

UNVEILING EXISTING DYNAMICS IN BATNA'S GATED COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

UNVEILING EXISTING DYNAMICS IN BATNA'S GATED COMMUNITIES

GCs have become a global trend, emerging across many regions of the world. In Algeria, they first appeared in major cities such as Algiers and Annaba, mainly after the adoption of neoliberal policies and privatization in the 1980s. Years later, the trend extended to other cities, including Batna, where GCs began to emerge around 2010. This study focuses on this newly enclosed housing typology in Batna and aims to uncover its multiple dimensions as the first study to do this. It examines the structural and subjective drivers behind their emergence, the reasons for their design choices, and the ways these communities were advertised. It also explores the social composition of residents, their interior spatial organization, and the underlying logic, along with the perspectives of both users and non-users. The field research is based on five case studies in Batna, analysed through observations, photographs, and semi-structured interviews with urban officials, architects, private developers, residents, and non-residents; and secondary data including document analysis and online content. The findings show that the emergence of GCs in Batna were influenced through a mix of structural and subjective factors, including globalization via internet and media, neoliberal reforms such as privatization, housing regulations, state-housing, consumer culture, and security. Although marketed globally as exclusive housing options, the GCs of Batna rely on local reputation. The plans replicate the spatial logic and content of conventional state-housing. The study also reveals strong family and social ties within the communities, and conventional spatial arrangements.

ÖZET

BATNA'NIN KAPALI SİTELERİNDE VAROLAN YAŞAM DİNAMİKLERİNİ AÇIĞA ÇIKARMAK

Gated Communities (GC'ler) dünya genelinde birçok bölgede ortaya çıkan küresel bir eğilim haline gelmiştir. Cezayir'de ilk olarak 1980'lerde uygulamaya konan neoliberal politikalar ve özelleştirme süreci sonrasında, başta Cezayir ve Annaba gibi büyük şehirlerde görülmeye başlamıştır. Yıllar içinde bu eğilim, 2010 civarında GC'lerin ortaya çıkmaya başladığı Batna gibi diğer şehirlere de yayılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Batna'daki bu yeni kapalı konut tipolojisine odaklanmakta ve bu konuyu ele alan ilk araştırma olarak, çok boyutlu bir çözümleme sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. GC'lerin ortaya çıkışının yapısal ve öznel nedenlerini, tasarım tercihlerinin ardındaki motivasyonları ve bu konutların nasıl pazarlanıp tanıtıldığını incelemektedir. Ayrıca, bu topluluklardaki sakinlerin sosyal yapısını, iç mekân düzenlemelerini ve bu düzenlemelerin ardındaki mantığı, hem kullanıcıların hem de kullanıcı olmayanların bakış açılarıyla birlikte analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, Batna'da seçilen beş örnek olay üzerinden saha gözlemleri, fotoğraflar ve kent yetkilileri, mimarlar, özel geliştiriciler, sakinler ve dış kullanıcılarla yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. Ayrıca belge analizi ve çevrim içi içerikler gibi ikincil veriler de kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, Batna'daki GC'lerin ortaya çıkışının internet ve medya aracılığıyla küreselleşme, özelleştirme gibi neoliberal reformlar, konut düzenlemeleri, devlet konut politikaları, tüketim kültürü ve güvenlik gibi yapısal ve öznel faktörlerin bir kombinasyonu ile şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Her ne kadar GC'ler küresel ölçekte ayrıcalıklı konut tipleri olarak pazarlansa da, Batna'daki örnekler büyük ölçüde yerel itibar üzerinden varlık göstermektedir. Planlar, geleneksel devlet konutlarının mekânsal mantığını ve içeriğini yansıtır. Çalışma ayrıca, topluluklar arasındaki güçlü aile ve sosyal bağları ve geleneksel mekânsal düzenlemeleri de ortaya koyuyor.



To my father.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The process of globalization touches all cities, and involvement in that process is not a matter of being either at the top or the bottom of it, but rather of the nature and extent of influence of the process.¹

Cities have long been connected through various processes;² however, many scholars argue that globalization has now created a single, interconnected global system.³ Today, cities are increasingly shaped by global forces of production, finance, telecommunications, culture, and politics, and are becoming arenas where global and local dynamics merge to create new forms of place-making. Contemporary urban studies have highlighted the strategic role of globalization on cities, exploring how global processes transform urban spaces and how cities, in turn, adapt and rework these forces. While such dynamics have been extensively studied in Western contexts, they remain comparatively widely understudied in the Middle East and North Africa, leaving significant gaps in understanding their impact on urbanization in these regions.⁴

To a geographer, globalization involves the integration of transnational spaces within national boundaries. For a sociologist, it reflects the diversity and alignment of social preferences regarding lifestyle and values. For an economist, it signifies the rise of a global market, while for the capitalist; it represents economic development and opportunities for profit.⁵ In architecture, globalization manifests in various ways, one example of this is significant investment in large-scale construction projects, with leading European and American firms frequently securing contracts in regions such as Dubai, China,

¹ Mahmoud A. Haggag, "The Impact of Globalization on Urban Spaces in Arab Cities," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Globalisation and Construction*, (Bangkok: AIT Conference Centre, 2004), 36.

² Saskia Sassen, *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25.

³ Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 129.

⁴ Şerife Geniş, "Globalization of Cities: Towards Conceptualizing a New Politics of Place-Making in a Transnational Era," *University of Gaziantep Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2007): 60–61.

⁵ Muqtedar Khan, "Teaching Globalization," *Global Policy Forum*, accessed January 7, 2025, <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/globalization/defining-globalization/27666.html>.

and Southeast Asia. Consequently, architectural designs the likes of which were previously frequently seen in North America or Europe are now being constructed across the globe, including Latin America, Africa, and Asia.⁶

Another aspect of globalization is its influence on architectural ambitions, where politicians, business leaders, and other figures in local and regional growth initiatives pursue their personal and professional goals by investing in and promoting iconic projects that aim to elevate their cities' global status and foster positive economic change. For example, the Guggenheim Bilbao, which generated significant debate about the commodification, commercialization, and replicability of iconic projects, served as a key motivator for this ambition. Urban elites across five continents sought to replicate Bilbao's success by bringing a Frank Gehry designed museum to their own cities, as the Bilbao project was widely recognized as a transformative success that elevated the city to a prominent position in the global architectural landscape. This transformation was fueled not only by the building's iconic design but also by local, contextual, economic, and political factors, as demonstrated by similar Guggenheim projects in Berlin (1997-2012), Las Vegas (2001-2008), and Abu Dhabi.⁷

Globalization, encompassing various processes such as the spatial integration of economic activities, the flow of capital, migration, and advancements in information and communication technologies, significantly influenced and reshaped urban patterns in various cities around the globe. In the United Arab Emirates, for instance, urban landscapes dominated by skyscrapers, curtain walls, glass facades, highways, and tunnels have rapidly emerged, which now define the character of most cities in the Gulf region.⁸

Globalization has profoundly shaped global urban centers, linking them to broader economic and cultural networks. Cairo, for example, has long served as Egypt's political, financial, and administrative hub, hosting numerous multinational corporations and institutions. This role has increasingly tied the city to the global economy. To support its position, the development of upscale residential areas, advanced infrastructure, and en-

⁶ Leonid Lavrov and Sergey Semencov, "Globalization in Architecture: Three Examples from Saint Petersburg," *World Applied Sciences Journal* 23 (2013): 25–30.

⁷ Gerardo del Cerro Santamaría, *Urban Megaprojects: A Worldwide View* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 2013), 497, 499, 510, 515.

⁸ Haggag, "The Impact of Globalization on Urban Spaces in Arab Cities," 35-40.

hanced services was prioritized, further driving Cairo's expansion and reinforcing its leading status.⁹ The urban governance of Istanbul, the capital of 'Euro-Asia',¹⁰ has been deeply affected by globalization. The introduction of neoliberal economic policies and the consequent of privatization after the 1980s positioned Istanbul as a major manufacturing hub and an essential node in the global system. These economic changes have promoted the growth of local capital and unlocked new entrepreneurial possibilities.¹¹ To become a stronger world city, the planning system's principles and strategies have emphasized preserving and enhancing the city's existing multifunctional character, particularly by investments in infrastructure. These efforts have driven significant physical changes and contributed to shaping a modern and contemporary image for the city.¹²

The number of such studies on the impact of globalization on the leading cities of the Middle East is quite limited, where more field studies are required for a better understanding.¹³ In other words, research on contemporary urban developments within the context of globalization has primarily concentrated on a selected few cities in the Middle East and the Global North. As a result, scholars are encouraged to shift their focus to the vast number of other cities that are also undergoing globalization, often in significant ways.¹⁴

While global cities like Dubai and Istanbul have undergone rapid urban change due to globalization, its impact on countries like Algeria remains less explored. Although research on globalization is expanding within the humanities and social sciences, studies on architecture often overlook its connection to architectural development. This gap in research is particularly significant given the ongoing transformations in Algeria's urban and architectural landscapes over the last decades. It is crucial to evaluate the effects of globalization on urban development and architectural production, as these changes are

⁹ Antar A. Abou-Korin, "Urban Primacy in Egypt: From Colonization to Globalization," paper presented at the 8th International Architectural Conference: Architecture & Built Environment, Contemporary Issues, Assiut University, Egypt, April 2010, 12.

¹⁰ Tüzin Baycan-Levent, "Globalization and Development Strategies for Istanbul: Regional Policies and Great Urban Transformation Projects," paper presented at the 39th ISOCaRP Congress, Cairo, Egypt, 2003, 2.

¹¹ C. Nil Uzun, "Globalization and Urban Governance in Istanbul," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (March 2007): 128, 129, 133.

¹² For instance, for the aim to establish the city as an international hub of attraction, the "CONCEPT 2023" initiative encompasses various large-scale urban transformation projects. See: Baycan-Levent, "Globalization and Development Strategies for Istanbul: Regional Policies and Great Urban Transformation Projects," 14 -15.

¹³ Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb, "An Intervention," in *Arabs and Globalization*, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Intellectual Seminar, 1998, 446. (Title translated from Arabic by the author).

¹⁴ Steffen Wippel and Christian Steiner, "Urban Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Deconstructing Visions, Politics and Identities," *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* 12 (2019): 9.

increasingly shaping the built environment. In addition to this, understanding the extent to which global influences shape national architecture provides a deeper understanding of Algeria's evolving built environment.

In the early 1980s, the changes in global economy pushed Algeria to implement economic reforms and restructure its economy via policies of liberalization and privatization.¹⁵ Consequently, this liberalization encouraged the private sector and promoted fundamental changes in the built environment. The signs of this change were not widespread, but they were still evident in the architectural fabric of major cities in Algeria, such as Algiers and Oran, particularly in the housing sector.¹⁶ Private construction companies, with land provided by the state, began developing clusters of apartment blocks for upper-middle-income families, managing the construction from start to finish. However, while major cities such as Algiers, Constantine, and Oran saw a higher concentration of these projects, smaller cities experienced a significantly lower number.

By the time the 1990s, or the 'black decade,' as described by the French post-colonial thinker Joseph Forde arrived,¹⁷ Algeria found itself facing another wave of transformation, as rural exodus accelerated not only due to widespread uncertainty and insecurity but also as a result of the government's agricultural revolution projects and the establishment of large industrial zones around cities. These factors encouraged rural populations to migrate to urban areas in many Algerian cities, including Batna. The situation led to an imbalance between housing supply and demand, despite the government's efforts to provide several housing projects with the help of private actors.¹⁸

In 1999, Abdelaziz Bouteflika began his successive four terms as president, marking a notable period of change in the country. During his presidency, he implemented neoliberal policies that promoted privatization and liberalization in various sectors such

¹⁵ Hakim Meliani, Ahmed Aghrout, and Ammar Ammari, "Economic Reforms and Foreign Direct Investment in Algeria," in *Algeria in Transition: Reforms and Development Prospects*, ed. Ahmed Aghrout and Mounir Bougherira (1st ed.; London: Routledge, 2004), 92.

¹⁶ Hynda Boutabba, *Spatial Specificities and Social Logics of a New Type of Domestic Habitat in Eastern Hodna: The "Diar Charpent" Type* (PhD diss., Mohamed Khider University, Algeria, 2013), 5. (Title translated from French by the author).

¹⁷ Joseph Forde, "Rethinking Urgence: Algerian Francophone Literature after the 'Décennie Noire,'" *Francosphères* 5, no. 1 (2016): 45.

¹⁸ Nourredine Mammri, "'Self-Constructed' Housing in Batna: Integration Process 'Case of the Popular District Bouakal'" (PhD diss., Université Mentouri de Constantine, 2011), 29, 31. (Title translated from French by the author).

as transportation, telecommunications, banking, finance, and housing. New laws and regulations were introduced, accelerating the transformation of the built environment.¹⁹ These new regulations encouraged the construction sector and led to the emergence of more private real estate construction companies.²⁰

Thus, one of the largest cities in Algeria, entered a new phase of development, which, I argue, marking a turning point in the early 2000s. Having lived in Batna for over two decades, I have closely observed the transformations in the city's housing stock from the late 1990s to the present. Based on my personal observations and past interactions with individuals, I will also argue that Batna City, in recent decades, has faced fast urbanization, resulting in a contrast between old and new neighborhoods. What is also remarkable in this development is the emergence of new housing typologies, especially the gated communities (hereafter GCs) constructed in the form of suburban clusters and disconnected urban spots. It is impossible to overlook their continuous proliferation in several directions and locations throughout the city of Batna, which are at the core of this research.

Despite the clear emergence of this new housing phenomenon in Batna's urban landscape since 2010, architectural scholarship seems to have disregarded it, creating the key motivation for this study. Although earlier case studies on GCs in Algeria, conducted in the cities of Algiers and Annaba, provide valuable knowledge, they offer limited exploration of the main causes that led to the emergence and expansion of these communities in each city. These studies (Laâla Boulbir, 2005²¹; Zohra Hathout, 2009²²; Atika Benazzouz-Belhai and Nadia Djelal, 2018²³) primarily provide a brief descriptive analysis and establish a connection to the social aspect of these communities, but they stop

¹⁹ Zouhair Hambali, "The Role of the State under Globalization: A Case Study of Algeria" (PhD diss., Larbi Ben M'hidi University, 2011), 122, 135. (Title translated from Arabic by the author).

²⁰ Abdelkader Djeflat, "Liberalisation and Technological Change in Algeria: Assessment of the New Regulatory Framework," in *The Global Challenge of African Business and Economic Development in the New Millennium*, ed. A. Ogbuehi and G. Ogunmokun, *International Academy of African Business and Development Journal* (St Joseph University, Atlantic City, New Jersey, USA, 2000), 1-2-6.

²¹ Laâla Boulbir, "Emergence of Residential Enclosures in Algeria, 'The New Practices of Bourgeois Urbanity,'" *Acte de colloque*, Alger, 2005, 13, title translated from French by the author.

²² Zohra Hathout, "Closed Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a 'Liberal' Residential Product Threatening the City" (Magister dissertation, Badji Mokhtar Annaba University, Department of Architecture, 2009), title translated from French by the author.

²³ Atika Benazzouz-Belhai and Nadia Djelal, "Gated Communities in the Suburbs of Algiers, Products of Social Disparities and a Security Imperative," *CyberGeo* (2018), title translated from French by the author.

short of offering a thorough investigation of the factors driving their development. Additionally, they neglect the architectural dimension, that is, how these communities were spatially configured, and the design aspects that characterize their architecture. There remains a critical gap in understanding how new housing production and architectural design both influence and are influenced by different factors such as the interplay of global forces, local practices, and dynamics that shape these residential enclaves.

According to Saskia Sassen, 'gating' is a diverse and multi-dimensional phenomenon: "Once gating is conceived of as a variable, it can become a more complex and contradictory process, one that requires research, interpretation, and debate."²⁴ Its controversial meaning, emergence, and causes can be seen and investigated from different perspectives, necessitating a thorough examination to understand how it operates in various contexts. This study focuses on the driving forces that influenced the emergence and the proliferation of GCs in the city of Batna to understand the factors that have an effect on the city's new built environment. It also seeks to expose the socio-economic and political contexts that are connected to the development of these communities. Additionally, it explores the marketing methods employed to attract prospective clients and to understand how certain groups are specifically targeted by contractors. This study also provides an analysis of the selected GCs architecture, focusing on their spatial configuration and architectural language, to uncover the rationale behind design choices in relation to local and social context. The focus on spatial organization has been largely overlooked in existing research on GCs worldwide. This study aims to address this gap in the literature and investigate future studies that explore the domestic space of GCs in relation to local culture and the relation of the residents to the domestic space. Based on open ended interviews, the research aims to share the feedback and perspectives on GCs of the residents and non-residents in Batna. During field study I also consulted architects and academics specializing in housing in the area, aiming to enrich the analysis with diverse viewpoints and provide a broader understanding from professional and scholarly perspectives.

GCs are not merely architectural projects; they are spatial manifestations of intersecting global economic forces, social, and traditional norms. This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to interpret the causes of the emergence and the

²⁴ Saskia Sassen, "Foreword: Gating as a Variable," in *Beyond Gated Communities*, ed. Samer Bageen and Ola Uduku (New York: Routledge, 2015), XVIII.

existing dynamics of the GCs in Batna, integrating different frameworks with economic, architectural, and social perspectives. Globalization and neoliberalism provide a crucial context, highlighting how Algeria's post-1990s economic liberalization, privatization, and global interconnectedness have driven the rise of these exclusive contemporary housing enclaves. Bourdieu's theory of distinction provides a theoretical lens to interpret the design and appearance of these communities. Additionally, social segregation theory is useful to understand how these GCs contribute to reinforcing spatial and social fragmentation in the city between two groups of people "insiders" and "outsiders". The use of the terms "insiders" and "outsiders" in this dissertation is inspired by the German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel, who discussed how social perceptions shift depending on one's position within or outside a group. He notes that "*the outsider is unaligned, the insider more prejudiced.*" Simmel explains that outsiders are often seen as more neutral because they stand apart from group loyalties, while personal ties and internal bias may influence insiders. In this dissertation, "insiders" refer to residents living within GCs in Batna, while "outsiders" refer to those living outside them.²⁵

To thoroughly investigate the dynamics of GCs in Batna, this study employs a qualitative case study methodology, focusing on five case studies to understand the architectural and socio-economic factors shaping these communities. In terms of data collection, a combination of methods was employed, each chosen to address specific aims. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with local officials to gather information about the policies and urban laws shaping the rise of GCs, with private developers to understand their motive, marketing strategies, and operational dynamics, and with the architects of the case studies to understand the reasons behind their design choices. Interviews with residents provided data about their reasons for choosing to live in GCs, their inner spaces' modifications, and their future aspirations for these communities. Architects and academics in the field of housing were also consulted to

²⁵ The use of the terms "insiders" and "outsiders" in this dissertation is inspired by the German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel, who discussed how social perceptions shift depending on one's position within or outside a group. He notes that "*the outsider is unaligned, the insider more prejudiced.*" Simmel explains that outsiders are often seen as more neutral because they stand apart from group loyalties, while insiders may be influenced by personal ties and internal bias. He used this idea to show why some societies preferred relying on outsiders in important roles, believing they would act more fairly. In this dissertation, "insiders" refer to residents living within gated communities in Batna, while "outsiders" refer to those living outside them. In: Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, originally published in 1908, translated and edited by Anthony J. Blasi, Anton K. Jacobs, and Mathew Kanjirathinkal, Brill, 2009, p. 157.

capture diverse perspectives and voices on the architectural and social implications of GCs. Observations were carried out to study the physical and social dynamics within these communities and to analyze how the spaces are used and perceived. Official documents, including the Algerian Official Gazette and the architectural drawings of the case studies in the archives, were obtained from local government offices such as the Directorate of Urbanism and Construction, to get information on urban planning regulations, zoning laws, and architectural guidelines that have influenced directly or indirectly the development of GCs in Batna. I Photographed and mapped the architectural and spatial features of the GCs, to understand their geographical locations relative to the city center and architectural character. In addition, I collected architectural drawings from the developers, architects in charge and the Directorate of Urbanism and Construction when I needed to provide detailed information on each case study.

The selection of the five case studies in this research was guided by various considerations, including their status as nearly completed or already constructed GCs in Batna, the availability of accessible and feasible data, and their ability to reflect a broad spectrum of the phenomenon. Their diversity in location, size, and architectural typology provides a valuable opportunity to examine the reasons behind existing design and social variations. In addition, the case studies were built over a period spanning from 2010 to 2021, from the very first GC in the city to the most recent one, allowing for an analysis of evolving practices. Furthermore, different real estate companies developed these GCs, some based in Batna and others from outside, allowing a comparative understanding of whether the developer's origin and reputation influence local residents' trust and purchasing decisions.

This dissertation is organized into five thematically structured chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research by examining briefly how globalization and neoliberalism have influenced urban development, leading to the rise of GCs in Algeria. The chapter also identifies the research gap, particularly in Batna, where GCs have emerged and expanded but remain understudied, and outlines the study's objectives, theoretical framework, and methodology.

Chapter 2 explores the connection between globalization, neoliberalism, and the emergence of GCs as a global housing trend and establishes a theoretical foundation for understanding the broader forces shaping the emergence and expansion of GCs in the world. Built on the existing literature, it examines how globalization has accelerated the

exchange of ideas, capital, and architectural practices, reshaping urban landscapes worldwide. The chapter highlights the influence of global economic and technological transformations on the built environment, particularly through the expansion of transnational real estate markets, privatized urban developments, and the proliferation of architectural trends. It further investigates how neoliberal policies have influenced housing production, leading to new urban typologies, including GCs. The chapter presents my interpretation of the evolution of GCs across different contexts, discussing their historical precedents and socio-economic drivers based on the ongoing scholarly debate surrounding GCs.

Chapter 03 traces the evolution of housing in Algeria after independence, with a particular focus on the transition from mass housing provision to collaboration with private sector actors. The chapter examines the subsequent shift toward privatization and discusses the increasing influence of private real estate companies in transforming the housing sector. It also investigates the impact of Algeria's urban regulations and legislative framework on housing forms, analyzing how these policies have shaped architectural and urban planning practices. The chapter briefly traces the emergence of gated housing forms in Algeria, beginning with the historical fortified communities known as Ksars, which developed between the 10th and 14th centuries. Then, the trend of self-enclosed housing emerged, as physical barriers increasingly enclosed both individual homes and mass-residential areas. This trend became more common during the Black Decade, mainly because of security concerns. The chapter concludes with the emergence of contemporary "New" GCs, highlighting the factors that have driven their emergence and development.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of the existing five case studies in Batna. It begins by examining the key factors that led to their emergence and proliferation in the city. The analysis starts with the marketing and promotional strategies used to attract clients, shedding light on how these communities are presented to potential buyers and how their architectural features, spatial layouts, and plans address residents' needs and preferences. Based on field observations and the interviews, the chapter presents my understanding of how some of the residents perceive their housing environment and why they are content or dissatisfied with certain aspects such as security, amenities, size, communal use, etc. It includes examples where the residents modified interior spaces to suit their expectations and how they justify these modifications according to the way they define

their lifestyles. The chapter concludes with a discussion that includes the views of architects and academics in the area on GCs. Chapter 5 reflects on the broader implications of the findings outlining directions for future research.

During the fieldwork, several practical challenges arose regarding data collection. For instance, during the semi-structured interviews with local officials and private developers, their concerns about confidentiality and their limited availability led to delays in reaching documents and related information. Some officials were reluctant to discuss certain sensitive topics, such as urban policies and laws that may have influenced the development of GCs in Batna. Additionally, some private developers were hesitant to share detailed information about their projects and operational dynamics. The project owners also occasionally restricted access to the architectural plans of certain case studies, so I sought alternative sources, such as the archive of the Directorate of Urbanism and Construction of Batna. Another significant obstacle was gaining access to the GCs; due to the strict security measures: It was difficult to enter, photograph, and observe the physical and social dynamics within these areas. Additionally, as I was a stranger to the residents, it was challenging to gain their trust, with many residents reluctant to share their experiences due to uncertainty about my intentions. A particularly difficult aspect of the research was accessing residents' homes to examine interior modifications and changes. This limitation did not allow me to gather as much detailed data on interior modifications as I expected. Furthermore, conducting site visits in some of the uninhabited GCs presented significant challenges because some of these communities were built in areas on the outskirts of the city, and some were empty or only partially occupied. This made site visits dangerous, as the lack of amenities and security in these areas posed risks to personal safety.

CHAPTER 2

GLOBALIZATION, NEOLIBERALISM, AND GATED COMMUNITIES

This chapter examines how the global processes of globalization and neoliberalism have influenced housing development and contributed to the spread of GCs in many parts of the world. It aims to understand how these interconnected forces have changed the built environment and redefined urban areas. It begins by understanding globalization's role in transforming architectural practices and urban forms through the global circulation of ideas, capital, and technologies. It then examines how neoliberalism has reshaped urban structure and planning, focusing on the shift toward privatized and market-oriented housing models. Finally, the chapter situates GCs within this broader context, tracing their historical evolution and global diffusion, and analysing the several forces behind their rise. This chapter sets the theoretical foundation necessary to contextualize the emergence of GCs in Algeria, which is explored in detail in the later chapter.

2.1. Globalization and the Changing Dynamics of the Built Environment

Over the centuries, cities have been at the crossroads of major, often worldwide, processes. What is different today is the intensity, complexity and global span of these networks, the extent to which significant portions of economies are now dematerialized and digitalized and hence the extent to which they can travel at great speeds through some of these networks, and the numbers of cities that are part of cross-border networks operating on vast geographic scales. What is different today also, is the elaboration of cross-border regulatory regimes and the extent to which national states have worked to produce the legal instruments necessary to accommodate the global economic system.²⁶

The word "globalization" is a relatively new term, which, despite occasional use before, was not widely recognized as an important academic concept until the early to

²⁶ Saskia Sassen, "Globalization and Cities: Locating Cities on Global Circuits," *Environment & Urbanization* 14, no. 1 (2002): 30.

mid-1980s. However, its significance grew rapidly in the late 1980s, extending across various aspects of life worldwide. Today, while its meaning remains somewhat fluid depending on the context, globalization has become an integral part of global discourse.²⁷ From a Marxist perspective, globalization is primarily understood as the expansion of the capitalist system on a global scale, a process that dates back to the 16th century when European traders established long-term economic ties with Asia, Africa, and the Americas.²⁸ In a broader historical analysis, Hopkins and his colleagues propose that globalization has evolved through distinct historical phases. They classify these as archaic globalization (before 1600), proto-globalization (emerging in the 18th century), modern globalization (developing in the 19th century), and postcolonial globalization (beginning around 1950 or 1970).²⁹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, professor of global studies and sociology, describes globalization as a long-term historical process that includes ancient migrations, long-distance trade between different cultures, and the spread of major religions.³⁰

Economist Dieter Ernst highlights that borders that once seemed impenetrable have now become more permeable, allowing for unprecedented economic and knowledge exchanges on a global scale.³¹ This transformation is at the core of globalization, which nowadays, is associated with political, technological, and economic advancements that have brought the world closer and strengthened its interconnectedness. This has increased geographical awareness of a shift toward a borderless world, where distances have shortened, societies have become more integrated, and the idea of isolation has gradually disappeared.³² As a result, globalization is also about the growing interconnection of people and cultures across long distances. People today are more connected than ever, whether through shared experiences, economic interdependence, or the rapid exchange of ideas. This process also involves the rise of international organizations and the development of

²⁷ Roland Robertson, "Globalization as a Problem," in *The Globalization Reader*, ed. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 86.

²⁸ Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, eds., *The Globalization Reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 53.

²⁹ A. G. Hopkins, *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002), quoted in Anthony D. King, "Interrogating Global Culture(s)," in *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 28.

³⁰ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), quoted in Michael Guggenheim and Ola Söderström, eds., *Re-shaping Cities: How Global Mobility Transforms Architecture and Urban Form* (London: Routledge, 2009), 29.

³¹ Dieter Ernst, "The New Mobility of Knowledge: Digital Information Systems and Global Flagship Networks," in *Digital Formations: IT and New Architectures in the Global Realm*, ed. Robert Latham and Saskia Sassen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 89.

³² Mohamed Gharbi, "Challenges of Globalization and Its Effects on the Arab World," *North African Economics Journal*, no. 6 (2009): 21. (Title translated from Arabic into English by the author).

a global culture, both of which have been accelerated by major advances in communication and transportation in recent decades.³³

As this global culture spreads, traditional structures gradually recede, making way for new social and cultural dynamics.³⁴ Anthony King states that the process of transplanting ideas, products, and practices from one part of the world to another inevitably involves ‘cultural translation,’ a key aspect of cultural globalization. In this process, words, ideas, and material artefacts are reinterpreted, adapted for new functions, and infused with different meanings. In many cases, they become integrated into existing cultural forms or ideas, resulting in a blend of hybridization and indigenization.³⁵ Confirming Giddens’s earlier work on modernity, the effects of globalization do not always follow a single pattern or move in the same direction; instead, they often create different changes,³⁶ thus, globalization does not necessarily homogenize all cultures or remove cultural identities. Instead, it actually helps spread and promote different cultures on a larger scale.³⁷ Similarly, Arjun Appadurai, cultural anthropologist specializing in globalization, argues that globalization does not necessarily make all cultures the same or always lead to the adoption of ‘American culture’, instead, societies adopt and reshape modern influences of globalization in their own unique ways, incorporating them into their traditions and local values.³⁸ This raises important questions about how different cultures around the world respond to global forces and trends, and how these dynamics bear upon architecture.

2.2. The Digital Age and the Global Flow of Architectural trends

Modern media serve as key drivers of globalization, connecting people across the world. For instance, for a long time now, movies have been distributed globally, shaping

³³ Lechner and Boli, "The Globalization Reader," 2.

³⁴ Anthony D. King, *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 97, quoting Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (London: Profile Books, 2002).

³⁵ Ibid., 199, 201.

³⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 64.

³⁷ Theodore C. Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global," in Lechner and Boli, *The Globalization Reader*, 119.

³⁸ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 9, 10, 17.

a shared leisure culture. Since the 1960s, satellite transmission has strengthened this connection by allowing audiences to watch the same events in real time. However, it was in the 1970s and 1980s that the globalization of electronic media grew significantly, driven by large media companies expanding through mergers and acquisitions. The launch of the World Wide Web in 1991 further expanded these links, making content easily accessible and enabling people to communicate in entirely new ways, increasing both global connectivity and awareness.³⁹

The continuation of technological advancements has significantly expanded the potential for global economic activity, allowing companies to coordinate production worldwide through advanced communication tools and flexible production methods.⁴⁰ At the core of this transformation, the internet has become the foundation of globalization's infrastructure, fostering a sense of a connected global community while enabling instant financial transactions across borders. This digital network has also optimized containerization, revolutionizing international shipping with purpose-built mega-ships, automated ports, and highly efficient truck and rail transport systems, ultimately making global trade faster and more cost-effective than ever before.⁴¹

The cluster of technological developments has also globalized the nature of architectural production, particularly through the internationalization of images, trade, information, and technology. This process has accelerated and enabled faster exchanges of architectural ideas. Additionally, the spread of design expertise worldwide and the increasing number of international competitions have further reinforced the global interconnectedness of architectural practice.⁴²

Friedmann and Sassen argue that globalization has led to the emergence of world or global cities, which function as urban centres that serve as key hubs of the global economy. These cities attract major corporate headquarters, sustain powerful financial and business service sectors, and play a central role in the international division of labour,

³⁹ Lechner and Boli, "The Globalization Reader," 362-363.

⁴⁰ Ngaire Woods, "Order, Globalization, and Inequality in World Politics," in *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, 2nd ed., ed. David Held and Anthony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 465.

⁴¹ Francis D. K. Ching, Mark M. Jarzombek, and Vikramaditya Prakash, *A Global History of Architecture*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017), 787.

⁴² King, "Spaces of Global Cultures," 41.

further reinforcing their dominance in the global economic system.⁴³ Nevertheless, Sassen states that despite the positive impact of new digital technologies, they also contribute to inequalities between cities by reinforcing the dominance of major urban centres, where capital primarily flows. Rather than dispersing economic activity, this dynamic exacerbates global economic inequalities.⁴⁴ This concentration of wealth and resources has not only deepened global economic inequalities but has also redefined the urban landscape, giving rise to a new type of urban hierarchy.⁴⁵

As these global cities consolidate their economic influence, they are also profoundly shaped by today's visual media and image production, which influence the proliferation of globally circulated building types, most notably high-rise office towers. These towers have become some of the most recognizable symbols of globalization, representing uniformity, standardization, and corporate capitalism. Over the past two decades, technological advancements and the expansion of multinational company networks have accelerated the spread of these commercial high-rises, making them essential for cities seeking global recognition and attracting international investment.⁴⁶ A similar phenomenon can be observed in the rise of skyscrapers in certain Gulf cities, which are often perceived as emerging from empty desert landscapes. Since the mid-20th century, these cities have played a significant role in global capitalism, urban planning, and architectural development.⁴⁷

⁴³ Chris Hamnett, "The Changing Social Structure of Global Cities: Professionalisation, Proletarianisation or Polarisation," *Urban Studies* 57, no. 1 (2020): 1054.

⁴⁴ Sassen, "Globalization and Cities," 19–20.

⁴⁵ Hamnett, "The Changing Social Structure of Global Cities: Professionalisation, Proletarianisation or Polarisation," 1054.

⁴⁶ Guggenheim and Söderström, eds., *Re-shaping Cities: How Global Mobility Transforms Architecture and Urban Form*, 63–64.

⁴⁷ Alex Boodrookas and Arang Keshavarzian, "Giving the Transnational a History: Gulf Cities across Time and Space," in *The New Arab Urban: Gulf Cities of Wealth, Ambition, and Distress*, ed. Harvey Molotch and Davide Ponzini (New York: NYU Press, 2020), 22.

Promoted through mass media, these spaces have become transnational, resembling globally branded shopping malls, theme parks, waterfront developments, and transport hubs that could exist almost anywhere in the world.⁴⁸ This phenomenon extends beyond specific regions and reshapes urban landscapes worldwide. For example, over the past two to three decades, globalization and economic reforms have significantly transformed African cities like Nairobi, Accra, Johannesburg, and Luanda. National capitals, in particular, have seen the rise of high-rise buildings designed by international architectural firms and developed by global real estate companies, often described as 'African urban fantasies' with their glass towers and ultra-modern designs. Alongside these changes, cities have also witnessed the emergence of American-style shopping malls, upscale GCs inspired by Western lifestyles, new financial and commercial districts, large-scale urban infrastructure projects, and planned smart and eco-cities such as Eko Atlantic City.⁴⁹

Within this evolving global hierarchy, the commodification of urban space is not a new phenomenon; however, it has become more pronounced with the rise of capitalist globalization since the 1950s, leading to significant shifts in architectural practice.⁵⁰ In this context, Leslie Sklair highlights another global trend in architecture that has emerged alongside the expansion of capitalism and consumer culture: iconic architecture. More specifically, he argues that as globalization advances, the production and representation of iconic architecture have become increasingly corporate, whereas state or religious authorities once primarily shaped them.⁵¹ As a result, Sklair argues that in the global era, iconic architecture seeks to transform nearly all public spaces into consumer spaces, extending beyond shopping malls to include cultural sites such as museums and sports complexes. Ultimately, this shift plays a crucial role in reshaping cities, particularly those undergoing rapid globalization.⁵² Consumer culture, which is deeply intertwined with this global trend, aims to turn everything into a product that can be bought and sold. In architecture, making a building iconic adds special value, increasing its commercial appeal

⁴⁸ Leslie Sklair, "Iconic Architecture and the Culture-Ideology of Consumerism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 5 (2010): 139.

⁴⁹ Elmond Bandaiko, Godwin Arku, and Hanson Nyantakyi-Frimpong, "A Systematic Review of Gated Communities and the Challenge of Urban Transformation in African Cities," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 37, no. 1 (2021): 8.

⁵⁰ Leslie Sklair, "Iconic Architecture and Capitalist Globalization," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 10, no. 1 (2006): 21–47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 21, 22.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 135, 138.

and financial worth.⁵³ This is especially evident in spaces of consumption, designed to encourage spending opportunities.⁵⁴

While globalization facilitates the spread of similar architectural styles, practices, and ideas worldwide, its impact remains diverse and varied, shaped by local circumstances and contexts. This diversity is evident in the architectural transformations driven by globalization, which Ching, Jarzombek, and Prakash identify through seven key trends that demonstrate the variety of architectural responses to globalization.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 147.

⁵⁵ The first of these trends highlights the influence of large international architecture and real estate firms, which have played a significant role in shaping cities globally. Firms such as Kohn Pedersen Fox, Callison, Helmut Obata Kassabaum, Gensler, and Nikken Sekkei have designed large-scale urban projects, including skyscrapers, shopping malls, airports, and other major developments across different parts of the world. The second trend focuses on 'starchitects,' renowned architects who create iconic and high-profile buildings worldwide through distinctive architectural imagery. Architects such as Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, and Santiago Calatrava have gained global fame by designing landmark structures that are frequently used to promote cities in tourism brochures, much like the Sydney Opera House, Guggenheim Bilbao, and Qatar's new museums, testifying to the global commodification of architecture. Among them, Rem Koolhaas stands out as one of the few 'starchitects' with a clear theoretical and arguably critical perspective on globalization. In his book *S, M, L, XL*, he argues that contemporary cities have become increasingly anonymous and standardized. The third trend focuses on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which gained prominence after the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. These organizations operate globally and play a major role in development efforts, addressing housing shortages, responding to disasters, and providing essential services such as education, particularly in underprivileged communities and areas where government efforts are limited. For example, after the 2000 earthquake in India, Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan, a coalition of forty NGOs, collaborated to build 20,000 earthquake-resistant homes using techniques that empowered local communities. Architecture for Humanity, another organization, provides free design services to develop essential infrastructure such as schools and clinics in disadvantaged areas. The fourth trend at the global level focuses on small local architecture firms that adopt global design movements or styles, particularly modern architecture. These firms create designs based on modernist principles, incorporating considerations of climate, site, and materials. For example, the Split House near Beijing by Atelier Feichang Jianzhu and the F-2 House in Mexico City by Adir, Broid, and Rojkind exemplify this approach. The fifth trend is an architectural movement that emerged in the 1960s, characterized by the use of creative structures and unconventional or recycled materials to create affordable and locally adapted architecture. Examples include a house in Massachusetts made entirely from newspapers, including its furniture, a house in Nevada built with automobile tires, and squatter settlements in Mexico that reuse discarded building materials. Some notable firms associated with this trend include Atelier Bow-Wow (Tokyo), Anupama Kundoo (India), and Santa Caterina Market (Barcelona). The sixth global trend focuses on sustainable and eco-friendly design as a response to the environmental impact of construction. Many notable architects, such as Thomas Herzog, William McDonough, and Foster & Partners, have led the shift toward sustainable architectural solutions worldwide. They specialize in green housing, solar homes, eco-villages, and corporate sustainability projects. Major firms now prioritize energy-efficient and low-waste construction methods. The seventh trend is the global movement to preserve architectural heritage, led by organizations such as UNESCO and DOCOMOMO. The protection of land, villages, and historical sites has expanded significantly since UNESCO established the World Heritage List, which now safeguards over 800 sites across 134 countries. In: Ching, Jarzombek, and Prakash, *"A Global History of Architecture,"* 788, 798.

2.3. Neoliberalism and the Reshaping of Urban Spaces

The process by which capitalism expands across the globe as powerful economic actors seek profit in global markets and impose their rules everywhere, a process often labelled “neoliberalism”.⁵⁶

In the 1980s, liberalism experienced a revival, bringing a renewed focus on free markets, reduced government intervention, and free movement of finance, thus acquiring the prefix “neo-”. However, according to Cerny et. al., in the early 1990s, it evolved into a more hegemonic system, influencing economies and politics in deeper and more widespread ways.⁵⁷ Today, for a large portion of the world’s societies, neoliberalism has become a norm of life.⁵⁸ As an economic idiom, neoliberalism calls for the liberalization and deregulation of economic transactions, not only within national borders but also, and more importantly, across these borders.⁵⁹ Over the last decades, the way countries manage their economies has changed significantly. Through privatization and deregulation, governments have reduced their control over businesses, eased restrictions on economic activities, opened their markets to foreign companies, and encouraged local businesses to compete globally. As a result, national economies have become more interconnected and increasingly influenced by global economic forces rather than being strictly controlled by governments.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Lechner and Boli, *The Globalization Reader*, 5.

⁵⁷ Philip G. Cerny, Georg Menz, and Susanne Soederberg, “Different Roads to Globalization: Neoliberalism, the Competition State, and Politics in a More Open World,” in *Internalizing Globalization: The Rise of Neoliberalism and the Decline of National Varieties of Capitalism*, ed. Susanne Soederberg, Georg Menz, and Philip G. Cerny (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 8.

⁵⁸ Ivonne Santoyo Orozco, “The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance,” *The Journal of Architecture* (2017): 03.

⁵⁹ Bob Jessop, “Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective,” in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, ed. Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 454.

⁶⁰ Sassen, “Globalization and Cities: Locating Cities on Global Circuits,” 13.

In his work on the impact of neoliberalism on architecture, Douglas Spencer summarizes the three core principles of neoliberalism as follows: First, the economic market is better equipped than the state to regulate and organize society. Second, all individuals should have equal access to the market, fostering competition among them. Third, the state should play a limited role, intervening only to ensure the necessary conditions for the market to function effectively.⁶¹ From another perspective, Cerny, Menz, and Soederberg identify four core dimensions of neoliberalism. First, it emphasizes the reduction of barriers to trade and capital flows, facilitating greater global economic integration. Second, it promotes financial reforms, including the independence of central banks from political control. Third, it involves a significant transformation in the way the state intervenes in the domestic economy, shifting from direct control to regulatory oversight. Finally, it prioritizes the role of the private sector, advocating for the reliance on private funding to fulfil public functions.⁶²

However, historian and theorist Ivonne Santoyo Orozco argues that the ‘freedom’ neoliberalism offers is a double-edged sword, as its ideology ultimately serves to secure both the individual and the market for its own projects and benefits.⁶³ The latter, within the framework of neoliberalism, is driven by the power of competition, which, according to Harvey, leads to the search for new products, new production methods, and innovative organizational forms.⁶⁴ In this regard, British politician Simon Clarke criticizes neoliberalism by highlighting the unequal distribution of property, arguing that it isolates individuals while granting property owners disproportionate power, allowing them to profit at the expense of others.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Spencer Douglas, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, 1st ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 02.

⁶² Cerny, Menz, and Soederberg, "Different Roads to Globalization: Neoliberalism, the Competition State, and Politics in a More Open World," 14-18.

⁶³ Orozco, "The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance," 1-2.

⁶⁴ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 68-69.

⁶⁵ Simon Clarke, Alfredo Saad-Filho, and Deborah Johnston, *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 52.

Consequently, in the realm of urban studies and planning, many writers argue that neoliberal economic policies have influenced built environment practices and city regulations by shaping new urban typologies.⁶⁶ In other words, neoliberal urbanism, which has developed alongside neoliberal economic restructuring, has expanded market influence in housing and real estate, privatized urban and social services, and strengthened the role of elites in shaping city landscapes.⁶⁷ Therefore, neoliberal projects are being implemented in cities at various levels, including local, national, and global, affecting urban planning, housing, and public services on different scales.⁶⁸ On this point, Orozco notes that while Spencer and others examine many aspects of neoliberal architecture, one area remains unexplored: how neoliberalism operates and inhabits spaces beyond high-profile architecture, and what other forms of architecture contribute to its promotion.⁶⁹ Therefore, examining the effects of neoliberalism should encompass all aspects of the built environment, including large-scale projects, commercial complexes, housing projects, and even smaller urban projects. This is also how my interest in the GCs of Batna was triggered.

2.4. Gated Communities in a Global Context: Origins and Growth

Throughout history, buildings and neighbourhoods have often been designed to reflect and reinforce class distinctions.⁷⁰ From ancient times through the Middle Ages, cities were often enclosed by walls as a means of protection against conflicts. By the 18th century, fortified enclaves began to appear as exclusive residential retreats for the wealthy elite.⁷¹ In more recent times, the proliferation of gated and isolated residential communities worldwide has raised questions about the persistence of these class-based divisions.⁷²

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Yarina, "How Architecture Became Capitalism's Handmaiden: Architecture as Alibi for The High Line's Neoliberal Space of Capital Accumulation," *Architecture and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2017): 243, citing Andrew E. G. Jonas and David Wilson, *The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives, Two Decades Later* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999).

⁶⁷ Geniş, "Producing Elite Localities: The Rise of Gated Communities in Istanbul," 773.

⁶⁸ Jessop, "Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective," 452.

⁶⁹ Orozco, "The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance," 3.

⁷⁰ Toba Khalifi, "'Madinaty' as an Example: Why Do Egyptians Resort to Living in Gated Communities?" *BBC Arabic*, <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/trending-52535631> (2020), accessed April 10, 2024. (Title translated from Arabic by the author).

⁷¹ Jill L. Grant, *Challenging the Public Realm: Gated Communities in History* (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2008), 1.

⁷² Khalifi, "'Madinaty' as an Example: Why Do Egyptians Resort to Living in Gated Communities?" *BBC Arabic*.

These communities primarily emerged in response to security concerns, as ensuring personal safety has long been a central focus in housing development.⁷³

There are many ways one can describe and name “gated communities”, such as ‘enclosed neighbourhoods’, ‘city of walls’ and ‘gated enclaves’ among others.⁷⁴ However, the urban sociologist Rowland Atkinson and Housing Law scholar Sarah Blandy, suggest a general definition, which states that GCs are walled or fenced by a boundary with guarded or restricted public access.⁷⁵ These communities can take the form of high-rise buildings, detached houses, or housing units, and offer a range of amenities. They are constructed within cities or in suburban areas. GCs primarily target individuals from the upper and upper middle-classes.⁷⁶

GCs have existed for centuries, in one form or another.⁷⁷ For instance, colonial powers have created fortified settlements to assert control and provide protection throughout history. Two thousand years ago, the Romans built walled towns across the empire in regions such as Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Similarly, in colonial North America, the French and British established enclosed settlements, including Quebec City in 1608, New Orleans in 1718, and Halifax in 1749.⁷⁸ However, contemporary gated enclaves are of a largely different nature.

In early 1980s, governments with different political stripes started to change policies by liberalize and deregulate market regulations, and focusing on ‘individual rights’ and ‘freedoms’. These changes, known as neoliberal policies, led to a shift in the role of the state, giving more space for private businesses and solutions to take over. During this time, governments either allowed or supported the creation of GCs as a way to lower

⁷³ Vania Ceccato, *The Urban Fabric of Crime and Fear*, cited in Zurinah Tahir and Jalaluddin Abdul Malek, "Elements of Security for a Gated and Guarded Community in the Context of Smart Living," *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 12, no. 3 (2017): 2.

⁷⁴ Rana Tawfiq Almatarneh and Yasser Mohamed Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 28 (2013): 506.

⁷⁵ Rowland Atkinson and Sarah Blandy "International Perspectives on the New Enclavism and the Rise of Gated Communities," *Housing Studies* 20, no. 2 (2005), as cited in Almatarneh and Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," 506.

⁷⁶ B. Tanulku, "Production and Reproduction of Space and Culture in the Virtual Realm: Gated Communities as the Imaginary, Intermediary, and Real Spaces," in *Gated Communities and the Digital Polis: Rethinking Subjectivity, Reality, Exclusion, and Cooperation in an Urban Future*, ed. K. Kim and H. Chung (Singapore: Springer, 2023), 87-88.

⁷⁷ Sarah Blandy, "Gated Communities in England: Historical Perspectives and Current Developments," *GeoJournal* 66, no. 1 (2006): 15.

⁷⁸ Grant, *Challenging the Public Realm: Gated Communities in History*, 4.

public costs, promote social status, and keep social order. As governments sought to reduce public expenditures and adapt to market demands, private and GCs began to appear in countries like Canada, the UK, France, the US, Australia, and New Zealand.⁷⁹ London inspired New York and Paris with these private gated housing estates.⁸⁰ In America, wealthy individuals established exclusive communities such as Tuxedo Park in New York and the private streets of St. Louis. Their primary aim was to distance themselves from the challenges of rapidly growing cities with diverse demographics. GCs were initially intended for retirees and the extremely wealthy. However, this trend began to shift in the 1990s, as more of these communities emerged to accommodate middle- and upper-middle-class residents. As a result, GCs have since expanded significantly and can now be found in almost every major city across the US.⁸¹

Chinese sociologist Beibei Tang argues that in China the structure of GCs differs based on their purpose and target residents. Some are intended as exclusive luxury enclaves, while others are designed for the growing middle class seeking a safe and stable environment.⁸² Elaborating on this classification, Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder identify three main types of GCs: lifestyle communities (figure 01), prestige communities (figure 02), and security-zone communities (figure 03). Lifestyle communities focus on leisure and shared activities, prestige communities represent wealth and social status, and security-zone communities develop in response to fears of crime and urban disorder.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁰ Stéphane Degoutin, *Voluntary Prisoners of the American Dream* (La Villette: Paris, 2006), 78. (Title translated from French by the author).

⁸¹ Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 3-4-6.

⁸² Beibei Tang, *China's Housing Middle Class: Changing Urban Life in Gated Communities* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 38.

⁸³ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 38–39.



Figure 1. A lifestyle GC, Sun Lakes, Banning, California
(Source: Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America*, 40)

In their work on Latin America, geographers Axel Borsdorf and Rodrigo Hidalgo Dattwyler, identify three typologies; ‘Urban GCs’, typically consist of attached houses, towers, or skyscrapers, offering limited facilities for middle or lower-middle-class families in intermediate locations or for upper-middle to upper-class families in central areas. ‘Suburban GCs’ cater to the middle and upper classes, featuring large detached houses with shared sports facilities, and are located on the outskirts of cities. Some suburban GCs, which lack common amenities, may also be designed for lower-middle-income groups. Lastly, ‘Megaproject GCs’ are expanding rapidly due to the influence of the international real estate market, with transnational developers playing a key role in their development.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Axel Borsdorf and Rodrigo Hidalgo Dattwyler, “From Polarization to Fragmentation: Recent Changes in Latin American Urbanization,” in *Decentralized Development in Latin America: Experiences in Local Governance*, ed. Paul Lindert and Otto Verkoren (London: Springer / Humana Press, 2010), 27-28.



Figure 2. A prestige GC, Beverly Hills, California
(Source: Blakely and Snyder, Fortress America, 41)



Figure 3. A security-zone GC, Potomac Gardens, Washington, D.C.
(Source: Blakely and Snyder, Fortress America, 43)

Scholars and urban planners have proposed various explanations for the rise of these recent GCs, starting with the American city planner Oscar Newman's 'defensible space theory,' which is frequently seen as a key influence on their emergence.⁸⁵ In his book *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space* (1976), Newman states:

The physical elements that are used to create defensible space have a common goal: to release the latent sense of territoriality and community among inhabitants. So as to allow these traits to be translated into inhabitants' assumption of responsibility for preserving a safe and well-maintained living environment. A defensible housing complex has the appearance of being composed of small, defined areas controlled by specific groups of residents. The effect is an environment that is intensively utilized and continually monitored by its inhabitants. Residents and non-residents alike should feel that they will be recognized easily by other residents, and that their presence can be questioned By creating housing projects that are defensible, it is possible, through physical design, to create a situation in which both inhabitant and stranger can perceive that a particular area is under the undisputed sphere of influence of a specific group of inhabitants The purpose of defensible space design is to return to the use of residents those previously public areas beyond the doors of individual apartments: the hallways, lobbies, grounds, and surrounding streets: areas that in most contemporary housing designs are beyond their control.⁸⁶

Thus, Newman argues that creating gates and physical barriers in a space allows residents to develop a sense of ownership, to have greater control over their surroundings, and to improve their feeling of security.

Professor of development planning Sonia Roitman, provides a detailed analysis of the causes driving the proliferation of GCs, and defines them as structural and subjective causes. Structural causes include economic globalization, economic restructuring, and the adoption of neoliberal policies by governments. The reduction of the state's role in housing development has influenced the real estate market, boosting both foreign and domestic investment and resulting in residential areas offering high-quality services and infrastructure for affluent groups. Subjective causes stem from individuals' desires for a sense of community, preferences for social homogeneity, shared perspectives, and the aspiration to achieve higher social status and distinction within specific social groups.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Adetokunbo Ilesanmi, "The Roots and Fruits of Gated Communities in Lagos, Nigeria: Social Sustainability or Segregation?" in *Sustainable Futures: Architecture and Urbanism in the Global South*, Kampala, Uganda, 2012, 108.

⁸⁶ Oscar Newman, *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1976), 4-5.

⁸⁷ Sonia Roitman, "Gated Communities: Definitions, Causes and Consequences," *Urban Design and Planning* 163, no. 1 (2010): 33-34.

According to McKenzie, such desires and aspirations, and the increasing demand for GCs, should be seen as situated within the neoliberal city's landscape, shaped by profit-driven motives and the commodification of land.⁸⁸ The system has fostered a competitive housing market, which further contributes to the development of these communities,⁸⁹ as a highly a profitable segment in the real estate market.⁹⁰ In other words, the withdrawal of the state, shifts in economic policy, privatization, and deregulation have all influenced the development of GCs, affecting both demand and supply. On the demand side, the middle class is shrinking, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and the income of wealthy individuals is rising. On the supply side, privatization and deregulation have created a favourable investment climate for GC developers.⁹¹ At this point, an essential question arises: to what extent has this investment or architectural product expanded on a global scale? In response, Michael Storper argues that Globalization is giving rise to totally new types of products and production techniques that are embedded in territorial locales.⁹²

One key aspect of globalization is the privatization and commercialization of many areas of life that were not previously part of the market.⁹³ As Koolhaas has argued, the design and production of architecture and what architecture produces are directly shaped by globalization,⁹⁴ affecting urban development, housing markets, and the way people understand private and public spaces.⁹⁵ Consequently, globalization is often perceived as a one-way flow of ideas, mainly from the "West" to the rest of the world, where

⁸⁸ E. McKenzie, "Constructing The Pomerium in Las Vegas: A Case Study of Emerging Trends in American Gated Communities," *Housing Studies*, as cited in Samer Bagaeen, "Urban Gating, Soft Boundaries and Networks of Influence and Affluence," in *Beyond Gated Communities*, ed. Samer Bagaeen and Ola Uduku (New York: Routledge, 2015), 16.

⁸⁹ Teresa P. R. Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), as cited in K. Kim and H. Chung, eds., *Gated Communities and the Digital Polis: Rethinking Subjectivity, Reality, Exclusion, and Cooperation in an Urban Future* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 89.

⁹⁰ Stephen V. Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities* (1998), as cited in Almatarneh and Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," 506.

⁹¹ Zoltán Cséfalvay, "Demythologising Gated Communities in Budapest" (conference paper, 2009), 43.

⁹² Michael Storper, "Industrial Economic Development and the Regional Question in the Third World," in *Global Networks, Linked Cities*, ed. Saskia Sassen (London: Routledge, 2002), 61, quoted in D. Linda Garcia, "The Architecture of Global Networking Technologies.

⁹³ International Forum on Globalization, "A Better World Is Possible!" in Lechner and Boli, *The Globalization Reader*, 787.

⁹⁴ Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *SMLXL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 367.

⁹⁵ Tang, *China's Housing Middle Class: Changing Urban Life in Gated Communities*, 139.

“Western culture,” political systems, and the free market are seen as solutions that must be implemented everywhere. Thus, living in GCs has come to represent the acceptance of contemporary standards of living, reflecting an acceptance of what is perceived as good and desirable in this globalized world.⁹⁶

Therefore, GCs are not just built and spread locally; they are part of a global trend influenced by ideas and connections across countries. The movement of capital and the growth of the real estate market on a global scale create economic and symbolic links that help introduce new types of housing. Additionally, advances in communication and transportation make it easier and faster to spread certain lifestyles, especially those inspired by Western cultures.⁹⁷ The growth of global financial markets and transnational real estate investments has played a role in the spread of GCs in numerous urban areas worldwide. This trend is especially noticeable in many cities around the world, where both foreign and local developers have promoted gated housing enclaves as representations of modernity and exclusivity.⁹⁸

It is worth bringing up a brief survey on the spread of GCs and the lifestyle packages they offer. In the USA, a key trend in recent urban development is the growing popularity of privately managed residential, commercial, and industrial spaces. Developers, investors, and landowners have played a major role in shaping these new urban environments. GCs offer more than just gates and security; they are part of a broader culture. This trend has quickly expanded. In major US cities, around 9 million people now live in 3 million housing units across approximately 20,000 GCs surrounded by walls and controlled entrances.⁹⁹

The emergence of GCs in Eastern Europe was little known before 1989. However, in recent years, there has been a significant boom in the emergence of this housing typology, making it the dominant choice for newly built residential developments. Security is the primary driving force behind its emergence in Eastern European countries, but, factors such as privacy, status seeking, and desired lifestyle also play crucial roles in shaping

⁹⁶ Ziauddin Sardar, "Opening the Gates: An East–West Transmodern Discourse?" in *Gated Communities: Social Sustainability in Contemporary and Historical Gated Developments*, ed. Samer Bagaeen and Ola Uduku (London: Earthscan, 2010), 11.

⁹⁷ Geniş, "Producing Elite Localities: The Rise of Gated Communities in Istanbul," 772.

⁹⁸ Tang, *China's Housing Middle Class: Changing Urban Life in Gated Communities*, 139.

⁹⁹ Chris Webster, Georg Glasze, and Klaus Frantz, "The Global Spread of Gated Communities," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 29, no. 3 (2002): 315.

people's preferences for these communities, as they do in many other contexts.¹⁰⁰ In Poland, for example, the spread of GCs is driven by a growing sense of danger and declining trust in public institutions and their ability to provide security, making the latter highly significant in both the demand and supply of such housing. Additionally, other important factors include the desire for order and control, well-maintained spaces, peace, quiet, and the absence of disturbances after socialism.¹⁰¹

Roitman argues that, in developing countries, GCs are marketed as symbols of global culture and are associated with the lifestyle of the modern international elite.¹⁰² Supporting Roitman, Almatrneh and Mansour argue that in these countries, the phenomenon of GCs is a recent result of economic changes and restructuring that also manifests itself in the sociocultural realm.¹⁰³ For instance, in the case of Egypt, the rapid spread of GCs in the suburbs can be attributed to the government's facilitation of privatization. The government has been selling outskirts lands to private developers at low prices without imposing restrictions in order to minimize public spending and generate taxes from buyers.¹⁰⁴ Among the reasons that also contributed to the spread of these communities in Cairo, was the unregulated urban expansion, which transformed the old rich neighbourhoods into areas surrounded by slums with high levels of pollution and overcrowding. This pushed most of the wealthy people to sell their homes and head to the GCs in search of a life of security and higher luxury.¹⁰⁵

In Lebanon, the development of GCs is attributed to a weak and minimalist public sector, deficient instruments of public planning that have not been renewed since the middle of the 20th century, and a limited extent of zoning that covers only 20% of Lebanese territory. Meanwhile, private developers establish their own rules and regulations regarding using their lands. They offer communities that provide security, comfort, amenities,

¹⁰⁰ Christian Smigiel, "Gated and Guarded Housing in Eastern Europe" (conference paper, 2009), 5.

¹⁰¹ Dorota Mantey, "Social Consequences of Gated Communities: The Case of Suburban Warsaw," *The Professional Geographer* 69, no. 1 (2017): 4.

¹⁰² Roitman, "Gated Communities: Definitions, Causes and Consequences," 33.

¹⁰³ Diane Singerman, *Cairo Cosmopolitan* (2006), as cited in Almatrneh and Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," 506.

¹⁰⁴ Almatrneh and Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," 510-522.

¹⁰⁵ Khalifi, "'Madinaty' as an Example: Why Do Egyptians Resort to Living in Gated Communities?" *BBC Arabic*.

and welfare, primarily targeted at wealthy clients who desire an environment and lifestyle resembling Western models.¹⁰⁶

In Yemen, Sana'a, while walls, gates, and fences have long existed, modern GCs emerged in the early 1990s. They differ in scale, structure, and purpose, rapidly expanding in different isolated locations, and despite their recent emergence, their numbers have grown exponentially. Though they vary in size, location, and amenities, they all function as enclosed compounds providing infrastructure and private services for socio-economically privileged elites, blending prestige, security, and exclusivity; they primarily attract middle-class professionals and the wealthy, with physical barriers, security gates, and surveillance reinforcing their exclusivity. These communities go beyond physical barriers; they also intensify social and economic divisions. Wealthy residents inside have access to better services and infrastructure, while those outside are excluded due to their financial status. This separation reinforces inequality, giving privileged groups more opportunities while limiting access to essential resources for the less affluent.¹⁰⁷

In Turkey, the development of GCs started after the economic and political changes of the 1980s. The factors of a neoliberal economy and the emergence of middle- and upper-income groups influenced the increasing number of these communities.¹⁰⁸ At the end of 2005, the number of GCs in Istanbul was estimated to be around 650, with construction beginning on more than 150 new developments in the same year. There is no reliable data on the population living in these communities, but demand is so high that units are often sold before construction even starts.¹⁰⁹ In Ankara, economic and urban changes have led consumers to buy houses in GCs as an investment. This demand encourages developers to build more gated projects. However, Turkey's current legal system does not offer specific rules for managing community life inside these communities. As a result, GCs have become an unregulated, market-driven solution that benefits powerful

¹⁰⁶ Charbel Nahas, *Land and Real Estate Markets in Lebanon* (1999), as cited in Georg Glasze and Abdallah Alkhayyal, "Gated Housing Estates in the Arab World: Case Studies in Lebanon and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 29 (2002): 332-334.

¹⁰⁷ Abdullah Al-Abed, "Bottom Squatted Settlements vs. Top Gated Communities: A New Direction of Social Segregation in Sana'a City," *Journal of Engineering Sciences* 39, no. 5 (2011): 1158-1169, 1173.

¹⁰⁸ Cem Rescoe, "Gayrimenkul Piyasası 2003" (2003), as cited in Ahmet Gün, "Using Imitation as a Design Parameter in Gated Communities: The Case of Istanbul," presented at the 3rd International Conference on New Trends in Architecture and Interior Design, 2017, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Geniş, "Producing Elite Localities: The Rise of Gated Communities in Istanbul," 775.

groups.¹¹⁰ For example, Kemer Country (figure 04) is the largest GC in Istanbul, developed by the Kemer Construction and Tourism Company on a total of about 3,200 acres. The residential section covers 1,200 acres, while the rest is home to the Kemer Golf and Country Club, a multi-purpose sports facility. Part of the surrounding forest, which is a national park, has been privatized and leased to the company. Residents highly value the quality of the environment, enjoying the fresh air, abundant greenery, and peaceful surroundings. They especially highlight the convenience of having all these facilities close by, reserved exclusively for their community.¹¹¹ Another example called Tuscan Valley GCs (figure 05), near Büyükçekmece Lake, in Istanbul, which differs from the more centrally located enclaves in the city. Its design closely resembles suburban developments in the American Southwest, partly because it was created with the involvement of California-based design firms. The residents of this community are not only the super wealthy citizens of Turkey; they are transnational elites who frequently cross-national borders and own homes in multiple countries.¹¹²

Globalization and liberalization policies have played a major and similar role in the rise of GCs in Accra, Ghana. Their development is closely tied to the introduction of liberalization policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These neoliberal economic policies encouraged a more business-driven approach to urban development, increasing the role of the private sector in building GCs. Bandauko et. al. argue that this involvement extended beyond local developers to include international investors, who continued to pour private capital into the housing market.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Özlem Güzey, "Neoliberal Urbanism Restructuring the City of Ankara: Gated Communities as a New Lifestyle in a Suburban Settlement," *Cities* 36 (2014): 100–101.

¹¹¹ Geniş, "Producing Elite Localities: The Rise of Gated Communities in Istanbul," 780–786.

¹¹² Albert S. Fu, "Mediterranean Style Gated Communities Around the World: Architecture, Globalization, and Transnational Elites," *City & Community* 19, no. 2 (2020): 2–14.

¹¹³ Bandauko, Arku, and Nyantakyi-Frimpong, "A Systematic Review of Gated Communities and the Challenge of Urban Transformation in African Cities," 1361–1380.



Figure 4. Aerial view of Kemer Country GC, Istanbul
(Source: Geniş, “Producing Elite Localities,” 781)



Figure 5. View of Tuscan Valley, Istanbul.
(Source: Fu, “Mediterranean Style Gated Communities,” 13)

Authors studying cities in the developing world often highlight the influence of “Western” tastes on local elites.¹¹⁴ In the case of GCs, some studies claim that changing preferences and values, have contributed to their increasing presence in many countries.¹¹⁵ Taking Turkey as an example, the ‘myth of the ideal home’ illustrates the impact of Western values on the housing market. GCs reflect this process, becoming desirable for the upper and middle classes as they seek status and a new lifestyle.¹¹⁶ Similarly, in Egypt, Almatarneh and Mansour further highlight that private developers of these communities cater to buyers by offering the values they seek in a residential environment. This primarily involves promoting images of “Western” lifestyles to create a 'privileged, exclusive lifestyle' that attracts consumers.¹¹⁷

2.5. The Debate on Gated Communities

Starting from a broader perspective, globalization leads to the segregation of activities and populations, shaping the way urban spaces are structured. As global cities witness the rise of privatized and fortified public spaces, such as malls, clubs, and GCs, concerns about spatial segregation continue to grow. This increasing fortification of urban areas not only reflects but also intensifies the social and economic divide among residents. The gates or fences around the communities represent more than simple physical barriers.¹¹⁸ Scholars and experts have expressed a range of perspectives on GCs, with both proponents and critics offering contrasting arguments. A clear distinction emerges between the privileged "in-crowd," who enjoy the comfort of exclusive, well-secured environments, and the marginalized "out-crowd," who are left to navigate overcrowded and poorly serviced urban areas.¹¹⁹ As public spaces become privately owned, many of the benefits they once provided are lost. For example, in Johannesburg, South Africa, some

¹¹⁴ Webster, Glasze, and Frantz, "The Global Spread of Gated Communities," 315–320.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 318.

¹¹⁶ Ayfer Bartu, "Dislayıcı Bir Kavram Olarak 'Mahalle,'" *Istanbul* 40, no. 1 (2002), as cited in Kyonghee Kim and Hyun Bang Chung (eds.), *Gated Communities and the Digital Polis: Rethinking Subjectivity, Reality, Exclusion, and Cooperation in an Urban Future* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 91.

¹¹⁷ Almatarneh and Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," 505–528.

¹¹⁸ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 3.

¹¹⁹ Petra Kuppinger, "Globalization and Exterritoriality in Metropolitan Cairo," *Geographical Review* 95, no. 3 (2005): 351–352.

public amenities like schools, libraries, and parks have been fenced off, limiting access. In Khartoum, residents living near or outside the Elnasr GC struggle to reach essential services because they cannot pass through the gated area. Similarly, in Cape Town, the Silvertree gated estate blocks direct access from Westlake Village to the Pick n Pay retail centre, forcing residents to take a 3 km detour to reach a shop that is less than 100 meters away.¹²⁰

GCs have introduced a new housing option for some but have also created a broader societal dilemma.¹²¹ Beyond physical separation, they reinforce a sense of social exclusion.¹²² According to Sassen, 'gates' contribute to the widening gap between the rich and the poor.¹²³ Similarly, social urbanist Dorota Mantey uses the expression 'them and us' to describe the division that GCs create between residents inside the gated areas and those living outside.¹²⁴ Blakely and Snyder argue that the walls and gates of these communities restrict social contact, and this reduction in interaction weakens the bonds that sustain the social contract.¹²⁵ 'Them and us' can also be seen in Maputo, Cape Town, and Windhoek, where GCs reflect the white middle class's desire to avoid contact with poor and black populations while reclaiming a sense of territorial control over their surroundings. Similarly, in Cape Town's Westlake development, the Silvertree gated enclave excludes poorer Westlake Village residents from accessing the infrastructure and services available to wealthier residents.¹²⁶

The ways GCs are marketed have further deepened the divide between socio-economic groups. In her article about GCs, Egyptian journalist Engy Salama, argues that promotional advertisements for GCs in Egypt (including those on social media) often rely on class discrimination. For instance, one real estate marketing company advertised villas in a specific GC featuring swimming pools surrounded by green spaces and enclosed by concrete walls. The advertisement depicted impoverished individuals standing outside the

¹²⁰ Bandauko, Arku, and Nyantakyi-Frimpong, "A Systematic Review of Gated Communities and the Challenge of Urban Transformation in African Cities," 9.

¹²¹ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 137.

¹²² Leyla Alkan-Gökler, "Gated Communities in Ankara: Are They a Tool of Social Segregation?" *International Journal of Housing Markets and Analysis* 10, no. 5 (2017): 5–12.

¹²³ Saskia Sassen, "Does the City Have Speech?" *Public Culture*, as cited in Federica Duca, "Gating in Urban Johannesburg: Digging Inside the Social and Political Systems of a Golf Estate and an Open Suburb," in *Beyond Gated Communities*, ed. Samer Bagaeen and Ola Uduku (New York: Routledge, 2015), 54.

¹²⁴ Mantey, "Social Consequences of Gated Communities: The Case of Suburban Warsaw," 6.

¹²⁵ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 137.

¹²⁶ Bandauko, Arku, and Nyantakyi-Frimpong, "A Systematic Review of Gated Communities and the Challenge of Urban Transformation in African Cities," 10.

community, their faces reflecting sadness and misery. The image was accompanied by the caption: 'O Lord, praise to you for the blessing of safe and upscale human housing.' Another TV commercial conveyed a similar message by emphasizing exclusivity, showing applicants from lower social classes being rejected.¹²⁷ Similarly, Egyptian journalist Toba Khalifi, writing on the BBC blog, argues that GCs reinforce class divisions in Egyptian society, especially at a time when one-third of Egyptians struggle to meet their basic needs. She contends that these communities alienate lower-income citizens by portraying the world outside their walls as unhealthy and unsafe.¹²⁸ This pattern is also evident in the way GCs are marketed in Ankara, using various slogans such as “prestigious,” “elite lifestyle,” and “exclusivity” not only to highlight architectural designs, styles, and available services but also as a strategy to attract buyers. However, many of these advertisements go beyond just displaying the housing features; they actively promote a distinct lifestyle that implicitly excludes others.¹²⁹

In her book *Locked In, Locked Out: Gated Communities in a Puerto Rican City*, sociologist Zaire Zenit Dinzey-Flores argues that when gates fragment and section off a city, they diminish the essence of what a city should be. Gates function as tools of power, establishing boundaries between inside and outside. They regulate access, determining who may enter and who must remain outside, thereby embodying and reinforcing control.¹³⁰ This is why some urban planners, who typically advocate for neighbourhood integration, connectivity, and equal access to services, view such enclosures as contradictory to fundamental planning principles.¹³¹ The Algerian urbanist Lala Boulbir builds on this, arguing that isolating the rich from the poor by creating exclusive, enclosed spaces is a sign of social collapse and the beginning of a dangerous trend. Additionally, the decline of public spaces and the state's growing disengagement from public law are indicators of a broader crisis in social and political relations within the city.¹³²

¹²⁷ Engy Salama, "Communities Behind the Separation Wall," SasaPost, 2017, accessed April 10, 2023.

¹²⁸ Khalifi, "'Madinaty' as an Example: Why Do Egyptians Resort to Living in Gated Communities?" BBC Arabic.

¹²⁹ Alkan-Göklér, "Gated Communities in Ankara: Are They a Tool of Social Segregation?" 5-12.

¹³⁰ Zaire Zenit Dinzey-Flores, *Locked In, Locked Out: Gated Communities in a Puerto Rican City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 27–55.

¹³¹ R. Jill Grant, "Planning Responses to Gated Communities in Canada," *Housing Studies* 20, no. 2 (2005): 282.

¹³² Boulbir, "Emergence of Residential Enclosures in Algeria: 'The New Practices of Bourgeois Urbanity,'" 11.

In his study on GCs and social segregation in Southern California, Professor of Geography and Urban Studie, Renaux Le Goix, argues that GCs do not inherently create segregation but are instead part of the broader urban development process. Their emergence is shaped by both private strategies (developers) and public strategies (buyers), highlighting how public policies can also influence patterns of segregation.¹³³ In this regard, Tony Manzi, lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, and author Bill Smith-Bowers state that GCs present a dilemma for policymakers, caught between concerns over segregation and the demand for security. Since consumer preferences prioritize privacy and safety, policymakers face challenges in opposing these communities.¹³⁴

Regarding urban planning principles and laws, Rana Tawfiq Almatarn from the Department of Architecture & Design in Jordan emphasizes the essential need for cooperation between planners and authorities to develop regulations and codes that provide appropriate alternatives, prevent socially undesirable outcomes, and address imbalances within city planning systems. Furthermore, she argues that the ability of planning systems to correct these imbalances has been significantly weakened by the dominance of market forces, which now serve as the primary drivers of urban change.¹³⁵ Sassen supports this claim, highlighting the limited ability of citizens to actively participate in and influence the urban environment due to the influence of elites and government policies that prioritize economic interests.¹³⁶

Despite widespread criticism of GCs, they also have their proponents who emphasize potential benefits. From an urban perspective, Zohra Hathout argues that these communities demonstrate the private sector's efficiency in housing provision. They are also seen as contributing to organized urban development by mitigating undesirable land-use practices, such as unregulated or informal construction.¹³⁷ Manzi and Smith-Bowers suggest that GCs can enhance social cohesion by encouraging residents to collaborate for shared benefits. They also argue that by accommodating a range of income groups, these

¹³³ Renaud Le Goix, "Gated Communities: Sprawl and Social Segregation in Southern California," *Housing Studies* 20, no. 2 (2005): 341.

¹³⁴ Tony Manzi and Bill Smith-Bowers, "Gated Communities as Club Goods: Segregation or Social Cohesion?" *Housing Studies* 20, no. 2 (2005): 357.

¹³⁵ Rana Tawfiq Almatarn, "Choices and Changes in the Housing Market and Community Preferences: Reasons for the Emergence of Gated Communities in Egypt. A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," *Ain Shams Engineering Journal* 4, no. 3 (2013): 575.

¹³⁶ Sassen, "Does the City Have Speech?" 54.

¹³⁷ Hathout, "'Closed' Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria): A Liberal Residential Product Threatening the City." 33.

communities can establish management systems that help reduce crime.¹³⁸ In line with this perspective, Sabatini and Salcedo claim that when high-end real estate developments are dispersed across different areas, they may contribute to a certain degree of social integration. Additionally, such developments can generate economic opportunities for lower-income residents by creating jobs in the surrounding neighbourhoods.¹³⁹ From both an urban and social perspective, a study on GCs in Amman suggests that social sustainability is higher in GCs compared to conventional communities, particularly in terms of personal relationships, private services, environmental quality, and social network support. The study advocates for expanding GCs in Amman while considering various sizes and income levels. Accordingly, planners and policymakers in Jordan should regulate and structure the concept of GCs to ensure they contribute positively to long-term societal well-being while maintaining an organized urban environment and landscape.¹⁴⁰ Overall, developers and corporations that promote GCs consistently claim that these communities guarantee property value appreciation, offer security, and foster a strong sense of community.¹⁴¹

Manzi and Smith-Bowers, however, express ambivalence toward GCs. While they acknowledge that these communities contribute to the exclusion of certain groups, they also suggest that GCs can serve as a positive model for housing development. Rather than seeking to prevent their expansion, this viewpoint argues that policymakers should accept their presence and focus on mitigating their negative effects. Efforts should prioritize addressing socio-spatial segregation and fostering social cohesion by promoting new forms of sustainable communities, rather than solely critiquing privatization, isolationism, and the pursuit of individual interests.¹⁴²

This chapter has explored the relationship between globalization, neoliberalism, and the transformation of the built environment through the emergence of various global

¹³⁸ Manzi and Smith-Bowers, "Gated Communities as Club Goods: Segregation or Social Cohesion?" 355.

¹³⁹ Francisco Sabatini and Rodrigo Salcedo, "Gated Communities and the Poor in Santiago, Chile: Functional and Symbolic Integration in a Context of Aggressive Capitalist Colonization of Lower-Class Areas," *Housing Policy Debate* 18, no. 3 (2007): 591.

¹⁴⁰ Amal R. Abed, Shouib N. Mabdeh, and Abeer Nassar, "Social Sustainability in Gated Communities Versus Conventional Communities: The Case of Amman," *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning* 17, no. 7 (2022): 2149.

¹⁴¹ Elena Vesselinov, Matthew Cazessus, and William Falk, "Gated Communities and Spatial Inequality," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2007): 118–119.

¹⁴² Manzi and Smith-Bowers, "Gated Communities as Club Goods: Segregation or Social Cohesion?" 357–358.

trends, with GCs being one of them. It highlighted how these forces have reshaped urban spaces worldwide, demonstrating how globalization driven by digital, technological advancements, and media influences has accelerated the exchange of architectural ideas, styles, and urban typologies. The discussion on neoliberalism, as it evolved into a global economic system, asserted how economic shifts and market-driven policies have redefined urban spaces through the principles of privatization and deregulation. This economic transformation demonstrated its role in intensifying spatial inequalities and reinforcing social divisions, as neoliberal policies often create conditions that enable elite capital to accumulate wealth, sometimes at the expense of marginalizing groups of lower income. The literature on the evolution of GCs demonstrates how globalization and neoliberalism have been, and continue to be, the primary driving forces behind their emergence and proliferation. However, the term "new" GCs is used because they are not a recent phenomenon; they have existed for a long time under various circumstances and for different reasons. The recent GCs, however, have evolved in response to contemporary security concerns and are shaped by economic, social, and urban transformations. Initially conceived as exclusive enclaves for elites and high-income groups, they have since expanded into diverse urban landscapes worldwide, increasingly marketed as secure, prestigious, and modern living environments. The presence of these GCs raises critical debates. To summarize, opponents perceive them as a source of deepening socio-spatial segregation between affluent residents within these communities and the lower-income groups residing outside them, due to the privatization of urban space, which leads to long-term consequences for urban cohesion and the fundamental nature of the city. Proponents, however, claim that these communities offer several benefits, such as demonstrating the efficiency of the private sector in the construction industry, organizing the urban landscape by reducing informal construction, enhancing social cohesion among specific groups, and creating job opportunities for lower-income populations. However, some studies suggest that governments should regulate the development of GCs to ensure they contribute positively to both society and the urban environment.

CHAPTER 3

THE HOUSING SECTOR IN ALGERIA

After examining the emergence, evolution, and global proliferation of GCs, this chapter shifts the focus to the case of Algeria. It traces the historical emergence of GCs in the country and analyses their contemporary presence by exploring the evolution of the housing sector. The chapter highlights key transformations and policy shifts that have shaped Algeria, and its housing development over time, particularly from independence in 1962 to the present, revealing how specific historical, political, and economic conditions laid the groundwork for the appearance of GCs in Algeria.

3.1. Historical Overview of Post-Independence Algeria

Algeria's independence from French colonial rule in 1962 was a pivotal moment in the country's history. According to J. McDougall, the newly established nation-state aspired to build a prosperous future, seeking to balance material progress with a strong, socially-conservative morality rooted in religious and cultural 'authenticity.'¹⁴³ This vision was further reinforced in the 1963 Constitution, which defined Algeria as a socialist state, designating Arabic as the official language and Islam as the state religion.¹⁴⁴

In the late 1960s and 1970s, the post-independence government faced significant challenges, including widespread poverty, insecurity, and growing frustration over unmet expectations for the future. In response, the regime implemented a comprehensive development plan that included agrarian reforms, socialist management policies for enterprises, and a socialist economy.¹⁴⁵ The British historian Ed McAllister describes this period in

¹⁴³ James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 236-237.

¹⁴⁴ John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 200.

¹⁴⁵ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 238.

Algeria as a crucial time in shaping the state, with much of its structure still in place. Beyond improving living conditions, the government aimed to reunify the country. Industrialization policies sought to connect urban workers to the national economy through state jobs and self-managed workplaces, while agricultural reforms reduced traditional rural power and brought villagers under state influence. Meanwhile, Arabization and universal education were introduced to create a shared cultural identity.¹⁴⁶ The return to Arabic was strongly linked in people's minds to a return to Islam and was clearly seen as prioritizing traditional and conservative values.¹⁴⁷

By the late 1980s, after the so-called 'agricultural revolution' failed to meet the country's food needs,¹⁴⁸ Algeria began shifting towards neoliberal economic policies, driven by slight structural adjustments imposed by international financial institutions. The government gradually moved away from centralized planning, started promoting privatization, market liberalization, and reduced state intervention in key sectors.¹⁴⁹ Mary-Jane Deeb, describes this period in Algeria as one marked by dislocation due to the sharp decline in oil prices and inefficiencies in the public sector, which led the government to implement widespread reforms across the economic, social, and political spheres. In response, the government moved away from its rigid centralized decision-making system, placing greater emphasis on market forces, with support from international organizations such as the World Bank.¹⁵⁰

Despite these reforms, economic and social ambitions encountered serious obstacles. Mounting tensions, particularly in key social and political areas, revealed the state's growing difficulty in managing rapid social change. Factors such as demographic shifts, the emergence of youth culture, family policies, language planning, educational reforms, and Arabization further complicated governance.¹⁵¹ Historian John Douglas Ruedy explains the poor economic performance of the country at that time due to multiple inter-

¹⁴⁶ Ed McAllister, "Algeria's 'Belle Époque': Memories of the 1970s as a Window on the Present," in *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015*, ed. Patrick Crowley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 49–50.

¹⁴⁷ Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 225.

¹⁴⁸ Anthony Toth, "Historical Setting," in *Algeria: A Country Study*, ed. Helen Chapin Metz (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1994), 61.

¹⁴⁹ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 257–236.

¹⁵⁰ Mary-Jane Deeb, "The Society and Its Environment," in *Algeria: A Country Study*, ed. Helen Chapin Metz (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1994), 69.

¹⁵¹ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 292.

connected factors, primarily linked to the rapid pace of development and sectoral imbalances that hindered progress toward self-sufficiency and economic integration. As pressure mounted to achieve overambitious targets, both the central planning office and state corporations struggled to manage their workload effectively. Many projects faced significant delays and rising costs, while state-owned enterprises increasingly relied on foreign companies to construct large-scale projects. This approach not only drove up development expenses but also deepened dependence on foreign expertise and suppliers. Additionally, the financial strain of meeting these targets exceeded the country's revenue-generating capacity, forcing Algeria to borrow from international banks, leading to an external debt of \$16.3 billion.¹⁵²

Patrick Crowley describes the late 1980s in Algeria as a period when the state-sponsored image of an Islamic, Arab, and socialist nation began to fade. At the same time, the housing crisis worsened, and unemployment increased.¹⁵³ Likewise, McDougall adds that, as the socialist experiment began to falter in the late 1970s and was dismantled in the late 1980s, neoliberal policies took hold, opening markets and creating new opportunities while also spreading corruption. In the process, the supposed higher purpose of stability that the system aimed to maintain gradually disappeared.¹⁵⁴

The 1990s, marked by the period known as the 'National Tragedy,' inflicted severe damage on state institutions.¹⁵⁵ This period, called *la décennie noire* (the Black Decade), reflects both the suffering and the uncertainty experienced by civilians. Although it was often seen as a conflict between the state and Islamist groups, many different factions were involved, making it hard to determine who was responsible for the violence.¹⁵⁶ The 1990s were difficult for Algerian citizens, especially in rural areas, which faced extreme violence from Islamist insurgents, leading to a mass exodus to major cities.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 220.

¹⁵³ Patrick Crowley, ed., *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 6.

¹⁵⁴ James McDougall, "In the Shadow of Revolution," in *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015*, ed. Patrick Crowley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 41.

¹⁵⁵ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 322–329.

¹⁵⁶ Crowley, ed., *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ Jessica Ayesha Northey, "Algerian Heritage Associations: National Identity and Rediscovering the Past," in *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015*, ed. Patrick Crowley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 111.

In an effort to restore stability, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika introduced key measures during his first term, including the ‘Civil Concord’ initiative, which was approved by a national referendum in September 1999 as an attempt to end local violence.¹⁵⁸ Bouteflika’s pragmatic approach helped establish a fragile peace, partly maintained by using revenue from Algeria’s oil and gas exports, which saw a significant rise in prices between 2003 and 2014. This income was directed toward sustaining a society where a large portion of the population relied on state subsidies for essential food and public sector jobs.¹⁵⁹ Throughout his four terms (from 1999 to 2019), Bouteflika continued to introduce reforms and constitutional changes that reshaped the national governance system across multiple sectors.¹⁶⁰ However, with the election of Abdelmadjid Tebboune as President in December 2019, the post-Bouteflika era saw no broad or radical changes but rather adjustments and reforms within the existing system. Tebboune’s policies largely continued Bouteflika’s economic approaches, with some modifications and new initiatives, maintaining policy continuity rather than implementing a transformative shift. In the following, I will focus on how this history is reflected in housing development.

3.2. Housing Development in Algeria

Housing in Algeria after independence went through two formative periods: the socialist period and the neoliberal period. In the first years of independence, colonial laws and tools inherited from the French were employed. This was the case due to the low level of importance housing had compared to other production sectors. As the state was burdened with several problems, the majority of funds were used sectors related to the economic development of the country.¹⁶¹

In 1961 and 1962, many French settlers abandoned their properties, which were quickly taken over by squatters from rural areas. In some cases, a single home that had previously housed one French family accommodated up to six Algerian families. The phenomenon became so widespread that the term "empty properties" entered common

¹⁵⁸ McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 322-329.

¹⁵⁹ Crowley, ed., *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015*, 9.

¹⁶⁰ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 322-329.

¹⁶¹ Ibtissem Hawchine, “Housing Policy in Algeria: Reality and Prospects,” *Journal of the Institute of Economic Sciences* 14, no. 1 (2010): 75–76. (Title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author).

usage. It took the government several years to inventory these vacant homes. By 1965, a financial reform was introduced to formalize property ownership and regulate rent collection for approximately 500,000 nationalized or sequestered apartments and houses in major cities.¹⁶²

Due to the housing sector being largely overlooked until the late 1970s, there was a severe housing shortage.¹⁶³ Until 1974, government involvement in public housing was minimal. To address this crisis, it launched and funded ‘Zone d’Habitat Urbain Nouvelle’, ZHUN (New Urban Housing Areas), a mass housing model influenced by modernist principles of prefabrication and standardization. It aimed to accommodate the rapidly growing urban population by providing modern, standardized, and affordable housing.¹⁶⁴

Even with the development of numerous ZHUN projects, housing shortages remained a significant issue. For instance, the 1000-housing-unit project in Biskra, built in 1984, consists of 123 residential blocks,¹⁶⁵ while the 800-housing-unit neighbourhood in Batna was constructed in 1989.¹⁶⁶ However, by the early 1980s, an average of seven people were still living in a three-room housing unit, and the country faced a shortage of one million housing units.¹⁶⁷



Figure 6. ZHUN housing project in Biskra (1000 units)
(Source: Naceur, “Effects of Outdoor Shared Spaces,” 462)

¹⁶² Deeb, “The Society and Its Environment,” 121-122.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 122.

¹⁶⁴ Farida Naceur, “Effects of Outdoor Shared Spaces on Social Interaction in a Housing Estate in Algeria,” *Frontiers of Architectural Research* 2, no. 4 (2013): 457-458-459.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Zine Elabidine Barkat, Djamel Seghiri, and Hanane Houbib, “Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City,” *Geomatics, Landmanagement and Landscape* 3, no. 3 (2024): 75.

¹⁶⁷ Deeb, “The Society and Its Environment,” 122.



Figure 7. ZHUN housing project in Batna (800 units)
(Source: “Appartement Vente F3 Batna Algérie,” Ouedkniss, accessed February 28, 2025)

In 1989, the socialist system was abandoned, and the government subsequently reduced its interventions, adopting new mechanisms to finance the housing sector.¹⁶⁸ For example, Law 90-25 introduced a new housing policy, opening real estate activity to both public and private stakeholders and encouraging real estate development by granting financial and land incentives to developers. Public rental housing was designated for the low-income class, while subsidized housing targeted the middle class.¹⁶⁹ However, the law’s impact remained limited, as new housing models were still primarily financed by public funds and did not align with population growth.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, the private sector remained nearly absent due to the high construction costs.¹⁷¹

During the 1990s, the country witnessed a period of political and economic instability due to insecurity, which caused severe economic stagnation and weak financing of several housing development plans.¹⁷² By 1992, the housing shortage had reached a critical level, rising to 2 million units. As a result, the average occupancy rate increased to 8.8 persons per unit, making it one of the highest in the world.¹⁷³ In response, the government introduced a series of reforms aimed at reducing the housing deficit, constructing

¹⁶⁸ Tayeb Toufik Dahar and Khaled Senator, “Tax Policy to Treat the Housing Crisis in Algeria: The Potential Impacts of Taxation on the Housing Market,” *Idara* 27, no. 2 (2020): 49. (Title of the journal translated from Arabic by the author).

¹⁶⁹ Fatima Bin Al-Din, “The Impact of Construction Laws on Illegal Construction in Algeria,” *Journal of Scientific Research in Environmental Legislation* 4, no. 2 (2014): 72.

¹⁷⁰ Dahar and Senator, “Tax Policy To Treat The Housing Crisis In Algeria: The Potential Impacts Of Taxation On The Housing Market,” 51.

¹⁷¹ Hawchine, “Housing Policy in Algeria: Reality and Prospects,” 75.

¹⁷² Soumia Souli and Djeghar Aicha, “Urban Growth in Algeria and Manufactured Housing Programs since Independence to the Present Day,” *Tabna Journal for Academic Scientific Studies* 4, no. 0 (2021): 106. (Title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author).

¹⁷³ Deeb, “The Society and Its Environment,” 122.

approximately 360,000 public housing units and launching new programs targeted at low-income groups. However, the completion rate for these housing projects remained low, reinforcing the need for more significant structural reforms.¹⁷⁴

As a result, new land legislation was introduced to end the local government's monopoly on land transactions, allowing urban landowners to freely buy and sell their property. The law also aimed to stimulate private-sector investment in housing and construction. Additionally, new regulations were implemented to simplify urban development procedures for private developers. To further encourage private sector involvement in housing, the government proposed legislation allowing private contractors to compete with public enterprises and gain access to building materials previously reserved for public housing projects. However, registered private construction companies remained small, primarily focusing on building private family homes. Despite some progress in the housing sector, Algeria in the 1990s continued to struggle with significant societal pressures, compounded by religious militancy and economic difficulties, which presented ongoing challenges for the government.¹⁷⁵

In the early 2000s, when Abdelaziz Bouteflika began his successive four terms as president, he introduced new housing policy that marked a clear departure from those of the 1990s. This policy aimed to prioritize the housing sector by emphasizing the importance of launching new housing programs, specifically targeted at providing affordable rental housing options for disadvantaged social classes.¹⁷⁶ The sector witnessed a quantitative leap due to the huge boom in the country's financial incomes, and new measures such as liberalizing the real estate market and creating new housing formulas.¹⁷⁷ The remarkable boom in the construction of housing projects was made possible by the revenues derived from Algeria's hydrocarbon exports, which significantly increased after 2003. These funds allowed the government to finance large-scale housing developments

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Deeb, "The Society and Its Environment," 123-124.

¹⁷⁶ Salma Mamish, "The Housing Economy in Algeria between Reality and Ambition," *Journal of Administrative and Financial Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2017): 460-463. (Title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author).

¹⁷⁷ Shawqi Ghasmi and Sabah Slimani, "Housing in Algeria: An Unexpired Crisis," *Journal of Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (2019): 215. (Title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author).

while addressing social needs and economic stability.¹⁷⁸ However, the government's approach primarily focused on providing housing units for the very low-income groups.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, to boost housing production and expand access to different social classes, the government lifted restrictions on private developers, encouraging real estate development and investment in housing construction.¹⁸⁰

In 2010, the government introduced a new housing program aimed for middle-income groups, which included social contributory housing, subsidized support housing, and rural housing. This program required a personal financial contribution from beneficiaries and was only available to those who did not own a home or were living in inadequate housing conditions.¹⁸¹ Despite this, new problems have emerged, particularly regarding the quality of the provided housing units, which have remained outside the concern of the authorities.¹⁸² The design and construction of these government-funded housing units failed to meet health standards, were narrow in size, followed uniform architectural patterns across all regions, and did not account for the diverse needs of different social groups.¹⁸³

In summary, Algeria's urbanization during the first post-independence phase (1962-1989) under the socialist regime was marked by a general lack of clarity in policy direction and the mismanagement of real estate. Land was often granted for symbolic prices, which led to the depletion of precious agricultural lands. The second phase (after 1990) saw a shift toward a market economy under neoliberal policies, introducing private actors into urban development. This period also saw the emergence of new housing models, including the rise of vertical housing, particularly in northern cities, with a strong presence in the capital.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, housing continues to face many challenges, and a significant gap remains between the two sides of the housing equation, with high demand and limited supply.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Crowley, ed., *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988–2015*, 9.

¹⁷⁹ Mamish, "The Housing Economy in Algeria between Reality and Ambition," 458.

¹⁸⁰ Abdelaziz Agagba, *Managing Urban Policy in Algeria: The Case of Batna* (Magister thesis, University of Batna, 2010), 126. (Title translated from Arabic by the author).

¹⁸¹ Mamish, "The Housing Economy in Algeria between Reality and Ambition," 460-463.

¹⁸² Ghasmi and Slimani, "Housing in Algeria: An Unexpired Crisis," 216-220.

¹⁸³ Bin Al-Din, "The Impact of Construction Laws on Illegal Construction in Algeria," 72.

¹⁸⁴ Agagba, *Managing Urban Policy in Algeria: The Case of Batna*, 169.

¹⁸⁵ Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, "Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City," 73.

3.3. Housing Policies and Private Sector Growth in Algeria

In 1973, efforts were undertaken to implement a policy of Algerianization in the housing sector by annulling several French decrees. The most important of which was No. 62/157 relating to the rules of urbanism, and replacing it with the first legislative text issued by the Algerian state in this field; No. 73/23. Urban laws then were no longer framed by French regulatory and legislative rules, but rather by Algerian texts.¹⁸⁶

The emergence of private intervention in housing in Algeria, such as private real estate development agencies, dates back to the issuance of Decree No. 76/92, which legislated the form of real estate cooperation. The aim of which is the participation of private capital in the construction of housing or the financing of housing projects and to reduce the burden of the public treasury of housing construction. Due to the limitation in results, a new Decree (No. 93/03) was issued, which opened the field to competition between the public and private sectors, where registration in the commercial registry alone is sufficient to practice the profession of real estate developer. However, due to the spread of fraud and deception against customers, the law had to be replaced (with the new No. 11/04). The latter stipulates the necessity of obtaining accreditation from the Supreme Council of the Real Estate Development Profession, in order to control the practice of the profession in a professional and ethical manner.¹⁸⁷

Law 11/04 introduced new privileges and subsidies for real estate housing projects, as the state aimed to support individuals in acquiring housing while also assisting real estate developers in completing their projects. Additionally, the law provided further subsidies, including reducing the price of state-owned land and selling it to private developers to encourage the construction of new housing projects.¹⁸⁸ Through Law 11/04, the authorities revised the financing strategy for housing projects. Previously, funding relied primarily on public treasury resources (75%) and a 20% contribution from the National Savings and Reserve Fund. However, the new approach shifted towards banks and both

¹⁸⁶ Kamel Takouachet, "The Development of Urbanism in Algeria," *Tabna Journal for Academic Scientific Studies* 5, no. 2 (2022): 818-819, 822-823, 825.

¹⁸⁷ Jamaluddin Babu and Karim Zeinab, "The Strategy of Housing Policy Adopted in Algeria and Its Effectiveness in Alleviating the Housing Crisis," *Journal of Research in Law and Political Science* 7, no. 1 (2021): 537-538.

¹⁸⁸ Mohammed Youcefi, "Providing the Real Estate Base for the Benefit of Real Estate Developers as an Incentive to Develop Real Estate Promotion Activity in Algeria" (title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author), *Journal of Construction and Building Legislation* 1, no. 2 (2017): 74-75.

private and public financial institutions as key mechanisms for real estate financing, encouraging them to provide real estate loans to private developers to facilitate their involvement in the sector.¹⁸⁹ Knowing that in the 1990s, the authorities was allowing all public banks to provide loans only to citizens, but loans for private provision of housing were non-existent.¹⁹⁰

Law 11/04, which regulates real estate housing development, marked a significant advance in expanding the role of private real estate actors. The law introduced new measures to support real estate development activities, granting special privileges and subsidies for residential housing projects.¹⁹¹ After the issuance of this law, the role of private real estate developers' intervention in Algeria expanded to an unprecedented range.¹⁹² In addition, when private actors were allowed to enter housing real estate market, private developers began creating their own allotments, resulting in numerous land divisions that contributed to housing production and diversification.¹⁹³

All the processes and policy shifts discussed so far laid the groundwork for the emergence of recent GCs in Algeria, which constitute the core focus of this research. However, before turning to this contemporary form, it is essential to recall that the phenomenon of gating has existed in various forms and historical periods across Algeria. Certain features of these earlier enclosed forms, whether social, spatial, or symbolic, did not entirely disappear. Instead, they re-emerged in new ways within today's GCs, as the next section will demonstrate.

¹⁸⁹ Radia Abass, "Contribution of Financial Institutions to Financing Private Real Estate Promotion," *Real Estate Law Journal* 4, no. 2 (2017): 88–92.

¹⁹⁰ Mamish, "The Housing Economy in Algeria between Reality and Ambition" 462.

¹⁹¹ Ahmed Enoui, "The Promotion of Real Estate in Algerian Legislation" (title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author), *Scientific Horizons Magazine* 11, no. 4 (2011): 240–241.

¹⁹² Muhammad Yousfi and Muhammad Amin Mizyan, "Investing in Financing Real Estate Promotion Projects and Its Impact on the Development of the Housing Sector in Algeria" (title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author), *Construction and Construction Magazine* 2, no. 5 (2018): 42–48.

¹⁹³ Mishnan Mishnan, "Residential Allotments in the City of Batna, Their Development and Contribution to Housing Production (A Field Study of the Mujahideen's Allotment of 800 Homes and the Allotment of Riyadh 2)", *Studies in Human Sciences and Society* 2, no. 3 (2019): 102. (title and name of the journal translated from Arabic by the author).

3.4. Gated Housing Forms in Algeria

The evolution of housing in Algeria reflects a complex interplay between cultural traditions, historical precedents, and modern socio-economic forces. This section examines the various forms of gated and enclosed residential environments present across the country, tracing their roots from historic fortified settlements (ksars), to contemporary self-initiated gating practices, and finally to the emergence of modern gated communities shaped by neoliberal urban dynamics.

3.4.1. Historical Fortified Communities: Ksar Settlements

Gated and walled cities have existed since the earliest stages of urban development. Throughout history, fortified settlements with gates and walls have been built across various regions of the world.¹⁹⁴ In Algeria, Ksar settlements were built centuries ago across different regions, serving as fortified communities that offered protection from external threats. These settlements were often strategically built in elevated or defensible locations, with thick walls and limited access points to ensure security.

Meaning ‘fortified city,’ the term ‘Ksar’ refers to a walled enclosure. The word is pronounced ‘‘gasar’’ and is a phonic alteration of the Arabic root "qasr," which refers to something short and limited. In this context, it describes a confined and reserved space, accessible only to specific social groups, usually of similar bloodlines.¹⁹⁵ Each Ksar typically features one or two entrances, surveillance towers, centred on a mosque at the highest point, and a marketplace (Souk).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 3-4.

¹⁹⁵ Jean-Loïc Le Quellec. *Maisons du Sahara: Habiter le Désert*. Hazan, 2006, 156.

¹⁹⁶ Manel Souidi and Siham Bestandji, “Tafilelt, the Neo-Traditional Model of Ksour in Algeria: Assessment of the Multi-functionality of Urban Spaces,” *Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2019): 99.



Figure 8. Model of Ksar Bani Hammed,¹⁹⁷ M'sila City, Algeria.
(Source: Seghiri, Barkat, and Kadri, "Urban and Architectural Heritage," 226)

In other words, the 'Ksar' is an urban structure designed for groups of people who share similar bloodlines, beliefs, and cultures. Typically, a 'Ksar' is encircled by a defensive wall, which is a key feature. This fortification provides protection and defence for the residents and their community.¹⁹⁸ Each ksar is surrounded either by a wall in the style of medieval cities, or by a series of joined fortified dwellings instead of a wall.¹⁹⁹

The strong bonds and the social solidarity among Ksar residents are the defining characteristics of these communities. Living within the Ksar provides a sense of social security, reinforced by a close-knit network of relationships that foster familiarity, and a shared sense of security, which is completely different from people living outside the ksar.²⁰⁰ For example, Ksar Beni-Abbes, which was established in the 18th century fol-

¹⁹⁷ Ksar Beni Hammad, located in Al-Ma'adid, M'sila City, Algeria, is a fortified site built between 1007 and 1008 AD by Hammad bin Belkin, who aimed to strengthen and stabilize Islamic identity. It became one of the symbolic landmarks of the Islamic state in Algeria. The small-fortified district adjacent to the right of Ksar Beni Hammad was inhabited by the Sanhajis, cousins of the Hammadids, who initially formed a privileged group, living in isolation from others in an area known as Ksar Manar. Taken from: Djamel Seghiri, Zineelabidine Barkat, and Derradji Kadri, "Urban and Architectural Heritage in Algerian Cities Between the Reality and the Challenges of Preserving It: A Case Study of the Beni Hammad Castle in Maadid, M'sila, Algeria," *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology* 16, no. 5 (2024): 223.

¹⁹⁸ Labtar Qadda and Abdelkader Belguernin, "Traditional House Elements in the Sahara 'Ksour' Northern Algeria," *Humanization Journal for Researches and Studies* 12, no. 1 (2021): 341.

¹⁹⁹ Office de Protection et de Promotion de la Vallée du M'zab (OPVM), "Structural Elements of the Urban Space", OPVM, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.opvm.dz/>

²⁰⁰ Naima Redai and Abdlaziz Khawaja, "Living in the Living Heritage Sites of the Mzab Valley, Algeria: Motives, Representations and Continuity," *Insaniyat* 92, no. 44 (2021): 7.

lowing an agreement between two prominent local tribes, Awlad Mahdi and Awlad Ra-hou. These tribes chose to abandon their previous settlements and unite to build and inhabit a single, unified community. Strong social ties and a shared goal of ensuring mutual security against external threats drove this collaboration.²⁰¹

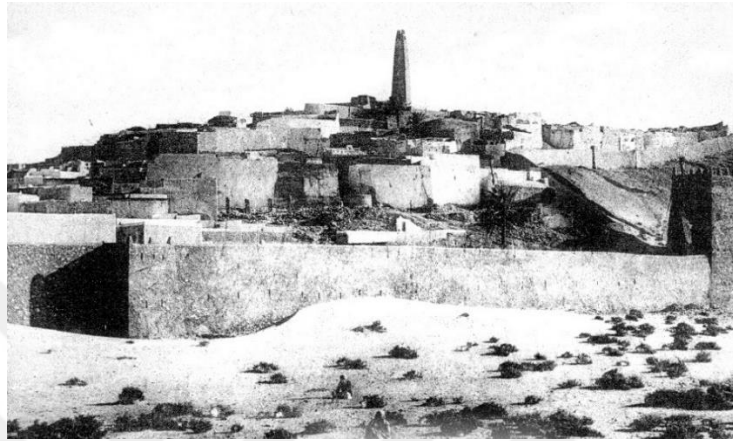


Figure 9. Ksar Tinemmerine Beni-Isguen,²⁰² Ghardaïa City, Algeria.
(Source: Debdabi and Ouafdi, Reconstruction Test at Ksar de Ouargla, 9)

Within these Ksars, the internal road network is carefully designed, with all paths leading to the central market square and the mosque. These layouts emphasize the importance of communal gathering spaces in fostering social and economic interactions, while the mosque underscores the centrality of religion in daily life.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Nir-Osra, “مقال مدينة بني عباس,” Nir-Osra, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://nir-osra.org/اسهام/مدينة-بني-عباس/>

²⁰² The name Tinemmerine Beni-Isguen is derived from a tribe of the same name, which is considered the first to build this Ksar. The latter was established in the 14th century and maintains its original organizational structure to this day. Enclosed by a surrounding wall that defines its boundaries and provides security, it is accessible through two primary gates: one located to the north and the other to the south. These gates serve as controlled entry points, reflecting the defensive and communal aspects of the settlement. This information is taken from: Aayane Isguen Association, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://aayaneisguen.com/عن-قصر-آت-يسجن/>; and, Office de Protection et de Promotion de la Vallée du M'zab , OPVM, accessed June 21, 2024, [https://www.opvm.dz/ar/99/10/المقالات/85/القطاع المحفوظ d/قصر بني يزجن](https://www.opvm.dz/ar/99/10/المقالات/85/القطاع%20المحفوظ%20d/قصر%20بني%20يزجن)

²⁰³ Office de Protection et de Promotion de la Vallée du M'zab (OPVM), “قطاع المحفوظ - قصر بني يزجن,” OPVM, accessed June 21, 2024, [https://www.opvm.dz/ar/99/10/المقالات/85/القطاع المحفوظ d/قصر بني يزجن](https://www.opvm.dz/ar/99/10/المقالات/85/القطاع%20المحفوظ%20d/قصر%20بني%20يزجن)

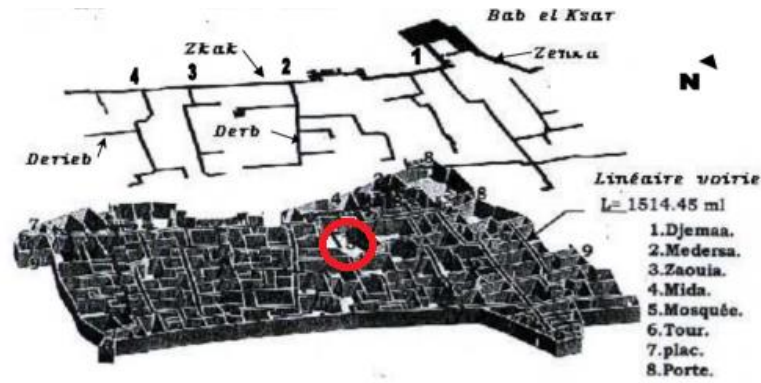


Figure 10. Ksar Beni-Abbes with mosque location, Bechar City, Algeria.
(Source: Debdabi and Ouafdi, Reconstruction Test at Ksar de Ouargla, 17)



Figure 11. Site plan of Ksar Tinemmerine Beni-Isghen, Ghardaïa City, Algeria
(Source: Redai and Khawaja, “Living in the Living Heritage Sites,” 3)

While all the represented examples of Ksars were established long ago, one recent GC adopts their spatial and architectural characteristics; known as Ksar Tinemmerine. It is located in Beni-Isghen, Ghardaïa City. Developed by the Algerian private developer Ahmed Nouh, under neoliberal urban dynamics. The project began after he purchased a 22-hectare plot of land from the state. Construction started in 1997 and was completed in 2004. This community is home to 6000 inhabitants are primarily Mozabites of the Ibadi

Muslim faith. Its design reflects the social structure and religious values of its residents, who follow a distinct Islamic faith in Algeria.²⁰⁴



Figure 12. Main Entrance of Ksar Tafilalt, Ghardaïa City, Algeria.
(Source: Debdabi and Ouafdi, Reconstruction of Ouargla, 23)



Figure 13. Panoramic view of Ksar Tafilalt, Ghardaïa City, Algeria.
(Source: Adad and Mazouz, the Old and New Ksour, 84)

²⁰⁴ Maimouna Manasria, *The Identity of the Local Community in the Face of Globalization* (PhD diss., Mohamed Khider University, Biskra, Algeria, 2012), 214. (Title translated from Arabic into English by the author).

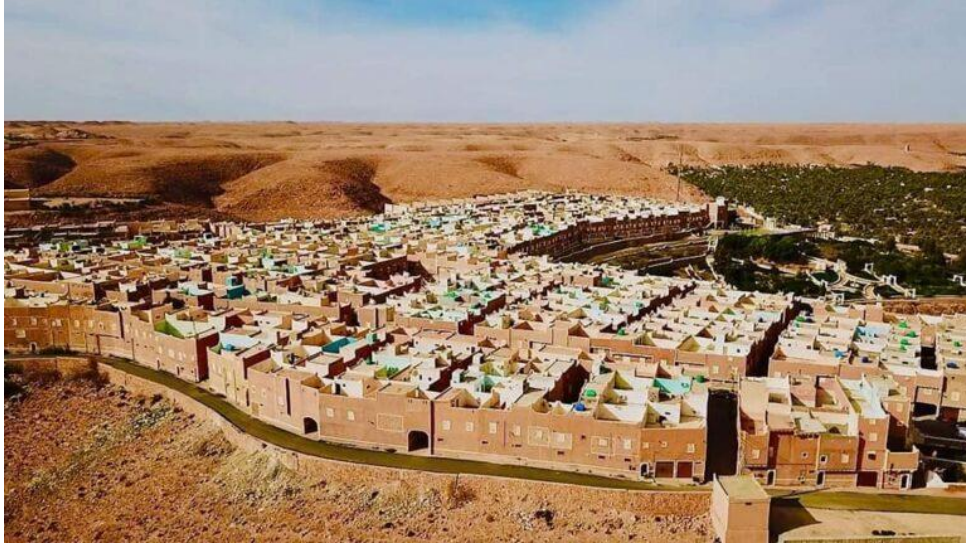


Figure 14. Panoramic view of Ksar Tafilelt, Ghardaïa City, Algeria.
(Source: Arabic Post, last modified May 6, 2023)

3.4.2. Self-Gated Housing Practices

In Algeria, urban residents have begun adopting similar strategies for security and privacy reasons, where individual homes or settlements that were not previously “gated” are increasingly walled off. The walls are not simple garden walls, but usually quite high, reaching about 2m and higher. The trend towards gating has grown significantly since the Black Decade and has expanded rapidly in recent years. However, this research area remains largely unexplored, with Algerian researcher Karima Bendib being the only scholar to have studied it.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Karima Bendib, "Residential Self-Enclosure as Perceived and Experienced by Residents of Gated Mass Housing: The Case of Batna (Algeria)", *Géocarrefour* 94, no. 4 (2020): 2. (Title translated from French into English by the author).



Figure 15. Examples of ‘‘Self-Gated’’ house, Batna, Algeria.
(Source: Photos by the author, Batna, Algeria, July 2022)

In the case of social collective housing, Bendib explains that the enclosure of residential areas is primarily achieved through metal fences ranging in height from 2.20 meters to 2.80 meters. This practice represents a relatively new form of reclaiming public space within Algeria’s social collective housing sector. Initially, residents would enclose small outdoor spaces adjacent to their buildings for personal use. However, more recently, they have begun to collectively enclose entire residential complexes, informally constructing fences around the neighbourhood and defining pedestrian and vehicle access points.²⁰⁶ Beyond security, these enclosures serve to clearly mark property boundaries, preventing disputes and reinforcing ownership. In some cases, the design and height of these barriers also reflect the owner's social status or aesthetic preferences, mixing functionality with a statement of exclusivity.

In the absence of government intervention, the addition of vertical barriers raises questions about whether it enhances residents' sense of security. Many believe they feel safer in a gated neighbourhood compared to an open one, as the barriers provide protection for children, homes, and vehicles. Additionally, enclosing these areas ensures that outdoor spaces, such as parking lots and playgrounds, are reserved exclusively for the residents of the fortified housing area.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 9.



Figure 16. Metal Fences in Mass Housing, Hamla Neighbourhood, Batna.
(Source: Bendib, "Residential Self-Enclosure," 3-4)

3.4.3. Recent Gated Communities

Globalization has significantly influenced Algeria, reshaping its economic framework and social dynamics. The adoption of international trade policies has altered labour markets, encouraged privatization, and increased the country's reliance on global financial institutions.²⁰⁸ The neoliberal transformation of housing policies, characterized by privatization, liberalization, and deregulation, has had a major impact on the urban landscape. This economic shift has also transformed the housing sector. Housing, once considered a public good under socialist systems, has been commodified, shifting towards a market-driven model that prioritizes real estate investment over social equity. As a result, GCs, as one of the products of neoliberal urban governance have emerged, serving both as desirable residences and profitable real estate investments.²⁰⁹

As a phenomenon linked to urban, political, and social change,²¹⁰ while GCs have gained increasing attention in various contexts, research in Algeria remains limited, with no more than three studies conducted on the topic to date. The first study examines the emergence and proliferation of GCs in the city of Algiers, with its primary emphasis on their impact on the social and urban fabric.²¹¹ The second study, investigates the reasons

²⁰⁸ Manasria, *The Identity of the Local Community in the Face of Globalization*, 214.

²⁰⁹ Tang, *China's Housing Middle Class: Changing Urban Life in Gated Communities*, 139.

²¹⁰ Manon Lautard and Pierre-François Galpin, "Gated Communities: A New Form of Urbanity and a Real Estate Product Born of Peri-urbanization," *Cities Territories Governance*, https://www.citego.org/bdf_fiche-document-1728_en.html (accessed April 10, 2023).

²¹¹ Belhai and Djelal, "Gated Communities in the Suburbs of Algiers, Products of Social Disparities and a Security Imperative."

why residents choose to buy a house and live in these communities.²¹² The third highlights the circumstances that resulted in the emergence of GCs in Algiers, and their ideological and urban planning references.²¹³

In Algeria, the term ‘GC’s’ are generally referred to similar terms such as closed-communities, secure residences, housing residences,²¹⁴ ‘a bourgeois-elitist project’²¹⁵, etc. Initially, the people who were looking for this expensive product were the wealthy immigrants in the 1980s who were looking for individual homes or buying real estate properties in Algeria. However, this part of the demand quickly disappeared during the ‘the Black Decade’, only to return later in the form of the demand for security and isolation. In addition to immigrants, a new national demand has emerged, driven by the Algerian bourgeois elite. This class began to take shape as Algeria opened up to foreign trade and introduced study programs abroad, enabling merchants, doctors, and other professionals to travel internationally on a regular basis. These experiences exposed them to bourgeois housing models and representations, including the concept of GCs designed for the wealthy.²¹⁶ Their professions or social statuses, such as being prominent doctors, high-ranking civil servants, senior military officers, or influential merchants, required a secure and private lifestyle for themselves and their families.²¹⁷

With the economic crisis in 1986, major construction companies that could no longer get bids from the public sector turned to real estate development on their own. Therefore, it took another form, especially when the famous Algerian real estate company *GENISIDER* started to cooperate with the French expertise in the end of the 80s. Thus the earliest GCs were marketed as a new housing product, a phenomenon shown to be widespread in French cities. Since then, most private real estate developers have adopted ‘gating’ as a marketing tool to the extent that they promoted it as their unique form of housing.²¹⁸ The first GC was built in *Annaba*, by the end of 1980s.²¹⁹ Then, from the end of

²¹² Hathout, *"Closed" Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a "Liberal" Residential Product Threatening the City*, 36.

²¹³ Boulbir, "Emergence of Residential Enclosures in Algeria, 'The New Practices of Bourgeois Urbanity,'" 13.

²¹⁴ Belhai and Djelal, "Gated Communities in the Suburbs of Algiers, Products of Social Disparities and a Security Imperative," 2–5.

²¹⁵ Boulbir, "Emergence of Residential Enclosures in Algeria, 'The New Practices of Bourgeois Urbanity,'" 5.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5–8.

²¹⁹ Hathout, *"Closed Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a Liberal Residential Product Threatening the City*," 152.

the 1990s, these communities started to spread to other cities like *Algiers* and *Bejaia*.²²⁰ Recently, it became a national phenomenon in other cities of Algeria, in significantly increasing numbers.²²¹

Hathout argues that GCs represent an idea aimed at legitimizing the dominance of the bourgeois elite, whose influence had declined after Algerian independence. These elites took advantage of the new political and economic context to reassert their presence in public life by imposing the logic of capital.²²² Housing consumption becomes a key site of innovation and a strategic tool for social differentiation, through which these elites incorporate the concept of GCs into their consumption practices.²²³

The liberalization of land and real estate markets has positioned private developers as influential actors in the urbanization process, particularly through their role in shaping urban development and promoting high-end housing, notably in the form of GCs.²²⁴ Consequently, the emergence of GCs in Annaba cannot be attributed only to purchaser demand. Rather, it reflects the role of new urban actors; private real estate developers, who stimulate the consumption of such residential products among affluent buyers, who are willing to pay high prices for exclusive and unique products.²²⁵

However, the pace of housing production in the form of GCs in the period between 1988-2002 was weak and corresponded to the period of launching and experimenting with the new product, as real estate developers were alone without any state assistance. The first jump in pace was after 2002, with the introduction and allowance of a large number of private developers (in *Annaba* for example 112 in 2007) to participate in housing production, when GCs began to attract more demand.²²⁶

²²⁰ Ibid., 3.

²²¹ Belhai and Djelal, "Gated communities in the suburbs of Algiers, products of social disparities and a security imperative," 2–5.

²²² Boulbir, "Emergence of Residential Enclosures in Algeria, 'The New Practices of Bourgeois Urbanity,'" 3.

²²³ Hathout, "Closed Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a 'Liberal' Residential Product Threatening the City," 266.

²²⁴ Belhai and Djelal, "Gated Communities in the Suburbs of Algiers, Products of Social Disparities and a Security Imperative," 8–9.

²²⁵ Hathout, "Closed" Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a "Liberal" Residential Product Threatening the City, 312.

²²⁶ Ibid., 203–283.

According to *Belhai and Djelal*, GCs are a product of social disparities, and three factors can be considered as drivers behind the spread in *Algiers*: the housing crisis, land liberation, and insecurity.²²⁷ In the case of Annaba, one of the key factors contributing to the proliferation of GCs is the city's designation as a future metropolis within the national urban development strategy. This status has enhanced its appeal to affluent private developers seeking investment opportunities. Furthermore, rising concerns over security driven by increasing unemployment and a growing crime rate, as reported by security services have amplified demand for secure residential environments, further fuelling the development of such communities.²²⁸

In the case of Algiers, and as noted by *Belhai and Djelal*, GCs can be seen as a symptom of the fragmentation and disorder of the urban structure. The city's urban landscape reflects a lack of spatial cohesion, marked by a mix of diverse and often conflicting elements. Urban production in Algiers consists of three main types: state-built housing, privately constructed buildings, and informal or illegal constructions. Furthermore, the proliferation of various types of GCs within the same urban area contributes to, and reinforces, socio-spatial segregation.²²⁹

GCs contribute to widening social inequalities, because the physical fence does not only separate the community from the rest of the city, it also creates social segregation, destroying connections between residents of a city. These communities also lead to strong regional variations that lead to the marginalization and exclusion of social groups facing unemployment and poverty, especially when they are spatially close. GCs can thus be seen, as a symbol of spatial fragmentation and segregation at the local level and even constitute a source of spatial inequality amplification.²³⁰

Nowadays, GCs respond to the search for a quiet life, and target a specific category of citizens and property buyers, which are the rich and upper middle classes of society. While the real estate development is considered the main actor behind its spread in *Algiers* by private real estate developers who rely their commercial offer through the marketing of 'security'.²³¹

²²⁷ *Belhai and Djelal*, "Gated communities in the suburbs of Algiers, products of social disparities and a security imperative," 1–6.

²²⁸ *Hathout*, "Closed" Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a "Liberal" Residential Product Threatening the City, 7.

²²⁹ *Belhai and Djelal*, "Gated communities in the suburbs of Algiers, products of social disparities and a security imperative," 22.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 09.

Concerning the residents, these communities in *Algiers* gather a category of the population according to a certain number of specific indicators: kinship, geographical origin, values, socio-economic category. The social and economic structure of the GCs' residents in *Algiers* is homogeneous at the cultural, social and economic levels. Most of them hold important positions or perform liberal functions. Their method of transportation is using private cars and school buses provided by private schools.²³²

While in the past, the economic conditions and insecurity were the drivers behind the emergence of GCs in the city of *Algiers*; today the motive behind it is the search for a better life with more comfortable features. Nowadays, choosing to live in a GC is no longer just a quest for security, but rather a quest for luxury and societal prestige to confirm one's success and social status, something that only people with high incomes could afford.²³³ However, the study of *Hathout* highlights that the main reason for choosing to live in GCs is security and that only a gated space is capable of guaranteeing it. Other motivations include the desire for a better living environment, social reputation aim, hygiene, calm, and investment.²³⁴

As this trend towards the creation of GCs is not officially recognized, there is no legislation to oppose their diffusion. In an interview with Annaba's Head of Urban Planning, he stated "People are closing their private property. It does not bother anyone", a policy of "close the eye and let it happen", often adopted by our politicians.²³⁵ Ironically, the proliferation of GCs does not appear to be a major concern for public authorities, who continue to exhibit a permissive stance toward the phenomenon. This can be attributed, in part, to the limited public and institutional engagement with urban planning issues in Algeria.²³⁶

To summarize this chapter, housing development in Algeria has undergone a profound transformation. From the early post-independence years, when the state adopted a socialist approach, to the neoliberal shift that introduced market-driven housing policies, Algeria's urban sector reflects the evolution and the shifts of its governance and economic strategies.

²³² Ibid., 15–24.

²³³ Ibid., 14–26.

²³⁴ Hathout, *"Closed" Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a "Liberal" Residential Product Threatening the City*, 161–162.

²³⁵ Ibid., 163.

²³⁶ Boulbir, *"Emergence of Residential Enclosures in Algeria, 'The New Practices of Bourgeois Urbanity,'"* 1.

During the socialist era (1962–1989), housing in Algeria was largely controlled by the state, with government-led initiatives like ZHUN housing projects, which aim to meet the growing urban population's needs for housing. However, due to limited resources, public housing development struggled to keep pace with the demand. By the late 1980s, severe housing shortages signalled the failure of government-controlled urban planning, prompting a policy shift towards privatization and real estate liberalization.

The neo-liberal era (post-1990s) saw many legislative reforms, such as Law 90-25 and Law 11/04, which opened and facilitated real estate activity to private developers, reduced state intervention, and encouraged market-driven housing solutions.

One of the most notable urban transformations in Algeria has been the emergence and the rise of the GCs, the increasing proliferation of which reflects the direct influence of neoliberal urban policies, where market forces rather than public interest shape real estate development. In Algeria, the rise of GCs is not simply an architectural trend but a reflection of shifting class structures, market-driven urbanism, and the commercialization of housing. As of the moment when this study was undertaken, research on GCs in Algeria remains in its early stages, and the number of researchers who have addressed this phenomenon is low. There are no official statistics, and the GC's level of diffusion at the national scale remains unmeasured due to the absence of specific studies.²³⁷ As Hathout states, even though the trend towards GCs is highly affecting Algeria, like many other countries, the existing knowledge of the phenomenon is still very limited.²³⁸ Given this research gap, it becomes essential to examine GCs at a more localized level.

To partially address this gap, the next chapter discusses the case of GCs in Batna. The discussion builds on the main themes identified in the literature review, particularly those related to GCs worldwide that have not yet been explored in the Algerian context, as well as research gaps observed across both international and Algerian studies. The chapter explores the emergence of GCs in Batna, their overall design, marketing strategies, social composition, spatial configuration, the perceptions of users and non-users, and the socio-spatial segregation they generate.

²³⁷ Belhai and Djelal, *"Gated communities in the suburbs of Algiers, products of social disparities and a security imperative,"* 2–5.

²³⁸ Hathout, *"Closed" Residences in Annaba (North East Algeria) a "Liberal" Residential Product Threatening the City,* 173.

CHAPTER 4

GATED COMMUNITIES IN BATNA

4.1. A Historical Overview of Batna's Urban Expansion

Batna is located in eastern Algeria and comprises 61 municipalities,²³⁹ covering an area of 3,393.97 hectares. Its strategic position has long established it as a key economic hub, facilitating trade and movement between the country's northern and southern regions, particularly since the colonial era. The city stretches over a vast territory, much of which is suitable for urban development, shaping its historical trajectory of expansion.²⁴⁰

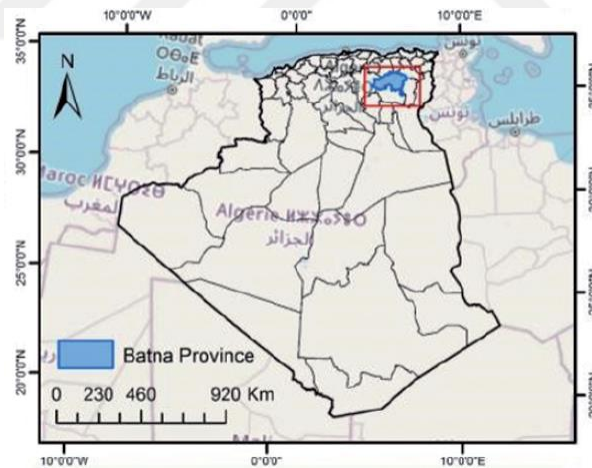


Figure 17. The location of Batna province.

(Source: Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, "Mass Neighbourhoods in Algeria," 75)

²³⁹ Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, "Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City," 74.

²⁴⁰ Fawzia Souissi, *The Growth of the City of Batna and the Necessity of Expansion Towards the the Periphery* (Magister thesis, Mentouri University, Constantine, Algeria, 2006), 9, 12, 19. (Title translated from Arabic by the author).

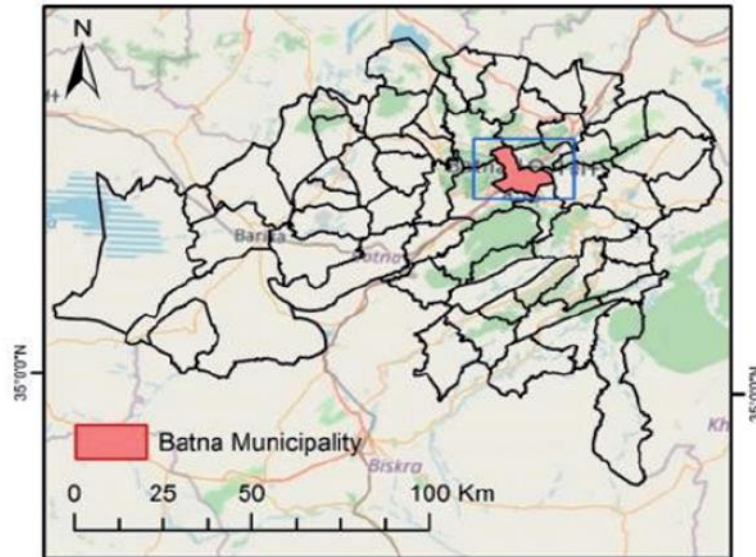


Figure 18. The location of Batna municipality.
(Source: Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, “Mass Neighbourhoods in Algeria,” 75)

Batna grew significantly during the colonial period, but its history goes back much further, to Roman times. The town and its surroundings have been a meeting point for various civilizations over the centuries. Notably, on the south-eastern outskirts of Batna, the Roman cities of ‘Timgad’ and ‘Lambese’ flourished, leaving behind a rich architectural heritage. However, the urban development of Batna as a colonial city began in the mid-19th century, marked by the establishment of a French military camp.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Dounia Khireddine and Aichour Boudjemaa, "Batna City from Organized Planning to Distortion (Case Study: Biskra Road Axis - Algeria)," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2022): 82.



Figure 19. The Roman city of 'Timgad', Batna, Algeria.
(Source: Nedjai, Urban Planning Instruments, 160)



Figure 20. The Roman city of 'Lambese', Batna, Algeria.
(Source: Nedjai, Urban Planning Instruments, 160)

In 1843, Batna was formally founded as a colonial settlement with the creation of a French military camp in what is now known as the 'Camp District'. This site initially included residential areas for French civilians, who were later relocated outside the barracks. Meanwhile, south of the military zone, a separate settlement for the indigenous

population emerged, later known as 'Z'mala'. At this time, Batna was still a small settlement, covering only 12 hectares.²⁴²



Figure 21. The residential areas for French civilians, Batna, 1923.
(Source: Bendib, *Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments*, 70)

Starting in 1871, Batna began to expand, reaching 26 hectares as urban infrastructure developed. This expansion reflected the broader administrative and economic consolidation of the French colonial presence and included the establishment of key public facilities, like two schools, a church, a market, a theatre (now 'Al-Atik' Mosque), a municipal building, a Christian cemetery, and a courthouse. Until 1923, the city remained divided into two distinct areas: the military core and Z'mala, a traditional district to the south.²⁴³

From 1923, to strengthen Batna's position as a strategic centre in the region, several major projects were initiated, including the construction of the railway station, which played a key role in transforming Batna into an administrative and commercial centre. Additionally, the colonial administration constructed a military airport in the south-western part of the military zone. Residential expansion during this period followed a segregated pattern: the Émir Abdelkader neighbourhood (now 'Stand') developed in the north as an upscale district for European settlers, while the indigenous population remained concentrated in Z'mala, which expanded significantly toward the southeast. Adjacent to

²⁴² Souissi, *The Growth of the City of Batna and the Necessity of Expansion the Periphery*. 36, 37

²⁴³ Ibid., 38

this area, the Bouakal and Chikhi neighbourhoods emerged as poorly equipped settlements. Originally built as colonial encampments, these areas were designed to contain and control displaced rural populations by isolating them and facilitating surveillance.²⁴⁴



Figure 22. The railway, 1923, Batna, Algeria
(Source: Bendib, Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments, 72)



Figure 23. The military airport the military zone, Batna, 1923
(Source: Bendib, Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments, 71)

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 39



Figure 24. The residential expansion for French civilians.
(Source: Bendib, Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments, 71)

By the mid-20th century, Batna's urban landscape continued to change, marked by the construction of new housing projects by the French colonial authorities, and the spread of informal settlements built by the indigenous population who were displaced by French colonial violence. In 1958, the city saw the emergence of mass housing developments built by the French colonial administration as part of mass housing efforts, including the construction of 180 Housing Units (now 'Ben Boulaid' Alleys), 158 Housing Units, the Fouriar neighbourhood with 100 Housing Units, and France Street (now Independence Street). Meanwhile, in the south, informal housing clusters began to form as indigenous populations fled colonial violence. Over time, these settlements expanded, eventually developing into established neighbourhoods such as Kechida, Chikhi, Parc-à-Fourrage, and Bouzourane.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.



Figure 25. 100 housing units' neighbourhood for French civilians, Batna, 1958.
(Source: Bendib, *Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments*, 72)

By 1962, Batna had developed around its military nucleus, European districts in the north and traditional neighbourhoods for the indigenous population in the south, separated by green spaces. However, following independence in 1963, the city experienced a massive population influx, further intensified by the departure of French settlers. Although many new residents settled in recently vacated colonial housing, the supply did not meet the demand. As the city's population grew, the pressure on housing and infrastructure increased, highlighting the urgent need for planned urban expansion. To address this, the 'Aurès'²⁴⁶ Program was launched in 1968, aiming to extend Batna's area to 1,227 hectares to facilitate new industrial and residential projects, improve the city's infrastructure, and develop agriculture, healthcare, education, and services.²⁴⁷

By the late 1970s, unregulated urban expansion intensified, largely due to the Real Estate Reserves Law, which allowed property owners to subdivide and sell large plots of land. During this period, Batna also benefited from large-scale social housing programs (ZHUN), which led to the construction of thousands of housing units across the city, including projects of 742, 410, 1,020, and 800 units, among others.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ The word *Aurès* is likely of Berber origin, as it is also used for Jebel Aurès, a mountain in Batna. See Khireddine Dounia and Aichour Boudjemaa, "Batna City from Organized Planning to Distortion (Case Study: Biskra Road Axis - Algeria)," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2022): 82.

²⁴⁷ Souissi, *The Growth of the City of Batna and the Necessity of Expansion Towards the Periphery*, 41.

²⁴⁸ Souissi, *The Growth of the City of Batna and the Necessity of Expansion Towards the Periphery*, 42.



Figure 26. A ZHUN project, 1020 housing unit neighbourhood, Batna.
(Source: Guerarra, Revalorization of New Urban Housing Areas, 144)

By the end of the 1990s, the city's built area had become highly saturated with construction, yet expansion continued in all directions. Growth occurred through both planned urban projects and unauthorized construction, which consumed significant portions of the city's land and resulted in large informal settlements.²⁴⁹



Legend: ■ Civil town - Camp- 1st French presence ■ Sprawl before 1962 ■ Sprawl after 1962

Figure 27. Successive urban sprawl of the city of Batna.
(Source: Boudjemaa, "Batna City from Organized Planning to Distortion," 85)

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

After 2000, Batna entered a new phase known as "infill development," where urban expansion focused on utilizing remaining vacant spaces within the city. However, as available land became increasingly scarce, the search for new expansion zones beyond the existing urban fabric became necessary.²⁵⁰

Despite the strict regulations and institutional provisions introduced in 2016, which prohibit the conversion of agricultural land into industrial or activity zones, the limited supply of land and the high demand from private economic actors have led to numerous violations of urban planning laws. As a result, dozens of hectares of agricultural land (63.15 hectares in 2016) saw the construction of housing units.²⁵¹



Figure 28. The use of agricultural lands in favour of mass housing, 2016, Batna.
(Source: Bendib, *Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments*, 110)

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 43

²⁵¹ Abdelhalim Bendib, *Geomatization of Land Planning Instruments for a Coherent and Sustainable Spatial Management: The Case of the City of Batna* (PhD dissertation, University of Batna, 2017), 110. (Title translated from French by the author).



Figure 29. A Recent ZHUN apartment blocks, Hamla, Batna.
(Source: Nezzar, Hamla: From a New Town Landscape to a Dormitory Landscape, 203)

According to Souissi, an Algerian researcher in the field of housing, Batna features five distinct housing typologies: villa type, courtyard type, standard housing, shacks, apartment blocks, and semi-collective housing. ‘Villa type’, remained limited after independence due to the rise of informal construction; it only became more common with the introduction of land allotments. The ‘courtyard type’, prevalent during the colonial period until 1962, is characterized by a central courtyard surrounded by rooms and other spaces of the house, typically single-story with tile roofs, many have since been modified with additional floors. What Souissi calls ‘Standard housing’, is the most common type in Batna, characterized by the absence of a central courtyard or tile roof, with one house typically ranging from two to four stories. ‘Shacks’, or informal housing, consist of sub-standard dwellings made from tin, wood, clay sheets, or other low-quality materials, often inhabited by very low-income populations. Reaching up to 12 stories ‘apartment blocks’, largely define Batna’s urban landscape. Lastly, ‘semi-collective’ housing, refers to two-story buildings resembling apartment blocks, introduced in the early post-independence

period as part of development programs. This typology is found only in three neighbourhoods in Batna: 84 Housing Units neighbourhood, 20 August Housing neighbourhood, and 150 Housing Units neighbourhood.²⁵²

While these typologies have shaped and continue to shape Batna's urban identity, Souissi's classification does not cover the recent shift, most notably, the emergence of a new housing trend: gated housing communities. The following section in this chapter discusses the causes behind their emergence, analysing their spatial and architectural characteristics, social dynamics, marketing strategies, residents' perceptions, and opinions from various academics and architects, as well as the broader implications of their proliferation in Batna via five selected cases.

In this chapter, I will follow a logical progression from general context to specific findings. I will begin by introducing the selected case studies and describing their key physical and architectural characteristics to provide the reader with a clear understanding of what is being analysed to lay the groundwork for critical analysis via these descriptions:

4.2. Case Studies: GCs in Batna

To understand the characteristics, development patterns, and internal organization of Batna's GCs, this section presents five case studies. These examples represent a variety of housing typologies, ranging from villa-based compounds to high-rise condominium complexes and mixed developments, and illustrate the diversity of scale, architectural form, and amenities present within the city's gated housing market.

²⁵² Souissi, *The Growth of the City of Batna and the Necessity of Expansion Towards the Periphery*, 90-91-92.

Case study 01: ‘Villas Benbellat-Tazoult’



Figure 30. Aerial view of ‘Villas Benbellat’ in relation to the city centre.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 23, 2023)



Figure 31. Closer aerial view of GC ‘Villas Benbellat’.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 23, 2023)

Located in the southern suburbs of Batna, this GC, was constructed in 2010, by Benbellat Real Estate Company. It features a linear layout with rows of identical villas. The community comprises 58 villas arranged in two parallel rows, with 29 identical villas in each row, forming a symmetrical layout. Currently, an additional set of 80 villas is under construction adjacent to the existing community, developed by the same company.



Figure 32. Part of the site plan²⁵³ of 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Taken from the Archive of the Reconstruction Directorate of Batna City, February 2024)

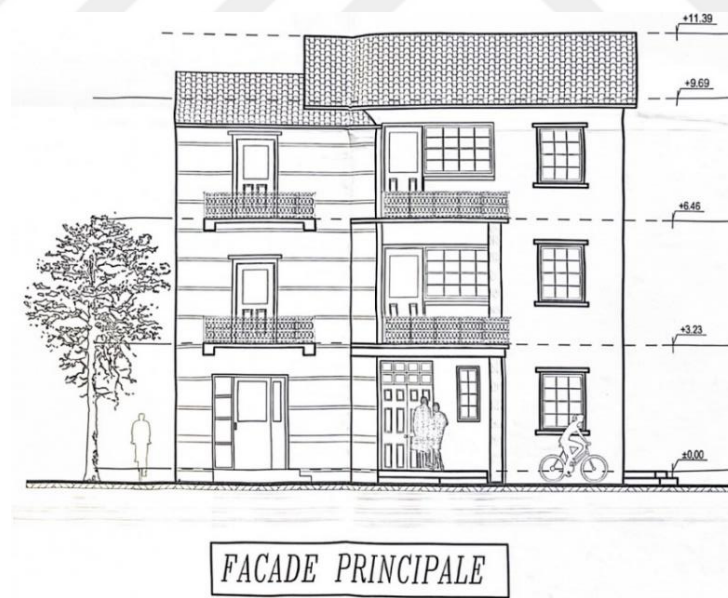


Figure 33. Architectural drawing of the main façade in 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Taken from the Archive of the Reconstruction Directorate of Batna City, February 2024)

²⁵³ This figure shows only part of the site plan because according to the staff at the Reconstruction Directorate of Batna City; the full version could not be found in the archive during the visit in February 2024.



Figure 34. Street view of 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 35. Standard villa type provided in the 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 36. Example of a user-modified villa in the ‘Villas Benbellat’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 37. View of another modified villa in the ‘Villas Benbellat’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 38. The newest villas under construction in ‘Villas Benbellat’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 39. The mosque built as part of the ‘Villas Benbellat’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 40. Playgrounds in the ‘Villas Benbellat’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

The community comprises standard villas with a uniform architectural design characterized. Each villa features a front-facing garage and an individual entrance. A perimeter wall encloses the community with controlled access via a regulated main entrance. Amenities currently available within the community include a mosque and few small playground areas.

Case study 02: 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala'

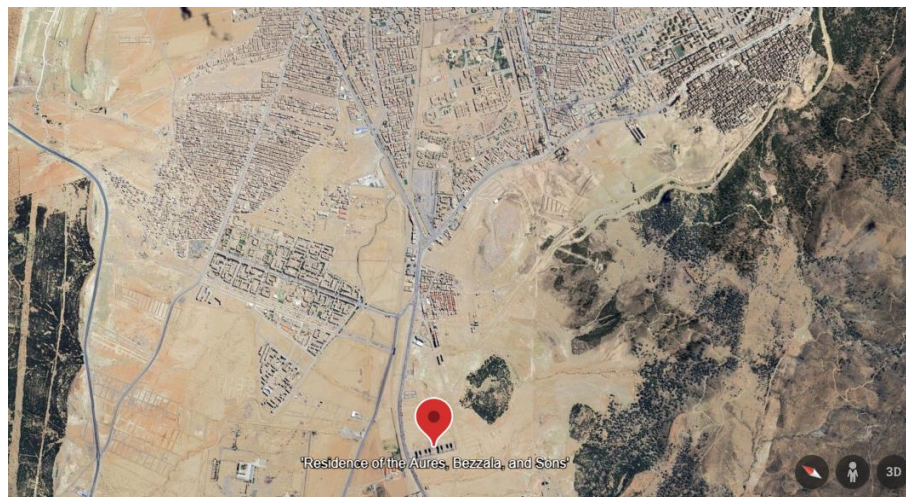


Figure 41. Location of ‘Résidence Bezzala’ in relation to Batna center.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 22, 2023)



Figure 42. Close-up aerial view of 'Résidence Bezzala'.
 (Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 22, 2023)

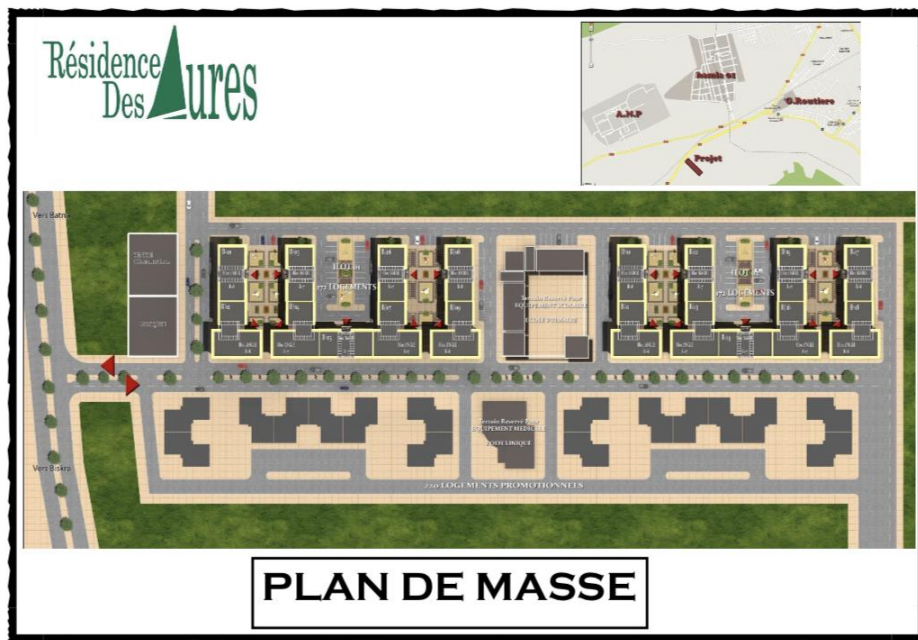


Figure 43. Site plan of 'Résidence Bezzala'.
 (Source: Source: Digital file by Rabie Mimoune, architect, July 2023)

Located in the western suburbs of Batna, this GC was built by Bezzala Construction Company and was built in 2012. The community consists of 344 housing units distributed among 32 high-rise condominium buildings. The site layout includes a reserved area for a planned primary school, still unbuilt, which serves as a spatial separator between two groups of 16 condominium blocks.



Figure 44. Proposed playground area in the GC ‘Résidence Bezzala’.
(Source: Source: Digital file by Rabie Mimoune, architect, July 2023)



Figure 45. View of the parking area within the GC ‘Résidence Bezzala’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

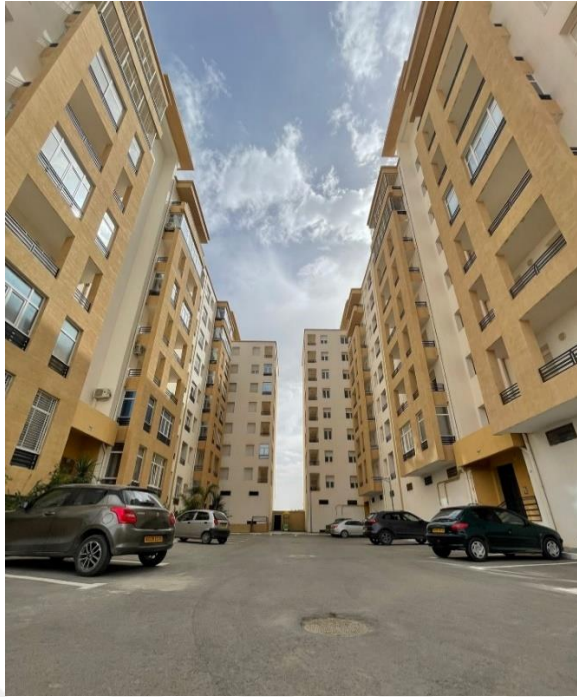


Figure 46. View of apartment blocks in 'Résidence Bezzala'
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 47. Main entrance and security checkpoint in 'Résidence Bezzala'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

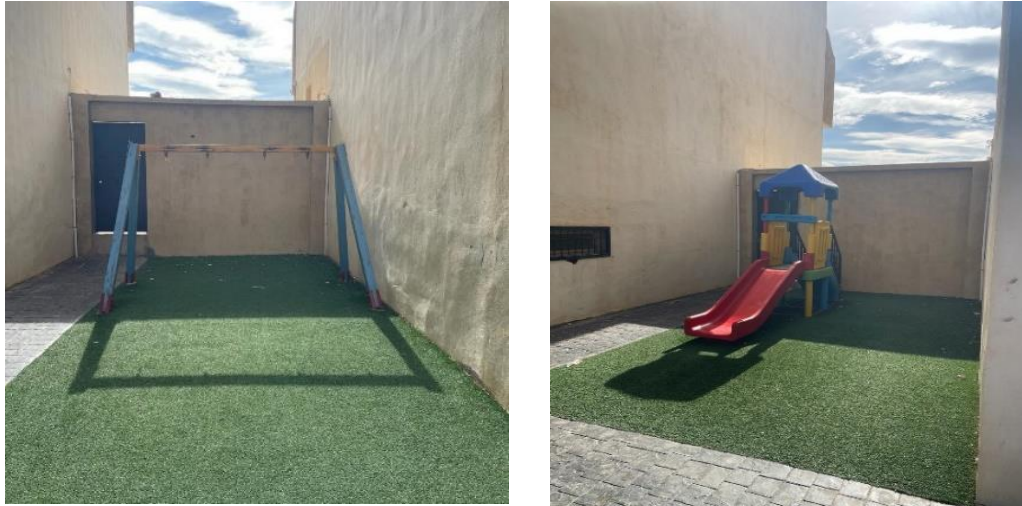


Figure 48. Playgrounds in 'Résidence Bezzala'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

Each condominium consists of seven floors, and dedicated parking areas surround each group of eight blocks. All blocks within this GC share an identical architectural design. The community is secured by an enclosing wall, with a main entrance monitored by a security guard regulating entry and exit. Apart from small playgrounds and a few shops facing the main road, no additional amenities currently exist within this community.

Case study 03: 'Residence Benaldjia'



Figure 49. Aerial view of 'Résidence Benaldjia' in relation to city centre.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 22, 2023)

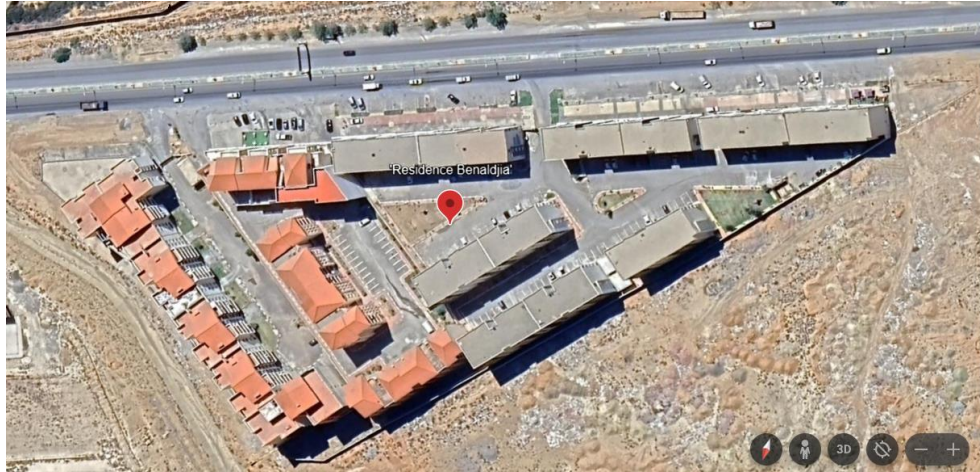


Figure 50. Closer aerial view of 'Résidence Benaldjia'.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 22, 2023)

Located in the north-eastern suburbs of the city, this GC was built by Benaldjia Real Estate Company in 2016. The development consists of eleven medium-rise condominium buildings, comprising 120 apartments. These are distributed as follows: 68 apartments are in the southern blocks, while the northern blocks accommodate 52 units. Parking areas, a playground, and small green spaces separate the two sections. All buildings within the community share the same architectural design and consist of four to five story structures.



Figure 51. Site plan of 'Résidence Benaldjia'.
(Source: Archive of the Reconstruction Directorate of Batna City, February 2024)



Figure 52. Architectural drawing of the main façade in 'Résidence Benaldjia'.
(Source: Archive of the Reconstruction Directorate of Batna City, February 2024)



Figure 53. View of apartment blocks in the GC 'Résidence Benaldjia'.
(Author's photo, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 54. Another view of parking area in the GC 'Résidence Benaldjia'.
(Author's photo, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 55. Playground area within the GC 'Résidence Benaldjia'.
(Author's photo, Batna, February 2024)

A surrounding wall marks the boundaries of the community, with access provided through a main entrance monitored by a security guard. Currently, the available amenities include a playground and several small green spaces, accompanied by a limited number of seating areas for residents. A few grocery stores have been built within the community, facing the main road. This placement allows both residents and non-residents to access them, making these markets accessible to the wider community.

Case study 04: '648 Housing Units'



Figure 56. Aerial view of '648 housing units' in relation to the city centre.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 23, 2023)



Figure 57. Closer aerial view of '648 housing units'.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 23, 2023)



Figure 58. Site plan of the GC '648 housing units'.
(Source: Khoudja Nouredin Omar, responsible architect of the project, February 2024)



Figure 59. Site model of the GC ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Author’s photo, July 19, 2023, Taamir Real Estate, El Manchar, Batna)

Located in the northern suburbs of the city, construction began in 2016 by Taamir Real Estate Company, and is currently ongoing. The development comprises 648 housing units, distributed as follows: ten twelve-story-high condominium, blocks containing 484 apartments, with the remaining 164 individual villas with four to seven bedrooms. The high-rise condominiums are concentrated in the southern section of the development, while the rest of the area is allocated to villas and amenities, including a primary school, a mosque, and a clinic. However, at the time of writing, these facilities had not yet been constructed.



Figure 60. View of apartment blocks in the ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 61. Street-level view of apartment blocks in ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Author’s image, February 2024)



Figure 62. View of the first parking area in '648 housing units'.
(Source: Author's image, February 2024)

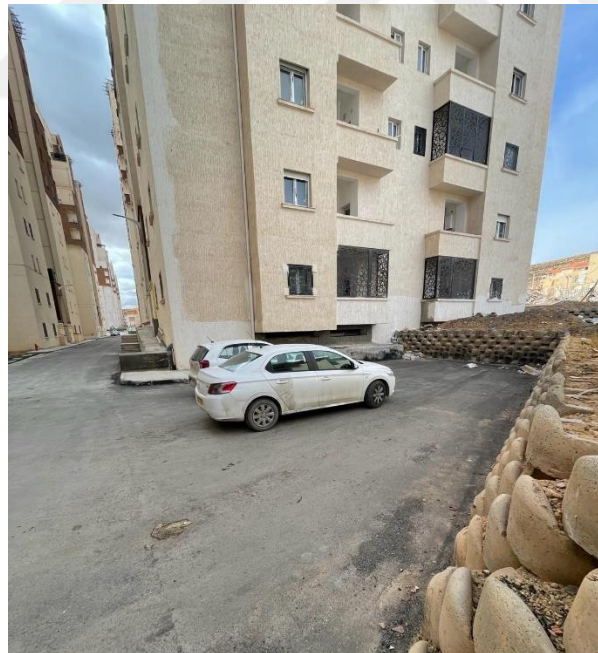


Figure 63. View of the second parking area in '648 housing units'.
(Source: Author's image, February 2024)

Several amenities are planned within the project, including a mosque, primary and middle schools, a medical clinic, and a shopping centre. The latter is not exclusively intended for residents but is also accessible to individuals from outside the community. According to an interview with the project's administrative and sales manager, the construction of the community's perimeter fence will take place after the entire construction phase is completed. The fence is planned as the final element to be constructed, since there is no immediate need for it while construction work is still ongoing.²⁵⁴



Figure 64. Exterior view of villa type 01 in '648 housing units'.
(Source: Author's photo, February 2024)

²⁵⁴ Interview with the administrative and sales manager of The Project, July 19, 2023.



Figure 65. View of villa type 02 in '648 housing units'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 66. Street-level view of existing villas in '648 housing units'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 67. Main façade of villa type 01 in ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 68. Architectural façade drawings of villa type 01 in ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)



Figure 69. Main façade of villa type 02 in ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

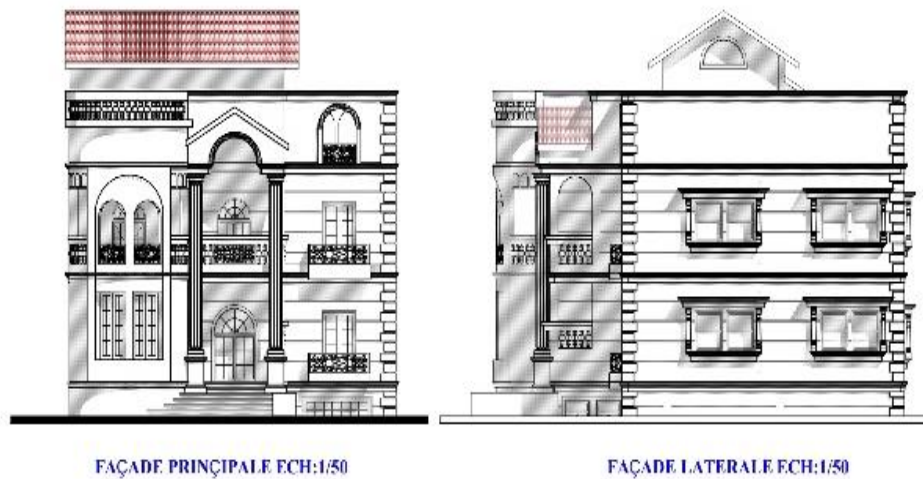


Figure 70. Architectural façade drawings of villa type 02 in ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

Currently, the condominium blocks are only partially inhabited, while the villas remain unoccupied. Additionally, since the project is still under construction, amenities such as the mosque, primary and middle schools, and the medical clinic have not yet been built. Furthermore, it remains uncertain whether their construction will be the responsibility of the same private developer or the state.²⁵⁵

Case study 05: 'Marwa Residence'



Figure 71. Aerial view of 'Marwa Residence' in relation to the city centre.
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 23, 2023)

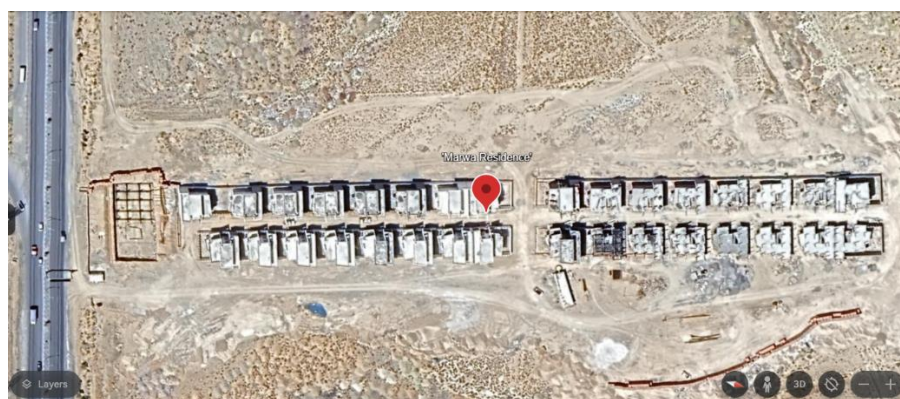


Figure 72. Closer aerial view of 'Marwa Residence'
(Source: Google Earth, digital image, accessed May 23, 2023)

²⁵⁵ Interview with the administrative and sales manager of The Project, July 19, 2023.

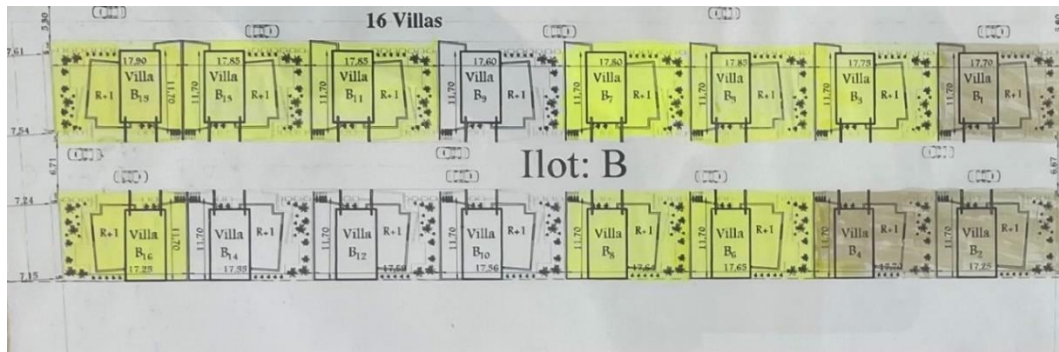


Figure 73. Site plan of the 'Marwa Residence'.
(Source: Taken from of Marwa Real Estate Company office, Batna, February 2024)

For Marwa Residence, Marwa Real Estate Company began construction in 2021 in the northern suburbs of the city, and the GC is not completed yet. It consists of 16 semi-detached villas arranged in two rows, with one row of eight villas positioned opposite the other. The private developer has recently begun constructing the second group of 16 villas, arranged similarly.



Figure 74. Exterior view of a typical villa in 'Marwa Residence'.
(Source: Author's photo, February 2024)



Figure 75. Typical villa row, under construction, ‘Marwa Residence’.
(Source: Images captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 76. Exterior view on ‘Marwa Residence’.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

A central road separates the two rows. Each villa features an open space (a garden), serving as a physical separation from the attached neighbouring villa. All villas within this GC share the same contemporary architectural envelope and the same repetitive module. A surrounding wall encloses the community. No amenities such as communal spaces, recreational areas, shops, or facilities, will be placed within this community.²⁵⁶

Following the visual presentation of each case study, the following table lists the features that define each case study:

²⁵⁶ Interview with the private developer of the project, February 2024.

Table 1. Summary of key features of selected GCs in Batna
(Source: Author)

Gated-Community	Construction Period	Developer	User Group	Architectural Typology	Amenities	Security	Housing Units
'Villas Benbellat Tazoult'	2010-2013	Benbellat Ahmed	Upper-Middle Class	Rowhouses	-Mosque. - Small play-ground areas.	Fence + Security guard at main entrance.	58
'Residence of The Aures, Bezzala'	2012-2017	Bezzala Rabie	Upper-Middle Class	High-rise Condominiums	-Two small Play-ground. -Few small green spaces.	Fence + Security guard at main entrance	344
'Residence Benaldjia'	2016-2021	Benaldjia Hmida	Upper-Middle Class	Mid-rise Condominiums	-Small play-grounds. - Few green spaces.	Fence + Security guard at main entrance	120
'648 Housing Unit'	2016- On-going	Amouri Laroussi	Upper-Middle Class + Middle Class	Hybrid (High-rise Condominium, Attached Rowhouses)	No existing amenities; however, a mosque, primary and middle school, medical clinic, and shopping centre are planned for future construction.	The fence will be constructed after the completion of the overall construction + Main Single Gate (ongoing)	648
'Marwa Residence'	2021- On-going	Djallal Abdennebi	Upper-Middle Class	Rowhouses	- No amenities	Fence + Security guard at main entrance	32

The selected GCs in Batna display various architectural features that differentiate them. These differences are reflected in several key aspects. In terms of building types, the selected GCs show variations in building forms. For example, the 648 Housing Units

project is a hybrid composition, integrating high-rise condominiums and attached row-houses. Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, is a high-rise condominium-based GC, while Residence Benaldjia follows a medium-rise condominium typology. Ben Bellat 1 Tazoult features row-houses with very simple façades, whereas Marwa Residence represents a contemporary row-house community with a modern façade design. The communities also feature a diverse range of housing units, including detached villas, semi-attached villas, attached row-houses, and apartments. The spatial arrangement is based on the housing typology of each GC. Row-houses follow a linear arrangement, while apartment blocks are more compact, grouped around the parking and circulation spaces. In mixed composition, the high-rise condominium buildings are located in the southern and eastern parts of the site; they are arranged in a compact way along the main roads. The northern part of the site is occupied by villas, which are placed in parallel rows, while amenities are strategically planned in central areas or along the main road to serve both residents and non-residents of the community. The availability of amenities varies among the communities; some provide a mosque, grocery stores, a shopping centre, while others offer limited amenities or none at all.

The architectural diversity observed among the case studies of GCs in Batna raises questions about the underlying factors and driving causes shaping these variations. Therefore, to understand these residential forms, it is essential to first investigate their emergence in Batna by examining the conditions and factors that led to their formation. This discussion is followed by an investigation of the reasons behind the design differences observed among the selected case studies. The discussion then turns to the promotional strategies used by developers, community formation/social ties within these communities, and the logic behind their layouts designs and spatial arrangement. Finally, it concludes with a presentation of GCs users' feedback, and the socio-spatial implications of these GCs in Batna.

I will use Sonia Roitman's framework only as a general organizational tool, adopting her two main categories, structural causes and subjective causes, to structure the analysis of the factors identified in Batna. While Roitman's article²⁵⁷ defines structural causes as economic, policy, and planning shifts and subjective causes as personal choices, motivations, and preferences, the specific subcategories presented here are derived from my

²⁵⁷ Roitman, "Gated Communities: Definitions, Causes and Consequences".

own fieldwork findings and differ from those in her classification. This approach allows for a clearer understanding of how various elements have shaped the emergence and expansion of GCs in Batna.

Accordingly, the structural causes identified in this study include globalization, mass media and internet exposure; the privatization of public lands; private real estate development under neoliberal reforms; urban and housing regulations; zoning regulations; and the absence of clear housing policies related to GCs. The subjective causes involve consumer culture, dissatisfaction with mass housing and the socio-economic segmentation it generates, as well as the security motive.

4.3. Structural Causes behind the Rise of Gated Communities in Batna

The emergence of GCs in Batna cannot be understood without examining the broader structural dynamics that have shaped the city's housing sector and urban growth. This section analyses the external forces and institutional frameworks that facilitated their rise, including the influence of globalization and mass media, neoliberal economic reforms, privatization, and shifts in urban planning and housing regulations.

4.3.1. Globalization, Mass Media, and Internet

Globalization, spurred by mass media and the use of the internet, plays a significant role in the spread of GCs, which originated in countries like England and the United States. As Jill L. Grant and Stéphane Degoutin state, GCs have reached nearly every corner of the world. However, in the case of Algeria, previous studies have overlooked the role of globalization in the emergence of these communities. This study argues that globalization is a primary factor that shaped the development of GCs in Batna, facilitating their spread as an idea or a trend to both consumers and developers. During the interviews conducted for this research, the interviewees pointed to the impact of mass media (accessed mainly via the internet) and consumer culture on resident preferences driving the rise of GCs in Batna.²⁵⁸

Frank J. Lechner and John Boli identify mass media and the internet as key drivers of globalization. Locally, Algerian researcher, Linda Azzazah also notes that in the age of globalization, the daily rituals and cultural practices of Algerians have become increasingly shaped by digital technology. Their interaction now primarily revolves around multimedia content accessed via digital technologies.²⁵⁹ This shift in media consumption has not only transformed lifestyles but also influenced architectural preferences and housing choices. This influence is also evident in Batna, where the exposure to international housing models through media and internet has played a significant role in both the emergence and the extension of GCs in the city. As Chahinez Djari notes in her dissertation titled *The Impact of Images from the Internet on the Genesis of the Architectural Idea* (2015), viewing architectural images through the media has a significant influence on the formation and development of an architectural idea for any project.²⁶⁰

The newly emerged form of GCs did not exist in Batna before 2010. Around that year, with the introduction of the internet into households and the rapid spread of social

²⁵⁸ The owner of Group Benbellat Real Estate Development Corporation, who created the first GC in Batna, highlighted the global sameness of architectural preferences, explaining, ‘‘We imitate the concept of ‘‘gated.’’ We saw it in different regions of the world, in Middle Eastern countries and America.’’ He also stated; ‘‘Due to the media effect, our architectural preferences are becoming the same. The same GCs in Brazil you can find in Canada and the same GCs in the Philippines you can find in Dubai. Nowadays, we have lost the concept of architectural identity.’’

²⁵⁹ Linda Azzazah, *Youth Culture in the Era of Globalization: A Field Study on a Sample of Batna University Youth* (PhD diss., Hadj Lakhder University – Batna, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2021), 230-232. (Title translated from Arabic into English by the author).

²⁶⁰ Chahinez Djari, *The Impact of Images from the Internet on the Genesis of the Architectural Idea* (PhD dissertation, University of Batna, 2015), 3. (Title translated from French by the author).

media platforms, people became increasingly exposed to new images, ideas, and architectural models. These images made the concept of GCs more accessible, turning it into a commodity or a housing option that people wanted to live in. The way media and the internet guide and shape the consumer's taste, promoting and presenting these communities as safe, luxurious, and exclusive environment for living, has played an important role in making GCs attractive to both consumers' desire to buy, and developers' strategy to sell.²⁶¹

4.3.2. Neoliberal Reforms and Privatization

This research aligns with studies by Blakely and Snyder (1997) and McKenzie (2015), among others, which argue that GCs emerged from the broader impact of the rise of neoliberalism and parallel economic reforms. In the Algerian context, the emergence and expansion of GCs coincided with the shift to a free-market economy and the start of privatization in the 1990s. These reforms, led to significant changes in housing laws and regulations. While some studies such as those by Mamish (2015), Ghasmi and Slimani (2016), Agagba (2018), and Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib (2019), as highlighted earlier, mention about how housing laws changed during Algeria's shift to a free-market economy, they do not follow the impact of these changes to the emergence of GCs.

4.3.2.1. Privatization of Public Lands

Since the 1990s, broader changes in property development laws in Algeria facilitated the transfer of public properties to individuals or companies, providing private developers with increased opportunities to construct housing projects on a larger scale. The Algerian government's transition to a free-market economy, which included the privatization of public lands, further enabled private property developers to acquire these lands from the government. In Batna, for instance, privately owned land covers 657.08 hectares, accounting for 19.36 percent of the city's total area. These properties are primarily located

²⁶¹ An academic interviewee states, "The media and social media have contributed greatly to spreading the idea and increasing interest in living in these GCs." Similarly, a research assistant and lecturer in the Department of Architecture at the University of Batna remarked, "Openness to others and other cultures has made this model of 'gated communities' a sort of 'international reference,' synonymous with prestige, sophistication, and ultimate luxury and comfort."

in the peripheral areas, which have become key zones for residential projects.²⁶² This policy played a key role in the rise of GCs in Batna's suburbs, particularly when urban authorities updated the land use plan to allow for housing development.

As consumer desire and demand for this new architectural product increased, GCs' suppliers benefited from the privatization of public lands, gaining the full right to buy and own land from the state. Many of them bought land in advance and waited for updates of the land use plan before starting construction.²⁶³

This shift toward the privatization of public lands has been allowing private actors to shape the urban space of the city of Batna in ways that serve their interests, which can lead to many critical consequences, especially spatial and social segregation. Such segregation can reduce the sense of belonging among the city's residents and weaken overall city cohesion. This concern was mentioned in an interview conducted with a research assistant and lecturer in the department of architecture at the University of Batna who said, *"the privatization of public space will reduce the feeling of belonging to the city among those who live within it."*

In addition, the sale of large public lands to private developers, reinforces social hierarchies by allowing the control of larger amounts of capital by fewer number of people, creating local and national monopolies. Those who own more land will be able to construct housing based on their own interests, without any real state intervention or regulation. This will lead to negative social and spatial consequences that will be discussed later.

4.3.2.2. Private Real Estate Development

In studies on GCs, researchers like Khalifi (2020) emphasizes the role of private real estate development in the growth of these communities worldwide. Khalifi's work parallels research on housing in Algeria by Dahar (2020), Mamish (2017), and Ghasmi and Slimani (2019), who highlight the state's efforts in early 2000s to liberalize the real estate market and incentivize real estate development through various financial and real

²⁶² Agagba, *Managing Urban Policy in Algeria: The Case of Batna*, 188.

²⁶³ The Head of Contract Laws and Building Settlement and Permits of Batna remarked; "When these property developers recognized that there was nothing stopping them from creating these communities after viewing the regulations, they waited for the updates of the land use plan and then bought the lands that allowed them to build these housing communities."

estate benefits. One key example is Law 11/04, discussed earlier, which is considered a major step in supporting and expanding the activities of private real estate developers in Algeria.

Interviews conducted during the study reveal that legal reforms in Algeria's real estate sector enabled private actors to enter the housing market, partially taking over the state's role in housing provision. A representative from the OPGI in Batna noted that one factor behind the rise of GCs was the introduction of laws permitting private actors to construct housing, addressing a backlog in government-supplied units. Likewise, the architect of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala emphasized that the state actively encouraged private developers by granting construction permissions for housing proposals on privately owned land.²⁶⁴

The Algerian state gave private developers the opportunity to take part in housing provision. However, by allowing real estate companies to produce GCs targeted at high-income groups, housing began to be treated as a profit-driven product and a commodity, rather than as a social right, as it should be. This capital-driven approach ignores the social and urban consequences of building these communities.

4.3.3. Urban and Housing Regulations

Urban laws require private developers to comply with development regulations and urban planning tools, including the Master Plan for Development and Reconstruction (PDEAU)²⁶⁵ and the Land Use Plan (POS)²⁶⁶. These two key planning instruments are designed to organize urban spaces, define project typologies and designated construction areas, and establish minimum and maximum building density limits.

²⁶⁴ According to the representative of the OPGI (Office of Promotion and Real Estate Management) in Batna, "Another cause behind this emergence is when the law included and allowed private actors to build housing after the government was the only provider for housing and is still facing the housing demand backlog." Similarly, The Architect of 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' observed, "the government was encouraging property developers to provide housing. If you have your own private land and you show them your proposition and they like it, they give you the permission to build it."

²⁶⁵ Algeria, *Law 90/29: Urban Planning Act*, Article 17, *Algerian Official Gazette* (2011): 970.

²⁶⁶ Algeria, *Law 90/29: Urban Planning Act*, Article 18, *Algerian Official Gazette* (2011): 981.

4.3.3.1. Zoning Regulations

This study addresses the important role of zoning regulations in both the proliferation and the architectural aspect of GCs in Batna. Although zoning regulations have received very limited attention in previous studies on GCs, they significantly influence where and how these communities are developed. Developers, after purchasing state-owned lands, wait for updates to the land use plan before initiating the construction of a GC within the designated housing zones. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of respecting the land use plan requirements during the construction of GCs, particularly regarding building heights and the maximum number of housing units allowed.

During the interviews with the developers, it became clear that recent changes to Batna's land use plan (POS) played a key role in enabling the expansion of private housing projects, including GCs. The Head of the Architecture Department at the Urban Planning and Construction Department in Batna explained that the authorities had revised the land use plan by allocating more vacant private lands for residential use. The developer of Marwa Residence project noted that although they had owned the land for years, they waited until the zoning regulations were finalized. Once the land was officially designated for housing, they proceeded with construction.²⁶⁷

The updating of housing zoning regulations, which private developers must await before launching their GCs construction projects phase, should not serve only to increase housing supply. It must be carefully studied by the urban authorities to ensure the protection of agricultural lands and contributes positively to the improvement of Batna's urban space and overall spatial quality.

4.3.3.2. Housing Policies

Hathout (2009) and Boulbir (2005) have argued that the proliferation of GCs in Algeria is not a primary focus of interest for the country's urban and housing authorities.

²⁶⁷The Head of the Architecture Department at the Urban Planning and Construction Department in Batna noted, "The authorities made new changes to the land use plan of Batna by adding many empty private lands for housing purposes." Furthermore, the Property Developer of the Real Estate Development Corporation Abdennebi ('Marwa Residence') shared, "We have owned this land for years. We waited until the regulations and decisions of the POS (the Land Use Plan) were finalized. Once authorities confirmed that the zoning permitted housing, we proceeded to build these villas."

This study supports that observation, finding that there are still no clearly defined housing policies addressing this phenomenon, despite its visible emergence over the past two decades across many Algerian cities; thus, the emergence and the continued growth of GCs in Batna. This policy gap was acknowledged by the architect of the “648 Housing Units” project, who stated, “*The weakness of laws and policies is behind the lack of control over this phenomenon.*”

The absence of any kind of concern, regulation, or clear position from the urban and housing authorities about GCs is making it easier for private developers to keep buying land from the state and building these communities. Since there are no laws that prevent or control this process, developers can continue freely. This situation may lead to a wider spread of this type of housing, especially in the suburbs of Batna, where many GCs could appear in the future. As a result, this may increase urban density and take over agricultural lands, which are mainly located on the outskirts of the city. This would have serious effects on the urban environment and the future development of the city.

4.4. Subjective Causes behind the Rise of Gated Communities in Batna

The residents of gated communities seek security, but more broadly, they seek control. They want to control crime and traffic. They want to be free from strangers, disruptions, intrusions. They want privacy, stability, peace of mind, familiarity. They want to protect their economic status and their investment in their home. All of these motivations are understandable and valid.²⁶⁸

There are a range of individual motivations that drive the demand for GCs. These motivations, while mainly focused on safety, also include aspirations for stability, predictability, and social distinction. In the context of Batna, several interconnected subjective factors have contributed to the preference for such housing models. These include the influence of consumer culture, dissatisfaction with the quality of state-provided housing, and increasing concerns about personal and property security. Each of these factors is discussed in the following subthemes:

²⁶⁸ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 143.

4.4.1. Consumer Culture and Preferences

After globalization sped up, consumer culture has been increasingly shaped by global trends and habits.²⁶⁹ People tend to desire and consume what is widely advertised, and made visible and offered through mass media, as well as what they encounter through their travels, not purely out of need, but because of what these goods symbolize to them. Bourdieu argues that in a culture of consumption: “*the tastes actually realized depend on the state of the system of goods offered; every change in the system of goods induces a change in tastes.*”²⁷⁰

It is not surprising, as this study shows, that a desire for GCs after being delivered through mass media, has started in the city of Batna and are preferred as a housing alternative by a specific social group in the city of Batna, mainly by those with upper-middle income levels. This group does not view GCs merely as a place to live; rather, they see them as symbols of a higher social status and distinction. Thus, the demand for these communities influences private developers to produce their supply in Batna. While developers produce various housing types, such as participatory housing (a government-supported model where future residents help finance and oversee the construction process, typically by forming resident groups or community associations, while the state provides the land and partial financial support), and assisted private promotion (a state-supported model where private developers are encouraged through incentives and subsidies to build housing for middle- or low-income groups), these forms are largely absent from mass media representation.

During the interviews, members of academia and the architectural community expressed a strong awareness that globalization, consumer culture, and the demand for exclusivity play a part in the residents’ desire to own a house based on exclusivity and distinction. This desire is reinforcing the production of housing in the form of GCs, and possibly the creation of other future models that respond to the demand for the users’ need to symbolize and signal their wealth, display their social status, and feel distinct. A lecturer from the Department of Architecture at the University of Batna described the rise

²⁶⁹ Güzey, “Neoliberal Urbanism Restructuring the City of Ankara: Gated Communities as a New Lifestyle in a Suburban Settlement,” 96.

²⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 231.

of GCs as a consequence of globalization. He explained that the growing supply and demand for this housing type is driven by a desire for a comfortable lifestyle and the pursuit of social distinction. According to him, consumer culture now plays a key role in shaping social identity, promoting a fashionable housing model that combines services, sociability, safety, and leisure. An architect interviewed in Batna also noted that consumer culture has influenced investor behaviour, leading many to see GCs as a profitable real estate opportunity.²⁷¹

4.4.2. Mass Housing in Batna

Various studies abroad, including Charbel (1999), Grant (2007), and Khalifi (2020), have stated that the low quality of state-provided housing is a key driver that influences the choice to live in GCs, particularly among certain social groups. Studies on GCs in Algeria have not addressed this as a significant factor, which contributes to their emergence and accelerates their proliferation. In their study titled *Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City* (2024), Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib stress the importance of improving the quality of the mass housing, highlighting that enhancements are necessary for residents to have a better and secure life. They emphasize the need for better access to essential services, including a cleaner environment, adequate public amenities, and entertainment.²⁷² During the interviews, residents of GCs heavily criticized the quality of housing produced by the state as unsuitable for living and investment, highlighting many issues including hygiene, size, maintenance, materials and security.²⁷³ Thus, for low-income families who cannot afford to live in GCs, housing provided by the state remains the only solution. As a result, mass housing may serve the

²⁷¹ A lecturer in the Department of Architecture at the University of Batna, who described this phenomenon as a ‘repercussion of globalization’. He claimed that ‘the supply and strong demand for this type of housing can be explained by the desire to have an easy quality of life or a ‘lifestyle’ and the social distinction to have a social status. This culture of consumption has become a determining factor in social identity, as it promotes a model of housing that is currently ‘a fashion’ and that offers a set of services and amenities...combining sociability, safety, and leisure.’ Similarly, an interviewed architect in Batna noted, ‘consumer culture has prompted some investors to search for real estate investment opportunities, making GCs a mean to achieve profitable returns on investment.’

²⁷² Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, "Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City," 84.

²⁷³ One mentioned, ‘Social housing is horrible, surface areas of the apartments are so small, and they have water availability problems.’ Another added, ‘The quality of the finishes in state housing is zero quality, which requires you to remove everything and start it all over again.’ One interviewee

needs of lower-income families, but it leaves wealthier residents unsatisfied and searching for “higher-quality” alternatives.

Therefore, the issue of mass housing as a subjective cause that led many residents to choose to live in GCs can be broken down into two main aspects. The first is the socio-economic stratification created by the state through its focus on providing housing mainly for low-income families, while neglecting the needs of other income groups who require adequate housing options. As a Professor of Architectural and Urban Phenomena at the University of Batna stated, *“Its spread demonstrates the failure of the housing policy adopted by the state, which tries to place all social classes in one housing type.”* The second aspect is the low level of security in these public housing areas, which has become another key reason why many residents prefer to live in GCs. As stated by the administrative and sales manager of TAAMIR Real Estate Company, noting: *“people see it as a suitable place for their security, since the housing that the state is providing does not meet the this need for this group of people.”*

4.4.2.1. Socio-economic Stratification

Since the start of implementing mass housing programs (ZHUN projects) in 1974, the state has consistently targeted vulnerable and low-income groups.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, studies on housing in Algeria as Bin Al-din (2014), Marmish (2017), and Ghasmi and Slimani (2019), all agreed with the fact that state housing in the country has been primarily provided for low-income groups. Other socio-economic groups, like upper middle-income and high-income families, have not been offered housing provision by the state. According to a study by Nacer and Barhi in 2003, in Batna’s ZHUN projects, residents

highlighted, “The state housing formats provide very tiny and small apartments; the construction materials they used are not of good quality, as are the doors and windows.” Furthermore, a participant pointed out, “When you see the quality, the apartment’s areas of the state housing is horrible, four rooms in 84m2. Is that a joke?” Another participant remarked, “The quality of state housing does not encourage you to buy or invest your money in it. Everyone there is suffering. No water, no security, crowded, and other problems.”

²⁷⁴ Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, "Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City," 74.

endured difficult conditions.²⁷⁵ Barkat et.al confirm that residents of ZHUN housing programs in Batna have consistently struggled with declining quality of life and poor conditions, as those of the 800 housing units neighbourhood.²⁷⁶

The quality of state-provided housing does not meet the needs or expectations of the city's high-income residents, and this is a key factor influencing both the spread of GCs in Batna. These individuals seek more luxurious homes in areas inhabited by others from similar social and economic backgrounds. This socio-economic gap, partly shaped by the state's housing policy, encourages private developers to invest in GCs to meet the unmet demand of wealthier residents.

Some interviewees stated that the emergence of GCs in Batna reflects a clear process of social and economic stratification. These residential projects are financially out of reach for lower- and middle-income groups, making them accessible only to a narrow, affluent segment of the population. Private developers intentionally design and market these projects to high-income families, claiming that most mass housing programs already address the needs of lower-income groups. This intention was confirmed by the property developer of Group Benbellat Real Estate Development Corporation, who explained: *“we built a number of villas according to the land surface capacity. Our target for this project was high-income families, because they cannot find suitable housing for their needs, as you know the majority of people are low income families, and the housing provision by the state is targeted for them.”* Within these communities, residents value not only the quality of housing but also the perceived social status of their neighbours. For some, living in GCs is a way to escape the issues they believe come with crowded state housing shared with lower-income groups.²⁷⁷

Although developers justify their focus on high-income families by claiming that the state already supports low-income groups, this strategy reinforces social segregation. However, the solution does not lie in building separate housing for the wealthy. It is the

²⁷⁵ Farida Naceur and Abdallah Farhi, “Les zones d'habitat urbain nouvelles en Algérie: Inadaptabilité spatiale et malaises sociaux. Cas de Batna,” *Insaniyat* 22 (2003): 74.

²⁷⁶ Barkat, Seghiri, and Houbib, “Mass Residential Neighbourhoods in Algeria: Between Reality and Planning. A Case Study of the 800 Housing Units Neighbourhood in Batna City,” 73.

²⁷⁷ A lecturer in the Department of Architecture at the University of Algiers, “These GCs are not for anyone; for example, a simple employee with a below-average income cannot afford housing in these communities. Families in these communities want to live with the same class; they do not want to live with the poor and middle-income classes.” A resident in 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' stated “Buying a house in crowded mass housing is not the same as buying a house in a gated residence like this one. Personally, I highly search for the quality of people I live with. I prefer to avoid problems with neighbours.”

responsibility of the state to provide better quality housing that includes residents from different income levels. This way can improve living conditions without deepening social divisions.

4.4.2.2. Security as a Motive

People's preferences are increasingly influenced by fear due to the state's failure to ensure safety, and this fear legitimizes the preference for GCs.²⁷⁸ Security has consistently been identified as a primary driver for the emergence of GCs worldwide, as stated in various existing studies. In this context, fear plays an important role in how these places are marketed. Ads use clear messages and images to tap into people's worries and their need for safe living, as seen in the case of Istanbul.²⁷⁹ In the context of GCs in Algeria, researchers such as Boulbir (2005) and Hathout (2009) have highlighted that mass housing fails to adequately address residents' fear and security concerns; consequently, the need for safety has emerged as a primary factor driving the demand for GCs in Batna.

Based on the conducted interviews, security appeared as the most repeated concern among residents and professionals when discussing the rise of GCs in Batna. Participants often connected their emergence to the instability of the 1990s, highlighting the rise in urban crime and the decline of public safety. Several residents explained that the main attraction was the sense of protection, such as being able to leave children at home without worry or living among neighbours with similar professional and social backgrounds.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Atkinson and Blandy, "International Perspectives on the New Enclavism and the Rise of Gated Communities," 185.

²⁷⁹ Gözde Kan Ülkü and Erdem Erten, "Global Image Hegemony: Istanbul's Gated Communities as the New Marketing Icons," *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* 7, no. 2 (July 2013): 247.

²⁸⁰ The Head of Projects' Studies at the Office of Promotion and Real Estate Management of Batna, "These GCs started to emerge at the beginning of the deterioration of the security situation in the black decade during the 1990s ... the main cause behind its emergence is the security motive." This concern for security was stated by the architect of the '648 Housing Units' project, who explained that the rise of GCs is largely due to "the alarming increase in crime in Algerian cities, particularly in Batna, thus, the need for security." Further, a Professor at the Department of Architecture, University of Batna, emphasized that "those coming from popular and poor neighborhoods become the masters of the neighborhoods, and violence becomes the master of the situation," which has led residents to search for safer housing options. Interviewees frequently stated the significance of security: "Security was my main reason," stated one resident. Another participant affirmed, "you can leave your children home while you are working without being afraid. People here bought their security." One resident from the 648 Housing Units stating, "what attracted me the most is that they told us that they would close it after the end of the construction phase." According to this aspect with the users, a resident of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, shared, "Security was my main reason.

‘Being safe’ is one of the first priorities people consider when choosing a house to live in. When someone can afford a better-quality home in an area surrounded by a fence or a wall, with a security guard who controls who enters and who does not, they often see this as the best option for achieving a high level of safety. However, being protected from danger or social ills is a basic right for all citizens of the city, no matter their income or social group. The sense of safety that GCs seem to offer, compared to the insecurity often felt in areas of state mass housing, reinforces urban segregation, creating a division between those who feel safe because they can buy it, from those who cannot.

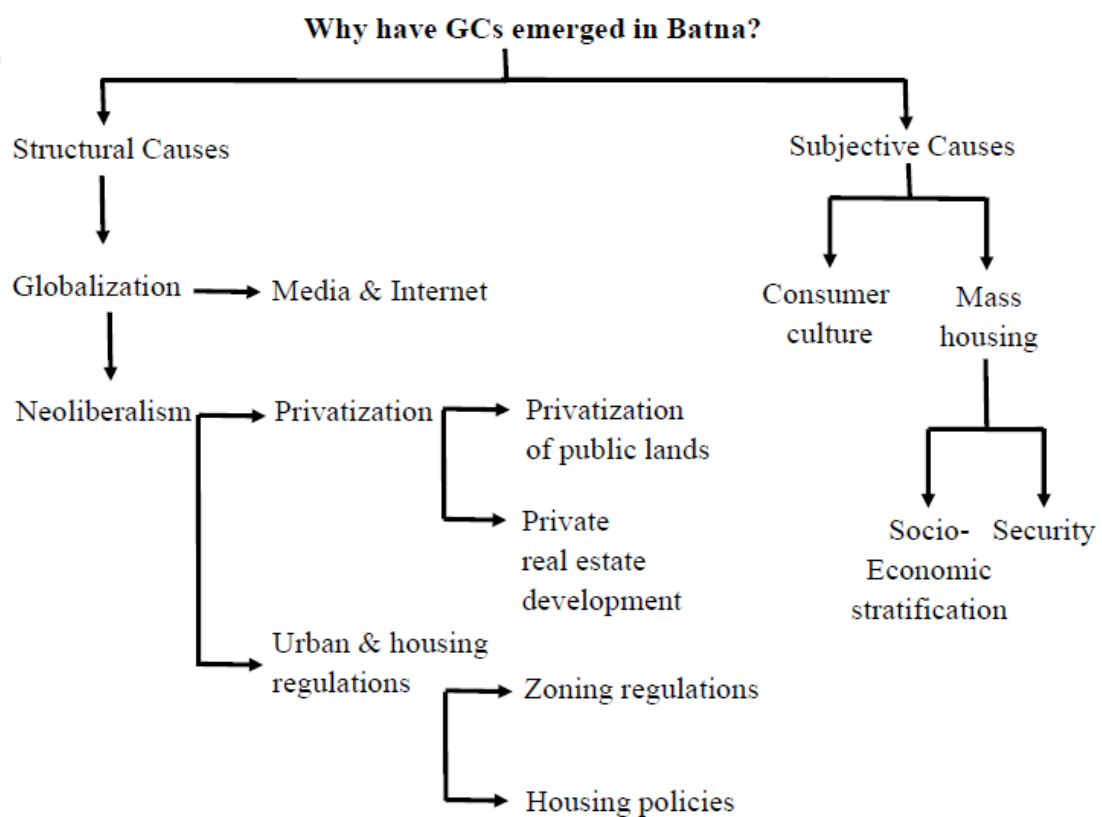


Figure 77. Factors Contributing to the Emergence of GCs in Batna
(Source: the author)

Everyone is searching for security, especially for people who travel a lot. In addition, and with respect to all human beings, you cannot live and be comfortable in any sort of neighborhood.” Another resident from the same community highlighted the sense of safety and social homogeneity: “There is a total security here. I do not feel afraid whenever my children play outside. In addition, the people who live with you are good quality people, my wife is a university professor, my neighbor’s wife as well works as a professor. The biggest family here has not more than two children; the mentality of the families here is not the same as outside.” Another participant confirmed, “you can leave your children home while you are working without being afraid. People here bought their security.”

4.4. Explaining Built Form Variations in Batna's Gated Communities

The physical diversity of Batna's GCs is not accidental but results from two interconnected forces: the developers' pursuit of distinction through design choices and their financial justifications that shape project layouts, density, and amenities. This section examines how these factors interact in shaping the city's gated housing landscape, showing how architectural variety reflects both a deliberate effort to signal exclusivity and a profit-oriented logic that often overrides spatial quality.

4.4.1. Strategies for Distinction

In Batna, private developers of GCs enjoy significant freedom in selecting forms and designs as previously observed. The existing variety might be partially attributed to the lack of specific policies or regulations governing building typologies and features, as a reading of the Algerian Gazette proves.

Interviews with officials from Batna's housing and construction offices revealed that urban planning documents such as the Land Use Plan (POS) and the Master Plan for Development and Urban Planning (PDEAU) define what types of buildings are allowed in each area and set height limits. These plans indicate whether a plot can be used for villas, apartment blocks, or other building forms. However, these regulations focus mainly on building typology and do not impose any rules regarding architectural style or expression. There are no clear guidelines that require private developers or architects to follow a specific architectural design. Instead, as they have mentioned, developers have full freedom in deciding the appearance and layout of their projects, as long as they respect the basic land use and height restrictions.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ The Head of Projects' Studies at the Office of Promotion and Real Estate Management of Batna explains: "the 'Land Use Plan' (POS), and the 'Master Plan for Development and Urban Planning' (PDEAU), primarily dictate permissible building types and maximum building heights, such as whether lands may be used for apartment blocks or individual villas." However, he noted, "The POS and the PDEAU only explain what is obliged and allowed in the typology aspect. In the architectural aspect of these communities, we do not force a specific architectural expression. So far, I have not seen any regulations that force the private property developer or the architect to follow a certain approach." Similarly, the Head of Contract Laws and Building Settlement and Permits in Batna observed, "Everyone chooses the shape they like. They have the total freedom to apply whatever they prefer. Only the land use plan tells you the maximum allowed height of the building and what is allowed to be built on certain lands, which all property developers should respect. Apart from this, they are free."

All the existing articles of the urban law related to the architectural aspects of buildings, as found in the current Algerian official gazette, include the following: Article 6²⁸² mentions that building heights must harmonize with their surroundings, yet it does not clarify the criteria for such harmony. Article 9²⁸³ requires that condominium projects include parking spaces, green areas, and commercial facilities to meet residents' needs, but these are functional requirements rather than architectural guidelines. Article 10²⁸⁴ calls for attention to architectural and urban harmony and aesthetic character, but it lacks any definition or strategy for that. Article 27²⁸⁵ promotes simplicity, unity, material economy, and general cohesion with the urban environment, but again, the interpretation is left to individuals. Article 55²⁸⁶ demands that permit applications include detailed architectural documentation, including facade appearance and material choices that consider local characteristics.

It can be observed through the existing architectural regulations published in the Algerian Gazette that only a few superficial regulations address the characteristics, design, and typology of buildings. These regulations mainly focus on building height, the number of housing units, and the maximum allowable construction surface area. No specific written regulations exist that address overall design compositions, architectural elements, or building facades. It was also noted that the authorities concentrate primarily on administrative procedures rather than on architectural quality or visual coherence.

Consequently, Tounsi Sabrina, a lecturer at the Faculty of Law at Algiers University, stated regarding this, that the existing urban and architectural regulations in the Algerian Official Gazette lack clarity and precision in their wording. She emphasizes the need to review and incorporate new ideas into urban laws and regulations, particularly Law 90/29, which has remained unchanged since 1990. She argues that this outdated law complicates administrative procedures, including the approval and authentication of proposed construction projects.²⁸⁷

²⁸² Article 06, Law 11/04, *Algerian Gazette* (2011): 1653.

²⁸³ Article 09, Law 11/04, *Algerian Gazette* (2011): 955.

²⁸⁴ Article 10, Law 11/04, *Algerian Gazette* (2011): 06.

²⁸⁵ Article 27, Law 11/04, *Algerian Gazette* (2011): 958.

²⁸⁶ Article 55, Law 11/04, *Algerian Gazette* (2011): 1658.

²⁸⁷ Sabrina Tounsi, *The Urban Legal System in Algeria* (PhD dissertation, University of Algiers 1, Faculty of Law, 2019), 381–382. (title translated from Arabic by the author)

The developers' choices regarding the appearance of GCs have played a significant role in shaping architectural diversity among GCs in Batna. In the absence of mandatory architectural regulations, as discussed, developers have become the main decision-makers influencing mostly the overall design of these new housing models. Each project reflects distinct design inspiration and strategies, as justified by the interviewed developers:

The general design of Résidence des Aurès, Bezzala and Résidence Benaldjia was justified by the developers' preference for simplicity.²⁸⁸ In contrast, classical Roman architectural elements were used to justify the aesthetic of the façade design in two other cases. In Ben Bellat 1 Tazoult GC, the developer stated that the design was inspired by Batna's Roman heritage, particularly the ancient city of Lambese, which was reflected through the incorporation of two columns at the entrance.²⁸⁹ Similarly, in the villas section of the 648 Housing Units GC, Roman-inspired columns were incorporated into the facades' design. The architect justifies his design choices by noting that elements such as bricks, arches, and stone columns were inspired by the nearby Roman city of Timgad, aiming to enhance the regional identity and link to local heritage.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ In Residence Benaldjia, the private developer stated: "We chose a simple design because we like simple designs." Similarly, in Residence of The Aures, Bezzala, its architect explained: "Because I love simplicity. Everything that is simple is beautiful."

²⁸⁹ In the case of Ben Bellat 1 Tazoult GC. The private developer stated during the interview: "I chose the architectural style ... I saw the project as something that should be a continuity and integration with the surrounding. The area had a Roman history that is why I tried to keep this idea and create a harmony between the old and the new ... I support the extension of the previous civilizations." His lead architect further explained: "He wanted to adopt the Roman architectural styles by implementing the two columns in the entrance ... Because the site of the project is very close to the Roman city of 'Lambese' ... He wanted to mix the idea of summerhouses with Roman style to make something different."

²⁹⁰ The responsible architect of 648 Housing Units explained: "In the design of the facades and sizes, elements and characteristics inspired by the ancient city of Timgad, located near the city of Batna, were used and combined, such as the use of bricks, arches, and stone columns, to enhance the local heritage and identity of the region."



Figure 78. Typical apartment block, front view, 'Résidence Bezzala'.
(Source: Image captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)



Figure 79. View of the new row of villas in the 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Images captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

Unlike existing villas in Batna, which typically feature compact, box-like volumes with minimal aesthetic expression, repetitive rectangular window openings, and plain plastered façades in pale or earthy tones, the developer of Marwa Residence stated that he intentionally chose a different aesthetic by designing façades and forms that differ from the existing villas, in order to create a distinctive appearance. He used elements that

emphasize vertical and horizontal lines, bold colour contrasts, and asymmetrical façade composition to give the villa a more contemporary appearance.²⁹¹

The overall design of 648 Housing Units GC was justified by the architect as an attempt to encourage social mixing within a single gated neighbourhood. This was achieved through the inclusion of two types of villas arranged in long rows, alongside several high-rise condominium blocks with apartments of varying sizes and room numbers, aimed at attracting both wealthy and upper-middle-income residents. The project also includes a mosque, a primary school, and a clinic, although these facilities have not yet been constructed. Additionally, a series of shops and a small commercial centre were included in the project have already been built. They are designed to face outward, offering services to both GC residents and the wider public to encourage the interaction between different social groups.²⁹²



Figure 80. Commercial and residential functions in ‘648 housing units’.
(Source: File received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

²⁹¹ The private developer emphasized this vision during the interview, stating: “People are always searching for something new and different from what already exists. Next year, we must make something else new and different from this project.”

²⁹² When asked about the decision to include both condominiums and villas in the project, the architect responded: “Diversification in styles came to diversify the products offered for sale and to encourage the integration of the components of society into one neighborhood, ‘social mix’ ... So that all segments of society with high middle and high incomes could purchase housing in the neighborhood.”



Figure 81. Architectural inspiration from Timgad in '648 housing units'.
(Source: File received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)



Figure 82. Architectural inspiration from Timgad, '648 housing units'.
(Source: File received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

The interviewed developers/ architects of the five case studies offered different justifications for their design choices, including a preference for simplicity, the incorporation of Roman architectural elements, the use of bold geometric forms with contrasting colours, and the inclusion of diverse housing typologies within a single project. These strategies were intentional and aimed at producing architectural forms that appear novel within the urban context of Batna. The goal was to create housing projects that are differ-

ent from existing housing in the city and make them visually distinct. Developers intentionally made the GCs that would attract high-income groups who are looking for a housing product that, for them, it signals exclusivity, symbolizes status, and distinction.

When private developers intentionally create housing that looks aesthetically different from the conventional models available, they are responding to the desire of a specific social group who want to distinguish themselves from the rest. These residents do not only look for comfort and function; they are also attracted to visual features that help them feel different from what they see as ordinary or common. Private developers are aware of this, as shown in the interviews conducted. Therefore, the act of creating something that looks different becomes a way to reproduce social distinction, just as Bourdieu describes in the phrase: “*the aesthetic sense as the sense of distinction.*”²⁹³

This strategy of creating housing products that differ from what already exists in the city may, lead to a fragmented and incoherent urban environment shaped by the individual interests and design logic of each private developer. In the absence of clear architectural regulations and coordinated urban planning, the continued expansion of GCs risks turning Batna into a patchwork of isolated enclaves, with each development reflecting its own vision of housing rather than contributing to a cohesive urban fabric.

Supporting this concern, Algerian researchers Khireddine Dounia and Aichour Boudjemaa have criticized the absence of a coherent architectural identity in Batna, stating that the lack of a unified architectural style contributes to a loss of visual harmony and shared values across the urban landscape. They argue that architectural character stems from consistent external features, which together give a place its unique identity.²⁹⁴

Similarly, the architect of the Residence of the Aures Bezzala, emphasized the need for architectural guidelines. He stated, “*It was necessary for the urban authorities to require or oblige specific architectural features in order to keep and have a specific architecture for us in Batna and Algeria. If you go to Tunisia, you can see their specific architectural features even in new buildings. In Algeria, we do not have. The authorities did not try to make it. Wherever you go, you see various architectural features that follow the architect’s imagination or his own preferences. Algerian architects have all the freedom.*”

²⁹³ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 56.

²⁹⁴ Khireddine and Boudjemaa, "Batna City from Organized Planning to Distortion (Case Study: Biskra Road Axis - Algeria), 82.

4.4.2. Financial Justifications

Private developers justify the overall design choices of their GC projects in Batna city mainly on financial grounds, citing their budget, but not necessarily their motives for profit. This study introduces these two factors as important incentives and key causes behind the diverse designs observed among GCs in Batna.

4.4.2.1. Form Follows Profit Motive

Naturally, private developers prioritize the maximization of financial returns as their primary goal while designing these communities, through the emphasis on land utilization and unit quantity over creating amenities. The influence of this profit motive is evident in land use, where the largest possible surface area is allocated to residential units. This is observable in all case studies, but particularly in the 648 Housing Units project, where villas are densely positioned, and directly attached to one another.

During the interviews, developers, architects, and academics confirmed that profit one of the factors behind their design decisions in Batna's GCs. The property developer of Marwa Residence explained that they chose to design medium-sized villas, not too small or too large, in order to avoid financial loss. He added that selling two villas is better than just one. A professor from the Department of Architecture at the University of Batna noted that private developers often aim to make the most profit from their land, which sometimes results in densely packed units where residents cannot even open their windows without facing their neighbours. Another pointed out that such projects exist only because developers see profit in them. If there were no financial benefit, there would be no supply. This perspective was stated by the Head of Project Studies at the Office of Promotion and Real Estate Management in Batna, who explained that developers took advantage of people's need for security and used it as a selling point. These projects were seen as commercial operations where developers used simple economic shapes and tried to occupy as much land as possible to increase their earnings. The "648 Housing Units" project was mentioned as a clear example. The administrative and sales manager explained that quantity was prioritized over quality. The architect was required to use the full surface area, which led to many customer complaints because the villas lacked gardens. The architect of the project confirmed that high land prices and the need to ensure

profitability led them to expand vertically and increase the number of housing units. The original design proposed 16 floors, but this was reduced to 12 due to land occupation regulations. Finally, an architect who has worked in Batna for years concluded that profitability is always the top priority. If regulations allow a developer to build 120 villas or nine-story blocks, they will do so, always aiming to use the maximum permitted land area to gain the most profit.²⁹⁵

Furthermore, the focus on profitability often resulted in the neglect of essential amenities. Many of these communities lack functional grocery stores or retail spaces, offer limited or non-existent parking, and provide playgrounds that are too small or poorly designed to serve children's needs. Green spaces and outdoor seating areas are also insufficient or completely missing. This situation raises concerns about the future of housing in Batna, especially if the trend of building GCs, or any other types of privately developed housing, continue to spread rapidly, and the profit motive remains dominant without any

²⁹⁵ The Property Developer of the Real Estate Development Corporation Abdennebi, of “Marwa Residence” explained, “We thought of making medium-sized villas, not very small or very large, so we do not lose. When we sell two is better than just one.” Similarly, a Professor in the Department of Architecture, University of Batna, observed, “The private developer searches for profitable exploitation of his land, which sometimes generates a large number of floors and units that are so close to each other that it is not possible to open the window of the house without looking into the neighbor’s house.” Adding to this perspective, a lecturer in the Department of Architecture, University of Batna, noted, “If private developers had not seen a profit from these projects, the offer would not have existed.” This was confirmed by the Head of Projects’ Studies at the Office of Promotion and Real Estate Management of Batna remarked, “The mentality of real estate developers took advantage of this situation ... They preferred to use the notion of closing by a fence because they care about their profit, which comes through what people need the most. They know that everyone seeks and needs security... These property developers of these communities usually use the economic shapes because, for them, this project is a commercial operation. The private developer is a trader; the more he earns the better for him and for his profit. That is why you can observe the maximum use of the land in these projects, which they aim to make profitable. The project ‘648 Housing Units’ is a good example of this phenomenon.” The Administrative and Sales Manager of TAAMIR Real Estate Development Corporation further described how the “648 Housing Units” project was affected by this factor: “The property developer prioritized quantity over quality, especially with the villas ... the architect tried to use the maximum surface area as it was required from the developer of the project. Therefore, the result is what the area of the land gave us. This led to many complaints from the clients about the villas because it does not contain a garden.” The architect himself of “648 Housing Units” confirmed that economic profitability dictated the decision to build vertically and increase housing density, he stated: “Due to the high price of the land, and in order to achieve the economic profitability of the project, it was necessary to expand vertically to increase the number of housing units. In the beginning, the number of floors designed was 16 floors, but the land occupation plan reduced the number to 12 floors. Diversification in shapes came to diversify the products offered for sale only to maximize the quality of the clients, so the quantity will be more.” Lastly, an architect who has worked in Batna for years summarized, “Profitability is the private developer’s first priority. Let us say if the urban regulations state that in one or 2 hectares the property developer should not create more than 120 villas, he will make 120 villas if his budget allows him. He will try to construct the maximum number of villas allowed. If he can create nine-story blocks, he will make them too. He tries to fill the maximum allowed area of his land to his profit.”

state intervention. It risks normalizing housing models that prioritize profit over residents' comfort, well-being, and needs.

4.4.2.2. Form Follows Budget

The budget uses by private property developers as a justification influencing their architectural choices. It influences key decisions such as the number of housing units, the type of residences (villas or condominiums), building heights, overall construction quality, and the inclusion or exclusion of essential amenities.

Interviewed architects emphasized that the number of housing units in GCs projects is mainly determined by two key factors: the available land area and the developer's budget. The architect of Résidence des Aurès Bezzala explained that developers always aim to reach the maximum number of units allowed by urban regulations, depending on what their budget permits. Likewise, the architect from Benaldjia Real Estate Development Corporation noted that if they had access to a larger plot and a higher budget, they would have been able to build more units.²⁹⁶

There is a clear contradiction in how developers justify their budget use. Much of the project's budget is allocated to building the maximum number of villas or housing units to fill the available land, rather than creating basic and good-quality amenities for users. In this sense, "budget" is an excuse to hide the real aim: maximizing profit. If the budget were truly the issue, we would not see such densely packed villas with no proper spaces for children to play, no seating areas for residents to gather, and no green spaces to improve the living environment. This profit-driven logic is justified through what developers call "budget considerations," but in reality, it prioritizes dense housing over the comfort and needs of residents.

The Administrative and Sales Manager of TAAMIR Real Estate Development Corporation explained that clients now prefer modern architectural features and avoid older designs. Clients according to her frequently complained about the outdated facades

²⁹⁶ The Architect of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, explained, "Every property developer sets the maximum number of housing units, which itself depends on both his budget and the maximum number of housing units allowed on a certain surface according to the regulations." Similarly, the architect from Benaldjia Real Estate Development Corporation highlighted the role of budget and land area, stating, "The number of housing units depended on the area of the land and our budget. If we had more surface and more budget, we could create more housing units."

and compared them to more modern projects like Marwa. In addition to the exterior appearance, the interior layout was also criticized. Buyers felt that the villas were too small, with cramped rooms, narrow staircases, and a limited surface area of 103 m², which did not match their expectations of what a villa should feel like. These design issues, according to the manager, had a direct negative impact on both sales and profit, as only ten villas had been sold in three years.²⁹⁷

The financial motive is not always in the developer's favour. The targeted group will not decide to buy a house just because it is in a GC if the villa or the apartment does not meet their expectations, they will not buy it. This was the case in the 648 Housing Units project, where many potential buyers stated that they did not like either types of villa because they were too small, the interior spaces were tight, lack of private garden, and the villas were placed very close to each other. This situation negatively affected villas' sales, as very few units were sold over a long period of time. Therefore, simply creating a GC to attract high-income families is not enough to convince buyers. These clients also expect well-designed, spacious, and comfortable villas that meet their living and daily life needs.

After identifying the strategies used by the owners of GC projects to create a sense of distinction within the physical site, important questions arise: Was this distinction established only through some exterior featured of the built environment, or did it also begin earlier, during the marketing and promotional phase? In what other ways does the notion of distinction manifest itself in these projects beyond their physical appearance? These questions will be examined in the following sections.

²⁹⁷ The Administrative and Sales Manager of TAAMIR Real Estate Development Corporation stated: "We have many old-style apartments that we have not sold, while all new-style apartments are sold. People are staying away from the old architectural aesthetics. They want something modern. In the case of the villas, many clients complained about the facades, asking why we did not make modern facades for the villas as in the case of the 'Marwa' project. This reason affects our profit and sales of the villas. We have not sold many villas so far. In three years, we only sold ten villas, and this is mainly because the property developer did not meet what they want. The majority did not like the interior design of the villas; they say that when they enter, it does not feel like a villa because it is very cramped, the staircase is very small, the surface of 103 m² is too small, and the rooms are very small. For me, the existing villas in this project are not something that is attractive for clients to buy."

4.5. Promotional Strategies

The way GCs were advertised in different countries or cities around the world reflected various aspects that advertisers took into consideration when representing and portraying these projects. In Canada, for example, before social media became a central tool in global communication, culture, and marketing, Canadian urban planner D. Kirstin Maxwell, in her 2004 study *Gated Communities: Selling the Good Life*, found GCs were most commonly marketed through brochures and websites. The key themes included security and gates, friendliness, ease of making new friends, social interaction, and lifestyle elements such as active living, a peaceful or slow-paced environment, and maintenance-free living. These advertisements also emphasized homogeneity by portraying residents as wealthy, healthy, and white, as well as highlighting privacy and exclusivity.²⁹⁸

In the case of Istanbul, GCs were promoted through printed media, brochures, community bulletins, and collections of advertisements in newspapers and magazines. These advertisements responded to local fears, anxieties, and concerns, particularly those related to safety and secure living in the city. They also highlighted the use of modern technologies and the inclusion of luxurious imported appliances in domestic spaces. Other represented themes included the promise of isolation from crowded life and closeness to nature. The use of so-called traditional or authentic elements to evoke nostalgia for a certain past. The marketing of a sense of belonging and distinguished neighbours to create a strong identity tied to the settlement, allowing the consumer to feel part of an exclusive environment. Gender was also used in these marketing representations, where women were shown as relaxed and freed from household chores, while men were portrayed doing activities such as playing golf.²⁹⁹

Using green marketing slogans and narratives to attract clients by emphasizing nature is another strategy employed to advertise GCs in Istanbul. Among many examples, the slogan used for Gölbahçe is "a privileged life in green and blue," for Vadistanbul Teras Evleri it is "Istanbul ever green," the narrative used for Aydos Country is "the most

²⁹⁸ D. Kirstin Maxwell, "Gated Communities: Selling the Good Life," *Plan*, Winter 2004, 21.

²⁹⁹ Ülkü and Erten, "Global Image Hegemony: Istanbul's Gated Communities as the New Marketing Icons," 247-248-249.

natural project of Anatolian side," and for Dekar Asmalı Hayat it is "one side is the sea, the other side is the garden, this is life."³⁰⁰

In the case of Egypt, the materials used for marketing and advertising GCs in Cairo, according to Rana Tawfiq Almatarneh in her study titled *The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt* (2013), can be grouped into four categories. The first is the social element, which involves depicting families and friends, a sense of community, community activities, meeting places, and homogeneity by presenting the community as a pleasant environment where one can engage in shared activities with like-minded friends and families who share the same socio-economic status. The second is lifestyle, expressed through images of exclusivity such as gates and walls, prestige such as the presence of prestigious international educational facilities like schools, privacy, shared identity, homogeneity, modern life including shopping and recreational complexes, playgrounds, and sports fields like basketball and tennis courts, and security through pictures of private guards and other safety features. The third category is the environmental element, which focuses on representations of greenery, openness, visual richness, and cleanliness. The fourth includes references to architectural and urban factors, highlighting modern architecture, contemporary urbanization, alignment with current trends, the absence of illegal construction, high quality of building, and well-developed infrastructure.³⁰¹

Before conducting fieldwork in Batna, I expected to find marketing materials similar to those used in GC projects in other parts of the world. However, I was surprised to discover that the advertising methods in the city were quite different; while some GCs around the world rely on large promotional strategies, the case of Batna revealed a more diverse and locally specific approach, as follow:

³⁰⁰ Alparslan Nas, "Between the Urban and the Natural: Green Marketing of Istanbul's Gated Community Projects," *Journal of Urban Studies* 8, no. 22 (2017): 412.

³⁰¹ Almatarneh and Mansour, "The Role of Advertisements in the Marketing of Gated Communities as a New Western Suburban Lifestyle: A Case Study of the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt," 511, 514–516, 520–521.

4.5.1. The Role of Reputation in Batna's Gated Communities

Through my fieldwork, I discovered that real estate companies based in Batna did not actively use Facebook or other social media platforms to promote their GC projects. Instead, they relied on their locally established reputation, which had been developed within the city over the years. It was primarily built through earlier residential projects developed in Batna, particularly after the state began involving private actors in housing provision by offering incentives and subsidies. One notable example is Ben Bellat, a private developer who built numerous social housing projects in different parts of Batna. Initially, they posted a few 3D renders of the project at first, followed by some updates featuring real photographs to highlight construction progress. These posts aimed to show interest and engagement but also to build credibility and provide buyers with a sense of assurance and transparency.

During the interviews, the architect of Villas Benbellat-Tazoult said that people already knew their work and often came to register before the project even started. He added that honesty and showing real photos helped build trust. The architect of Résidence des Aurès stated that Bezzala's strong name was enough to bring clients without needing much advertisement. The architect of Benaldjia Residence mentioned that their company had been known in Batna for 25 years, and already have more than 400 people waiting to buy, so they only posted basic details and images online. Similarly, the developer of Marwa Residence said that most buyers already knew them, and Facebook was just a way to show how the villas looked rather than a main tool to attract new clients.³⁰²

The images below are screenshots taken from each company's official Facebook page, displaying content shared during the construction period:

³⁰² The architect in charge of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, explained, "We used only 3D renders images through Facebook ... Our emphasis was on the name of the real estate company, Bezzala, in order to attract customers ... The fact that Bezzala Construction Company is old and has a very good reputation in the city was more than sufficient." Similarly, the architect of Benaldjia Residence Company emphasized their reliance on reputation: "We have been well known here for 25 years. We use Facebook, but we do not depend on it to get clients because we already have more than 400 name in the waiting list and in need of housing. We just posted some real or 3D renders as they are ... We just write the number of apartments of the project and some small descriptions and details ... When the company is famous in your city, you do not need Facebook or Instagram to get clients." The responsible architect of Villas Benbellat-Tazoult also stated, "We posted on Facebook, but it was not that important because we had already made our name. People who know us usually visit us and know our coming projects before we start to build them ... They come to us because they trust us ... Honestly, we just post on Facebook to let the clients see the progress we made in our projects, that is all. We do not count on Facebook for selling the villas or apartments in our projects. Once people hear that we will start a housing project, they immediately come to our office and

Case Study: 'Villas Benbellat-Tazoult'



Figure 83. Facebook posts featuring 3D renders of 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Villas Benbellat-Tazoult, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

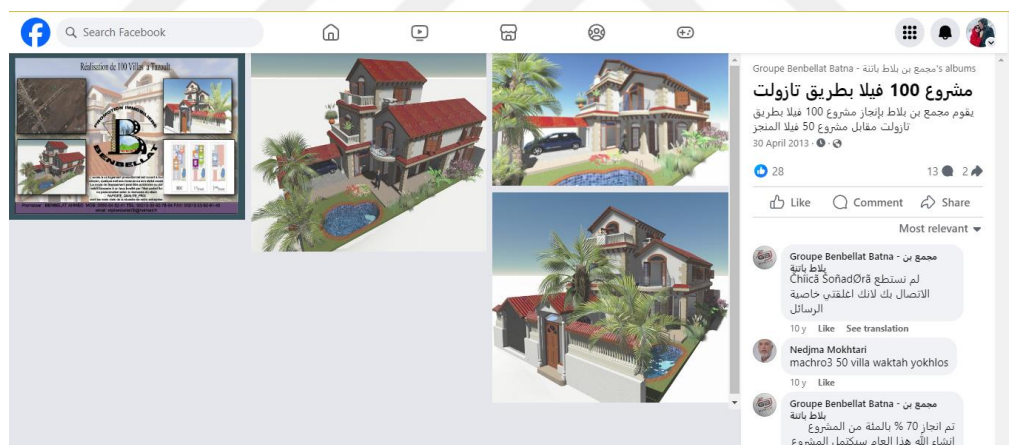


Figure 84. Other Facebook posts of 3D renders of 'Villas Benbellat'.
(Source: Villas Benbellat-Tazoult, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

register their names to buy a house ... We post real photographs of the villas; we are honest, and this is our strong point, which created the clients' trust in us." The property developer of Marwa Residence shared a similar experience, highlighting that their Facebook presence served primarily as a complementary tool rather than a central marketing strategy. He stated: "We just used Facebook posts ... We posted the existing 3D renders as well as the real images of the villas on site to show how they looked to the clients ... We did not focus on words; we focused on what our work and villas looked like, and this was enough to attract our clients. In addition, we became so well known here that we did not need that much effort to advertise our projects ... The majority of our clients who bought a villa already know us. Very few came to us through Facebook posts."

Case Study: 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala'

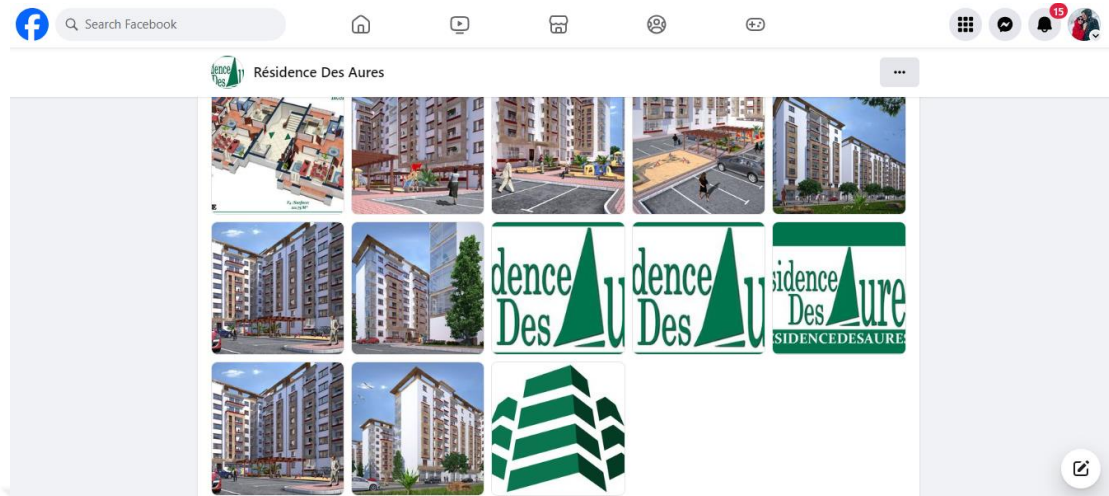


Figure 85. Facebook posts highlighting 3D renders of 'Residence Bezzala'.
(Source: Bezzala, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

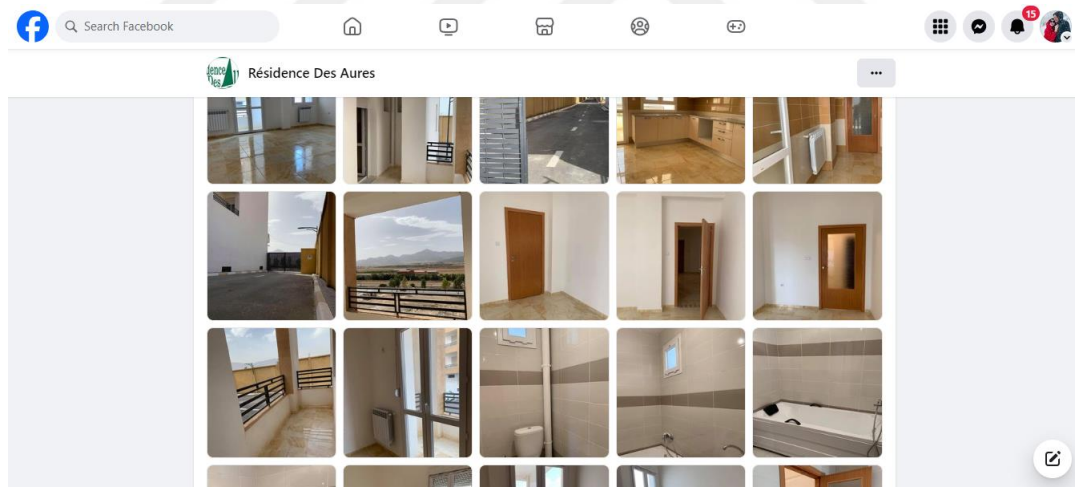


Figure 86. Posts on construction and finishes, 'Residence Bezzala'
(Source: Bezzala, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

Case Study: 'Benaldjia Residence'

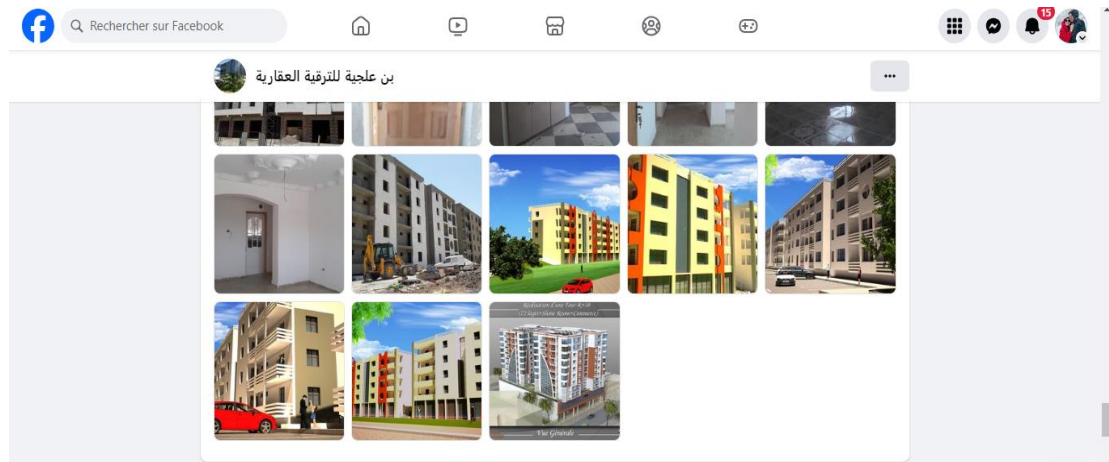


Figure 87. Facebook posts showing 3D renders, 'Benaldjia Residence'
(Source: Benaldjia Residence, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

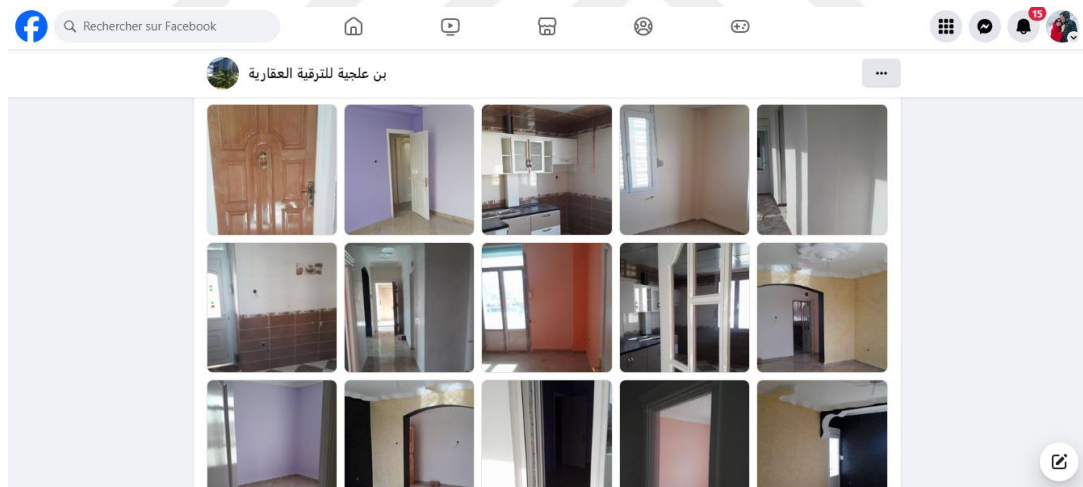


Figure 88. Posts showing construction and finishes, 'Benaldjia Residence'
(Source: Benaldjia Residence, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

Case Study: 'Marwa Residence'

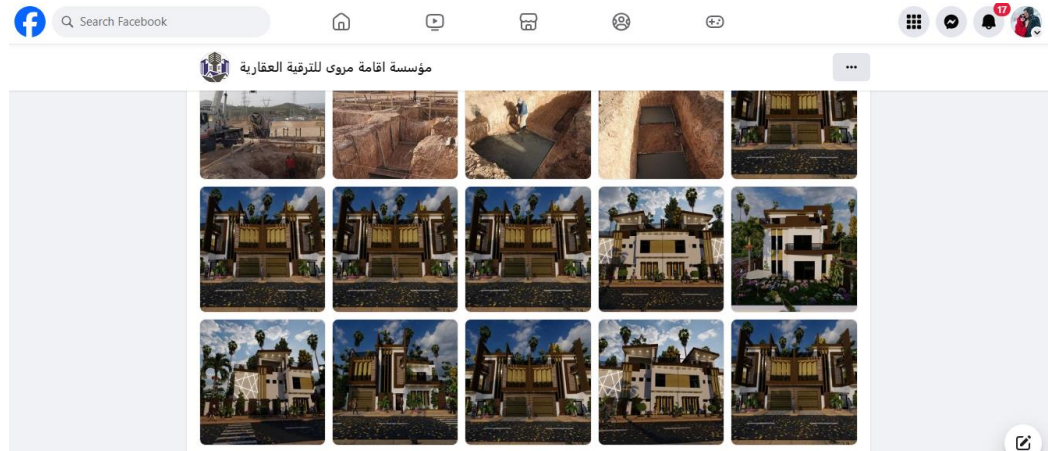


Figure 89. Facebook posts showing 3D renders, 'Marwa Residence'
(Source: Benaldjia Residence, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

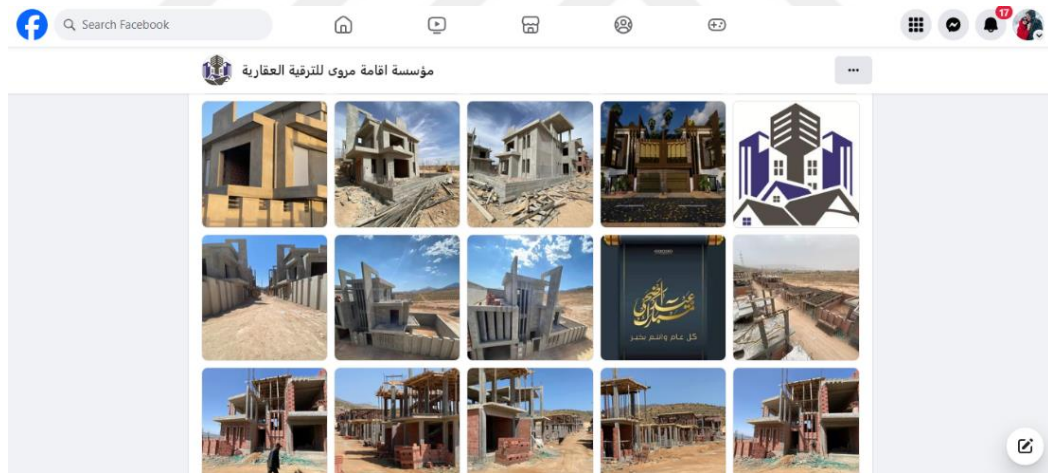


Figure 90. Facebook posts showing construction progress, 'Marwa Residence'
(Source: Benaldjia Residence, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

Unlike local companies owned by local known developer in Batna, I have observed that the '648 Housing Units' project, which has been developed by a real estate company based outside of Batna (in Biskra), relied on different elements through Facebook and Instagram ads to promote and advertise the project in order to get the targeted

clients. The postings as showing in the coming figures emphasized aspects of a contemporary lifestyle, such as contemporary kitchenware, lifestyle imagery, single-child families, and flexible payment options through instalment way.

The following are screenshots of the official Facebook page of TAAMIR Real Estate Company, advertising the '648 Housing Units':



Figure 91. Facebook post showing a single-child family, '648 housing units' (Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

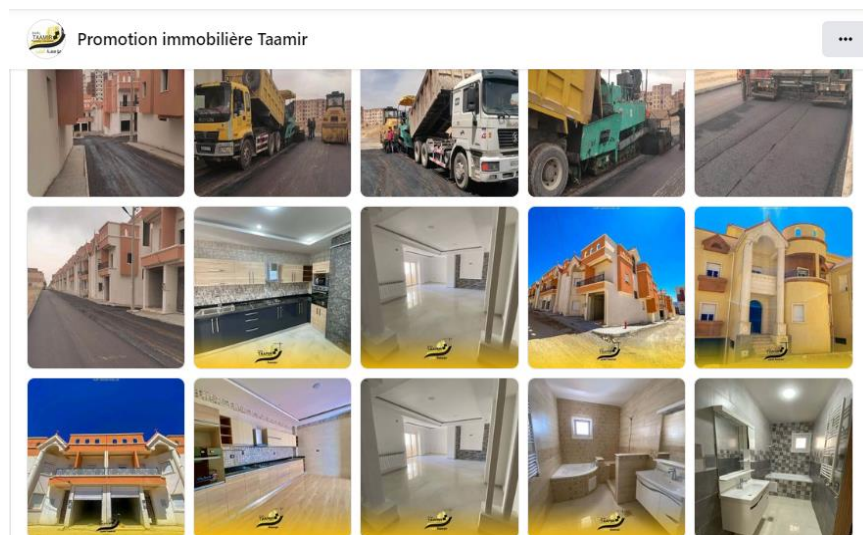


Figure 92. Construction progress posts on Facebook, '648 housing units' (Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)



Figure 93. Facebook post showing future amenities, '648 housing units'
 (Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)



Figure 94. Facebook ad highlighting instalment payments
 (Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)



Figure 95. Ad video showing kitchen interiors, '648 housing units'
(Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)



Figure 96. Facebook ad highlighting kitchen island, '648 housing units'
(Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)

Based on my observation of the postings by both local and non-local companies, I argue that the developer of the "648 Housing Units" project relied on social media platforms primarily due to the absence of a strong local reputation, which many Batna-based companies had already established. Unlike locally owned companies, this developer employed different marketing elements such as images portraying modern lifestyles, stylish interiors, and representations of single-child nuclear families to depict exclusivity and a less crowded living environment, and the inclusion of instalment-based payment methods to reduce financial barriers and attract broader potential buyers. However, despite these advertising efforts, only a limited number of apartments and villas have been sold, as

confirmed by the commercial representative during the interview (see footnote 301).

Therefore, based on the five case studies of this research, I would also argue that the local reputation of the construction companies and their locally-known owners is a more effective and powerful means of advertising and selling GCs' housing units than the reliance on social media promotion and lifestyle-oriented imagery used by a company owned by a non-local developer. Even though the owner of TAMIR Real Estate is a well-known businessman in Algeria, local residents placed more trust in the local developer who had been delivering various housing formats in Batna over the past two decades. This local preference exemplifies what Simmel argued about "insiders" and "outsiders" (see footnote 25), showing how social perceptions shift depending on one's position within or outside a group. He notes that "*the outsider is unaligned, the insider more prejudiced.*" Simmel explains that outsiders are often seen as more neutral because they stand apart from group loyalties, **while insiders can be influenced by personal ties and internal bias**, and that is reflected in how residents of Batna tend to prefer and trust the local developer (insider) more than the non-local one (outsider).

4.5.3. Religious Representations

The incorporation of religious themes and visuals in the Facebook posts of two case study projects was observed as a strategy to attract potential clients. These posts emphasized the inclusion of a mosque within the community and a prayer room within the apartments. The following images show screenshots taken from the official Facebook pages of each case study, showing religious representations incorporated into their advertising:



Figure 97. Screenshot of ad featuring prayer room, ‘648 housing units’
(Source: 648 Housing Units, official Facebook page, accessed December 9, 2023)



Figure 98. Architectural render of promised mosque, ‘648 housing units’
(Source: Image received from the responsible architect, accessed December 9, 2023)

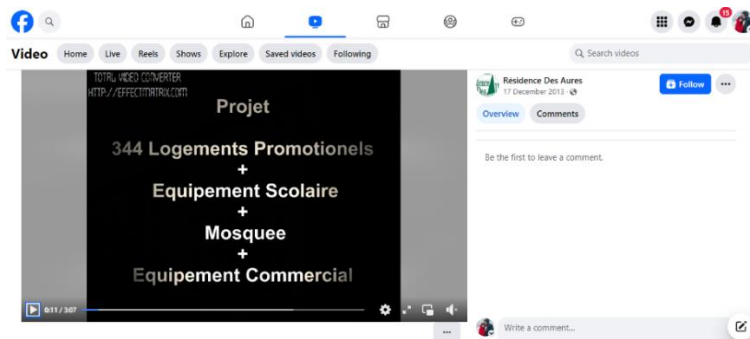


Figure 99. Ad video showing mosque and amenities, ‘Residence of the Aures’
(Source: Screenshot from a video, Facebook Watch, accessed December 9, 2023)

During daily chats, many residents in Batna pointed to the incorporation of a religious space, specifically a mosque, as a positive aspect e.g. the mosque in the first GC ‘Villas Benbellat-Tazoult’ gave it a very good reputation. Mention of this GC was usually followed by how impressed people were with the presence of the mosque within it. Therefore, developer companies consciously employed religious motifs in advertising a GC was to attract customers, since having a mosque where they can practice their religious acts was one of their preferences. However, these religious spaces still remain to be built. In both cases, the mosques were not built yet. Although, they were shown as part of the project on the official Facebook pages, the contractors have not built them.

4.6. Social Ties and Community Formation in GCs in Batna

Dorota Mantey, a Polish urban sociologist, states that despite extensive research and widespread awareness of GCs in Poland, there is still a lack of studies examining the complex dynamics of their living environments, the needs and lifestyles of their residents, and the social interactions within these communities.³⁰³ This gap is also evident in the existing literature on GCs in the context of Algeria, where no attention has been given to the social ties and proximity that emerge within GCs in Batna. Therefore, this study highlights what is actually taking place in this new architectural housing product in relation to the ways residents relate to one another.

³⁰³ Mantey, "Social Consequences of Gated Communities: The Case of Suburban Warsaw," 2.

Simmel's concept of the social perception of "insider" and "outsider" is reflected not only in the tendency of Batna residents to prefer and place greater trust in local private developers over non-local ones. Fieldwork revealed, unexpectedly, that across the five case studies, the majority of current residents and those who had already purchased units, according to interviewed developers, belong to the same extended families or are close acquaintances. These families and friends actively encouraged one another to move into the same GC, thereby creating a close-knit environment. In several cases, siblings, cousins, or in-laws occupied entire apartment blocks or villa rows. Some residents mentioned choosing to live there specifically because they knew the project owner or had family members already living on-site.³⁰⁴

Residents across the case studies confirmed that personal connections played a central role in shaping who lives in these GCs. Several participants described how family members or close acquaintances influenced their decision to buy a house, often with the aim of living near one another. In Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, one resident explained that his family chose to settle there because they knew the developer personally, and many of their relatives now live in the same block. In Residence Benaldjia, another resident mentioned being encouraged by a friend to buy an apartment next door, noting that several brothers live in neighbouring units across multiple blocks. In Villas Benbellat-Tazoult, a resident pointed out that many homeowners are part of the same extended family, including the project owner's relatives and his in-laws.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ The architect of 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' stated, "Most of the residents are close friends as well as their family members or relatives." Similarly, the architect of 'Benaldjia Residence Real Estate Company' noted, "Most of them know each other; one tells another, a friend or family member. We have many brothers who bought apartments on the same block." The responsible architect of 'Villas Benbellat-Tazoult' remarked, "each brings some of his acquaintances as well... for example, the doctors in this project gathered themselves. At most, the ones who bought from us were our acquaintances, a wealthy and educated class where each told another, and so on... they know the owner of the project, ... Algerians still think, according to the famous proverb, 'I buy the neighbor before the house.' Our clients bring their neighbors, their cousins, their close friends, a colleague, etc." Similarly, the Property Developer of 'Marwa Residence' noted, "There are also clients from the same family: two brothers here and two there."

³⁰⁵ The residents of the case studies stated this pattern too; they highlighted the role of personal connections in shaping the social fabric of these communities. As a resident of 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' shared, "my father knows the owner so well; he is one of our close acquaintances. There are families who live in one block, his mother is here, his sister is next to him, my uncle is here, and my aunt is there. Each brings another because they do not prefer strangers to live close to them, as we say: Buy the neighbor before the house." In 'Residence Benaldjia,' a resident remarked, "my friend gave me the idea of buying an apartment here and to live next to him. The majority here brought some of their family members or their close friends. For example, in that block, there are three brothers; in that other one, there are the other three brothers too." Similarly, in 'Villas Benbellat-Tazoult,' a resident noted, "my daughter knows the owner of the project. Many here are from the family of Benbellat. There are also his in-laws who have villas here too, and they took the last

This was rather surprising to me. Having lived in Batna for three decades, I never expected that the practice of bringing extended kin together in a shared and closed residential space would still exist. I had assumed this tradition, once common in the courtyard houses of extended families in many Algerian cities, had disappeared. However, through this study in Batna, I can state that many GCs' users prefer to live among those they already know, often sharing the same family name. Therefore, I would also say that these communities in Batna do not only bring together high-income groups within enclosed spaces, but also promote the formation of residential projects based on kinship and close social ties.

I would also argue that if this community formation continues in future GCs planned for the city, Batna might experience a pattern of social organization similar to that of traditional Ksar settlements, where residents from small, closed tribal groups sharing the same lineage, religious doctrine, blood ties, and family ties lived together in the same enclosed space.

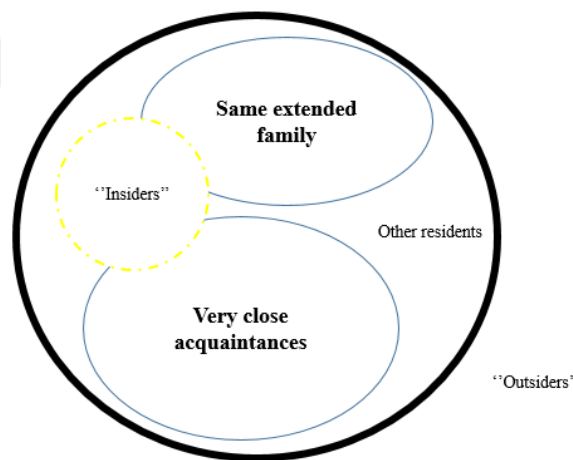


Figure 100. Kinship and Social Ties in Batna's GCs
(Source: the author)

4.7. Spatial Logic

Having explored the external patterns of the case studies, the analysis now moves inward to examine their internal layouts. This shift allows for understanding the spatial rationale behind the existing configurations and the design intentions they reflect. It also helps assess whether this recently introduced housing typology in the city of Batna shares any similarities or diverges from the already existing housing types. The following figures present the floor plans of the residential units from each case study:³⁰⁶

Case Study: 'Ben Bellat Villas'

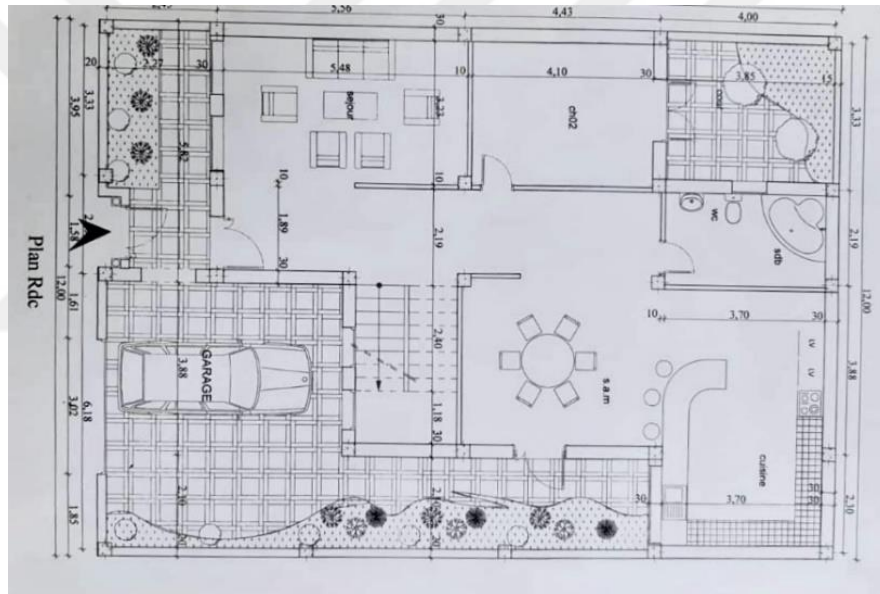


Figure 101. Floor plan of a villa from the first group, 'Ben Bellat Villas', 2010
(Source: Received from the responsible architect, Batna, February 2024)

³⁰⁶ The terms used in the following plans are in French. Each term corresponds to the following meaning: Entrée: Entrance. Séjour / Salon: Living Room / Lounge (For Algerian families, this space is used not only for hosting guests, but also for socializing, watching TV, and spending time together as a family). Cuisine: Kitchen. Ch /Chambre: Bedroom / Room. SDB/Salle de Bain: Bathroom. Hall: Entrance Hall. Sechoir / Balon: Balcony.

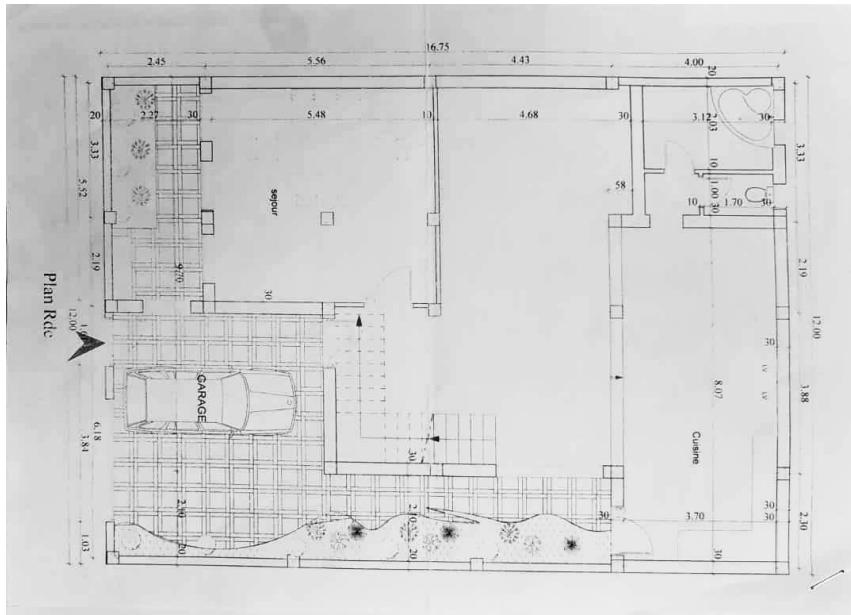


Figure 102. Floor plan of newest villas under construction, 'Ben Bellat Villas'
(Source: Received from the responsible architect, Batna, February 2024)

Case Study: 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala'



Figure 103. Floor plan of corner apartment, 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala'
(Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)



Figure 104. Floor plan of apartment unit, ‘Residence of the Aures, Bezzala’
 (Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

Case Study: 'Residence Benaldjia'

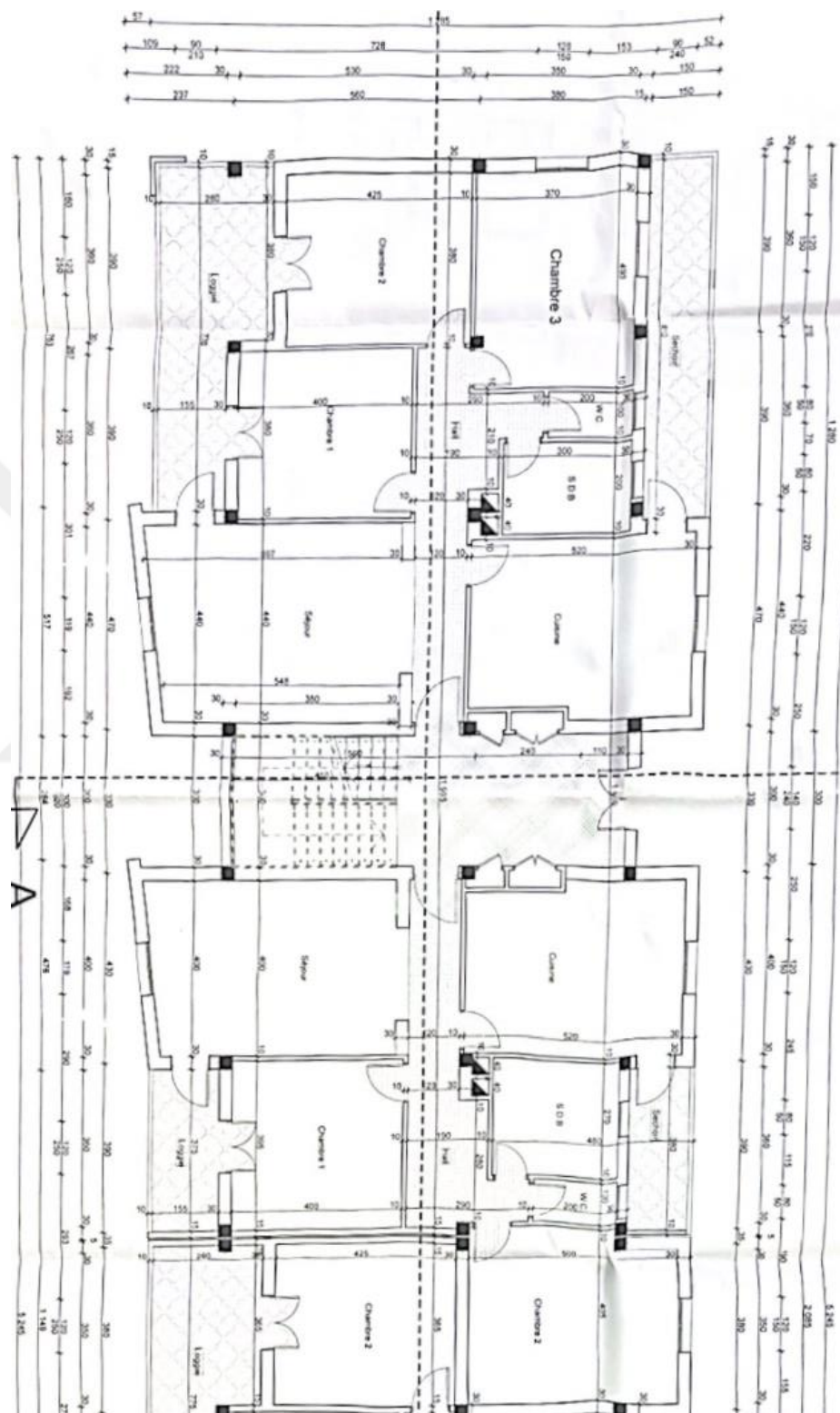


Figure 105. Floor plan of apartment units, 'Residence Benaldjia'
(Source: From the archive of the Reconstruction Directorate of Batna, February 2024)



(Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

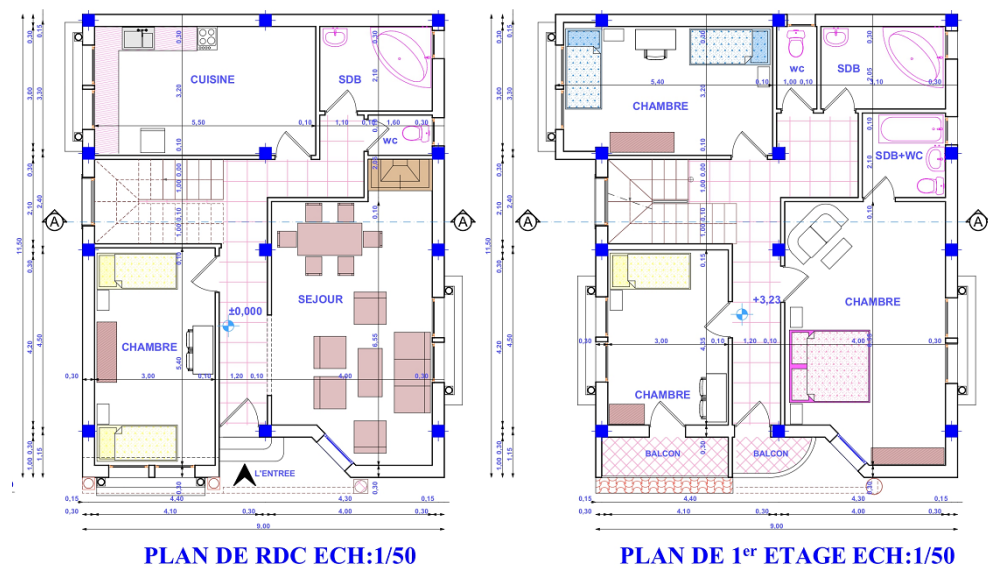


Figure 107. Floor plan of villa type 01, '648 housing units'
(Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

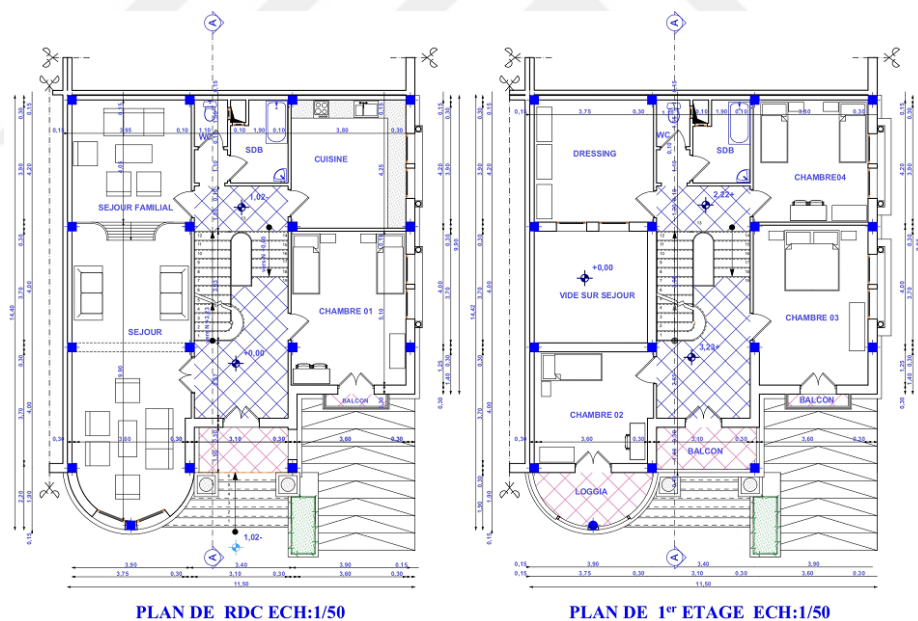


Figure 108. Floor plan of villa type 02, '648 housing units'
(Source: Received from the responsible architect of the project, February 2024)

Case Study: 'Marwa Residence'

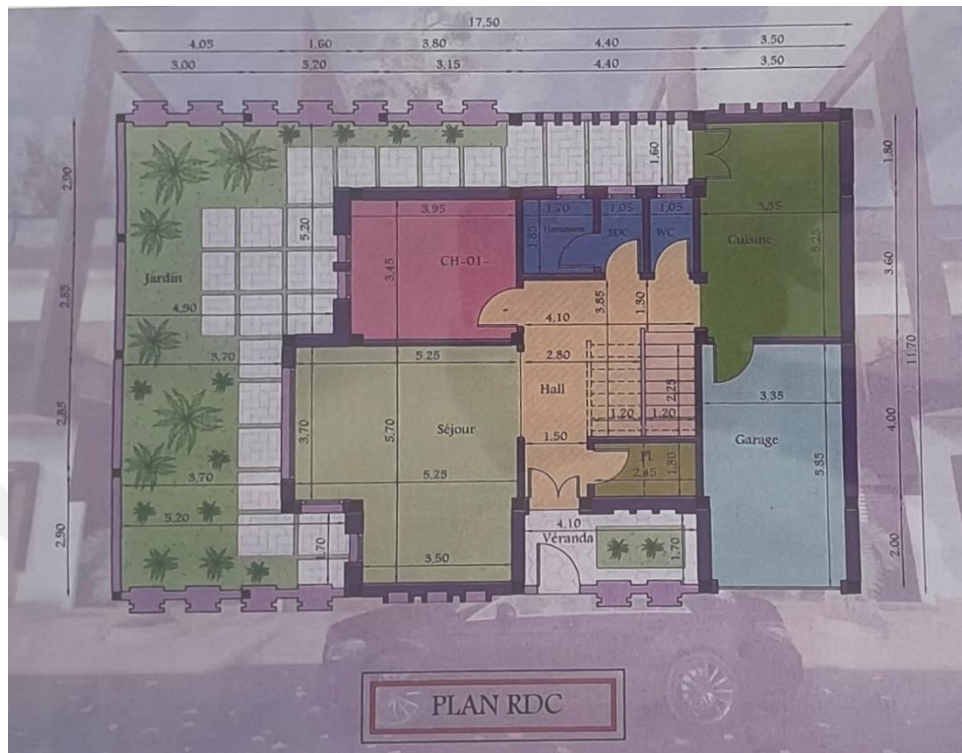


Figure 109. Floor plan of villa unit, 'Marwa Residence'
(Source: Taken from the office of Marwa Real Estate Company, Batna, February 2024)

4.7.1. Spatial Composition

Having previously lived in a ZHUN apartment (the 1200 Housing Units neighbourhood in Batna), my first observation when examining the plans and layouts of GC apartments and villas in Batna was that they do not significantly differ from those of other mass housing projects in terms of the internal existing spaces. They generally share similar spatial components. The only notable difference lies in the surface area of the units, with GCs offering larger rooms, more spacious interiors, and bigger kitchens.

The following figures show examples of constructed ZHUN projects in the city of Batna, further confirming the strong similarity in the interior composition of spaces provided when compared to the previously presented plans of GCs in the city.

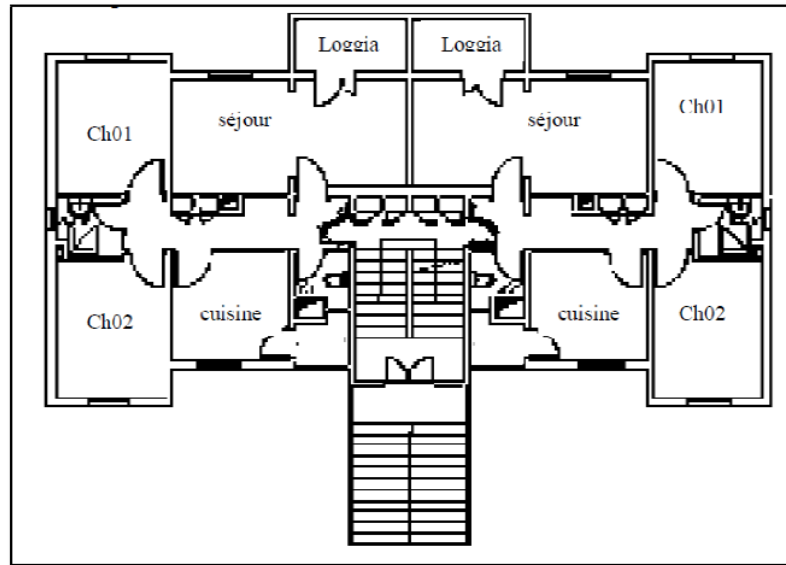


Figure 110. Mass housing block plan, 1020 housing units, Batna
(Source: Guerarra, Revalorization of New Urban Housing Areas, 143)

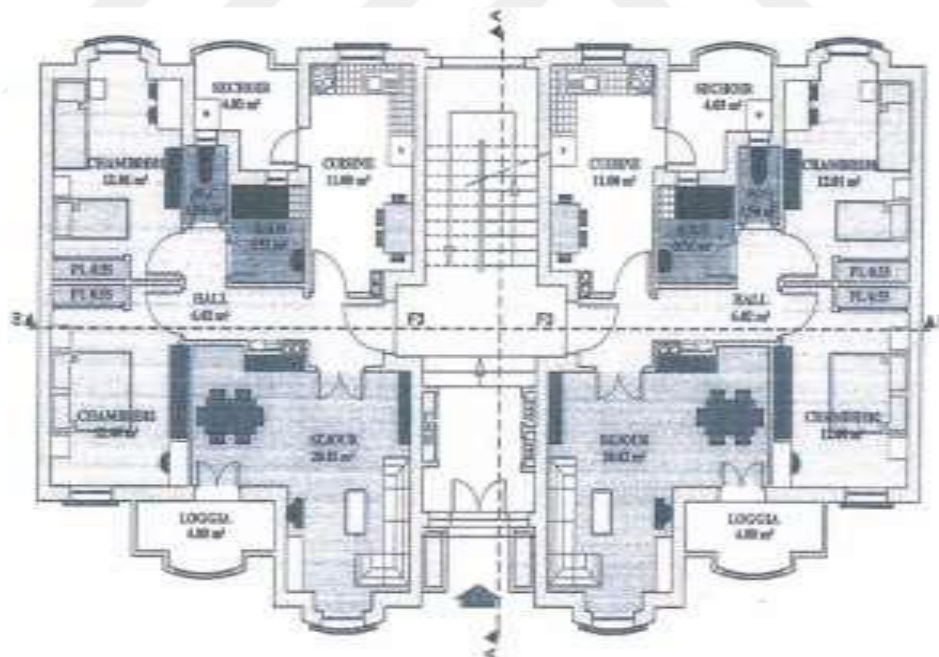


Figure 111. Plan of a mass housing block, Batna
(Source: Djafri, Osman, Rabe, and Shuid, "Social Housing in Algeria," 259)

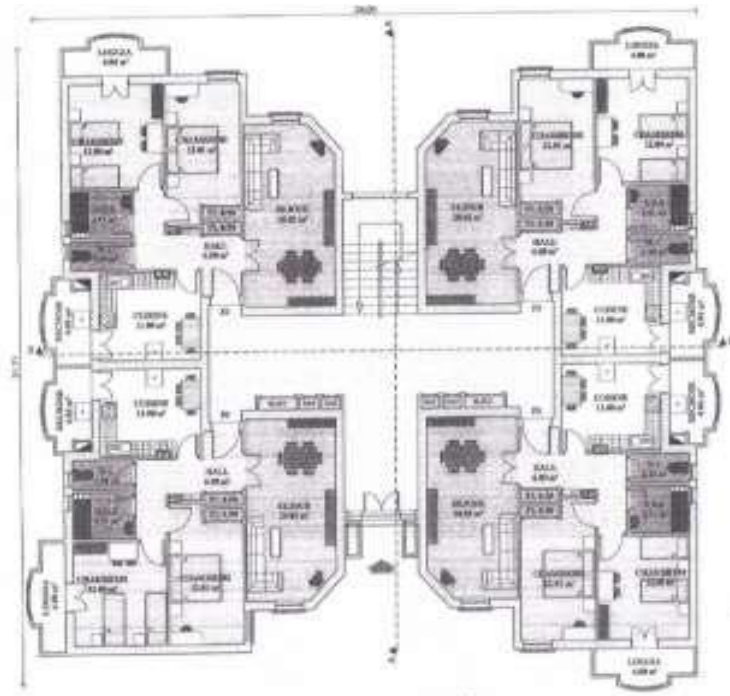


Figure 112. Another example plan of mass housing block, Batna
(Source: Djafri, Osman, Rabe, and Shuid, "Social Housing in Algeria," 259)

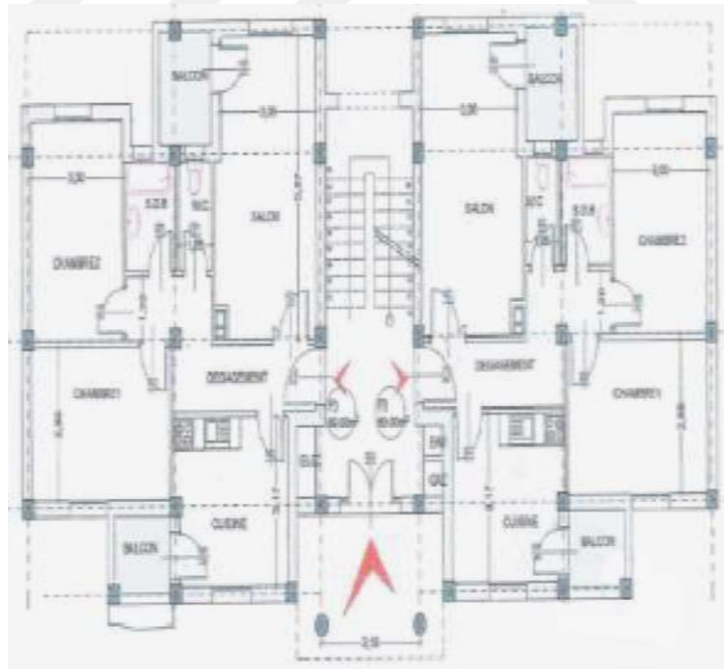


Figure 113. Additional example of mass housing block plan, Batna
(Source: Djafri, Osman, Rabe, and Shuid, "Social Housing in Algeria," 259)

Through the analysis of provided plans from several ZHUN housing projects in Batna, it becomes evident that these units consistently feature a similar set of interior spaces: a living room, a kitchen, bedrooms, a bathroom, a corridor or entrance hall, and a balcony or loggia. Interestingly, these same spatial components are also found in the GC case studies. The interior layouts do not include any additional or noticeably different spaces compared to what is already provided in state-built housing.

The architects involved in the case studies, who explained that their design choices were shaped by what they believed Algerian families used to seeing in a home, also confirmed my observations. In *Résidence of the Aures*, Bezzala, the architect aimed for simplicity, functional layouts, and a sense of privacy and comfort. In *Benaldjia Residence*, the focus was on creating a familiar and practical design while using good materials and finishes. In *Marwa Residence*, although the exterior has a modern look, the internal layout was intentionally kept traditional to match what families expect. Some residents of these projects supported this approach, expressing that the layouts felt familiar, suitable for them, and match what they had experienced throughout their lives.³⁰⁷

Private developers in each case study justified this standardisation or the repetition of conventional spatial layouts by claiming that people are used to such configurations and prefer what they already know. However, I would argue that introducing new spatial elements would require larger surface areas, higher construction costs, might make some customers hesitate to buy, since many prefer layouts that look like what they are already used to in their daily home life, ultimately, this could reduce profits. This point back to the profit-driven logic shaping many aspects of these GCs, including their interior design decisions.

³⁰⁷ When asked about the plans, the responsible architect of 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' explained, 'I thought about what Algerian families prefer: simplicity, large apartments, security, and privacy.' Similarly, the architect of 'Benaldjia Real Estate Company' emphasized, 'We made an ordinary, simple design, but we focused on good-quality materials and high-quality finishes... we created something usual for the Algerian families.' The property developer of 'Marwa Residence' also noted, 'We made something modern from the exterior, yes, but the spaces on the inside we kept it as Algerian families used to see.' Many residents stated and affirmed that the layouts are consistent with typical Algerian housing designs. A resident of 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' remarked, 'They made ordinary interior plans, which we have seen since we were young.' Another resident in 'Benaldjia Residence' stated, 'There is nothing different in the plans. You enter, the living room here, the kitchen here, and the rooms there. Something as we used to, and I am so comfortable with it.' Another added, 'The plans are so suitable for Algerian families. You enter and find the living room just next to the entrance door; the rooms are far from the entrance. The kitchen was made slightly apart from the living room and the main entrance.'

4.7.2. Functional Arrangement: Social Norms

After analysing the composition of the plans in the case studies, it is also important to explore whether their spatial distribution reflects any functional needs, social preferences, or developer priorities. To do so, I begin by presenting the following diagrams, which illustrate the interior spatial organization of the GC case studies.

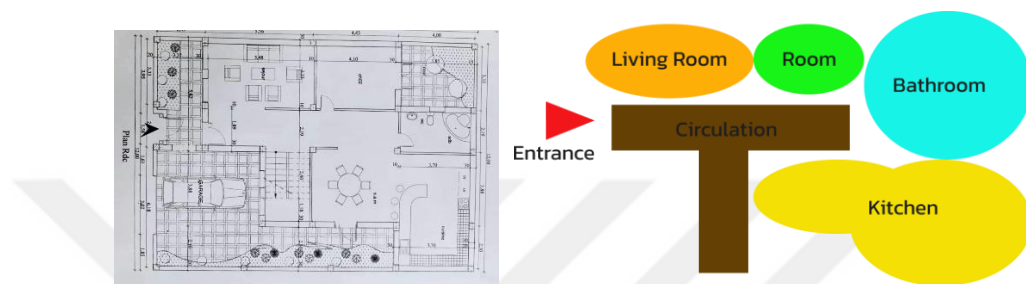


Figure 114. Spatial diagram of villa unit, 'Ben Bellat Villas'
(Source: the author)

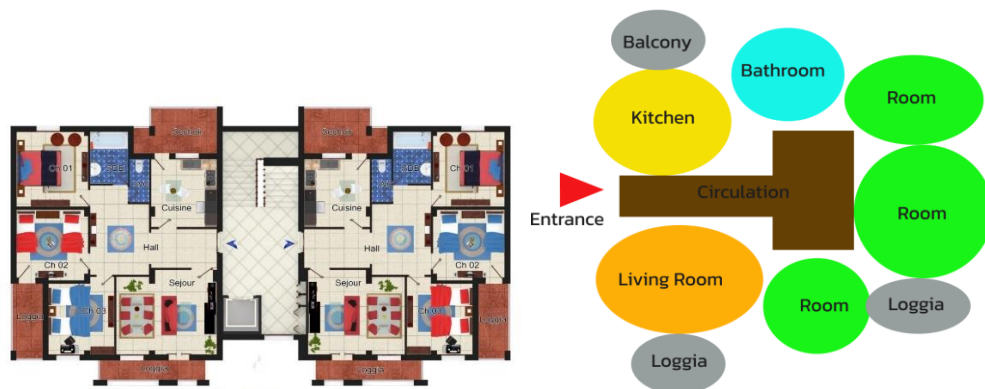


Figure 115. Spatial diagram of an apartment unit, 'Residence Bezzala'
(Source: the author)

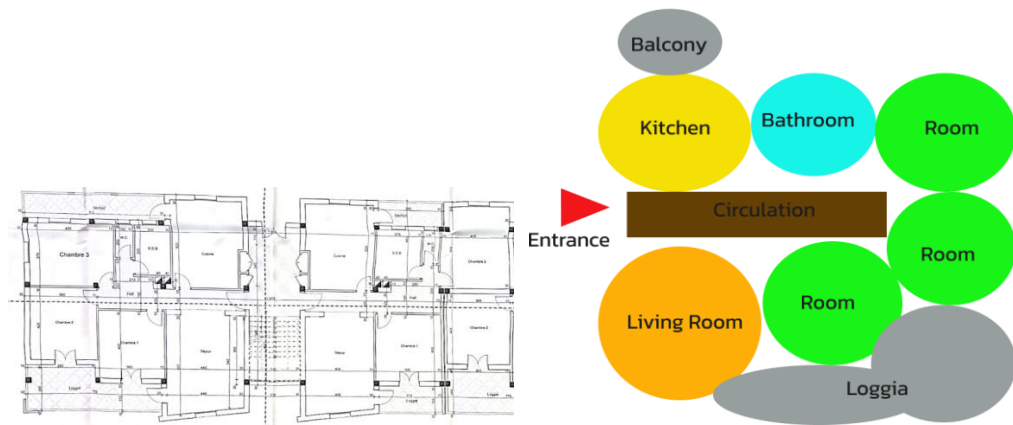


Figure 116. Spatial diagram of apartment unit, 'Residence Benaldjia'
(Source: the author)

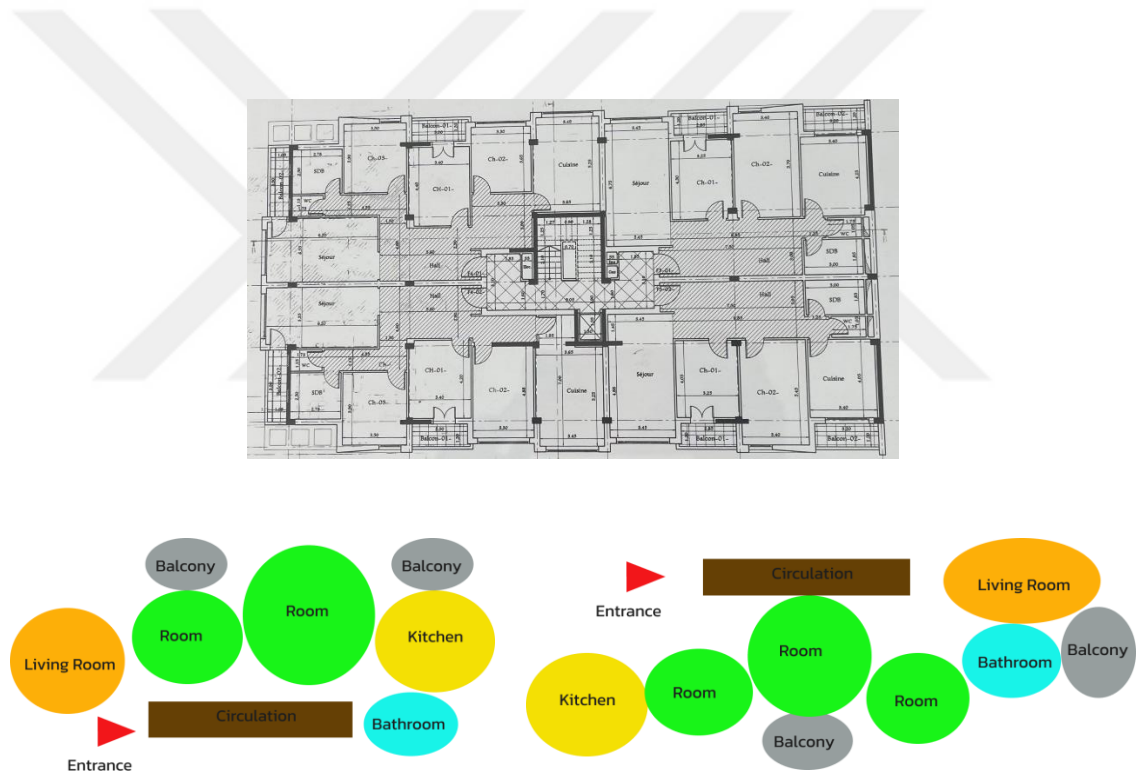


Figure 117. Spatial diagram of 2- and 3-room units, '648 housing units' project
(Source: the author)

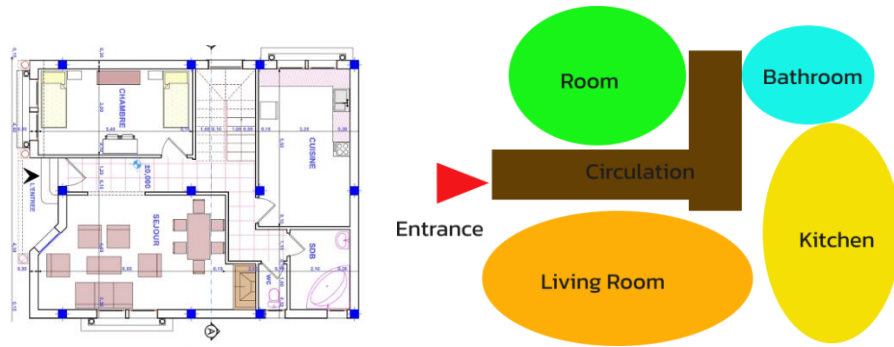


Figure 118. Spatial diagram of villa type 01, '648 housing units' project
(Source: the author)

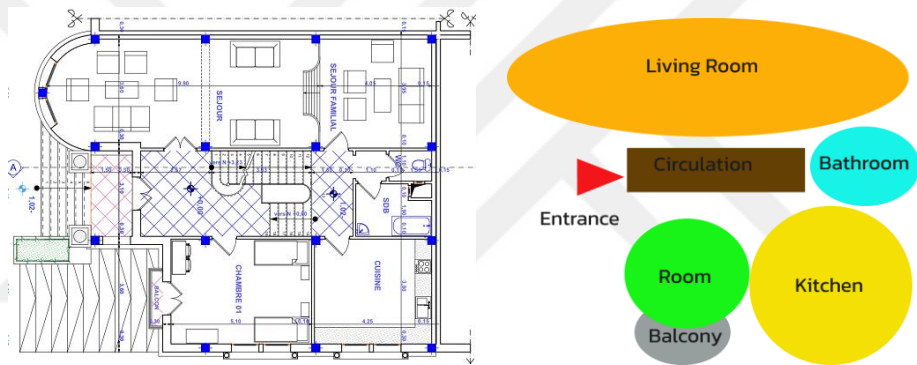


Figure 119. Spatial diagram of villa type 02, '648 housing units' project
(Source: the author)

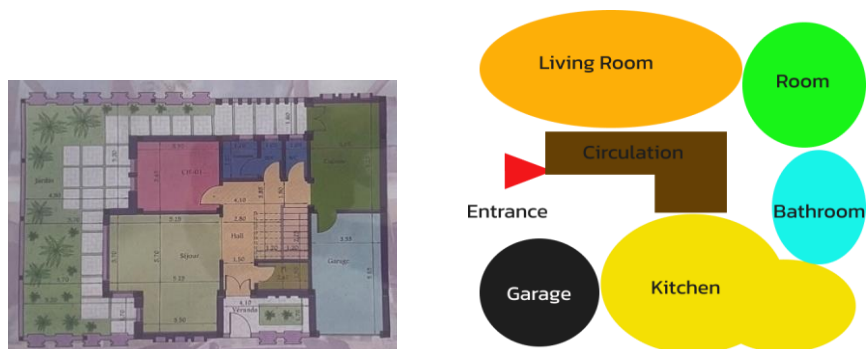


Figure 120. Spatial diagram of a villa unit, 'Marwa Residence'
(Source: the author)

Observing the spatial distribution of interior spaces in the presented plans of the GC case studies in Batna reveals that: the living room is almost always positioned directly next to the entrance. The kitchen, in some cases, is located in front of or close to the living room and the entrance, while in other cases it is set farther away from the entrance. Bedrooms are generally positioned at a distance from the entrance, often at the end of the house or on the upper floor of the villas. The placement of the restroom and shower is typically neither too close nor too far from the entrance, often located in a central area of the house.

While reviewing the interior spatial organization, I also noticed a clear similarity with layouts commonly found in mass housing projects. Both have nearly the same interior layout, with no important difference in how the spaces are placed.

The following diagrams illustrate the spatial arrangements of the previously presented ZHUN housing projects in Batna, highlighting their similarities with the interior layouts' spaces distribution of the GCs in Batna, as shown earlier:

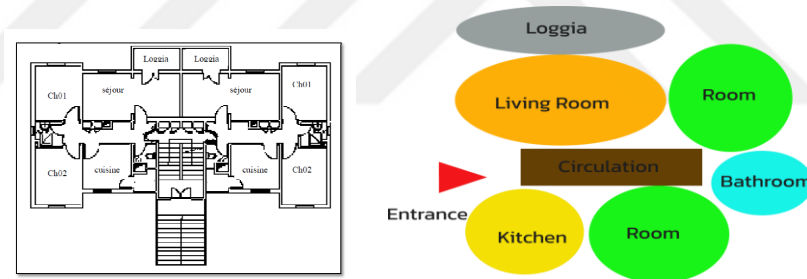


Figure 121. Spatial diagram of a mass housing, 1020-unit project, Batna
(Source: the author)

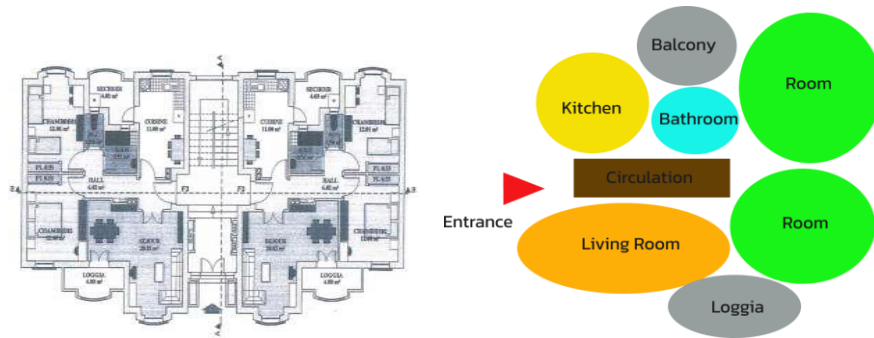


Figure 122. Spatial diagram of a mass housing, Batna
(Source: the author)

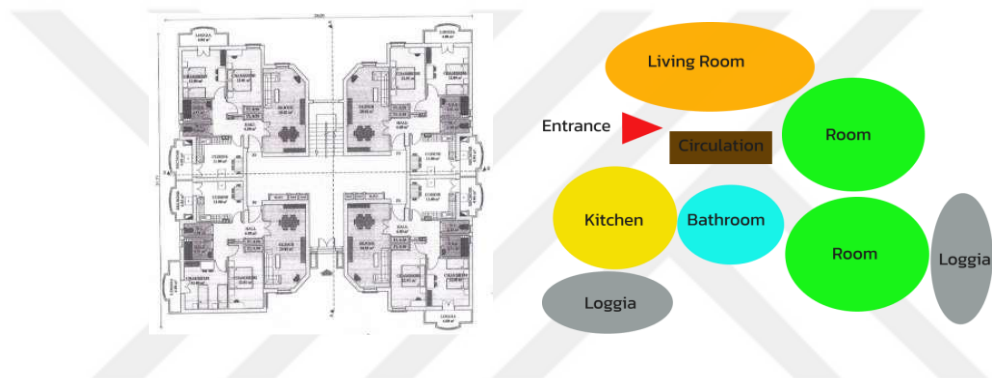


Figure 123. Another spatial diagram of a mass housing, Batna
(Source: the author)

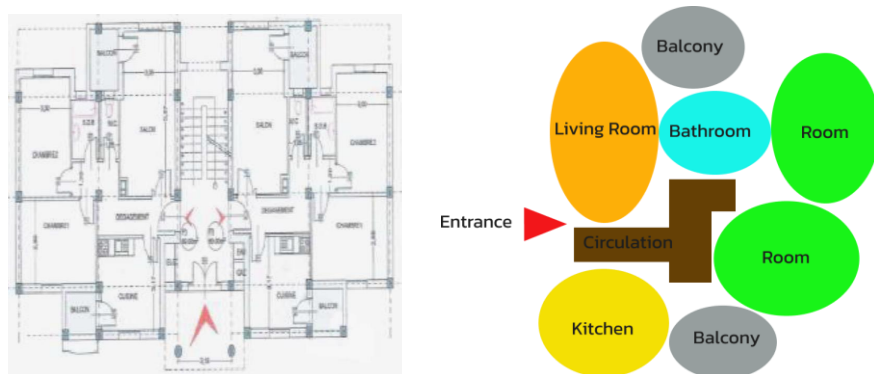


Figure 124. Additional spatial diagram of a mass housing, Batna
(Source: the author)

I would then argue that the logic of this spatial arrangement has remained mostly the same over time in Batna, even in the more recent housing type of GCs. The placement of these spaces is not random. It reflects local culture, religious beliefs, and social habits. For example, placing the toilet near the entrance allows guests to use it without walking through the entire house. In addition, the common separation between the toilet and the shower is a clear feature in Algerian housing layouts. This reflects a religious idea about cleanliness and the importance of separating different functions in the house. Separation walls, doors, and the positioning of the kitchen, living room, and bedrooms are also arranged in a way that protects the privacy of the household.

The placement of the kitchen was carefully designed to serve the purpose of privacy. In the case studies, I identified three common strategies used to achieve this. If the kitchen is located near the entrance or the living room, architects make sure it is enclosed and that the door is positioned in a way that prevents anyone passing through the entrance from seeing inside. The second is to locate the kitchen farther away and out of sight from both the entrance and the living room. The third strategy mostly used in villas, is to place the kitchen on the ground floor in a position that is also hidden from the entrance.

Another important observation from the interviews was the strong emphasis on privacy expressed by male participants, including architects and residents, when discussing the plans. For them, privacy was a key factor influencing their sense of satisfaction and comfort within the space. As mentioned during the interviews, the architect of the '648 Housing Units' project explained that privacy is a fundamental requirement for Algerian families. Likewise, the architect of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, stated that both interior and exterior privacy were carefully taken into account.³⁰⁸

What also cannot be overlooked during the interviews is the frequent connection made by male interviewees between privacy and the kitchen. The architect of Benaldjia Residence explained that the interior design followed typical Algerian family expectations, with particular attention given to the size and placement of the kitchen as essential for maintaining privacy. Likewise, the developer of Marwa Residence pointed out the careful planning in how the kitchen, rooms, and living areas were arranged for privacy.

³⁰⁸ The architect of '648 Housing Units' explained, "In Algerian families, we cannot overlook the importance of privacy". Furthermore, the responsible architect of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, explained, "we gave a great regard to the neighborhood inner and outer privacy. Inner through the careful placement of the interior spaces, exterior through the spatial organization and the distance between every apartment and another, and from each block and another, and the spaces between them."

A resident of the 648 Housing Units project reinforced this view, stating that what mattered most to him was interior privacy, noting with satisfaction that the rooms were placed away from the entrance and the kitchen was separated from the living space.³⁰⁹

Another point raised by male residents frequently mentioned points by male residents was the importance of maintaining female privacy within the home. This was often associated with the female members of the household and linked directly to the position of the kitchen. The majority of male interviewees emphasized that the layouts were designed in a way that preserves women's privacy and keeps them out of view from male visitors. This aspect of spatial organization was also a main reason behind their satisfaction with the plans. This view was clearly expressed by several residents, they pointed out that the kitchens being closed and placed away from the entrance made both their male guests and wives feel more comfortable. Some also explained that open-plan kitchens are not compatible with local social norms, as they do not allow for the separation of male and female guests. Others emphasized that such spatial arrangements reflect deeply rooted cultural expectations, where protecting the visibility of women inside the home remains important.³¹⁰

To better understand what usually happens within these interior layouts, consider the common case of a male guest visiting the home. In such situations, the female members are expected to remain hidden in the rooms or in the kitchen, the space primarily designated for them to prepare food and drinks, which are then served to the guest by the

³⁰⁹ The architect of Benaldjia Residence Real Estate Company highlighted, "we applied simplicity in terms of the exterior and the interior. The interior spaces are typical of Algerian families, who value privacy; the placement and surface area of the kitchen are very important." Similarly, the property developer of Marwa Residence noted, "As I told you, we made a modern form for these villas because people prefer something that looks new and modern. But we kept in mind how Algerian families prefer the distribution of the inner spaces by taking the privacy aspect into consideration; the placement of the kitchen, the rooms, and the living room." One of the residents in 648 Housing Units stated, "For me, the most important thing is security and privacy inside my house. I do not have any problem with the plans; the rooms are away from the entrance, the kitchen is separated and away from the living room, and that is all."

³¹⁰ A resident of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala emphasized, "I like the plan and the placement of the living room and the entrance hall, and because the kitchen is closed. I prefer it closed and far from the entrance. If you have a guest, he will feel comfortable, and my wife will feel comfortable too." One resident also from "Residence of the Aures, Bezzala" explained, "I like the living room; it is large, the kitchen is closed. It is not open to another space because it does not work here with our mentality. In foreign countries, this is okay for them; whenever they have female and male friends, for us, we should separate males from females' guests." A resident in "Residence Benaldjia" added, "for me, I care about the guest when he comes, and I also care about the privacy of my house and my wife. You know our mentality, and the plans I think are so good for that. There is no problem with it." Another resident from the same GC stated, "The interior plans are very good. You know that our mentality is that the women of the house should not be seen if a male guest enters the house. You feel comfortable if anyone enters your house because the kitchen is closed."

male members of the household. Women are not expected to move freely through other parts of the house, especially near the entrance or through the living room.

Therefore, what I would argue from the GC plans, the conducted interviews, and my personal experience in Batna is that the concept of privacy through the plans is strongly embodied in the need to prevent women from being seen by male guests. As a result, interior layouts are designed to ensure that women remain out of sight when a male visitor enters the home. In this context, the kitchen plays a central role, as it is often viewed as a space specifically designated for women. Thus, it becomes a measure of the household's privacy: the more hidden the kitchen, the more hidden the women, and the more private the home is considered to be. This creates one interconnected equation in which privacy, the female members of the household, and kitchen placement are inseparable, where greater privacy is accompanied by increased considerations regarding women's movement and visibility.

4.8. Reflections and Perceptions on Gated Living in Batna

Our housing choices are far more complex than simple economic options. They symbolize what we want for our families and communities and what we don't want, what we value and what we fear.³¹¹

The Algerian family is constantly evolving and adapting to modern times. The continuous consumption of ever-changing needs, driven by human intellectual production, reflects an ongoing process of transformation.³¹² Within this context, and based on the views of some residents, this part of the chapter presents selected feedback from those living in GCs in Batna, focusing on how they modified their interior spaces after moving in. It also highlights the aspects they find lacking or unsatisfactory in this emerging housing model. Finally, it explores how these communities are perceived not only by residents who inhabit them but also by non-residents who observe these communities from the outside.

³¹¹ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 145.

³¹² Belkacem Dibe, "The Modern Urban Environment and Social Illness in the City of Algeria: A Field Study of the City of Batna," *Majallat Jami'at Dimashq (University of Damascus Journal)*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2009): 449. (Title and journal name translated from Arabic by the author).

4.8.1. Internal Changes: Towards Open Interior Spaces

Based on the interviews and field observations, some residents of GCs in Batna have made various interior modifications after moving into their homes. These changes according to them reflect their need to personalize and adjust the original layouts to better suit their daily routines. The one noticeable trend in these modifications is the tendency to create a more open-plan by removing interior walls.

It was revealed that, unlike older-aged residents who prefer segmented and enclosed interior spaces for reasons of privacy and traditions, some interviewed younger couples and residents from younger age hold different views. They modified parts of their homes, most often the living room, by removing internal separation walls to create one single larger open living area. These young couples explained the reasons behind these changes by stating that the current modern life, characterized by busy schedules and long working hours for both parents, necessitated such adjustments. Upon returning home, they seek to maximize their family time by spending it together in a single, cohesive space. According to them, the open space creates a shared environment where different activities can happen at the same time without visual or physical separation. As some said, an open space allows them to engage in conversations with their spouses or following their children's activities in the living area. They also mentioned that open space makes their homes feel larger and more inviting.

This shift toward open-plan living was also acknowledged by the architect of 648 Housing Units, who explained that modern family life now takes place mostly in the living room. For this reason, its size was increased, as it serves multiple purposes such as working, studying, relaxing, and spending time together. Similarly, in Benaldjia Residence, the architect noted that while the company followed a standard layout, some clients chose to make internal changes. A number of them removed interior walls to create more open spaces, while others kept the original design.³¹³

³¹³ The architect of '648 Housing Units' explains the mentioned point by stating, "the modern life of an entire family has become embodied in the living room. And accordingly, the living room's area has been doubled and furnished at the expense of the rest of the spaces because the living room has become a space for work, study, entertainment, conversations, and all other activities." Similarly, the architect of Benaldjia Residence Real Estate Company noted, "We did our design as usual, but some of the clients decided to make some inner changes; some preferred to keep it as we did, and some demolished some inner separation walls to create open spaces."

The following figures show examples of open space modifications made by some residents in the GC case studies:

A resident of Residence of the Aures, Bezzala explained that she removed two internal walls to enlarge the living room. Her aim was to create an open space for family gatherings and to set up a visible prayer area, allowing her children to see her praying and encouraging them for spiritual practices.³¹⁴



Figure 125. Open-plan modification by participant, 'Residence Bezzala'
(Source: Taken from a house at Residence of the Aures, Bezzala, February 19, 2024.)

From Residence Benaldjia, the owner shared that that the original plans reflected an older way of living, so he modified the interior to create an open space. Since both he and his wife work all day, they preferred to return to a home where they could easily talk and spend time together with their children in one shared area, without many dividing interior walls.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ The owner resides in 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' sated "I removed two separation walls. That was a room there, which I removed. Because Algerian families gather in the living room, I wanted to make it larger, and create an open space for praying to make our children have the spiritual continuous contact and to make them see me praying so they do the same thing."

³¹⁵ The owner resides in 'Residence Benaldjia', stated, "I will tell you honestly that the plans at first were made according to the old way of living. I personally made some changes because I prefer the open space. Me and my wife work and spend all the day outside. I want to come back home to watch my son and daughter and my wife do what they do; we talk easily without these many walls. We gather all in one space, and we stay in it together."



Figure 126. Participant's open-plan modification, 'Residence Benaldjia'
(Source: Provided by a resident at 'Residence Benaldjia,' Batna, February 2024.)

In the third example, the owner shared during the interview that since childhood, he had lived in his grandfather's house with many family members and numerous rooms. This experience made him prefer not to live in a similar interior plan, which is why he decided to change the original into a more open interior space.



Figure 127. Open-plan modification by resident, 'Residence Benaldjia'
(Source: Sent by the resident at 'Residence Benaldjia,' Batna, February 2024).³¹⁶

This growing trend is also observed in the newly constructed row of villas in Benbellat GC. The lead architect explained that people, especially young couples who work all day, have started to prefer and ask open plans. According to him, the older villas were made with everything closed, as that was what people preferred in the past. Now, most clients prefer open spaces, so in the new row of villas, the plans were left without any inner wall separations.³¹⁷ The following figures show the current interior of the new villas in Benbellat GC that are still under construction:

³¹⁶ The owner stated "When I was a kid, I lived with my grandfather and a big part of our family. The house had so many rooms and felt very crowded. I did not like that. So when I got this place, I changed the plan. I wanted something more open. I prefer open spaces. I am tired of walls."

³¹⁷ The lead architect stated "we made the new raw villas with an open space interior. People nowadays have started to prefer the open space, especially new couples who both work all day long. As one mother previously mentioned to me, whenever I come back home, I prefer to cook dinner while I watch my son or daughter playing in the living room and my husband watching TV, in order to create a familial atmosphere. Open space helps create visual and direct contact between family members. Yes, the old ones; we made it so ordinary according to the Algerian mentality at the time; everything was closed, the kitchen with a door, and the living room as well. After years, the client's mentality has changed. I can tell you that the majority prefers open inner spaces. Therefore, what we did in the new raw villas was leaving the plans without any kind of inner wall separation. All floors are open."



Figure 128. Interior views of new open-plan villas, ‘Villas Benbellat-Tazoult’
(Source: Images captured by the author, Batna, February 2024)

This recent trend toward open-plan layouts, especially among newly married couples living in the GC case studies in Batna, reflects a noticeable shift from conventional Algerian housing patterns. I argue that this change is not only the result of practical needs and causes such as longer working hours and faster daily routines, it is also influenced by the widespread circulation of images on social media in visual media, where open and visually connected spaces are presented as attractive, modern, and desirable.

In addition, I argue that adopting this layout can be understood as a way to express distinction. Choosing to live in an interior space that looks different from the majority is a way to step away from repetition and sameness by changing a part of conventional and common designs. Because these younger-aged residents and newly married couples are unlikely to have more than two children, and the original plans already provided enough living room space to comfortably accommodate a family of four. My assumption is based on current trend in Batna as I have observed recently, where younger married couples increasingly prefer smaller families because of their awareness of financial responsibilities, dual employment, and a shift toward modern lifestyles, often shaped by social media depictions of how families should look as minimal with one or two children. Whether they intend to look different from others or not by using these open-plan layouts, this choice I would argue works as a form of social distinction. This idea is captured by Pierre Bourdieu, who writes: *“It should not be thought that the relationship of distinction (which may or may not imply the conscious intention of distinguishing oneself from common people) is only an incidental component in the aesthetic disposition.”* It explains how

people, consciously or unconsciously, use their taste to differentiate themselves from others or from other social groups.³¹⁸

4.8.2. Future Aspirations: The Call for Religious Spots

Almost all the interviewees who reside in the case studies expressed a strong desire and need for religious spaces within the GC, including a mosque, or prayer room, or a space for sacrifice rituals, or a Quran school. These amenities are highly valued by the interviewed residents and are seen as essential components of their daily lives. Many interviewees noted that such facilities had been promised by the office of the real estate company of the GC during the initial phases of the project but had not yet been constructed as in the case of ‘‘Residence of the Aures Bezzala’’ and ‘‘648 housing unit’’.³¹⁹

The fact that there are no religious spaces upset many residents because, for them, such places help create a sense of community and spiritual comfort and practice. For many, having a mosque or prayer room is a necessity that facilitates their religious practices and enhances their quality of life. As they mentioned, a space for sacrifice rituals is important during religious festivals, allowing residents to perform these rites in a manner that is respectful and in accordance with their beliefs. Additionally, a Quran school within the community according to the interviewed users would provide a religious educational space, ensuring that their children can learn about their faith in a safe and environment.³²⁰

³¹⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 31.

³¹⁹ A resident of the '648 Housing Units' explained, ‘‘When I talked to the sales manager of the project the first time, she told me that they will build the mosque in parallel with the apartments, but look, no mosque, nothing; we cannot hear the call for prayer!’’

³²⁰ When asked about what they need and feel is missing in the GC they live in, a resident in 648 Housing Units stated, ‘‘I am old, and I really feel lonely. Sometimes I want to talk to my neighbors and stay with them. Probably they will create a mosque here so I can meet with other people and talk.’’ A resident in Residence of the Aures, Bezzala mentioned, ‘‘I would prefer at least a small mosque to be used for Ramadan month for praying Taraweeh in the evenings. I also wished to have a place here where we can make the sacrifice in the feast festival, where all neighbors gather and sacrifice their sheeps together to create a good atmosphere. I also wished to have here a Quranic school for my children. I send my son every Friday to another place in order to read and learn the Quran.’’ Another resident in Residence of the Aures, Bezzala also expressed, ‘‘I would prefer to have more conversations, gatherings, and meetings with my neighbors, as I mentioned before we even do not have a mosque. In Ramadan, it feels like normal days, we do not feel its sense.’’ Another complained, ‘‘There is no space outside, as you see, you can meet and sit with your neighbors. We would prefer to have it, or at least a small mosque to sense the gatherings with the neighbors, which I really miss. The idea here is I can pray at home, but the feeling when you have a mosque near from your house is different.’’ While a resident in Villas Benbellat-Tazoult, the only GC that contains a mosque, expressed her gratitude, ‘‘I feel so happy when I go to the mosque, meet my neighbors, and pray together. It would also be better if they created another place for buying necessary things, if I want to buy bread or milk or a vegetable, there is no close market from here.’’

This statement reflects what Manasria indicates in her study: that 77% of Algerians prefer to integrate religion into their daily and social lives as a way to preserve their identity. They are also committed to honouring and respecting its rituals, especially during religious holidays such as Eid al-Fitr (celebrating the end of Ramadan) and, in particular, Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice).³²¹

4.8.3. ‘‘Insiders’’ & ‘‘Outsiders’’ Voices

As previously shown in the literature reviews, scholars are divided in their views on GCs, with some opposing and others supporting the GCs phenomenon, this study presents some views of both ‘‘insiders’’ and ‘‘outsiders’’ regarding the emergence and the proliferation of GCs in the city of Batna. The interviews revealed that both groups expressed a range of opinions, including both supportive and critical about various aspects.

4.8.3.1. ‘‘Insiders’’

Some users of GCs expressed both positive and negative opinions about these communities. While some strongly encouraged the creation of more such communities, others viewed them as a beneficial housing type due to the comfort, safety, and exclusive services they offer to residents. For certain users, living in a GC is seen as preferable because it is believed to provide a safer and more suitable environment for raising children within a high-class social group, as they described, compared to other social groups.³²²

Even though there were positive opinions from some GC users, others expressed dissatisfaction and disappointment regarding various aspects. For example, some residents highlighted a gap between the promised designs and the actual outcomes. Several

³²¹ Manasria, *The Identity of the Local Community in the Face of Globalization*. 360-361.

³²² The Property Developer of Group Benbellat Real Estate Development Corporation who lives in his GC, stated, ‘‘I support this type of closed communities, yes. It is better and a good idea to create more in the city.’’ Similarly, the Property Developer of Marwa Residence who also owns a villa in his community, commented, ‘‘This is a good thing for the property developers, for the people of Batna, as well as for Batna’s reputation if good designs of housing.’’ A resident from '648 Housing Units' remarked, ‘‘These communities are something very positive. With the security it provides, not everyone is able to buy an apartment here. The majority of people here are rich and educated, which reduces many problems.’’ Another resident from 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala' shared, ‘‘These communities are a good thing because they provide us with maximum security, which makes you comfortable in your life and when you are sleeping or traveling.’’

residents were particularly dissatisfied with the unfulfilled expectations related to communal spaces such as gardens and the playgrounds for their children.³²³ It is also the case in the '648 Housing Units' GC, which was the subject of criticism from several users who expressed dissatisfaction with the gap between what was initially advertised and what they found after moving in. Complaints focused particularly on the lack of parking facilities, as well as the absence of promised recreational and a religious space.³²⁴

While most GC users expressed either positive or negative views, one resident from 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala', expressed a dual opinion. It was stated that this community is seen as both positive and negative: negative, as social cohesion is reduced due to the absence of shared spaces for gatherings; positive, due to the high level of security, cleanliness, and organization is provided. Living in such closed communities was highly recommended by him, especially if the cost of purchasing a house can be afforded.³²⁵

4.8.3.2. "Outsiders"

Among all the conducted interviews with non-residents, only two architects expressed positive opinions about GCs. The architect of the '648 Housing Units' emphasized his support that was mainly based on the security and special services these communities offer to residents, stating, "The residential neighbourhoods that provide comfort, safety, and distinguished services to the residents are always a positive thing." The second archi-

³²³ As one of the residents of the Aures, Bezzala, explained, "They promised us that they would create a large space as a garden as in the renders, but they did not make it so far. This is what the plans showed at the beginning too."

³²⁴ As one resident explained, "They showed us different things at the beginning, and in real life, it is not the same. I thought that it would be a good and different project, secure and calm with many facilities, but as you see, it is the most horrible place to live! I convinced my three close friends to buy apartments here; they did, and now they regret that. There are currently no more than twenty inhabited apartments so far, and still we do not find where to park our cars. Can you imagine when all the 648 come and live here?" Another resident highlighted the lack of promised amenities, stating, "They told us at the beginning that by the time they give us the keys to the apartment, we would also find the mosque ready to be used. There is no mosque now. Whenever we ask them about it, they tell us that they will make it soon." Another noted, "They should have thought about where the coming 648 cars will park because the ground-floor parking space is very small. The outside parking areas cannot serve more than 30 cars. They did not create playground areas for children, a gym, etc."

³²⁵ He stated, "I consider these GCs a positive and a negative thing. Negative because as this community, it reduces the social cohesion because we do not gather or meet with each other at all due to no space for that offered. Positive, because it offers a high level of security, clean, organized. I highly recommend living in such closed communities if someone can afford the price of buying a house."

tect based in Batna, viewed GCs as a positive addition to the urban space and the landscape of the city and a source of diversity that could attract more visitors and investors. He highlighted the aesthetic and urban benefits, noting, “GCs can contribute to adding urban diversity to the city, as they are designed uniquely and aesthetically. This diversity can enhance the city's attractiveness and attract more visitors and investors.”

Nonetheless, more critical perspectives dominated the interviews, particularly among academics with backgrounds in architecture and urban studies. The phenomenon of GCs was rejected for several reasons and concerns. It was argued that some of these communities were built without proper planning or in-depth studies. For example, in 'Residence Benaldjia', it was pointed out that the issue of unpleasant smells from a nearby sewage treatment plant had not been taken into account, affecting residents' comfort. Concerns were also raised about the absence of green spaces and children's playgrounds in existing GCs in Batna. It was observed by a former architecture lecturer that these communities had not been constructed according to sound urban planning standards; the land had been filled with villas, lacking both public facilities and green areas, and the basic requirements for a GC were said to be mostly missing.³²⁶ The risk of urban fragmentation was also highlighted, as the spread of such communities was believed to increase spatial disconnection in the city. It was noted that a city cannot be formed simply by combining individual GCs; instead, connections among all parts are needed to create a unified and meaningful urban space.³²⁷ In addition, concern was expressed about the isolation of these communities, which was seen as a threat to urban unity and diversity, and contrary to core principles of urbanity based on mixture and inclusiveness.³²⁸

Several non-resident interviewees shared dual views about GCs, recognizing certain benefits while raising critical concerns. They acknowledged positive aspects such as improved security, housing quality, urban diversity, etc., while also highlighting issues related to social and spatial exclusion, poor planning, the lack of integration into the city's

³²⁶ A former lecturer in the Department of Architecture in Batna, currently teaching in Algiers, observed, “These communities were not built according to well-studied urban standards, the land is full of villas and without green spaces, the facilities do not exist, and the minimum standards or conditions that must be met in a GC do not generally exist.”

³²⁷ An Assistant Professor at the University of Batna explained, “We cannot produce a city (in its total meaning) by adding the sum of the parts to each other (these GCs). The whole is not the sum of its parts. All parts must be linked to produce an integrated semantic space.”

³²⁸ A Research Assistant and Lecturer at the University of Batna cautioned, “The risk lies in the spatial isolation of these communities, which will result in a fragmentation of the city and the creation of a large number of GCs within the city. I will call into the principles of urbanity, which must be based on diversity and mix.”

fabric, etc. The issue of exclusivity was highlighted by the Head of Projects' Studies at the Office of Promotion and Real Estate Management in Batna, where it was stated that although these communities serve the needs of their own residents, they create a sense of separation for those living outside, who may perceive them as restricted areas for privileged groups.³²⁹ A similar view was expressed by the architect of 'Residence of the Aures, Bezzala', where the project was considered positive from a security standpoint but criticized for its negative impact on the urban image. It was mentioned that fences, especially opaque ones, reduce the architectural contribution of these projects to the surrounding landscape, and a preference for shorter, transparent barriers was suggested as a solution.³³⁰ Likewise, another architect based in Batna since 2011 acknowledged the safety and modern architectural standards of these communities, but concerns were raised about their lack of harmony with the existing architectural identity of the city.³³¹

In addition, some participants emphasized the importance of aligning GCs with local identity and cultural values. It was suggested by a lecturer at the University of Batna that legal measures reflecting local identity and culture should be introduced to counter the effects of globalization and avoid excessive standardization. Support for these communities was not rejected entirely, but it was stated that proper planning and adherence to urban laws must be ensured.³³² Another architect also highlighted the need for more inclusive planning, where it was stated that these communities should be designed and managed in ways that reduce social discrimination and encourage communication and understanding among different societal groups.³³³

A broader urban perspective was also emphasized during the interviews by one architect, who pointed out that understanding how urban development is being shaped through the emergence of GCs requires considering local and global changes, along with

³²⁹ "These communities have positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect is that it benefits only their local residents and their needs. The negative is that it affects people who do not live inside these communities because they see it as a special place for special people that they cannot enter."

³³⁰ "From a security aspect, I see it as a good project. However, from an architectural aspect, I personally do not prefer the gates and, especially, the fences. Because when you make a beautiful project and you close it with a fence, it will mean nothing for the landscape of the city. We can solve this problem by using transparent, short fences."

³³¹ "I see these GCs something positive in terms of security, the evolution quality of villas and buildings, and keeping pace with modernity. Negative in terms of creating buildings that are not homogeneous with the city's architecture."

³³² "It is better to add some laws related to local identity and culture in order to escape globalization and standardization a little. I am not against these communities, but with real planning and standards that respect urban laws."

³³³ "These communities must be designed and managed in a way that reduces discrimination and promotes understanding and communication between different groups of society."

economic, social, and environmental factors, highlighting the need to assess these interconnected challenges within the planning process.³³⁴ In addition, a research assistant and lecturer drew attention to the importance of analysing the motivations behind residents' choices. She noted that the phenomenon should be understood, and that user's behaviour, along with the key factors driving investment in such enclosed communities, should be carefully studied and evaluated. According to her, this is so necessary to ensure an effective management of the situation.³³⁵

Finally, warnings were expressed by some interviewees regarding the long-term consequences that may occur if no intervention is made. The urgency of responding to rapid urban change was emphasized by an Assistant Professor at the University of Batna, where it was stated that urban adjustment has become a vital necessity due to the fast spread of the phenomenon in Algeria.³³⁶ This concern was expressed by an architect working in Batna since 2015, who warned that, in the long term, urban problems could emerge and will become difficult to resolve if appropriate legal measures are not taken by the government.³³⁷

4.8.4. Socio-spatial Segregation

Neighbourhoods have always been able to exclude some potential residents through discrimination and housing costs. With gates and walls, they can exclude not only undesirable new residents, but even casual passer by and the people from the neighbourhood next door. Gates are a visible sign of exclusion, an even stronger signal to those who already see themselves as excluded from the larger mainstream social milieu.³³⁸

After exploring how GCs are perceived by both residents and non-residents, it is now essential to highlight their critical impact, particularly the ways in which they contribute to socio-spatial segregation. This issue, which builds on the earlier theoretical discussion, has been widely recognized in previous studies on GCs, and it also emerged as a significant theme during the fieldwork and interviews conducted in Batna.

³³⁴ "Local and global changes, along with economic, social, and environmental issues, need to be considered to understand how they might affect the future of GCs in Batna and Algeria."

³³⁵ "We must understand the phenomenon and assess the behavior of users and the factors that push them to choose and invest in this type of 'enclosure' in order to control the situation."

³³⁶ "Urban change and adjustment have become a vital necessity in the face of the fast spread of this phenomenon."

³³⁷ "In the long term, we will be exposed to urban diseases that will be difficult to solve if the government does not move and make laws related to this phenomenon."

³³⁸ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, 153.

The findings of this study have reinforced and supported the statements of previous studies on the influence of GCs in spreading and deepening socio-spatial segregation within societies, as noted by Grant (2005), Le Goix (2005), Belhai and Djelal (2018), and many others.

Starting by spatial segregation, many interviewees have asserted that the certain groups who prefer and can reside in a GC seek their own special enclosed area to maintain greater control and security. This exclusivity with limited access leads to spatial fragmentation within the city of Batna, creating a barrier between community residents and non-residents. Such a condition was considered by some and contradicts fundamental urban principles that based on diversity and social mixing. As stated by an Assistant Professor at the University of Batna that spaces hidden behind walls tend to be perceived as unfamiliar or disconnected, and that each GC is distinguished from the rest of the city by the status of its residents, the type of buildings, and the available services.³³⁹ Additionally, an architect working in Batna since 2008 emphasized that these communities promote spatial segregation and discrimination, which were not observed during the socialist period when various social groups lived together in the same areas. He emphasized a warning that such spatial segregation could result in long-term social and urban deterioration.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ “What lies behind the wall is always strange. This is the first lesson the city has given us since ancient times. Every GC is distinct from the rest of the city through its distinction in the quality of its residents, buildings, and facilities.”

³⁴⁰ “these communities encourage discrimination and spatial segregation. This is what we did not see during the time of socialism. There was no segregation. All social groups lived together in the same place. Spatial segregation leads to social and urban collapse in the long term.”

Regarding social segregation, several interviewees have stated that private developers primarily construct GCs for specific groups, including the rich, upper-middle, and high-income families. Other interviewees have agreed that this practice of segregating specific income groups within a closed housing space increases and reinforces social stratification and isolation. This, in turn, leads to the weakening of social cohesion among different segments of society. These families often prefer to reside in isolated spaces with others from similar backgrounds, frequently selecting neighbours based on class, family ties, or regional origin, and distancing themselves from lower-income individuals and families.³⁴¹ This trend was criticized by an architect in Batna who stated that separation from the rest of society is seen as a factor that encourages social segregation and the division of society. He also pointed out that the high cost of these communities makes them inaccessible to many people who seek safe living environments.³⁴² In response to this criticism, some residents from the case studies justified this exclusivity. Many have stated that the social atmosphere of the people who live in state housing does not encourage them to live among them.³⁴³ It was also added that, in a residential area, the presence of many non-residents is not preferred, and that the enclosed space should remain exclusively for its residents.³⁴⁴

This divide between "insiders" and "outsiders," often viewed as a negative consequence of GCs, reflects Zygmunt Bauman's critique in *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* where he highlights the growing gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" in a consumer-driven society, where those unable to engage in consumer culture are marginalized, labelled as outsiders, and subjected to social exclusion.³⁴⁵ Regarding the latter, housing,

³⁴¹ A lecturer at the University of Batna remarked, "these communities are intended for a specific social class. The latter wants to distinguish itself from the 'rest' of society by offering itself luxurious units of housing and even a new identity. The grouping of specific income households in these GCs by socio-economic affinities promotes social segregation and weakens social cohesion. The distancing of certain social groups destroys the links between residents of the same city. As a result, we will witness an increase in social disparities." Similarly, a lecturer in the department of architecture in the University of Algiers explained, "Families in these GCs want to live with the same class; they do not want to live with the poor. For example, families in the Ben Bellat Villas community chose each other. You will find groups of families who came from the same family name or original region."

³⁴² "as an architect, I criticize this phenomenon, as separation from the rest of society is considered an encouragement to social segregation and division of society. In addition, these communities have a high cost that make them inaccessible to everyone who wants to live in a safe place."

³⁴³ "the social atmosphere of the people who live in state housing does not encourage us to live with them."

³⁴⁴ "you know that in a residential area, we do not like many non-residents. We prefer that the closed space stay only for us, for its residents."

³⁴⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 204.

and socio-spatial segregation, Ham and Manley argue that ‘*housing processes have the potential to be a force for social exclusion by creating and maintaining social and spatial divisions.*’³⁴⁶

How David Byrne explains and defines social exclusion closely mirrors the aspects observed in the phenomenon of GCs in Batna. He states: ‘*The two words ‘social’ and ‘exclusion’ when put together conjoin society as a whole ... When we talk and write about ‘social exclusion’ we are talking about changes in the whole of society that have consequences for some of the people in that society ... ‘Exclusion’ is something that is done by some people to other people.*’³⁴⁷ Madanipour et al. further expand on this concept, explaining that social exclusion is the result of a multi-dimensional process that combines several forms of exclusion: from participation in decision-making and politics, to access to jobs and resources, and engagement in social life. When these exclusions intersect, they result in spatial consequences manifesting in clearly segregated neighbourhoods that reflect and reinforce social divisions.³⁴⁸ This is clearly reflected in the case of GCs in Batna, where those living within the GCs benefit from access to better housing quality, security, and close social connections, while those outside are excluded from these privileges, lifestyles, and the physical-spatial space of the GC itself. This phenomenon of social exclusion according to British sociologists Nick Jewson and Susanne MacGregor may produce a variety of responses: opposition and resistance to the system through crime, protests, or terrorism; withdrawal from society, which may include mental health issues; or separatism, through the formation of isolated communities or movements.³⁴⁹

Social segregation, caused by this new type of housing, was the final dimension discussed in the fieldwork findings and their interpretation. This chapter explored several layers of GCs in Batna. It started with the reasons behind their emergence, explored the

³⁴⁶ Maarten van Ham and David Manley, “Segregation, Choice-Based Letting and Social Housing: How Housing Policy Can Affect the Segregation Process,” in *Social-Spatial Segregation: Concepts, Processes and Outcomes*, ed. Christopher D. Lloyd, Ian G. Shuttleworth, and David W.S. Wong (Bristol: Policy Press, 2020), 252.

³⁴⁷ David Byrne, *Social Exclusion*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), 2.

³⁴⁸ Madanipour, A., Cars, G., and Allen, J., *Social Exclusion in European Cities* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1998), quoted in David Byrne, *Social Exclusion*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), 2.

³⁴⁹ Nick Jewson and Susanne MacGregor, “Transforming Cities: Social Exclusion and the Reinvention of Partnership,” in *Transforming Cities: Contested Governance and New Spatial Divisions*, ed. Nick Jewson and Susanne MacGregor (London: Routledge, 1997), 7.

variations between each case, and examined how they were advertised, identified the social and kinship relationships among residents, described how they look and function from the inside, explained how both residents and non-residents perceive them, and finally discussed their impact. Through this detailed investigation, a clearer and deeper understanding was reached about the dynamics behind GCs in Batna, which are connected to global, economic, political, and social factors.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to explore multiple dimensions of GCs and life within them in the city of Batna. In line with Ola Uduku and Samer Bagaeen's statement that GCs can be analysed through various lenses,³⁵⁰ the findings show that these communities are more than just an architectural product. Rather, a range of architectural, social, economic, and cultural conditions that have contributed to form their emergences and proliferation within the city of Batna.

5.1. Key Findings

The first stage of this research revealed that the emergence of this new type of housing, in the form of GCs in Batna, started mainly as a result of two major structural factors: globalization, through internet access and mass media, and neoliberalism, through the adoption of privatization policies. Internet access became widely available in Batna around the years 2009-2010, a period when most families could have internet connections installed in their homes. Concurrently, neoliberal reforms, especially the implementation of privatization, began to be applied more across almost all sectors in the country, including housing. The internet, as one of the key drivers of globalization, played a significant role by allowing people to see, follow, and become aware of the developments beyond national borders, shaping their new housing preferences in line with international housing trends. More broadly, globalization also contributed to the spread of a new economic system in Algeria characterized by following global neoliberal principles, particularly through privatization.

³⁵⁰ Samer Bagaeen and Ola Uduku, *Gated Communities: Social Sustainability in Contemporary and Historical Gated Developments* (London: Earthscan, 2010), 131.

Privatization was reflected in many new regulations. The first one related to private real estate development, which encouraged private developers who owned real estate companies in Batna to start producing GCs, was Law 11/04. This law introduced new forms of support and incentives provided by the state for real estate housing projects. The aim was to assist private developers in completing their constructions. It also included additional benefits, such as lowering the price of state-owned land and allowing it to be sold to private developers, in order to encourage the development of new housing projects. The privatization of public lands is another important aspect of privatization that effected the emergence of GCs in Batna. This factor allowed large areas of state-owned lands especially those located in the outskirts of Batna to be sold to private developers. It made it possible for them to purchase land directly from the state and use it for their own projects without major restrictions. As a result, only those who had sufficient capital were able to access these lands and build GCs. This situation clearly explains why all the case studies in this research are located in the suburban areas of the state. This is directly parallel to what happened in Istanbul around the same period where state-owned lands close to transportation infrastructure was sold to developers as part of a profit-sharing mechanism, which spurred the development of housing for higher income groups, mostly in the form of GCs.

Another structural factor contributing to the emergence of GCs in Batna is the current urban and housing regulatory framework, which does not include any specific policies addressing these communities, despite their growing presence in numerous Algerian cities over the past two decades. According to the Algerian Official Gazette, the existing regulations, which have remained unchanged since the 1990s, have facilitated the development of GCs by private developers on their own land. In particular, once land is designated for residential use through the update to the city's land-use plan (POS), private developers are allowed to initiate GC projects.

One can also observe the subjective causes related to residents as advocated by Roitman. Consumer culture shapes and influences consumer preferences based on what is made available and promoted through traditional and social media, along with the symbolic meanings these representations convey. In many parts of the world, GCs are marketed as housing products that offer enhanced security, social exclusivity, and the opportunity to live among high-income groups. In short, they are advertised in a manner that

emphasizes distinction, an attribute that many residents in Batna have increasingly begun to seek and demand as a result.

Another important subjective cause behind the emergence and growing demand for GCs is dissatisfaction with state-provided housing in Batna. GC residents do not prefer this type of housing for many reasons; the first reason is the low quality of the apartments provided by the state, which often suffer from issues such as limited water supply, poor hygiene conditions, and very small living spaces. The second reason relates to the social profile of the target group; state-provided housing is usually intended for low-income groups, and many GC residents prefer neither to be associated with the lower-income groups nor to live with them. This seems to stem from their perception of living with these groups as unsafe and problematic, which leads them to choose living environments with relatively more security. State housing is often seen as lacking proper safety and control, and the alternative is GCs.

After identifying the factors and causes underlying the emergence and proliferation of GCs in Batna, I proceeded to present the case studies with a focus on investigating and understanding the variations in their overall design and the influences that led to these distinctive outcomes. These variations are reflected in diverse compositions: some consist exclusively of attached or detached villas; others are composed of medium-rise apartment blocks, high-rise condominiums, or a combination of forms, including two distinct types of attached villas alongside high-rise condominium towers.

I received varying explanations from the private developers and architects of the case studies regarding their choices of overall design. Some expressed a preference for simple forms and facades, while others aimed to produce a more contemporary appearance. A few stated that they sought to create a distinctive aesthetic by incorporating Roman architectural elements into the facades. However, these justifications appear to function more as attempts to explain choices made for other motives; the objective across these cases seems to be the creation of visual distinction from Batna's existing housing fabric, and a sense of exclusivity, designed and intended to attract a specific target group that seeks for such differentiation.

The financial dimension also played a significant factor in the explanations provided by the owners of GCs in Batna. The overall outcome of each case study was largely attributed to the available budget and the expected profit. Developers explained that, with

a larger budget, they would have been able to include more housing units as well as additional amenities for residents. Simultaneously, they acknowledged that profit considerations were important during the design process, which involved maximizing the number of villas that could be built on limited land. However, I saw a clear contradiction here: while the absence of essential amenities, such as children's playgrounds, green spaces, and adequate parking areas, etc., was justified by financial limitations, the same budget constraints did not prevent them to construct additional villas or apartment blocks. In fact, the logic of profit maximization meant that increasing the number of housing units was prioritized, which is reflected in the evident spatial density observed across all the five case studies.

After understanding the reasons behind the case studies' overall design, I sought to expand the scope of the study to include a closer look at many aspects of these GCs in Batna. This involved moving beyond a surface-level analysis of design choices toward a more comprehensive understanding of how these communities function: considering aspects such as marketing strategies, internal organization of the layouts, and the expressed feedback and aspirations of the residents and non-residents.

While reviewing the official Facebook pages of the real estate companies that developed the case studies, I aimed to examine how these GCs projects were advertised. Surprisingly, I found little to no content about that, neither promotional posts designed to attract potential clients nor visual images that could capture the attention. This absence led me to directly interview the developers to gain information about their marketing strategies. From these discussions, I concluded that most local companies did not rely on advertising methods to attract clients. Instead, they relied on their good reputation in the area, since they had been working in construction for a long time and already had a large number of clients who trusted them. In contrast, in the case of TAAMIR, a company based outside of Batna, the project's architect explained that they relied more heavily on social media platforms to promote the development and reach potential buyers. What I found also interesting is that despite the efforts, the non-local company was still unable to gain the trust of Batna's residents, as shown by the low number of apartments and villas sold so far in many years. In contrast, I was told that local companies in Batna have long waiting lists, with hundreds of clients already looking forward to their upcoming GCs projects. This shows that local people in Batna trust local developers more than those from outside the region. In addition, given the critical feedback that TAAMIR's project

received, it is still uncertain whether local people would choose to buy from a non-local company, even if the future projects are of high quality and meet their expectations. This fact points to the culture of buying houses in the area and how it is linked to existing social relationships.

Regarding the social relations among residents in the case studies, I was surprised to find that most individuals living within these GCs in Batna belong to the same extended family (e.g., cousins, uncles, siblings, aunts) or are close acquaintances, including long-time friends, former neighbours, colleagues, and family friends. This finding was unexpected, as I had assumed that the practice of residing in close proximity to family members or familiar social networks had largely disappeared following the decline of traditional Ksar settlements, in which individuals with shared backgrounds lived collectively in tribal-like configurations. This contemporary arrangement also bears a resemblance to the extended family courtyard houses, where large kinship groups historically cohabited within a single enclosed dwelling.

After examining various issues that factor into the production of the GCs in Batna, I turned my attention to their internal characteristics, focusing on activities and spatial arrangements within. I analysed the internal structure of the floor plans, the organization of spaces, and any modifications residents had made to the original layouts, as well as the motivations underlying these changes

While analysing the floor plans of the housing units across all the case studies in this research, the first thing that I realized was how familiar they looked. These plans did not differ significantly from those of the state-provided housing units, such as those found in the ZHUN housing projects. Having lived in one for 27 years and having seen many others throughout my life in Batna, I recognized that both types of housing include similar interiors: a living room, kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, toilets, and balconies. In addition, these standard spaces that consistently appeared, with no additional function or space distinguished the GCs' layouts from those of the state-provided housing units.

The similarity between the case studies and the ZHUN housing projects extended beyond the composition of interior spaces to include the spatial arrangement within the floor plans. In all cases, the living room was situated near or immediately adjacent to the main entrance; the kitchen was typically located opposite or next to the living room; the restroom was positioned centrally within the house; and the bedrooms were consistently

placed at the rear, away from the entrance. This pattern of spatial organization was consistently observed across all case studies, with no significant variation in the distribution of spaces.

The rationale behind this spatial arrangement of interior spaces is primarily to ensure a high level of privacy. This approach has been used for many decades in Algerian housing units and continues to appear in the contemporary form of GCs in Batna. The emphasis on privacy in Algerian households is especially linked to the presence of women in domestic space, who are culturally and socially expected to occupy the kitchen. Since the kitchen is traditionally viewed as a female space, it is intentionally hidden in various ways: the kitchen is fully enclosed, with the door positioned to prevent visibility from anyone entering the house, or placed at the back of the home. Such spatial strategies are designed to prevent male visitors from having visual access to the women of the household.

Another interesting finding regarding the interior layouts is that some of the newly married young couples living in the case study units have modified parts of their floor plans to create more open plans. This was done by removing the separation walls to form a larger living area. According to these residents, the demands of modern working life and long working hours motivated them to create a shared space where they could spend time together with their children, rather than being separated in different rooms. However, I also noticed a contradiction in this reasoning: some of these couples do not yet have children, and others have only one or two. Moreover, the original living rooms in these units are already large enough to accommodate two to four people comfortably. Therefore, I will argue that this shift may reflect not only a functional response to daily life but also a desire to differentiate their homes, an attempt to create a sense of exclusivity within the interior layout and to distinguish themselves from others' living spaces.

Although I observed differences in how interior layouts are perceived or modified depending on whether the couples are newly married or have been together for many years, there is one aspect that nearly all interviewed residents agreed on: the need for an outdoor religious space. Some of them show disappointment because they were promised to have a mosque within the community, but this is not done yet. Some showed an extreme need for that for many reasons; as a place for gathering between the neighbours, as a place to teach their children religious principles, and as a place to feel more the deepness of religious festivals all together.

Through this study, I also offered both users and non-users of GCs in Batna the opportunity to freely express their views about these communities. The users expressed a general sense of satisfaction, particularly about two main aspects: the feeling of safety and the comfort of living among people with similar income levels. However, they also expressed several complaints. Besides the lack of a religious space, several residents were disappointed by the difference between what they saw in the original project renderings and what was built. The visualizations had depicted more green spaces, larger and well-designed playgrounds for children, and communal seating areas for neighbours, features that are largely absent. Furthermore, there was a common complaint about the limited availability of parking spaces when compared to the number of residents.

Some of the non-residents of GCs in Batna also shared their views with me about how they perceive these communities. Only a few expressed positive opinions, mentioning the safety these communities offer to residents, the improved housing quality, and the potential contribution to urban diversity and the visual appeal of Batna, which could help to attract visitors. However, many expressed negative views and rejected these communities. Some believed that the projects ignore many essential needs of residents, they pointed out the lack of green spaces, grocery stores, and children's playgrounds, which they considered basic necessities in any housing project. Others criticized the social segregation and urban fragmentation that such communities might intensify if they continue to expand within the city. Several participants also warned that if GCs include buildings that do not match the local urban character, this could lead to fast urban changes and landscape, and the loss of cultural identity. Because of these concerns, some called for more inclusive urban planning and regulations that consider GCs, while others stressed the need for research to understand the causes of this phenomenon and find ways to manage it.

5.2. Critical Reflections and Implications

Looking critically at the broader picture of these GCs in Batna, I see them as state housings surrounded by fences. They are housing projects that are composed of densely number of villas or apartment blocks for the function of residential use, with a better quality of finishes and larger surface areas of interior spaces. However, none appears to offer spaces that enable joy or social gathering. The existing playgrounds for children are

either extremely small, broken, or entirely absent. Green areas are non-existent, or if they do exist, they are not noticeable.

I also criticize the fact that some high-income groups buy houses or apartments in these GCs in Batna primarily to seek status and social distinction, while neglecting the absence of essential spaces within it; such as grocery stores, social gathering spaces, safe and spacious playgrounds, greenery, etc. This raises a question: why not buy a piece of land and build a villa according to one's own preferences, in a location of choice rather than where the developer's land is? The construction period of a single villa would not last as long as an entire GC project and s/he would not have to wait years just to receive the keys and begin living there. Moreover, this option would often cost less than buying a unit in one of these communities.

However, as long as there is no way to escape globalization and its influence, especially through the media that shapes and directs people's tastes and preferences, there must be regulations, limitations, and rules to reduce the negative impacts of GCs and prevent these effects from deepening. In addition, I suggest that the state should start rethinking the quality of the housing it produces and improve it in all aspects to make it more liveable. This would help reduce the sense of social segregation between different social groups and the exclusion of low-income populations.

I also find concerning that the state is increasingly privatizing public lands for private purposes, without paying attention of the outcomes on these lands after the project is completed, as seen in the case of GCs. Authorities should implement strict regulations that at a minimum require the inclusion of essential amenities for residents. Particularly because these housing projects are often located far from the city centre. Basic housing needs should be guaranteed for all income groups.

I anticipate that in the coming years, these GCs will likely continue to spread in the outskirts and suburbs of the city of Batna, as there are large empty lands that will probably be designated for future housing projects. The demand is also expected to continue growing, since this trend has already started, which will lead high-income groups to perceive it as the desirable and suitable option. In addition, local and non-local investors are likely to develop more GCs, as they are aware that such projects can be a profitable way for capital investment. However, I would also anticipate that future GCs will evolve and offer enhanced amenities and services. This would be a way for developers or investors to differentiate them not only from conventional housing types, but also from

the existing GCs in Batna, which mostly provide only housing units and lack basic amenities or services.

5.3. Research Contribution

Through the findings and the interpretations of this research, I have contributed to existing knowledge by filling a specific gap about an important housing phenomenon that, in recent decades, has spread as a global trend, which is the recent GCs phenomenon in Algeria. This topic that has not been highlighted by Algerian researchers in the context of Batna, even though it is a phenomenon that started to appear in the city since 2010 and has been spreading in many directions within the city over the past ten years.

Another main contribution of this research is about showing the unique practice and way the case studies were marketed in Batna. It is about how the most effective way to promote the projects was not through digital marketing, but through the local reputation of the owner. The developers who are local and known in the city managed to attract more customers, even with very limited advertisement. In contrast, a non-local developer, despite investing in digital marketing campaigns, could not achieve the less expected results. This demonstrates that in the context of the five case studies in Batna, digital advertisement strategies are not always the most effective; in some cases, local trust and familiarity can be the dominant force.

An additional demonstration of this study's originality lies in exploring the relationships and social connections among the residents of GCs in Batna. The finding that most of them are either relatives or close acquaintances is a particularly unique contribution and finding to the existing literature on GCs. It shows that shared high-income level is not the only common aspect among GC residents; in Batna, family ties, shared surnames, and social familiarity are also key features that shape these communities.

This research further distinguishes itself through the way it analyses the plans and layouts of the selected case studies. The identification of clear similarities between the internal spatial arrangements of these GCs and those of state-provided housing projects in Batna, represents a new and original contribution to the literature on GCs. It reveals that although GCs may appear different on the outside, their internal configurations follow the same conventional patterns found in public housing plans.

This study does not only introduce new perspectives to the literature on GCs, but also does so at a timely moment, offering important implications for future research and practice:

Since there are currently fewer than ten GCs in Batna, this research serves as a warning for the urban authorities to consider this newly emerging housing form and to pay close attention to its potential implications for rapid expansion in the near future, as well as its possible negative impact on the city's urban space.

This study on GCs in Batna also sends a clear message to the responsible authorities, highlighting the importance of providing safety and acceptable housing quality for low-income families who continue to live in difficult housing conditions, and a check to the existing living conditions within these GCs.

It also raises the issue of the lack of basic amenities for GCs residents. These housing communities often consist a group of densely arranged housing units or villas that occupy the maximum allowable surface area. However, the residents of these communities still need essential services such as grocery stores, playgrounds for children, and communal areas where neighbours can sit and socialize. In most cases, these amenities are either completely absent or present in very poor conditions.

5.4. Suggestions for Future Research

I suggest, for instance, exploring GCs in other Algerian cities, as they have already expanded in various directions across the country and remain largely under-investigated, particularly in Oran, Setif, and Constantine, which are among the largest and most densely populated cities in Algeria. How are these communities configured? Do they resemble one another, or does each city present a distinct overall design? Are their advertising narratives consistent, or are different promotional strategies employed? Do their floor plans follow conventional models, or do they diverge? If variations exist, what factors account for these differences?

I suggest that future research should examine how these GCs in various Algerian cities are already transforming the existing built fabric, and how their continued expansion may lead to undesirable urban landscapes. Such a study could anticipate the long-term implications of widespread gated forms on urban cohesion, visual harmony, and the functionality of public space.

I also propose rethinking the topic of GCs from a post-colonial perspective. This approach involves examining the similarities between colonial practices and GCs, particularly in terms of spatial separation, social exclusion, territorial control, internal rules and management systems, etc.

Finally, I suggest that GCs should be further explored through disciplines beyond architecture. Fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, human rights, etc., can offer different valuable perspectives on these GCs. This understanding might help to produce cities that make all people feel secure and fulfilled without barriers.



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