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Beyond Gated Communities: A Typology of Residential Compounds in Granada

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Abstract: Gated communities have spread globally, though unevenly. However, their early popularity and expansion from North America to other different localities have led to their physical and social diversification (i.e., morphological design and locking mechanisms and their resident profiles, which are not limited to the richest classes). This diversity has resulted in varied and sometimes conflicting concepts and classification criteria. Given this situation, this study aims to propose a typology of these developments that encompasses all current forms, based on an exhaustive census we compiled. We used a broader concept adapted to the research context, that of the 'Residential Compound', based on the idea that total closure is not an essential condition for consideration. Although the empirical work is based on the metropolitan area of Granada (Spain), we believe it is representative of most Spanish and possibly European metropolitan areas. Using satellite images and the Spanish electronic cadastre, we compiled a census of 642 residential compounds, classified based on over 50 variables. These compounds were categorized into five types depending on the enclosure level: (1) protected compounds; (2) controlled compounds; (3) structurally self-isolated compounds; (4) individualistic compounds; and (5) symbolic compounds.

Keywords: gated communities; residential compounds; typology; metropolitan area; Granada (Spain)

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1. Introduction

Gated communities are becoming increasingly important developments worldwide. Although it is not possible to know exactly how many there are, nor how many households or people reside in them, estimates have been made in the USA and elsewhere [1–4]. Their popularity has grown notably in North America since the late 20th century [5], expanding to other territories such as the United Kingdom and Australia [3,6] and other regions like Latin America [7], Asia, and Africa [8,9]. However, in Continental Europe [10], specifically in Spain [11], their presence appears to be less prominent.

The proliferation of this residential phenomenon in diverse sociocultural contexts reveals a much more varied reality, both in its physical and spatial manifestations and in the social profiles of its residents. Increasingly, there are examples of semi-gated, pseudo-gated, symbolic, and open residential compounds [6,12,13], located in suburban areas and urban centres [7], that are inhabited by people from the middle class or more popular social strata [14]. The presence of this diversity of urbanization in Spain and Europe goes beyond the traditional gated community. Nonetheless, there is not yet a universal term to refer to this broad and plural residential phenomenon [15] that can encompass its proven complexity.

Based on this scenario, the main objective of this work is the elaboration of a typology based on the way in which these housing developments achieve greater or lesser isolation from the surrounding environment, limited to its morphological characteristics. This requires the use of the concept of the residential compound, capable of encompassing each of the heterogeneities that these urbanisations already manifest in the current urban context in Spain. This typology is the result of more than two years of empirical work identifying

and quantifying all the residential precincts (a complete census) in the metropolitan area of Granada (Spain) until 2022. The selection of the metropolitan area of Granada derives from its high representativeness of medium-sized metropolitan cities in Spain [16] and, potentially, of the European context in general.

This study is divided into six main sections. The first two provide a brief overview of gated communities, highlighting the diverse definitions, typologies, and categories used to describe them. The fourth outlines the focus on Granada and the methodology for creating the typology. The fifth section presents results, showcasing examples and summarizing characteristics. Finally, the study concludes by discussing the importance and implications of the proposed typology.

2. From Gated Communities to a More Pluralistic Reality

The academic literature on gated communities has currently reached a substantial volume, especially for works referring to America (both North and South) but increasingly to Asia and Europe, mainly in the UK. In this context, several typologies of gated communities have been proposed from different perspectives: from their demand (residents) or supply (developers) but also from their physical characteristics (i.e., enclosure and security measures, the common facilities and services, the architectural layout, etc.) or from their integration within the urban environment.

One of these first proposals is that of Blakely and Snyder [1], which focuses on the functions of these developments and the reasons why people choose to live in them, distinguishing three ideal types in the United States: (1) lifestyle communities; (2) prestige communities; and (3) security zone communities. These functions relate, however, to the characteristics of amenities and facilities, the type of resident (socio-economic and occupational profiles), and security, respectively. Subsequently, Grant and Mittelsteadt [17] extended the typology previously created by Blakely and Snyder, including other characteristics such as the tenure or size of the development and those related to location or policy context. The combination of all these items would give rise to a huge number of classes of gated communities. However, the authors ended up proposing a classification through a continuum of 'enclosure' of eight different types. This typology emphasizes morphological aspects. Other authors [18,19] have adopted a more social approach, considering the socio-economic profile of the residents and the type of tenure, as well as other personal determinants (search for prestige, security, etc.), although they also included some structural elements.

Based on a sample of advertisements in the property press during 2003, Blandy [20] proposed a typology of gated communities based on their built form and their purpose from the developers' point of view: (1) 'Infill' gated communities, which are small-scale and not of very high status. They are the most common and are usually located in urban areas. (2) 'Heritage conversion' gated communities, which are more exclusive and arise from the use of pre-existing historic buildings with heritage value. (3) 'Village' gated communities, which are large urban developments, very similar to Blakely and Snyder's 'lifestyle communities'. Similarly, Ainur-Zaireen et al. [21] considered a plurality of factors in their typology, depending on the risks and rewards that developers face. However, this is only a framework for a typology, which is not presented as such.

Other authors focus on the impact of gated communities on patterns of residential segregation [22] or on how they are embedded in and affect the urban fabric of the immediate surroundings [7]. Similarly, La Grange [23], in an assessment of gated communities in Hong Kong, argued that demand- and supply-side factors are of a higher order than those relating to physical characteristics and built form. However, residents' life aspirations continue to be inferred from the morphological characteristics of these developments, rather than by surveying or interviewing residents directly. Therefore, we believe that it is the morphological characteristics that are most relevant for constructing a typology.

This variety of classifications responds, in part, to the fact that the phenomenon presents itself in different forms in different countries, depending on their history and

social relations, as well as on their legal frameworks. However, the expansion of this phenomenon globally must respond to a shared determinant, a question that we will not go into in this paper. All these typologies start from a very strict definition of gated communities, where access control and the existence of private amenities and facilities are fundamental [1,3,24]. However, some authors now use broader definitions of gated communities, emphasizing the physical and social heterogeneity of their territories.

For example, Grant and Mittelstead [17] identified some types that are not strictly gated: (1) ornamental gating; (2) walled subdivisions; (3) faux-gated entrances; etc. Others, for example, speak of 'semi-gated communities' [25] or 'fake gated communities' [26]. Furthermore, Wehrhahn and Raposo [12] distinguished between gated communities, pseudo-communities, and condominiums. Landman [8] identified gated neighbourhoods with restricted access and townhouse neighbourhoods designed as gated communities. Dowling et al. [6], based on the nature of the enclosures and governance mechanisms, distinguished three types of communities according to shared services and amenities and whether the road system was public or private: (1) gated communities; (2) semi-gated communities; and (3) symbolic communities.

Two general conceptualisations of the gated community can be distinguished. The first is limited and only includes fully enclosed, single-family housing developments with common services [3]. The second, which is a broader conceptualisation, includes developments with varying degrees of enclosure [9] or with more subtle (symbolic) boundary mechanisms, such as 'private property' signs or dead-end streets [4], as well as diverse housing types and facilities. However, both conceptualisations share the same premise: gated communities represent an urban development in which access to and use of shared services is restricted to its inhabitants. Even so, debates persist about the degree of enclosure required for a development to be considered a gated community [27].

The scarcity of more descriptive typologies that emphasize their morphological plurality may be due to the methodological field. Some authors [11] have highlighted the absence of statistics to quantify the presence of these residential developments in the urban landscape. Case studies (generally qualitative) predominate, which poses challenges for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon [28]. This empirical gap hinders a broader understanding of these residential patterns, hindering the development of descriptive typologies that emphasize morphological characteristics and can be extrapolated to different contexts.

In summary, diverse concepts and definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of this residential phenomenon beyond strict gated expressions. Efforts to study these residential developments have primarily focused on recognizing their current morphological plurality [4]. Nevertheless, these definitions and terms undergo continuous revisions, adding or removing elements based on specific contexts rather than aiming for a better, more universal understanding of this phenomenon. This highlights the importance of using a broad concept that encompasses the heterogeneity of these residential models, regardless of the economic, cultural, or planning framework of any territory. By doing so, researchers and policymakers can better address the complexity of this phenomenon and its potential impact on the socio-urban structure of their cities.

3. Residential Compounds: A More Inclusive Concept Adapted to Other Contexts

Given the multiplicity of conceptualizations and typologies, a broad concept is needed to encompass the various expressions of this residential phenomenon that we have seen. In addition, a precise definition is essential to identify housing developments and to be able to make a typology, which is the object of our empirical study.

Previous studies have already used a broader term to encompass these alternative, more 'open' forms of spatial enclosure in these residential settings, for example, the master-planned residential estates [6,29], whose use remains tied to the original Australian context [30]. Other manifestations of this same residential phenomenon are 'horizontal gated condominiums' [31], or simply 'condominiums', in Brazil or Turkey [32,33]. Also

included are 'enclosed communities' [34], 'gated urban enclaves' [35], 'fraccionamientos cerrados' [36], and 'countries' or 'barrios privados' [37], although not 'ciudad blindada' [38], 'barrer community' [39,40], or 'defended neighbourhood' [40]. In all these examples, we can see that either the element 'gated' or 'community' is substituted, and in some cases both. Therefore, as has long been pointed out [28], gated communities are challenged in both their terms: the enclosure itself and the community relations, because access is not always controlled nor is a sufficient sense of community always developed.

The plurality inherent in these residential developments can be explained largely by the urban and land-use planning policies applied in each country, and even in each region or province [15] (p. 9). Consequently, these developments take various physical forms, depending on the legal and urban planning framework.

Regarding common real estate property, in Spain, it is regulated by the Horizontal Property Law [41], which establishes that there is community when a property is shared by several people, highlighting the responsibilities of payment and maintenance of shared services. Common properties can be very varied, from swimming pools, paddle tennis courts, or children's playgrounds in urbanisations to the lobby, lifts, aerials, or stairs, as in any normal building. This communal property is duly registered as such and can be the basis for its study, as we do in this work. This regulation is based on Roman law and is similar in much of the Western world.

According to the urban planning framework, as in other European countries, Spain does not have a code that legally protects the development of private and gated residential models [42]. However, such developments have existed since the 1950s, and continue to occur [11]. In Spanish urban planning laws, the most similar are the so-called 'private urbanisations' [43], which are not an autonomous category but rather an intermediate stage in the process of urbanization and urban management. It is a stage that can, however, be prolonged indefinitely through agreements with local governments or because they are simply tolerated.

This study uses the term 'residential compounds' as a more adaptable alternative to describe these developments, for several reasons. First, planning legislation on 'private residential developments' imposes limits on their development, especially on the enclosure and private management of public roads and services. Second, private residential compounds have undergone great diversification, in which what unifies them is not enclosure but the presence of shared services and facilities. Third, this has gone hand in hand with an increase in diversity, not only morphological but also social. More specifically, the choice of each of the terms has two explanations.

First, 'residential' has been chosen instead of gated to avoid taking into consideration the nature of the closure—whether it is more physical or symbolic—and to attribute a value to the compound that goes beyond the result of differentiating the community from the outside. As mentioned earlier, the diversity and heterogeneity characterizing this phenomenon are primarily evident in its physical expression and delimitation. This diversity extends to various socio-economic groups, encompassing not only the upper class but also the middle and working class [14]. Emulating unique residential patterns involves employing more affordable enclosure mechanisms and sometimes lighter or more subtle morphological expressions of enclosure. By using the term residential instead of 'gated', we encompass these more recent expressions of the phenomenon.

Second, the term 'community' has been discarded because, although communal ownership of common facilities is a necessary condition, it does not imply the development of community ties in a sociological sense. Their shared existence facilitates social interaction among residents [44] and may lead to the possibility of creating stronger social bonds among inhabitants, such as feelings of collectivity or belonging [45]. However, community is not a hallmark of the residential compound, although it may become one. It seems to us that applying the term community to this residential phenomenon without confirming the existence of a genuine sense of community is inappropriate. The alternative chosen is the term 'compound' which is understood as "an enclosed area of land that is used for a

particular purpose" [46] (British English meaning 1; or "an enclosed space with a building or group of buildings within it" [46] (American English meaning 2). Thus, a more neutral term is used that does not prejudge the social and community functionality within them.

According to the concept of 'Residential compound', any urban development must meet two basic conditions to be considered as such:

(1) The existence of communal facilities for recreational use (swimming pools, padel/tennis courts, playgrounds, furnished gardens, etc.) inside the residential compound that could serve as spaces for members' social interaction [9]. Studies [47,48] confirm the vital role of public spaces and amenities in fostering routine interactions. In our case, the availability of communal amenities offers the potential for intra-neighbourhood interactions but not necessarily the development of strong community ties.

(2) The presence of one or several demarcation mechanisms, either physical or symbolic, establishing social–spatial separation between life within an urban development and the external environment—not only the physical ones (walls, fences, etc.) but also symbolic closures, which are less aggressive objects used to create an atmosphere of residential self-isolation [4,11].

All these demarcation mechanisms will be outlined below, forming part of the empirical work conducted for this study, wherein all residential compounds in the metropolitan area of Granada (Spain) were identified and counted. This effort resulted in an exhaustive census of residential compounds, serving as the foundation for developing the typology of residential compounds.

4. Scope and Methodology

4.1. The Granada Metropolitan Area as the Scope of Study

Founded on the delimitation of metropolitan areas by Feria and Bernabéu [49] based on daily residence–work mobility according to the 2011 census, the area of Granada stands out as a fairly representative case of the Spanish metropolitan area and possibly of southern Europe as a whole [16]. Located in southeast Spain, the Granada metropolitan area contains a total of 46 municipalities with more than 500,000 inhabitants in 2023. Among its most outstanding characteristics are the following.

Despite its average size, the Granada area (Figure 1) has a very dynamic and consolidated metropolitan housing and labour market, making it particularly suitable for this study [16]. The structure of the labour market in Granada is clearly centralized by the capital city. The housing market in Granada is largely characterized by suburbanization and movements between suburban municipalities. Granada's centralized suburban configuration imparts a functional and morphological structure typical of a standard metropolitan city. The economic activity is concentrated in the urban centre, while extensive residential suburbs are connected to the capital through a network of circular motorways and tramway connections.

The configuration of the Granada area makes it particularly useful in the context of this study, as it represents the type of metropolitan area that is predominant not only in the Iberian Peninsula but in most Western countries [16]. However, Granada exhibits distinct features, notably a bourgeois urban centre and clearly defined working-class outskirts [50], setting it apart from cities in England and America. This unique social division in the metropolitan space must be considered in the analysis of residential compounds, influencing both symbolic enclosure mechanisms and the urban-centric locations of the compounds, in contrast to more suburban settings.

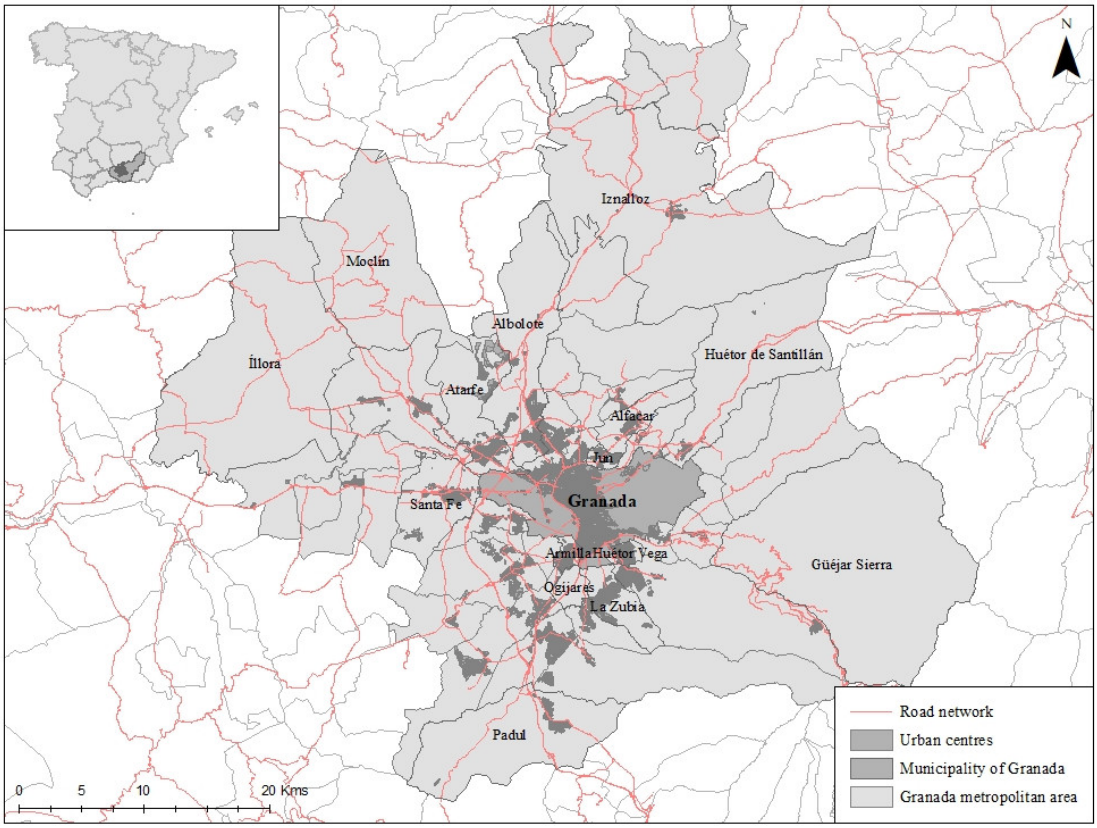

Figure 1. Granada metropolitan area.

4.2. Fieldwork: Creating a Residential Community Census

To identify the residential compounds, two main sources used were: (1) the Google Earth web application (the satellite images and Street View mode) and (2) the Spanish electronic land registry (Sede Electrónica del Catastro). During the initial identification of residential compounds, special attention was paid to the availability of communal amenities (e.g., swimming pools, sports grounds, children's playgrounds, etc.). These features make it easier to identify the phenomenon from a bird's eye view, using satellite images from Google Earth. The land registry was used to quantify the number and type of properties in each compound, as well as to establish their lot boundaries. The fieldwork culminated in a census made up of a total of 642 residential compounds disbursed around the Granada metropolitan area. A wide variety of compounds in terms of composition and morphological structure was observed.

Once the census of the residential compounds was completed, the information related to the relevant variables in Table 1 was compiled for later classification, with the variables largely taken from the works on classification by the authors discussed above [11]. The variables were measured during subsequent on-site visits to some of the residential compounds where the data provided by the electronic sources were either somewhat incoherent or limited. The final database contained a total of 57 observational variables separated into 10 different blocks.

Table 1. Observational variables in the residential community database.

Observational Variables		
Blocks	**Codes**	**Description**
General information	CPRO	Province of Granada code
	MUN	Name of municipality
	CMUN	Municipality code (3 digits)

Table 1. *Cont.*

Observational Variables		
Blocks	**Codes**	**Description**
General information	CDIS	Census district code (2 digits)
	CSEC	Census section code (3 digits)
	CMAN	Association code (2 digits)
	CCOM	Residential compound code (3 digits)
	CC	Complete compound code (8 digits)
	MAN	Association, yes or no
	LAT	Latitude (UTM; ETRS89_30N)
	LON	Longitude (UTM; ETRS89_30N)
Basic characteristics	AÑO	Year of construction
	SUP	Plot surface area (m^2)
	NVI	Number of dwellings
Residence type	VAI	Isolated single-family home
	VPA	Semi-detached single-family home and others
	VAD	Terraced single-family home
	PMC	Closed blocks of flats
	PMA	Open blocks of flats
	CON	Under construction
Structural aspects	CSS	Dead-end street
	CFS	Cul-de-sac street
	CPE	Pedestrian street
	LIN	Inside commercial premises (urban development)
	LEX	Outside commercial premises (urban development)
Road use	PPU	Public domain and public use
	PRE	Private domain and restricted public use
	PPR	Private domain and private use
Distance from main hub	DIS	Isolated urban development
		Separate urban development
		Urban development integrated into the inner city
Enclosure type	VER	Gates or fences
	MUR	Walls
	CAD	Chains
	BOL	Bollards
	ARB	Bushes
	CPP	Private property signs
Entry points	PVI	Individual dwelling entrance/s
	PBL	Block entrance/s
	COM	Communal entrance to urban development
	COMS	Several communal entrances to urban development
Communal amenities	PIS	Swimming pool
	PTP	Tennis/paddle tennis court
	PBA	Basketball court
	CFU	Football pitch
	CGO	Golf course
	GIM	Gym
	PAR	Children's playground
	MOB	Furnished patio
	JAR	Gardens/parks
Security	GSE	Security guard
	CSE	Security cameras
	BSE	Security boom barrier
	ASE	Security alarm

Source: authors.

Besides basic variables like property type, quantity, and construction year, various characteristics were recorded, including communal amenities, potential security features, and diverse physical enclosure mechanisms (e.g., fences, walls, and bushes). The enclosure variable involves elements as distancing mechanisms, not strict perimeter enclosures. It includes the road arrangement, the distance from the nearest population centre, and the nature of entry points (total or partial; one or many). The internal road structure, typically one-way streets or cul-de-sacs, along with the use of private property signs contributed to the symbolic isolation of the residential compound [3]. Crucial factors, such as distance from the population centre and spatial barriers like lakes, rivers, and motorways, enhance this self-exclusion, with some dating back decades. In Spain, the development of gated residential compounds lacks legal coverage, regulation, or definition, resulting in a hybrid evolution in practises. Self-enclosure mechanisms are employed to achieve a similar result.

4.3. Construction of the Typology

Once the database was complete, the typology was constructed in two phases. Firstly, a process synthesized information and constructed new variables based on observational variables. The presence of communal facilities and amenities was a necessary condition to define a residential compound but was not essential for classification. Consequently, only variables enabling the determination of physical or symbolic enclosure based on morphological structure and spatial arrangement were considered for residential compounds. Additional variables, specifically property characteristics, were excluded following a statistical factor analysis revealing their significant internal heterogeneity and lack of informative value for potential typology. Efforts to simplify the information resulted in five types of derivative variables (Figure 2):

(1) Security: either through video surveillance cameras, security alarms, barriers, or signs indicating their existence, as well as the possible availability of a contracted security service (i.e., a security guardhouse inside the compound).
(2) Entry points: whether access to the urbanization is communal or individual. They are communal when the members of the development must access the development and communal amenities through the same entrances as the rest of their neighbours. They are individual if each resident or specific group of residents (i.e., block entrance/s) has their own access to the residential development or communal areas.
(3) Type of enclosure: determined by observational variables that indicate the material and harder enclosure of the complex through gates, fences, or walls, in addition to other softer access restriction mechanisms (i.e., bollards, bushes, etc.).
(4) Pedestrian or vehicle traffic control: determined by documenting instances where a residential compound has internal commercial premises, necessitating partial openness to the general public, especially during business hours (road use); this detail enables the distinction between compounds completely closed all day and those that are not.
(5) The structural enclosure of the residential compound: created by several elements of two observational variables (i.e., dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs from "structural aspects" and "distance to the main core"); both are indirect devices that help to regulate inflow and restrict access to the residents of the complex or its visitors.

Finally, a synthesis was conducted from the three first-order variables, resulting in only one second-order derivative variable: the type of residential compound. This single variable summarizes residential compounds in the Granada metropolitan area, according to the form of control over their entrances. A total of five categories of residential compounds were classified: protected, controlled, structurally self-isolated, individualistic, and symbolic. The subsequent section analyses their descriptions and characteristics.

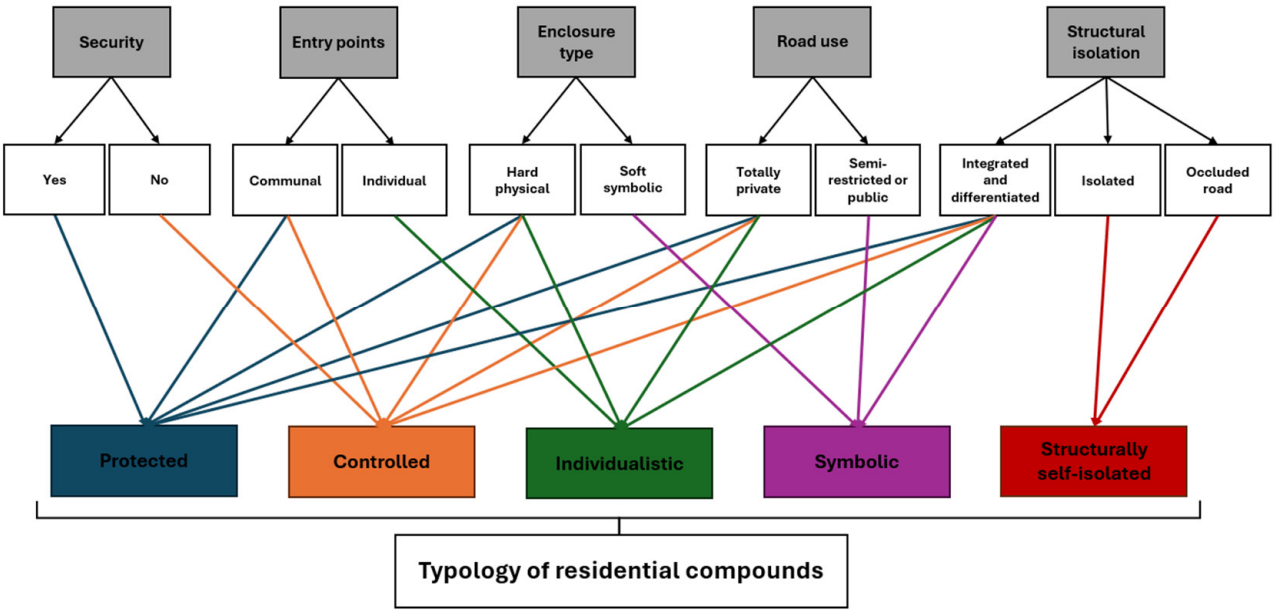

Figure 2. The process of constructing derivative variables to measure the residential compound enclosure.

5. Results

5.1. Characteristics of the Typology

The typology contains 642 residential compounds in the Granada metropolitan area. Its internal logic corresponds to a continuum according to the type of enclosure ranging from protected—classified as gated communities—to symbolic compounds with less-strict non-physical enclosure mechanisms. Excluding protected compounds, the others can be conceptualized within the broader term of residential communities, following the approach of authors studying the phenomenon in Europe [6,13]. A simple look at the number of residential communities according to this typology indicates their heterogeneity in Granada, which also applies to Spain overall.

Out of the total registered compounds, only 10% are equivalent to the category of traditional gated communities, while the remaining ones align with the broader concept, featuring less restrictive enclosures. Reviewing the features of each residential compound type (Tables 2 and 3) and their locations (Figure 3) uncovers trends highlighting the distinctive nature of southern European residential compounds. Protected and controlled compounds are primarily located in the urban centre, predominantly featuring blocks of flats. However, most of the symbolic compounds are in the central municipality. This contrasts with the traditional conception of more enclosed compounds in other countries, which are quite the opposite: single-family homes located in the suburbs. However, the type of communal amenities indicates that these urban compounds, especially the protected ones, share sophisticated and complex facilities (more than two sports and recreational facilities). Most compounds, however, have only a basic facility (simple gardens with playgrounds or walking areas) or a simple facility (a single sports or recreational facility, usually a swimming pool).

The typical suburban residential compound does not have a strict degree of enclosure but uses structural distancing strategies. Like the individualistic compounds, these self-isolated compounds are primarily made up of single-family homes. However, there are some divergences, due to their structure. While the structurally self-isolated compounds are larger and have more complex or sophisticated equipment, individualist compounds are smaller and have fewer common services. This is due to their structure; the former construction is usually located far from the population centres, while the individualistic compounds are generally closer and have a lower number of communal amenities.

Table 2. Basic characteristics of the residential compounds by type.

	No. Residential Compounds	Surface Area (m^2)			No. Dwellings		
		Total	%	Average	Total	%	Average
Protected	62	1,256,997	21%	20,274	7084	17%	114
Controlled	261	908,802	15%	3482	14,006	34%	54
Self-isolated	38	1,868,693	31%	49,176	2902	7%	76
Individualistic	213	900,820	15%	4229	8973	22%	42
Symbolic	68	1,184,861	19%	17,424	8416	20%	124
Total	642	6,120,173	100%	9533	41,381	100%	64

Source: authors.

Table 3. Type of residence and communal amenities in residential compounds.

	% Compounds in Granada	Distribution of Dwellings by Type			Communal Amenities			
		Single-Family Homes	Blocks of Flats	Both Types	Sophisticated	Complex	Simple	Basic
Protected	66%	9%	91%	1%	6%	27%	45%	21%
Controlled	55%	8%	92%	0%	3%	8%	61%	29%
Self-isolated	0%	82%	16%	3%	5%	11%	58%	26%
Individualistic	33%	32%	67%	1%	0%	6%	76%	18%
Symbolic	65%	21%	66%	13%	0%	6%	44%	50%
Total	47%	21%	76%	3%	2%	9%	62%	27%

Source: authors.

Figure 3. Residential Compounds in the Granada Metropolitan Area by Type.

5.2. Typology of Residential Compounds

Classified in descending order according to the intensity of the enclosure, topping the list is the protected residential compound. This residential model is more like the ideal gated community that is very common in Australia, North America, and Latin America. However, this study does not distinguish between gated urban developments and single-family homes and condominiums.

As seen in Figure 4, control and privacy in these residential settings is not only ensured by the perimetral enclosure made up of walls and communal entry points but also by using security services or mechanisms like cameras, signs, and guards. These urbanisations have completely delimited residential perimeters, controlled using communal entry points and security services and mechanisms like guards, boom barriers, security cameras, and the like. The two examples in the figure also have gatehouses with guards (a role at times filled by the caretakers of the urban development) or video cameras.

Figure 4. Protected residential compounds: Granada (**left**); Albolote (**right**).

Protected compounds are followed by controlled residential compounds (Figure 5), which are also characterized by the strict physical enclosure of the urban development. Entry is communal and limited to residents. However, unlike the first type, these do not have security and the only way to control who enters and leaves is through the entry point. Since these are communal, the residents of the urban development themselves can determine whether the people coming in and going out are residents or not.

The middle of the list is occupied by structurally self-isolated residential compounds (Figure 6), which are characterized by the self-isolation of the residential setting via a road system that structures the compound and its distance from the rest of the population. These residential structures are highly developed internally, using dead-end streets or cul-de-sacs to restrict access to residents and their visitors. Although the access is technically open, the arrangement of the streets alone indicates that this is an isolated residential space that excludes the non-resident population.

Clear examples of these compounds can be found in specific suburban municipalities where the developments are distinct from the population centre and feature a single communal entry point. Additionally, access is only relevant to residents or their visitors. The winding road system described above further contributes to securing this self-enclosure.

Figure 5. Controlled residential compounds: Granada (**left**); Alfacar (**right**).

Figure 6. Structurally self-isolated residential compounds: Jun (**left**); Atarfe (**right**).

The distinguishing feature of individualistic residential compounds (Figure 7) lies in their individual entry points. Each house or building has its own entrance to the urban development. In this respect, it is more difficult to keep track of and control who enters the compound, compared to controlled compounds.

The last type of compound comprises symbolically (Figure 8) enclosed residential compounds, which have a very subtle or practically non-existent degree of enclosure. In these developments, access to passers-by is not forbidden, although it is restricted in different ways. This residential compound is usually located in an urban centre and

often combines the use of private property signs, bollards to limit pedestrian access, and communal, open access to the development.

Figure 7. Individualistic residential compounds: Ogíjares (**left**); Armilla (**right**).

Figure 8. Symbolic residential compounds: Alfacar (**left**); Granada (**right**).

The symbolically enclosed residences primarily comprise landscaped areas, as well as communal spaces such as tennis or paddle tennis courts or a swimming pool. Access is open, but the residents cover the maintenance and administrative expenses of the communal areas. As seen in the example (right), some degree of restriction may be practised using signs, bollards, or barriers that impede admittance to vehicles and pedestrians. Likewise, access to the swimming pool and paddle tennis courts is only available to residents (left).

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The hypothesis guiding this paper is that to properly understand housing complexes, it is necessary to first consider the phenomenon in its entirety and analyze all its existing categories rather than focusing on a single specific type.

Our analysis shows the continuity that exists between the different types of compounds, which makes it clear that they all belong to a common phenomenon that we refer to here as 'residential compounds'. Perhaps in other contexts where residential security is more important [8,24,32], it makes more sense to look at the category of more enclosed and isolated urbanizations with respect to the immediate surroundings of the gated communities. However, this is not the case in Spain, nor in continental Europe [12], where these assumptions are less evident. Thus, in Granada, this type of more enclosed complex represents no more than 10% of the total. Even in complexes where there are barriers that physically delimit the urbanization, most of the time, these represent a very weak impediment to passage that is easily circumvented, which differentiates them from the traditional model of gated communities.

Granada, like other regions around the world, but especially in Europe, illustrates this diversity in the form and composition of the structures, which range from very closed (protected) to more open (symbolic) enclosures. This is particularity due to the fact that, possibly, the legal regulation of property rights and urban planning activity in Europe is inspired by Roman law, which hinders, but does not prevent, the privative actions typical of the large gated communities in other parts of the world [1,2,30]: armoured cities—or defended neighbourhoods—within the cities themselves [38,40]. But, this is only a hypothesis that needs to be studied in detail.

It is essential to conduct more studies that survey residential compounds in metropolitan areas across different countries. One significant challenge is the lack of reliable statistics on this phenomenon [11]. While the Spanish cadastre collects information that, with substantial effort, could facilitate such studies, it remains uncertain if similar data collection is feasible in other countries.

However, the conceptual and typological framework presented here is just the initial step in a larger task that involves investigating the values residents associate with these compounds, the relationships between neighbours, and, ultimately, what motivates them to choose to live there and their experiences as residents. Moreover, on a more quantitative level, this study is the preliminary step to delving deeper into the contribution of the compounds to the processes of residential segregation to which this phenomenon is normally linked. All these tasks are addressed in other papers.

This analysis, based on an exhaustive census of residential compounds in the Granada area, shows why we need a defining framework capable of integrating the morphological and social heterogeneity of the phenomenon. A framework that allows us to better understand each of the types and their similarities and differences with the others, especially the so-called 'gated communities'. Research (beyond typologies) based on very strict definitions tends to place excessive importance on security, physical encapsulation, and the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion associated with them, at the expense of other equally relevant residential values such as the desire for social distinction [6]. This is why we adopt a broader concept of residential compounds, in which the gated community in the strict sense is just one more case, in order to study this phenomenon in all the complexity with which it is presented in Granada and, surely, in a large part of Europe.

In any case, we need more studies based on censuses of residential compounds in other metropolitan areas, especially in Europe, to check the suitability of both the definition and the typology proposed here.

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