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Gating Tegucigalpa, Honduras: The paradoxical effects of “Safer Barrios”

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the paradoxical political and socio-spatial dynamics created by “Safer Barrios,” a security program that redefines notions of citizenship, governance, participation, and space in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The rapid proliferation of street gates sanctioned by the state under this program is producing understudied effects both within and outside the gates throughout the city, a phenomenon that this study qualitatively analyzes. The findings reveal that these newly gated residential areas demand a more nuanced analysis than that which traditional gated communities have received in the past; this stems from their different constitution and consequences, particularly the program’s unique relationship to and sponsorship by the local government. The program paradoxically fosters a greater sense of community and safety for participants while negatively affecting mobility and sociability for the rest of city residents. The findings hold critical implications for city design, planning, and policymaking.

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