



**Mehmet Yiğitcan UÇAR: *Twenty-First Century Gated Communities in Istanbul*, MA thesis, Prague – Budapest 2017, 104p.**

**Supervisor's review of the thesis**

The gated community is a relatively recent form of housing that originated in a particular context of the US society, but subsequently became a model to be followed in large cities elsewhere. Mehmet Yiğitcan Uçar decided to address in his thesis the experience with this type of housing in Istanbul, in which the gated communities arrived together with neoliberal fervour and attempts to rebrand the city as the “global” one.

As regards the structure, the thesis is nicely designed. The chapters logically proceed from general and theoretical parts on gated communities in general, to more specific context of the urban change in contemporary Istanbul and critical overview of gated communities in Istanbul, including some of the studies already done about them, to the robust case study on one particular gated community at the city's outskirts. Although some parts might have been more concise and others more developed, the narrative remains quite focused, internally coherent, and all chapters support each other. What makes Yiğitcan's thesis truly interesting is precisely the linking of his research on a particular gated community with the broader context of urban development of Istanbul.

Talking about the quality of the work, I cannot but praise the solid heuristics that forms the basis for the case study (surveys and interviews) as well as the use of extensive literature on urban theory and gated communities. The analysis is conducted carefully, although I have sometimes doubts about the accuracy of the questions and answers, or categorization, in the survey. A thorough consultation with a specialist in social science methodology would be beneficial. Also the interpretation sometimes reveals lack of experience, as many interesting points remained a bit concealed for Yiğitcan, but this is minor point. In general, the research does reveal many interesting insights about how the residents perceive the gated communities and their own personal experience of living in them, on the broader horizon of urban experience of Istanbul. It turns out that security (especially for children), avoidance of the urban chaos of downtown Istanbul, and a dream of the re-established sense of neighbourhood culture (*mahalle* culture) are the main drivers for moving to a gated community in the perspective of the interviewed residents. Equally interesting are the negative comments, such as the fear about the children's loss of connection with the real Turkish world. One may just wonder – and this may be my question for the defence – how different the results of a similar survey would be, if conducted in a different type of the gated community in the city (e.g. some gated towers in central business district).

Given the fact we intensively consulted the thesis in the stage of completion, I am of course aware of some of the weaknesses that had to be overcome. After all, Yiğitcan himself acknowledged his low experience with writing academic texts. But having said this, I can gladly confirm that Yiğitcan made enormous progress in all respects. Though some imperfections may have remained (in referencing, in sometimes quite complicated argumentation and unclear sentences), the final result is quite good.



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To conclude, the thesis clearly demonstrates that Yiğitcan has mastered the essentials of academic research design and writing, and I cannot but hope he will continue with further studies. Given the overall effort exerted for the thesis, the quality of the thesis, and last not least Yiğitcan's extremely responsible attitude, I gladly **recommend** the thesis for successful defence, with **grade 1** (excellent) in the Czech grading system and 5 in the Hungarian system.

Prague, 9th June 2017

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