politics / social work / charity / community work

- in what
- do you participate actively in any
- why / why not

What do you think that there are municipality wide common interests?

- are they important for you?
- do you engage in these issues?

What do you consider to be the major problems within your municipality?

- do you think these issues are also important for the neighbouring communities?

Reassure confidentiality

Thank you again for taking your time for this interview, and I want to reassure you that all the data will remain anonymous as I said before.

Switch off the tape recorder

Ask for possibility to come back and for other possible interviewees

As I am just starting this research and I am still looking for more possible interviewees, I wanted to ask you if you could think of anybody here in the neighbourhood who would possibly also be prepared to do an interview with me. I would contact them once you asked them, to explain the details and since I am going back to London soon I would probably do the interview on my next trip to Buenos Aires in April. …

Give your address for further contacts and questions of any kind.

Make notes on observations and peculiarities of interview …

- record what I see and hear outside the immediate context of the interview
- my thoughts about the dynamics of the encounter
- ideas about inclusion of new topics
- thoughts about analytical stage

Make photographs if possible

Name:
Date:
Location:
Duration:

Thanks:
First of all I want to thank you for your participation in this interview, I appreciate that you are taking your time for this.

Presentation:
I am a PhD student in Social policy at the London School of Economics in London (card). I'm German but my mother is from Argentina that is why I have been to Buenos Aires many times since I was a child. I am an Architect with a specialisation in urbanism and I live in London.

The research project:
My PhD is in the field of urban sociology and the research focuses on the analysis of linkages between the urban form of residential neighbourhoods and the relationships of residents with the municipality, their social and political interests and values and their civic concerns. To explore these topics I will interview residents of the following types of neighbourhoods in San Isidro and in Malvinas Argentinas: Closed neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods with security provision, deprived neighbourhoods and open middle class neighbourhoods.

Confidentiality:
The interview will mainly be about your opinions about the neighbourhood and the surrounding areas and about your social and political interests. I will neither publish your name nor your direction in my thesis. I want to say that you will remain anonymous. What I will do is use the interviews to compare the discourses within them and analyse if there are linkages between the type of neighbourhood and the other issues we will now talk about.

Tape recorder:
Since Spanish is not my mother tongue it is difficult for me to take notes while we are talking, therefore I would like to ask you for your permission to record our conversation. I will only use this recording as an aide-memoire in order to remember the details of the interview.

Content:
I. Location / Security
II. Transport / Leisure time / Public Space
III. Community Functions
IV. Local Politics / Trust
V. Political Process
VI. Questionnaire

Note: Questions in blue are only for residents of gated communities.

I. Location / Security

1. Years of residence in the neighbourhood:

2. Do you live with family?

3. Where did you live before?
   - Did you search in other neighbourhoods / gated communities?
   - Did you consider non-gated communities?
   - Could you imagine living outside a gated community?
   - Why did you move here?

4. How would you characterise your neighbourhood?
   - Do you like living in your neighbourhood?
   - What do you like / dislike about the neighbourhood?
   - What are the advantages / disadvantages of living in the neighbourhood?
   - What would you like to improve / change in your neighbourhood?
   - What do your friends think about your neighbourhood?
   - What do you consider to be your community? (Geographically)

5. Where do your family and friends live?
   - Describe their neighbourhoods.
   - Do you visit each other regularly? Who was the one you've last visited – and when?

6. Do you know people in your neighbourhood?
   - How many?
   - Do you know them by name?
   - From where do you know them?
   - What kind of relation do you have? Friends, neighbours, acquaintances …
   - How many neighbours do you visit at home?
   - Do they visit you?

7. How would you describe the surroundings of your neighbourhood?

   - Do you spend times in these or other neighbourhoods?
   - What do you do there - or why not?

8. Do you know people in the surrounding neighbourhoods?
   - How many?
   - Describe the area they live in.
   - From where do you know them?
   - What kind of relation do you have? Friends, neighbours, acquaintances …
   - Do you visit each other? Often?

9. Do you think there are any common interests between the residents of your neighbourhood and those of the surrounding ones?
   - What are they?
   - Are you interested in the problems of other neighbourhoods, which and why?
   - From where do you get your knowledge about other neighbourhoods?

10. How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood?
    - In the surrounding areas?
    - In the rest of the city?

II. Transport / Leisure time / Public Space

1. How do you move inside your neighbourhood?
   - And your family
   - And before living here?
   - And when you leave the neighbourhood?

2. Where do you work?
   - Where works your partner?
   - Where do your kids go to school?

3. What do you generally do in your leisure time?
   - Which locations do you go to?
   - With whom do you meet?
   - Was this different before you moved here?
   - How are the other people you meet there?
   - Are you a member in a club (sport or other)?

4. Where do you do your shopping?
   - Clothes, food, …
   - How are the people you meet/see there?

5. Do you use/know public spaces?
   - Which? What do you think of them?
   - When do you use them?
   - Why / why not?

III. Community Functions

1. Do you participate in any community function in and/or outside the neighbourhood (church, education, sport, cultural)?
   - What kind?
   - Since when and how often?
   - What kind of people do you meet there?
   - Before living here?

2. Do you participate in any social functions in your neighbourhood?
   - Which?
   - How often did you visit your clubhouse and other facilities of the gated community during the last two weeks?
   - Do you partcipate in any neighbourhood association?

3. Are you interested in social work / charity / community work?
   - Do you participate actively?
   - Why / why not?

4. Do you think your neighbourhood is privileged / disadvantaged compared with others in the municipality?
   - Considering schools, health services, shops, sport facilities, infrastructure …
   - What do you think the reasons are?

5. What do you think are the issues that are the responsibility of the municipality concerning problems in your neighbourhood?
   - Which should be solved privately?

6. Do you think wealthy people have enough social responsibility?
   - What do you think about financial redistribution?
   - What do you think about voluntary social engagement / work …

IV. Local Politics / Trust

1. What do you think are municipality wide common interests?
   - Are these issues important in your life?
   - Do you think they are important to others in your neighbourhood?
   - Do you engage in any of these issues?
   - Why / Why not?

2. What do you consider to be the major problems within your municipality?
   - Do you think these issues are also important for the neighbouring municipalities?

3. Are you interested in local politics?
   - Do you participate actively
   - Why / why not

4. Do you think politicians know about and are interested in the problems in your neighbourhood?
   - Do you think they are able to solve them?
   - What would you do first if you were a local politician?

5. Thinking about the last local elections:
   - Have things in your municipality changed since the last local elections?
   - Do you think problems can be solved at the local level?
   - Did you vote?
   - Which party did you vote for and why?

6. Do you know what the new security policies of your municipality are?
   - What do you think of them?
   - Have you noticed changes recently?

V. Political Process

1. If you are concerned about something in your neighbourhood, whom do you address?
   - Politicians / municipal civil servants / local administration / priest / other organisations / institutions?
   - Do you think there are enough possibilities to get in touch with local politicians and local administration?
   - Which other possibilities would you like to have?

2. Have problems in your neighbourhood in the past been resolved?
   - How?
   - Who dealt with them?
   - Have things changed afterwards?

3. Has there ever been a local initiative in your community?
   - Who initiated it?
   - What did it consider?
   - Did it receive political support?
   - Did you participate?

4. Have you ever been active in politics or socially?
   - If yes, in what and did you achieve something?
   - Do you think anything can be achieved with local initiatives?
   - Under what circumstances would you engage politically or socially?
   - How important do you think is the political engagement in your neighbourhood?

5. Who are the people who you think have political influence in your neighbourhood?
   - Do you think they can represent you?
   - Why do you think they have political influence?
   - Who do you think are the people who have political influence in your municipality?
   - Do you think they can represent the interests of your neighbourhood?

VI. Questionnaire

Gender:	M	F		
Age:	<20	20-45	45-60	>60
Family status:	single	married	married with children (Nº)	
Education:				
Profession:				

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Or do you have any question?

I want to thank you again for taking the time and I assure you once more that all information will remain anonymous, as explained in the beginning.

I only have one more question: Do you think any of your neighbours or other acquaintances living in San Isidro would also be disposed to give me an interview? I would contact them once you've asked them if you could give me their phone number.

I will leave you my address here in Buenos Aires, my phone number and e-mail address.

Make notes on observations and peculiarities of interview …

- *record what I see and hear outside the immediate context of the interview*
- *my thoughts about the dynamics of the encounter*
- *ideas about inclusion of new topics*
- *thoughts about analytical stage*

Make photographs if possible

Name:
Date:
Place:
Duration:

Thanks:
First of all I want to thank you for receiving me for this interview. I appreciate that you are taking your time for this.

Presentation:
I am a PhD student in Social policy at the London School of Economics in London (card). I'm German but my mother is from Argentina that is why I have been to Buenos Aires many times. I am an Architect with a specialisation in urbanism and I live in London.

The research project:
My PhD is in the field of urban sociology and the research focuses on the analysis of linkages between the urban form of residential neighbourhoods and the relationships of residents with the municipality, their social and political interests and values and their civic concerns. To explore these topics I have been interviewing residents of the following types of neighbourhoods in San Isidro: Closed neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods with security provision, deprived neighbourhoods and open middle class neighbourhoods.

Confidentiality:
The interview will mainly be about your perspective about these topics and about the role of your office. I will not publish your name in my thesis. I want to say that you will remain anonymous just as all the residents that have been interviewed will remain anonymous, as is common practice in this type of research project. What I will do is use the interview to compare the discourses and as supplementary information to the interviews with the residents.

Tape recorder:
Since Spanish is not my mother tongue it is difficult for me to take notes while we are talking, therefore I would like to ask you for your permission to record our conversation. I will only use this recording as an aide-memoire in order to remember the details of the interview.

SWICH ON RECORDER

To start with I would like to ask you if you could tell me what the main occupation of your office is, how you would define its role in San Isidro.

PROJECTS AND PROBLEMS

What are they major projects for the future in San Isidro?

Are there other things that should be done or that should be changed?
Why are they not done?

What are the major difficulties or problems in San Isidro?

What are the major problems of the municipality?

Are there any specific problems of single neighbourhoods in San Isidro?

What do you think what image do residents of San Isidro have of their municipality and of their local government?
Do you think these images are different comparing residents of different neighbourhoods?

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

What do you think are the major concerns of the residents of San Isidro?

What are the needs of the residents?

How do you know what the concerns and problems of residents are? Where do you get the information from?

What method do you use to gather information in order to know residents concerns and problems?
Participation?
Questionnaires?

What are the major complaints of the residents? Have they been resolved or are there plans to resolve them?

Which groups complain the most?

Are there any community initiatives? What do you know about them?
Are you in contact with the organisers of these initiatives?
Does your office support these initiatives?

SECURITY

Are there security problems which are specific to San Isidro? – Which are they?

What do you think how safe residents of San Isidro feel?
Do you thinkm this varies between different neighbourhoods?

Are there any new security policies?

What is your opinion about private security services?

What is the role of your office in regards to the provision of security in San Isidro?

How does your office deal with closed neighbourhoods in San Isidro?
Are there any conflicts? Or have there been any in the past?
What are the regulations concerning closed neighbourhoods?

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

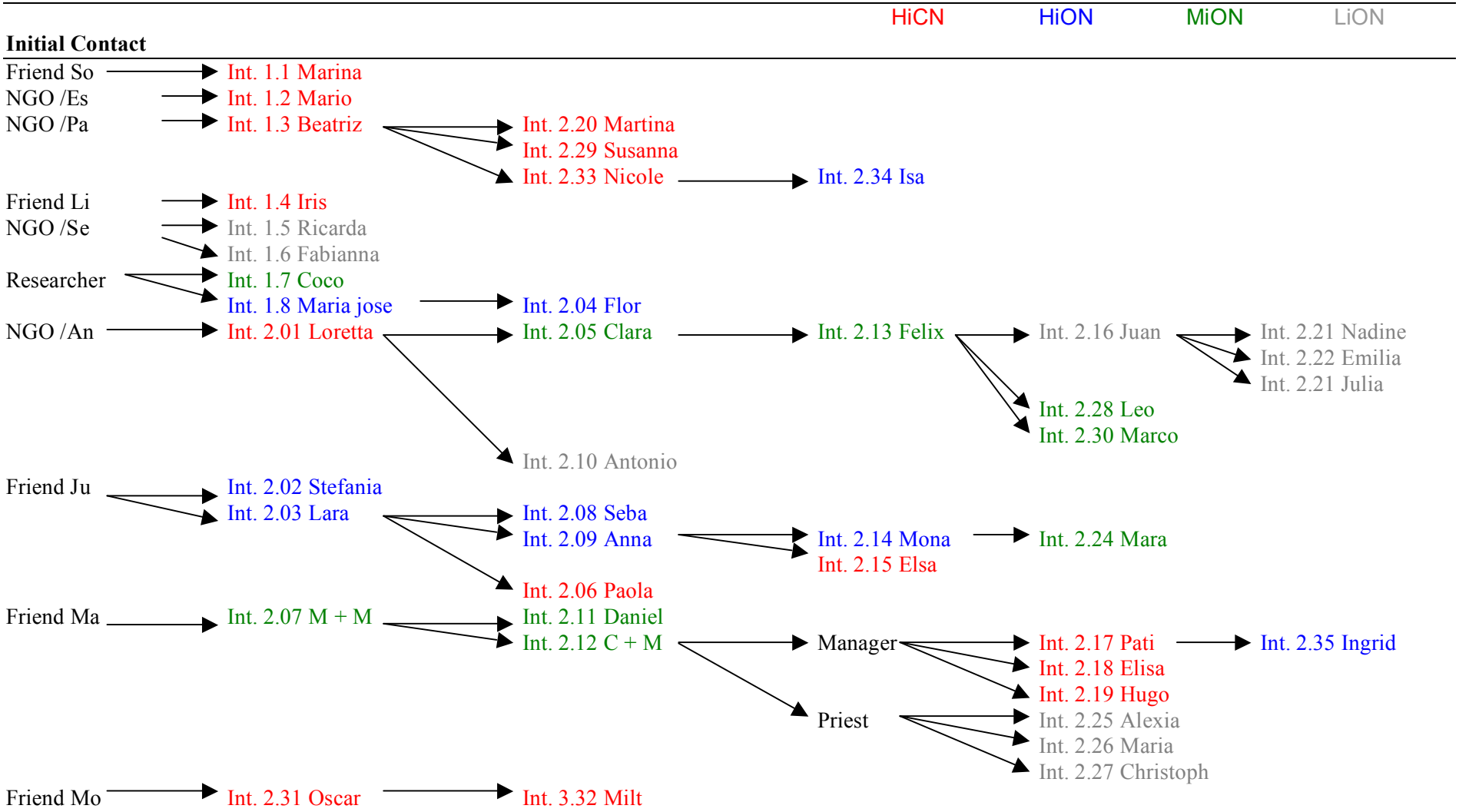
How is the relationship of your office with informal settlements?
Are there any conflicts? Or have there been any in the past?
What are the plans for the future?

What is the official policy towards La Cava?
What are the plans for the future of that area?

Do you feel that among the residents of San Isidro there exists much social responsibility and/or solidarity?

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Or do you have any question?

APPENDIX 6 – **CONTACT LINES**



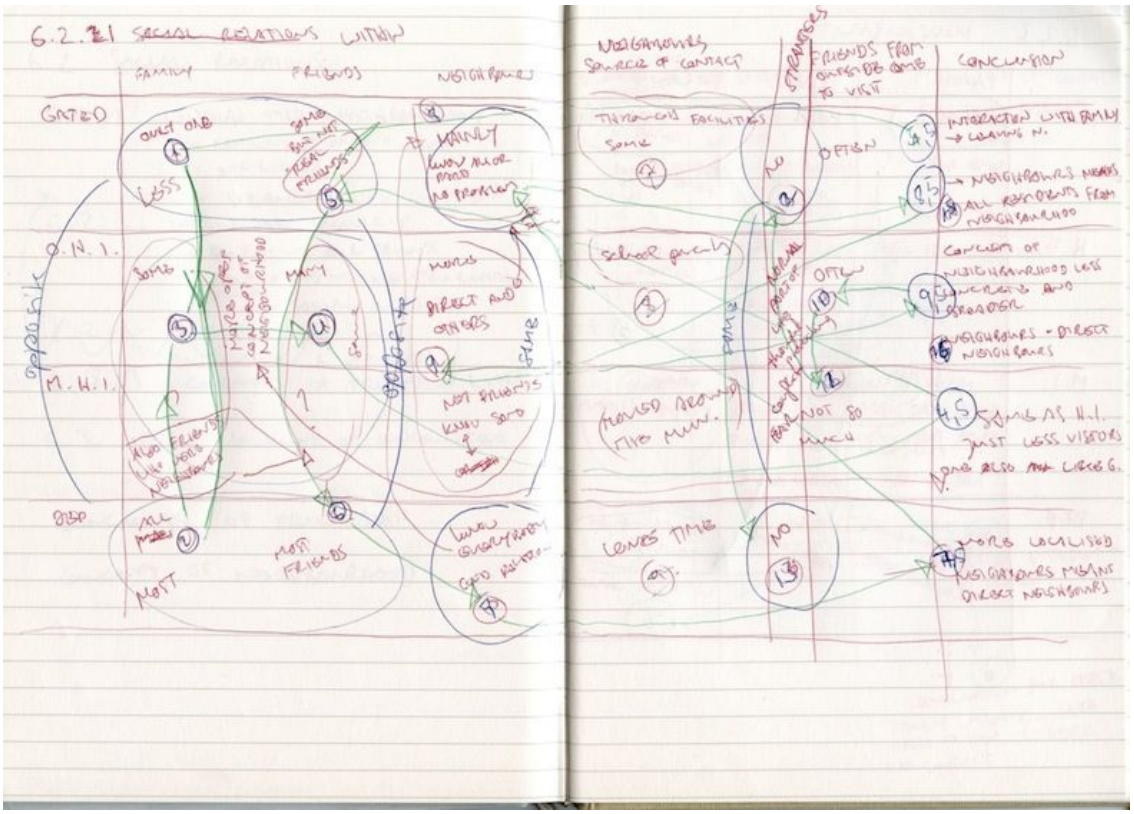


Figure 29 Social relations within the neighbourhood

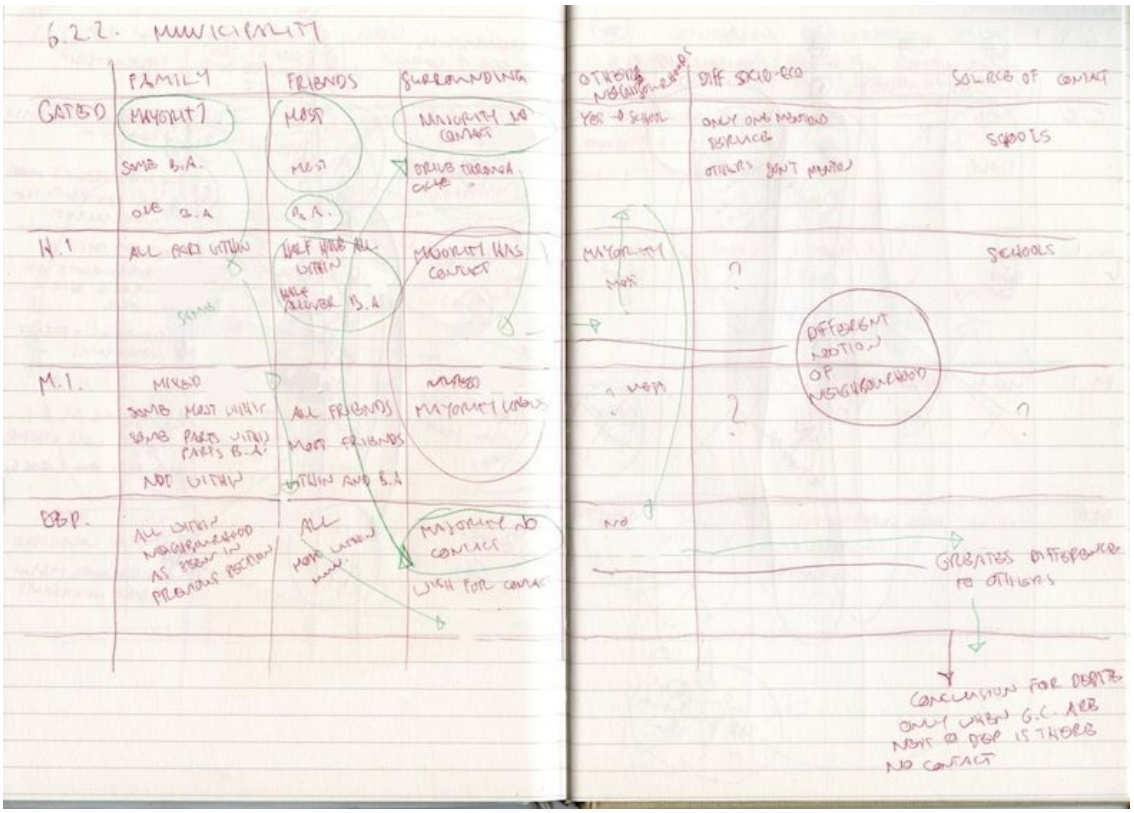


Figure 30 Social Relations within the Municipality

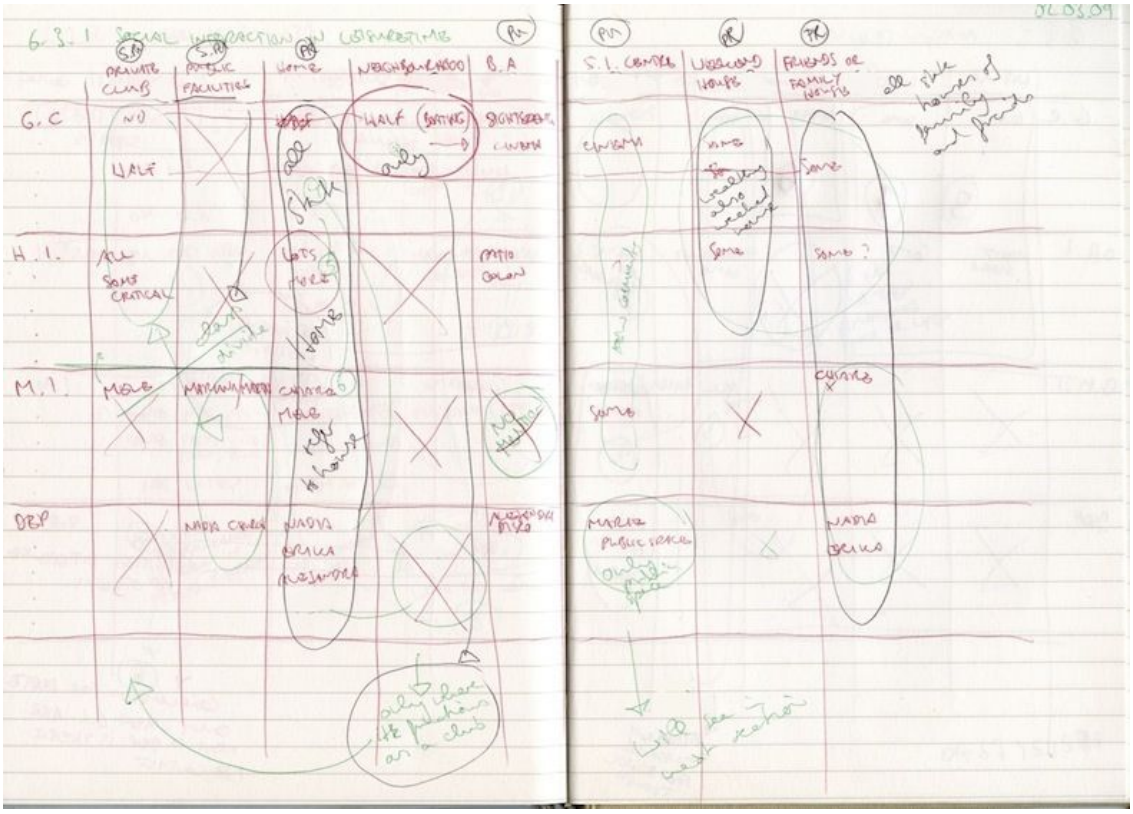


Figure 31 Social Interaction within Leisuretime

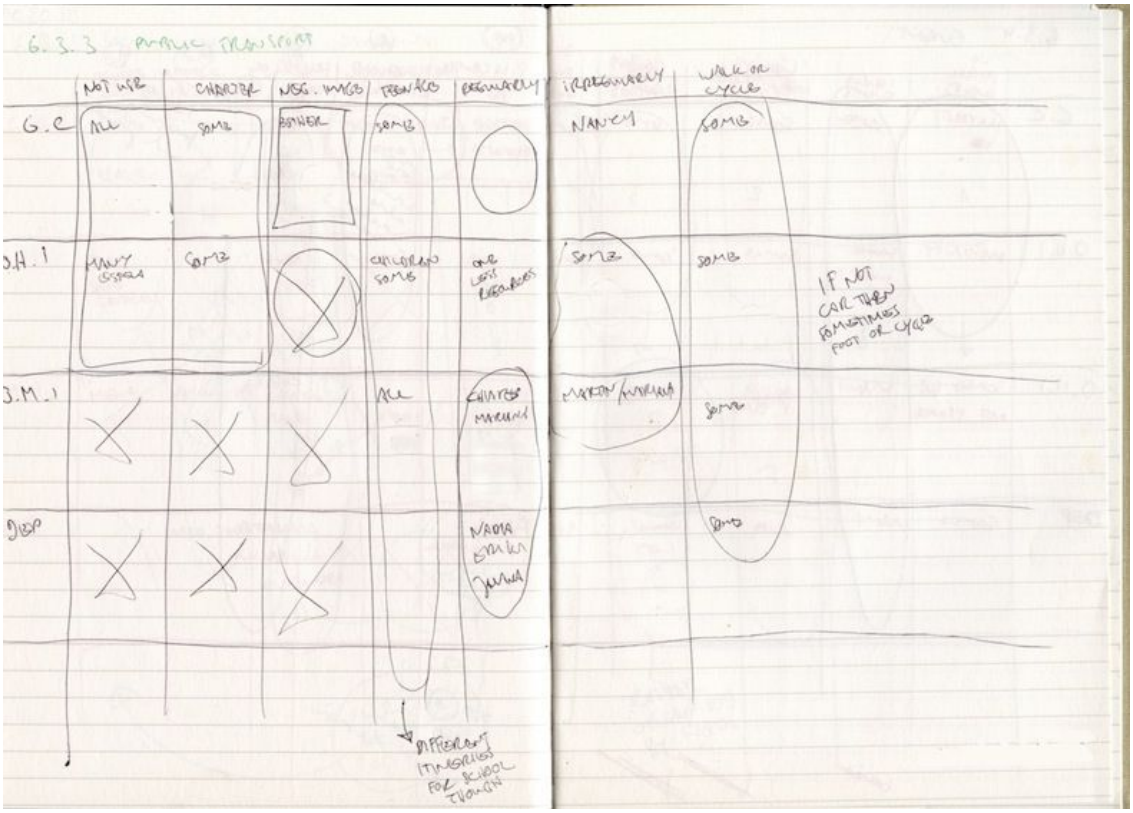


Figure 32 Public Transport

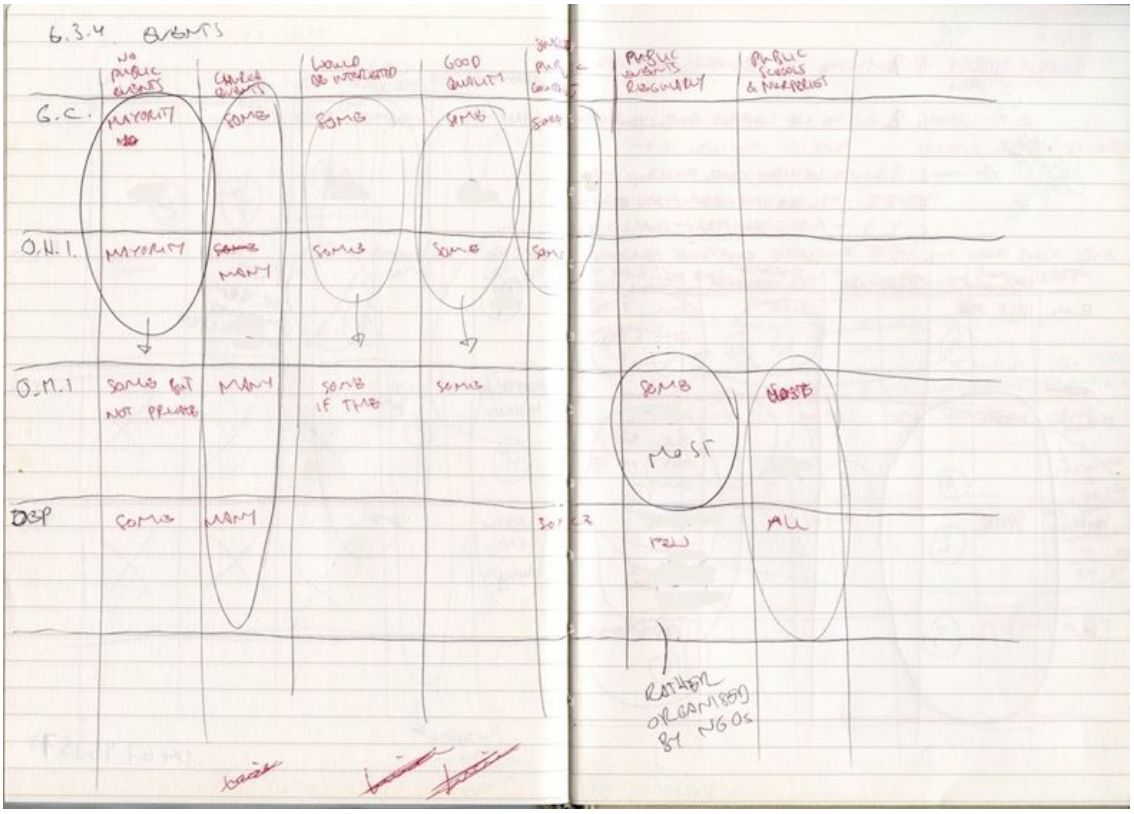


Figure 33 Participation in Public Events

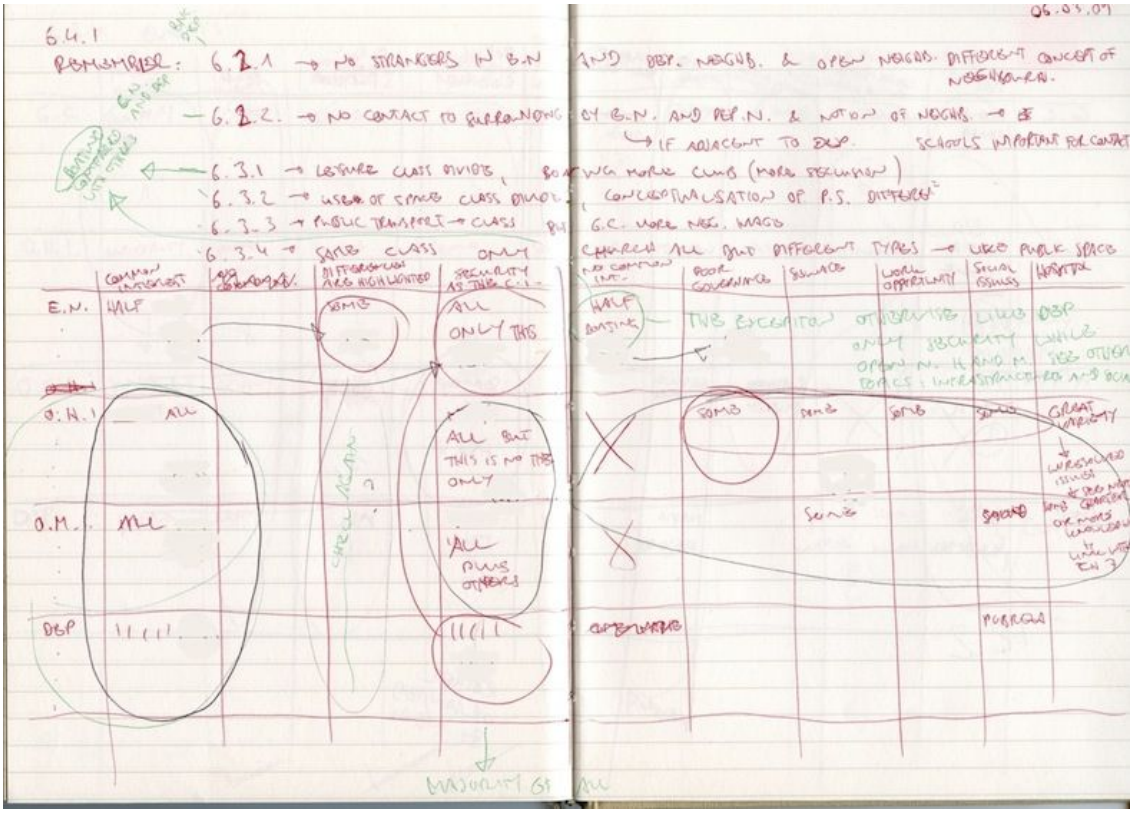


Figure 34 Common Interests

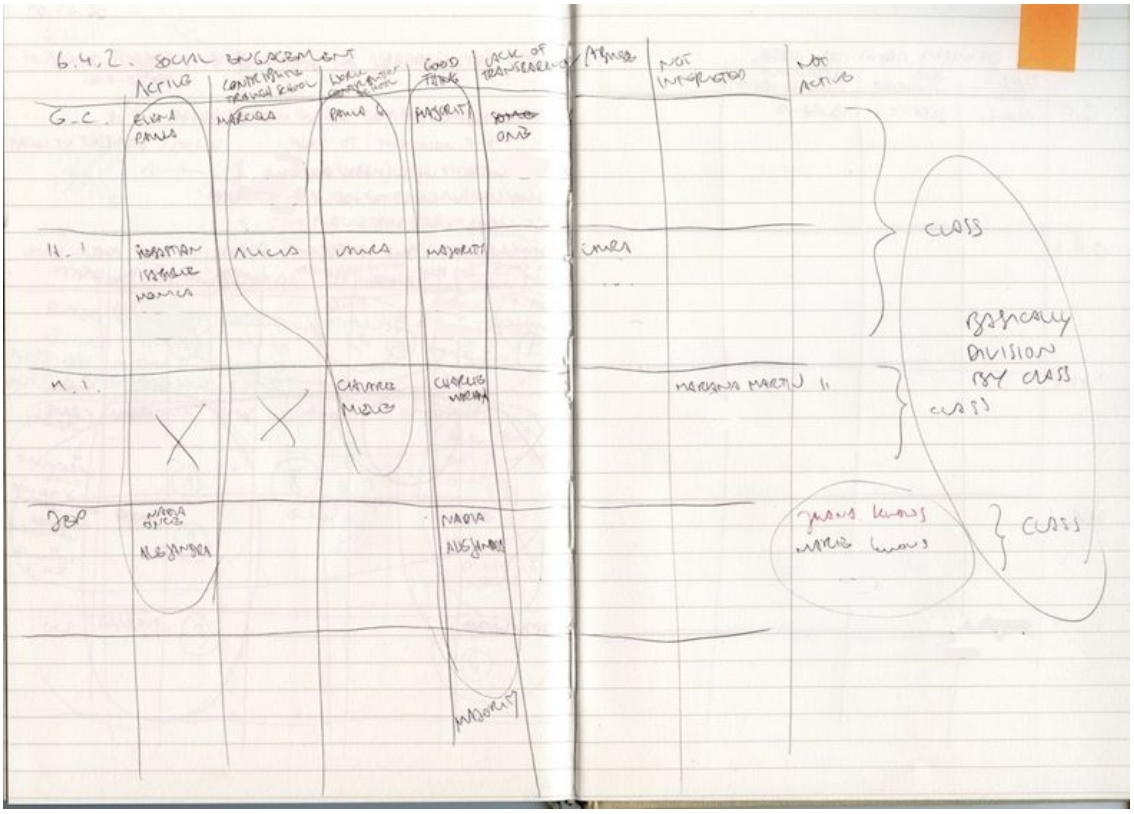


Figure 35 Social Engagement

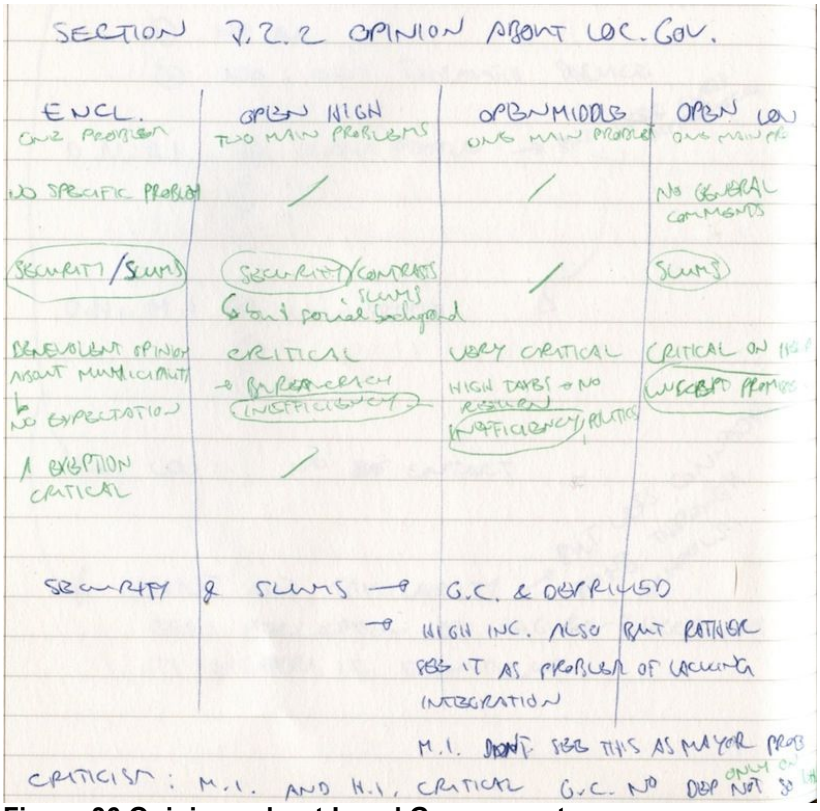


Figure 36 Opinions about Local Government

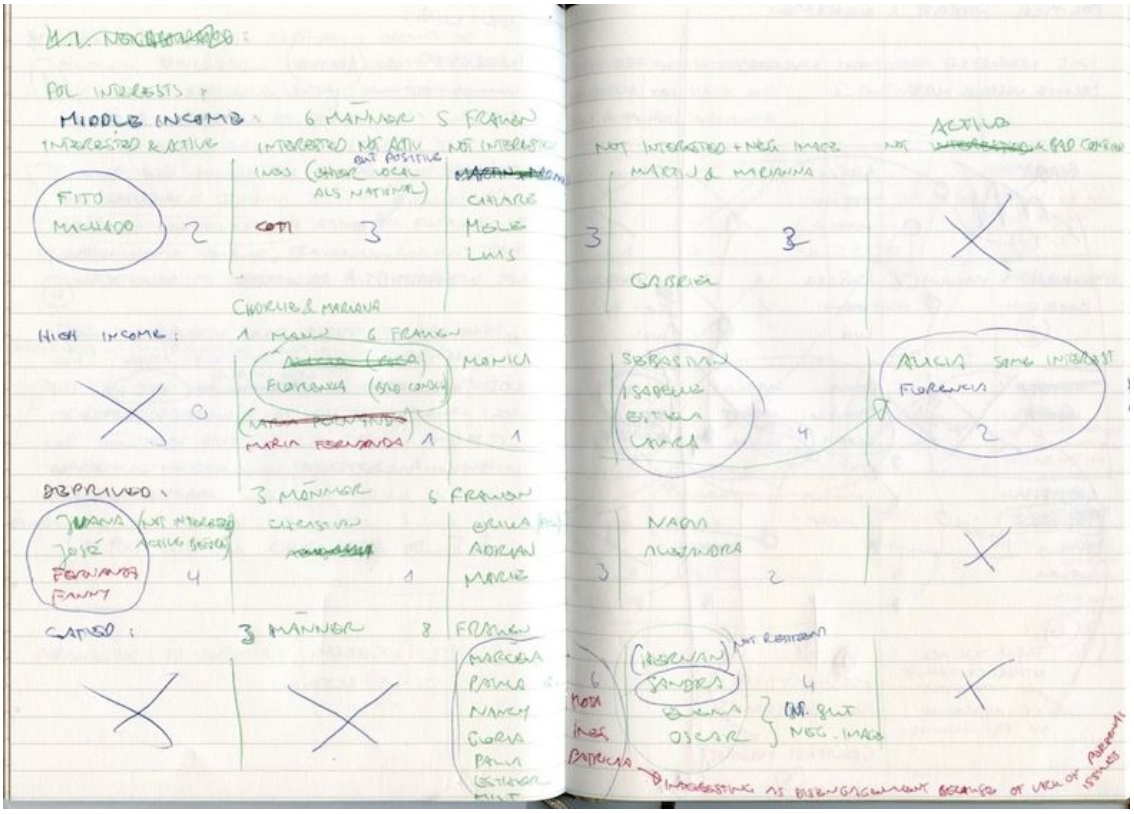


Figure 37 Interest in Local Politics

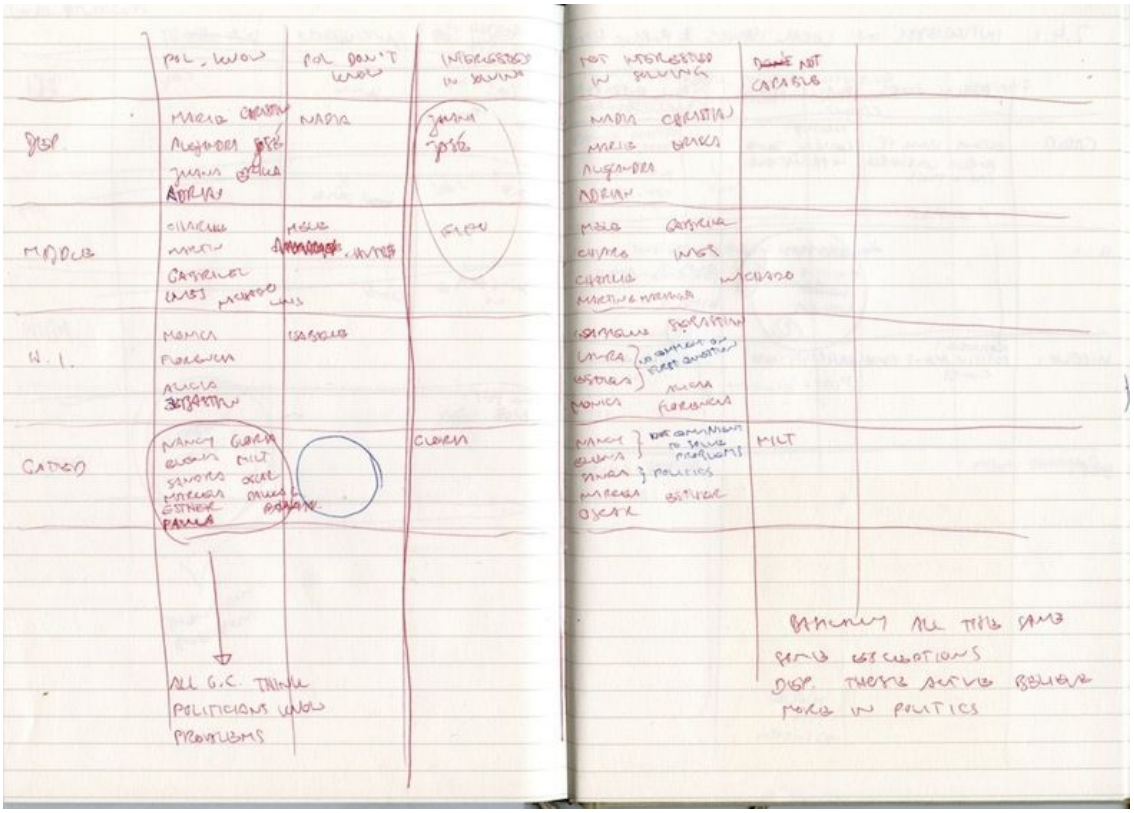


Figure 38 Opinion about Local Politicians

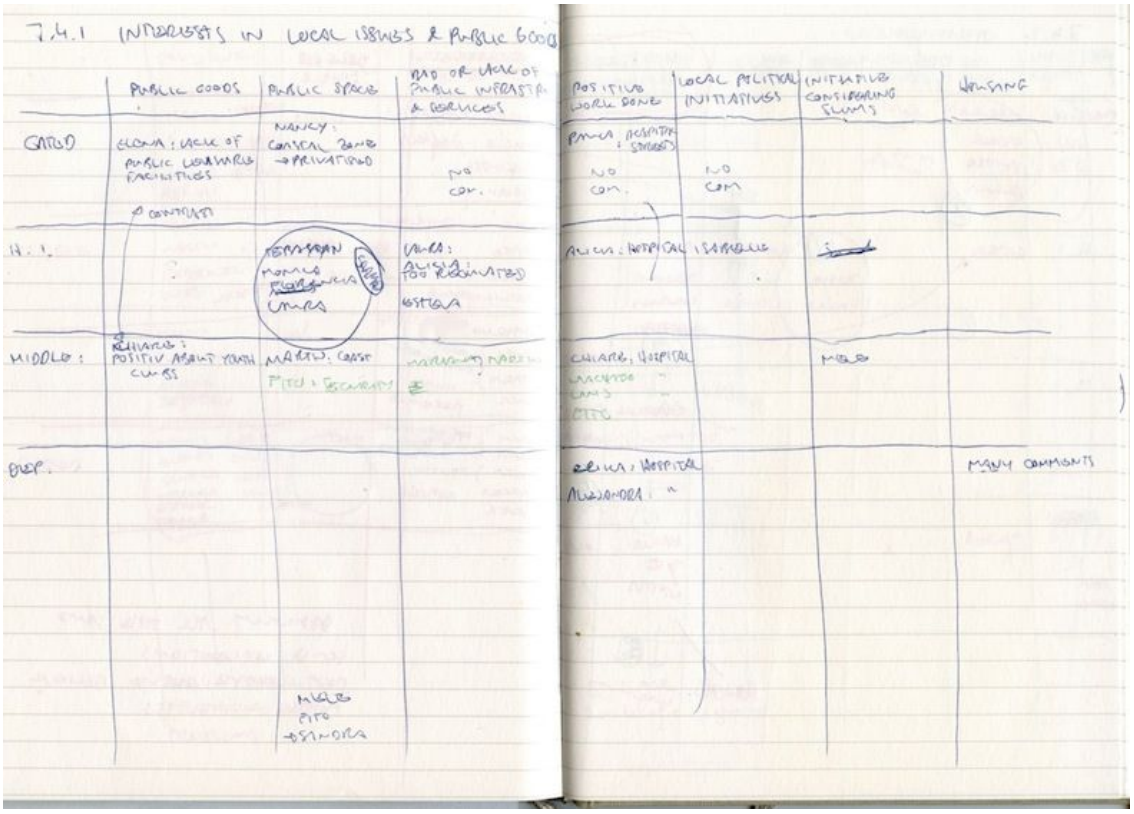


Figure 39 Interests in Public Goods

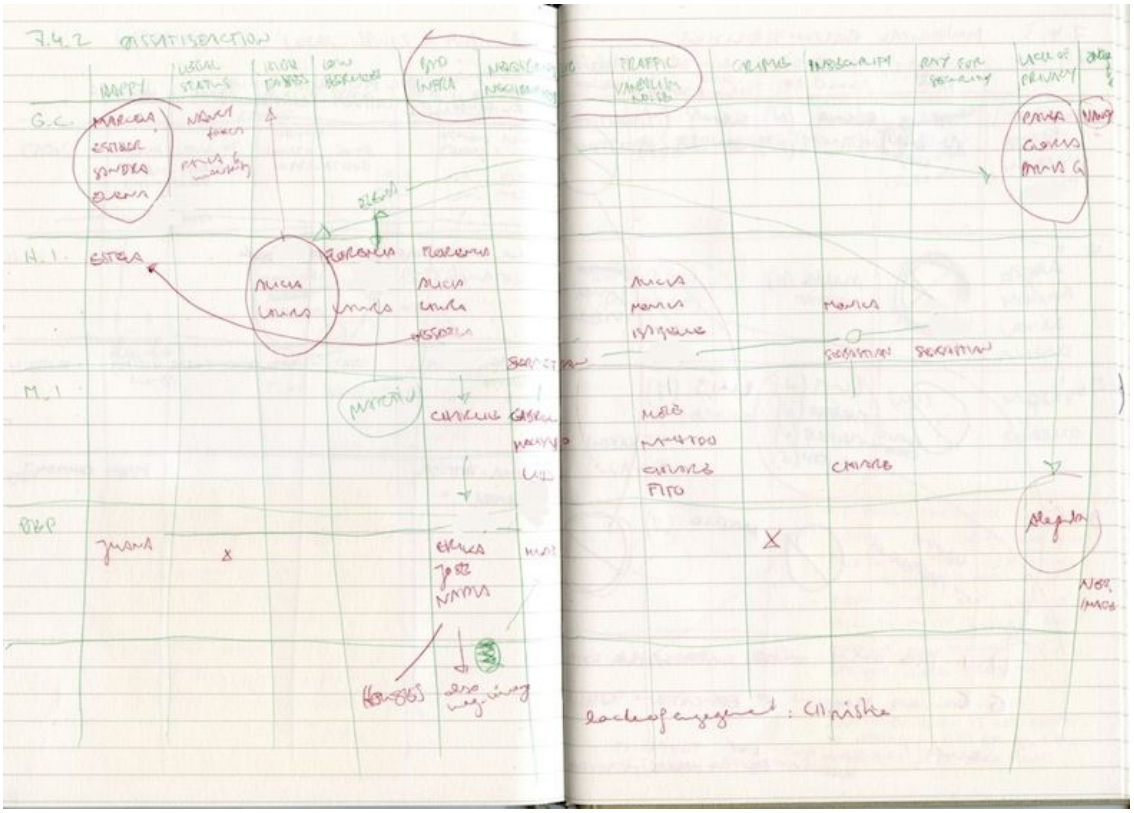


Figure 40 Dissatisfaction with own Neighbourhood

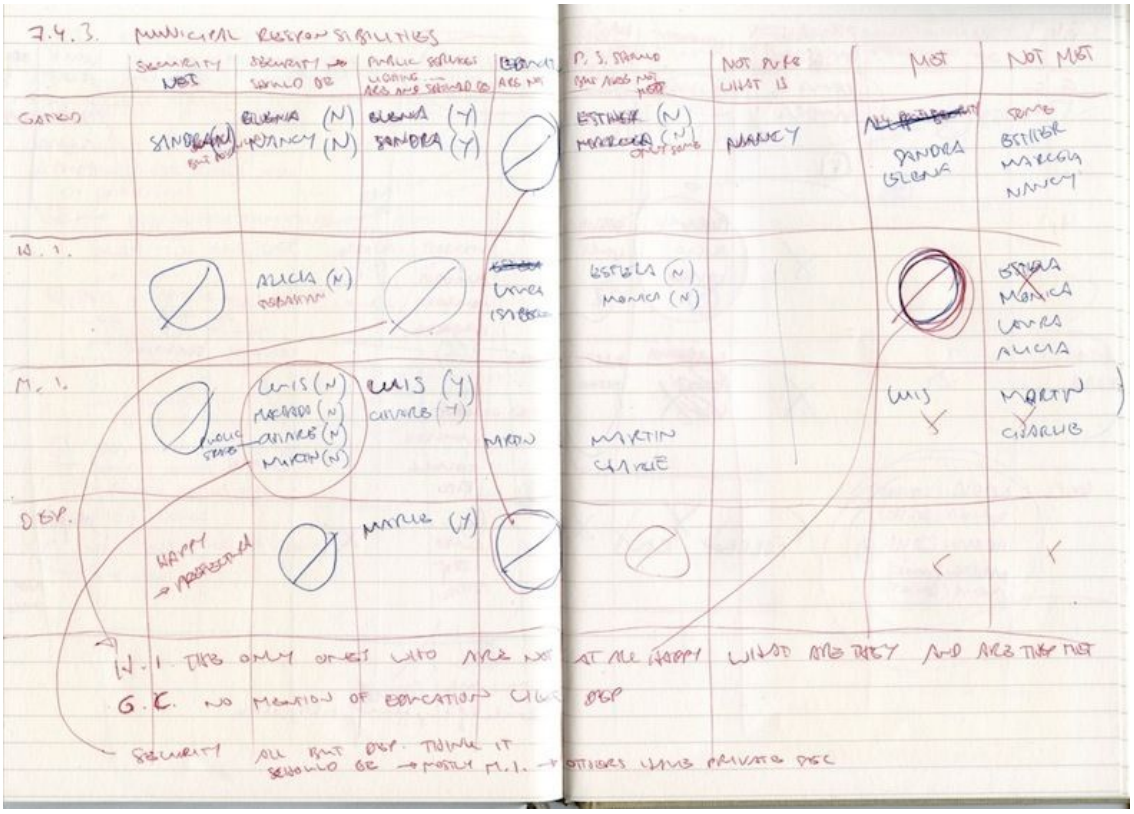


Figure 41 Municipal Responsibilities

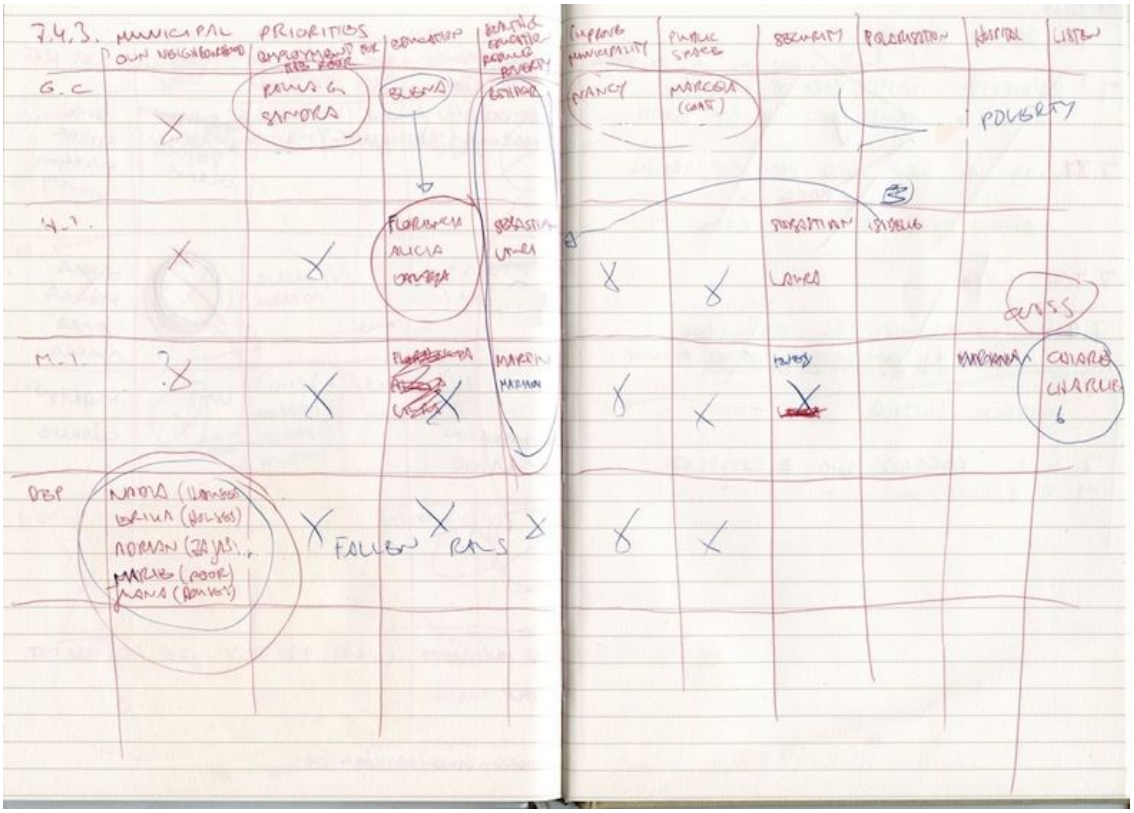


Figure 42 Municipal Priorities