

**Commodity City: The case of Horizontal Gated Communities in the
Municipality of Rondonópolis-MT**

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes to analyze the urban phenomena resulting from the implementation of horizontal gated communities, located in the municipality of Rondonópolis-MT. Its high commercial value, characterized as speculative, demonstrates the sale of the city as a commodity in the consolidated soil of the municipality. The socioeconomic development of/in cities occurs unevenly through urban interventions, resulting in socio-spatial and socio-economic inequalities produced and reproduced spatially. Thus, understanding the urban structure resulting from real estate speculation as appropriation of public space, segregation, gentrification, spreading and the fortified enclosure existing in the city's gated communities, which makes evident the socio-spatial and socio-economic contradictions and disparities in a medium-sized city with strong support from agribusiness in the region.

KEYWORDS: Real Estate Speculation. Segregation. Gentrification. Cloistering. Rondonópolis-MT.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rondonópolis is located in the southeastern region of the state of Mato Grosso, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in 2019 its population was estimated at 232,491 thousand inhabitants. It is the third largest municipality in the state and the largest producer of grains in agribusiness. It is a medium-sized city in full development in the Midwest.

This work is part of this discussion following the concepts from researchers in the area, who gave theoretical support in the analysis of the city of Rondonópolis, with an emphasis on the city's condominiums and how these phenomena are behaving in the formation of the urban space.

The theoretical debate shows how the relationship between State/Market/Population and the causes and consequences resulting from the implantation of gated communities, seeks to contribute to future studies on the analysis of the landscape, distance from the consolidated space and the value of the land or property to from the year 2000, which highlights the strong presence of agribusiness in the present century.

Horizontal gated communities today are products that cause several urban phenomena. One of the consequences is the implementation of guiding axes of this research in the city of Rondonópolis.

The presence of these developments in the municipality, leads to the question: Which gated communities are intended for these publics? What benefits and consequences are caused on consolidated soil? Who is financing the construction of these?

The objective is to understand the socio-spatial changes from the urban expansion process with emphasis on cases of gated communities implementation, analyzing the conditions and contradictions derived from the market/state/population relationship, in cases of closed spaces with horizontal dwellings.

Methodologically, exploratory research with a qualitative approach was adopted, for the interpretation of the relationships between the various socio-spatial actors and their products, as well as their effects. In order to carry out this study, a survey was made of the urban phenomena resulting from the implementation of condominiums and how actors behave and relate on consolidated and expanding soil. The categories of analysis were given through studies of landscape, land income and

the contemporary city and a quick approach to agribusiness¹. The bibliographic research was done through the studies of books, scientific articles, norms and guidelines, maps and images pertinent to the object of study. The main authors were: Caldeira (2000) where he discusses horizontal condominiums, Serpa (2014) who discusses the importance and forms of appropriation of public spaces, Sposito (1988) who reflects on the city treated as a commodity, Harvey that makes a study on the capitalist production of the State (2005) and the value of use of the land (2013), Negri (2008) where it discusses on the development and inequalities of the city of Rondonópolis, Vainer (2000) in another point of view of the city merchandise and Corrêa (1989) who conceptualizes the urban space, shows its behavior, production and reproduction, urban phenomena such as segregation and real estate speculation and others.

2. COMMODITY CITY

Studying the city as a commodity, based on real estate speculation through the implementation of gated communities, is a major factor in urban development, which has undergone an expansion outside the urbanized limits of the centers and mostly providing the formation of large urban voids.

How are cities planned? For Vainer (2000, p.78) "One of the most popular ideas among urban neoplanners: the city is a commodity to be sold, in an extremely competitive market, in which other cities are also for sale". It is concluded that the city is a commodity and can be purchased by those with greater capital.

To complement this thought, he sought out the words of Harvey (2005, p.222) that "The land, the natural resource or the place of singular quality is not traded, but the goods of the service produced through its use". This shows the real estate profit due to land speculation, today considered by many researchers as the major urban problem, and in rural areas, mainly with the advance of agribusiness.

To whom the gated communities are destined, it must be questioned, the city must belong to everyone. The existing urban phenomena, derived from the implementation of these communities, are products derived from the relations between market, State and population and are elements of great value for analysis and studies of urban science. This relationship between the State, real estate speculators and other social actors leads to a class struggle for access to land, thus generating the occurrence of several urban phenomena.

Harvey (2013, p. 431) makes it clear that "the land and the worker have made the fountains of all wealth" what made this research reflect the value of the land that in its "virgin state is the universal object of human work" That after this handling has a value "in the capitalist mode of production". Which is perceived aggressively in the municipality under study.

Urbanistic phenomena such as real estate speculation, socio-spatial and economic segregation and gentrification are common in Brazilian cities. Segregation, for example, can be found in most municipalities in the country, especially in planned cities or neighborhoods where land has become a commodity that does not serve the social interest of its population (MORAES, 2006).

Thus, it is noted the existence of two types of segregation, spontaneous and induced, in the case of spontaneous it occurs through the self-segregation of the dominant classes that occurs in the

¹ O Agronegócio e a financeirização serão aprofundados em outros estudos para desenvolvimento da Dissertação de Mestrado.

case of middle to upper class gated communities, in the case of induced segregation, the social classes with less purchasing power are inserted in places peripheral to the big centers, generally in places without or with little access to basic infrastructure and services.

For Vilaça (1998, p. 148) “segregation is a dialectical process, in which the segregation of some causes, at the same time and by the same process, the segregation of others. It follows the same dialectic of the slave and the master” that of the worker and the boss.

Continuing this line of thought about the action of the bourgeoisie in cases of segregation Corrêa (1989, p. 64) affirms that their choice “is made, on the one hand, through self-regulation insofar as it can effectively select for itself the best areas, excluding them from the rest of the population: you will live wherever you wish”, in general in carefully planned spaces within the precepts of contemporary and sustainable urbanism.

The author expresses that the dominant class is the existence of sumptuous neighborhoods, with walls and their own surveillance system, offering leisure areas and certain services for exclusive use such as restaurants. This is segregation by classes, it can be said that it is “the non-place and the place” so named by Campos (2017).

Duarte (2005, p. 4425) states that the term gentrification “was coined for the first time by the English sociologist Ruth Glass, from her studies about London, in 1964”.

The author used the word to show the process of expelling the low-income population in certain central neighborhoods of the city to peripheral areas of the cities, systems also implemented in Brazil since the 1930s in the city's beautification projects, also called sanitation such as in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and others. Transforming these urban spaces into carefully urbanized areas, while the former residents were expelled to the peripheral regions, which led to the creation of slums.

The production of enterprises, construction of buildings and gated communities, is part of the logic of obtaining profits, these profits are directed to the construction companies, property developers and landowners (real estate speculators), this capitalist logic works according to Lefebvre (2000, p.456) as follows “From the formation of a mass of surplus value that increases the general mass, but of which part returns to construction companies, developers, speculators”. And so, Sposito (1988, s.p.) evidences that “the development of the capitalist mode of production had already made the land also a commodity”, as will be shown in the studies of the gated communities of Rondonópolis, “which meant that access to a part of the space of these cities was mediated, by the purchase or rent of land, with buildings or not”, already defined by the real estate market.

This access to land is the product of capitalism, where the ruling class chooses where to invest according to its uniqueness, and these are privileged lands, often well located, close to public facilities, areas of environmental preservation, parks or segregated from large centers to escape crime. Elements that become sales marketing.

There are only two social classes according to Marx, being the bourgeoisie (made up of the owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (made up of workers exploited by the bourgeoisie). Following Marx's concept, the bourgeoisie is then the ruling class. IBGE, on the other hand, divides social classes between “A” and “E”, class A is the one with the highest purchasing power and income concentration, while class E is the one with the lowest purchasing power and income. So, the dominant class following the IBGE concept would be from class A to class C. These classes can also be referred to as high, medium and low class.

The city/commodity relationship then is characterized as the market itself is perceived as a class struggle, in some situations this struggle is expressed spatially through the implementation of

horizontal gated communities, where sometimes, new ventures take over public spaces, producing induced segregation or self-segregation.

Condomínios privados horizontais são criados por meio de segregação planejada ou induzida, através da venda do espaço como objeto de segurança, tranquilidade, beleza, luxo e proximidade com a natureza. Um estilo de vida longe do caos urbano e da criminalidade que ocorrem nas médias e grandes cidades. Os condomínios horizontais são caracterizados como “propriedade privada para uso coletivo e enfatizam o valor do que é privado e restrito ao mesmo tempo que desvalorizam o que é público e aberto na cidade” (CALDEIRA, 2000, p. 258).

Horizontal private communities are created through planned or induced segregation, through the sale of space as an object of security, tranquility, beauty, luxury and proximity to nature. A lifestyle far from the urban chaos and crime that occur in medium and large cities. Horizontal private communities are characterized as “private property for collective use and emphasize the value of what is private and restricted while devaluing what is public and open in the city” (CALDEIRA, 2000, p. 258).

3. RESULTS

The systematization of this article is based on the causes and consequences of urban phenomena existing in the contemporary city. The authors talk about the city as a commodity to be sold, where those who have greater purchasing power stand out. According to Sposito (2013), the capitalist production model makes land a commodity, making access to these lands a product, as well as real estate and buildings.

The urban phenomena resulting from changes in the urban territory are real estate speculation, socio-spatial, economic segregation and gentrification.

The real estate speculation for many authors is conceptualized as a phenomenon in which the land and real estate value is increased, that is, the value of sale and purchase is valued, increased, this is due to urban interventions such as infrastructure implantation, environmental protection areas, shopping malls, among others, being able to promote gentrification due to the competitive process of the real estate market. These improvements are clear from Harvey's claims that:

Soil and its improvements are, in the contemporary capitalist economy, goods. But, soil and improvements are not just any commodity: thus, the concepts of use value and exchange value take on meaning in a more than special situation. (HARVEY, 1980, p. 135)

This value is given according to the expansion of the city and types of occupation of properties, improvements and use.

The expansion of large modern cities gives an artificial value, colossally increased, to the soil in certain areas, particularly in those of central location; the buildings built on them, instead of increasing this value, make before going down, as they no longer correspond to the changed conditions; they are demolished and replaced by others. This happens, above all, with workers' houses located in the center, whose rentals are never, or only, extremely slow, exceeding a certain maximum, even if the houses are overcrowded in the extreme. They are demolished and in their place stores, warehouses, public buildings are built. (ENGELS, 1873, p.18)

The demolition and replacement referred to by the author (1873) is gentrification, its conceptualization is nothing more than the substitution of one social class for another, this occurs in

illegal occupations mainly in central locations or even in deteriorated neighborhoods, where residents are expelled for peripheral areas, this expulsion occurs through the Property Tax and Urban Territorial Tax (IPTU) and more expensive rents, or through processes of relocation of these people, so other social classes take ownership of these places previously occupied by lower classes. Duarte (2005), states that gentrification transforms the form and social content of urban spaces.

In addition to the gentrification resulting from the State/Market and Consumer relationship, there is socio-spatial segregation. This occurs according to scholars in the following way, populations are segregated (separated) from large centers, which can be over great distances, or simply segregated by space-bounding walls as in the case of gated communities of the upper and middle income class. These types of segregations are economical too, because a large part of the population is characterized as very poor in Brazil, they cannot live in luxury communities, thus leaving only peripheral areas to live, often without access to basic infrastructure.

The State is the main producer of space, it produces, reproduces and orders the territory, distributes public equipment and creates laws for ordering. The State is the institution responsible for the territorial ordering of Brazilian cities, demarcating who should remain in a given territory and how they should pay fees. The Market is another important agent, where it sets prices making certain social classes have access to the purchase of some space or not, these spaces treated in this article are the properties in gated communities. For Harvey (2013) income is a concept of the economy that influences spatial organization and thus the population is the one who will occupy the urban space, depending on their social and economic status is what will have an impact on the value of the urbanized area or to be urbanized. As an example, we can mention the horizontal gated communities.

The horizontal gated communities in the municipality of Rondonópolis were implemented as urban allotments, in 2011 there were already several urban allotments in the municipality of Rondonópolis.

The intense growth registered in the city, which reached 10% per year and, often, did not have adequate planning, caused major urbanization problems. Today, the city has large urban voids, a high number of allotments - 241 -, which in most cases are quite small, in addition to some that are not even defined by streets, (NEGRI, 2011, p. 49).

Below are the horizontal gated communities used in this article as examples. The aim here is to investigate phenomena that may arise from the implementation of these projects in Rondonópolis.

3.1 CONDOMÍNIO DO BOSQUE I E II

Condomínio do Bosque both I and II are intended for the dominant class, I was approved in 2005 and II in 2007. Condomínio do Bosque I is located in front of Horto Florestal and in front of the future Rondonópolis Municipal Park, formerly called Parque das Seriemas. Condomínio do Bosque II is also located in front of the future Rondonópolis Municipal Park, both are located in the Vila Goulart neighborhood next to the Rio Vermelho and strategically located with roads that provide easy access to the city center and shopping center. It should be noted that the Park has not yet been built and, so far, it is only a Permanent Preservation Area. According to NEGRI (2011, p.56):

Condomínio do Bosque I has an area of 153,000 m² (one hundred and fifty-three thousand square meters), divided into 140 lots. While Condomínio do Bosque II (still under construction)

will have an area of 270,000 m² (two hundred and seventy thousand square meters), where it will be subdivided into 318 lots ranging from 440 to 800 m².

This cloistered way of life close to a public space such as a park, forest garden, river is an object of desire, far from the chaos, criminality and filth of the city. Continuing to talk about the Condomínios do Bosque, NEGRI (2011, p.56) shows that:

Therefore, the main characteristic of these gated communities, in addition to the status of living in a —private club||, is the presence of green and leisure areas nearby, so the gated community is seen as something clean, unpolluted, quiet and with a milder temperature. The environmental quality of the gated community, therefore, is characterized by its residents as superior to the rest of the city, which provides the feeling of feeling free, in permanent contact with nature, in short, of feeling healthy.

One of the phenomena present in both gated communities exposed here is spontaneous segregation, local residents choose to live in these spaces to isolate themselves from the rest of the population. In the words of NEGRI (2011, p.56):

[...] the same natural and landscape attributes that cause the feeling of well-being and environmental comfort, also serve as obstacles to a more socialized coexistence between the condominium and the rest of the city. The appeal for nature contrasts with the feeling of absence of neighborhood, as a closer look realizes that both the Horto Florestal and the Rio Vermelho serve as natural barriers that “protect” the residents from any possible external contact, practically isolating them.

Condomínio do Bosque I has walls with security system, access control, monitoring system, individual access gates, playground, tennis court, volleyball and squash court, soccer field, indoor pool, party room, equipped fitness center and kiosks with barbecue grill.

Condomínio do Bosque has an area of 870.19 m² in the amount of 800,000.00 reais, houses in the amount of R\$3,000,000.00 in a land with 853.00 m² and a built area of 417.28 m², in the amount of 2,200,000.00 reais, with 351 m² of built area and land of 712.50 m², and also in the amount of R\$2,500,000.00 with 416 m² of built area and land of 611.70 m². These values give us a sense of the existing prices. The value of the square meter in the referred gated community is approximately 919.34 reais, considering this resultant, if the land were 360 m² the value of the land would be 330,962.40 reais, therefore, the value of the land rent is still high in this gated community.

Meanwhile, Condomínio do Bosque II has a gym, bike rack, indoor pool, playroom, barbecue grill, adult pool, children's pool, playground, squash court, sports court, party room, gourmet space, 24 hour concierge, electronic gate, television internal-circuit, double pedestrian gate, internal security, 24h surveillance and electric fence.

The project has land with values above R\$300,000.00 and land with an area greater than 500 m². There are some residences for sale, a 380m² residence built on a 567m² land in the amount of R\$2,400,000.00, a 450,000 m² land with a constructed area of 258.00 m² in the amount of R\$1,600,000.00, and a house in the amount of R \$ 1,700,000.00 with a built area of 285 m², among others. Considering the value of the 500 m² land presented at the beginning of this paragraph, if there was land with 360 m² for sale in that gated community, it would be sold for 216,000.00 reais, the value of the m² would then be 600 reais, thus, land value would be moderately speculative.

It can be noted with these data that the space in these gated communities is overvalued, resulting in real estate speculation and, consequently, socioeconomic and spatial segregation, since only the dominant parts of the population will have the purchasing power.

Another factor that will cause real estate speculation to occur will be the implantation of the Rondonópolis Municipal Park, which will have a leisure space, according to Lugli², Cláudia, manager of the Research and Urban Planning Institute of Rondonópolis “the intention is to offer the population a large, modern park that respects the environment.” She states that “the project foresees that the area that allows construction will receive three multi-sports courts, sand court, tennis court, bocce court, guardhouse, toilets, fencing, bike path and 1,200 meter long walking path, playground, gym, administration, monuments, as well as a large contemplation pond”, as shown in image 1.

Image 1: Perspective of the architectural design of the leisure space in the Municipal Park of Rondonópolis



Source: Disclosure of Rondonópolis-MT City Hall (2020).

From the moment that parks are implemented, there is an appreciation of both real estate and land, and along with this real estate speculation comes gentrification due to the increase in the value of properties and taxes imposed by the State such as the IPTU. Thus, the proletariat moves because of the high taxes imposed on their properties and often they sell their property because it has been valued and then move to peripheral areas where the cost of living and the purchase price is lower.

3.2 CONDOMÍNIO VILLA TOSCANA

An example of this type of enterprise in which the landscape is appropriated is the so-called Villa Toscana, located close to Horto Florestal and in front of the future Rondonópolis Municipal Park.

2 Entrevista concedida ao jornal A Tribuna Mato Grosso (2019). Disponível em: <https://www.tribunamt.com.br/2019/07/24/agora-parque-municipal-prefeitura-de-rondonopolis-anuncia-construcao-do-ex-parque-da-seriema/>

According to Serpa (2014, p.42) “these parks are, for the most part, reserved for a specific type of public that does not include the less favored, in terms of income and academic formation”.

The lots available in the project will be residential and commercial, with 3,000 m² for the commercial area. The residential area has lots starting at 300m², with values above R\$140,000.00, has 26,000m² of green area and 10,000m² of leisure area. The location of the project is shown in Image 2 below:

Image 2: Location of Villa Toscana Residencial



Source: Google Maps and the website of Villa Toscana. Elaborated by the author (2020).

Its sustainable premise with the insertion of a green belt crowning its territory is one of its promotional adjectives, the enterprise appropriates the landscape and benefits of the environmental protection areas next to it, using sales marketing to the existing high vegetative density, and of course all the concepts coming from gated communities such as security, enclosure, leisure, tranquility and services. Caldeira, (2000, p. 265) states that:

This “new housing concept” articulates five basic elements: security, isolation, social homogeneity, equipment and services. The image conveys that the highest status (and more seductive) is of the cloistered, fortified and isolated residence, a safe environment in which someone can use various equipment and services and live only with people perceived as equals.

The gated community Villa Toscana Residencial will also use this leisure space. Therefore, these enclosed and segregated fortified gated communities are luxury objects to be sold as merchandise destined only to those who have greater capital, in this case, the middle and upper middle class, following the theoretical precepts set out above. What reinforces the high segregation in the city, social status has been consolidated with agribusiness.

There is a residence worth R\$850,000.00 with 163.00 m² of built area on a 313.84 m² land space, a house worth R\$880,000.00 on a 300 m² land, another house with a built area of 172.00 m² on

a land with 313.00 m² costing the amount of R\$920,000.00, and another house on a land of 320.84 m² and built area of 183.30 m² costing the amount of R\$950,000.00. It is observed that even with the value of the land being relatively low because it consists of small lots, the houses built have a high sale value, the value of the square meter built in this gated community is around 5,000 reais, being thus speculative.

Campos Filho (1992, p. 46) shows that:

In the framework of capitalism, the distribution of the population and economic activities on the urban soil follows the basic rule whereby whoever can do more, in terms of purchasing power, is better located in the structure of cities in relation to employment, the offer of urban services, commerce and services in general, specifically those related to culture and leisure.

So, what would be the privilege of living at Villa Toscana Residencial? It would be the location, close to Horto Florestal with a distance of 2 kilometers, Rondonópolis Municipal Park right in front of it, Rio Vermelho that is approximately 1 kilometer and 700 meters, close to the Shopping Mall that is situated at 4 kilometers and 200 meters approximately and towards downtown a course of 3km and 500 meters and, of course, enjoy all adjectives from the concept of living in gated communities, as shown in Image 3.

Image 3: Region around Villa Toscana Residencial



Source: From the project's publicity, electronic model (2020).

This commodity is a product intended for those who have greater purchasing power and the landscape in the case is of the Municipal Park of Rondonópolis and close to the Vermelho River, leisure in these spaces are speculative objects that become, in a hidden way, property of the more affluent class.

3.3 ALTA VISTA PARQUE

In this same perspective, there is the Alta Vista Parque subdivision (an allotment in Rondonópolis much alike a gated community), equipped with surveillance cameras and with the same predominant characteristics of a gated community, but it differs in that it is not physically segregated by walls that border space. The same can be considered as a contemporary model of housing. Its target audience is the middle and lower class, as it is a non-speculative value with easy financial access.

The allotment has lots starting at 200 m² and values starting at R\$50,000.00, so the value of the square meter of the land is 250 reais, a low value easily accessible to the middle and lower classes. The project will have bike paths, a walking track, a complete leisure area with playground, sand court, gym and living area.

As stated earlier, speculation generates segregation. As for socio-spatial segregation, the concept of Sposito (2013, p. 65) was sought at this time, which makes it clear that it only exists “when forms of differentiation lead to radical spatial separation and implicates a break, always relative, between the segregated part and the whole urban space, hindering the relationships and articulations that move urban life” of the population. This can be spontaneous (like residents of gated communities) or induced (like residents of housing estates in peripheral areas) already analyzed in another part of this article, present in the city of Rondonópolis. In Image 4, an image of the project can be seen:

Image 4: Location of the Alta Vista Parque allotment



Source: Advertisement of the project (2020)

The type of segregation resulting from the implantation of Alta Vista Parque is induced by the surrounding landscape.

3.4. ROYAL BOULEVARD DO CERRADO

Located just minutes from Rondonópolis' downtown and close to the Universidade Federal de Rondonópolis-MT, the gated community is a luxury project for the middle and upper classes. It will have a complete leisure area with lake, swimming pools, courts, skate park, playground, gym and party room, with lots from 360 to 970 m² and with a minimum sale value of R\$245,000.00, therefore, the value per square meter of land in this gated community is 680 reais.

Land of 300,000 reais with an area of 500 m² is already on the market, land with an area of 450 m² in the amount of R\$320,000.00. House of 234 m² on a 450 m² land in the amount of R\$1,630,000.00, house with 240 m² of built area, 400 m² of land in the amount of 1,500,000.00 reais, and residence with a built area of 220 m² on 380 m² of land in the amount of R\$1,300,000.00. The value of the built area would then be approximately 6,000 reais.

Based on the values provided here, it is evident that those who have the financial conditions to acquire real estate, especially those that already have residences built in this condominium are the more affluent classes, being luxury objects, which causes socioeconomic and spatial segregation due to the simple fact of their high value of sale.

CONCLUSION

The city of Rondonópolis, classified as a medium-sized city, is in rapid development in Mato Grosso. The spread of the urban space with large urban voids is explicit, which favors the social segregation imposed on the low-income population.

Urban space is produced and reproduced by social actors, there are pros and cons in the production and reproduction of space. The real estate speculation resulting from the implementation of gated communities makes the urban space become costly for the State, a sprawling city is an example of this. Urban equipment should be everyone's right, but sometimes these spaces become the property of the ruling class when they take over urban equipment close to gated communities.

The analysis of urban phenomena resulting from the implementation of horizontal gated communities in Rondonópolis analyzed here, led this study to induce that the city with its full development from this century onwards transformed it into a commodity city, probably with the advent of agribusiness in the state of Mato Grosso.

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