"Where Life Comes Together"
The Imagined Meanings of Lived Geographies

A Case Study of Two Gated Communities in the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt.

Jennie Gustafsson
Acknowledgments

This study has been carried out within the framework of the Minor Field Study (MFS) Scholarship Programme, funded by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida).

The MFS Scholarship Programme gives Swedish university students the opportunity to carry out fieldwork in a Third World country. The extent of the work can lead to Bachelors or Master’s Degree. The studies focus on areas and issues of relevance for development problems, and are conducted in countries supported by Swedish development assistance.

Sida’s main purpose with the MFS Scholarship Programme is to stimulate the students’ interest in, and increase their knowledge about, as well as their understanding for, developing countries and development issues. The MFS scholarships provide the students with practical experiences of the conditions of development. A further aim for Sida is to strengthen co-operation between Swedish University Departments, Institutes and organisations in countries in Africa, Asia and South- and Central America.

The Department of Human Geography at Lund University is one of the departments that administer MFS Programme funds.

***

The writing of this thesis would not have been possible without my interviewees, thank you for the shared time and information. I also want to thank you who helped me in Cairo, Aya M Nassar, Safaa Marafi, Mohamed Abdallah, and Helena Hägglund. Likewise I want to thank Andreas Malm and Maria Johansson for the support and encouragement with the application and the study. I also want to acknowledge the support from my supervisor at Lund University, Guy Baeten. Lastly, thank you to my friends who have helped me with the text, Anna Holmgren and Andrea Pettersson, and Jens Hyllner, thank you for your support, hard criticism, and theoretical discussions.

*Citation on the frontage: from the signature brochure of Mivida, Emaar Misr.*
## Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 4
   1.1 The problem ................................................................................................................... 4
   1.2 Purpose and research questions .................................................................................... 6
   1.3 Previous studies .......................................................................................................... 6

2. Background ............................................................................................................................ 8
   2.1 Egypt and Cairo ............................................................................................................. 8
      2.1.1 Egypt: brief history until today .............................................................................. 8
      2.1.2 Cairo .................................................................................................................... 9
   2.2 Localizing my study ..................................................................................................... 10
      2.2.1 Al Rehab and Talaat Moustafa Group ................................................................. 11
      2.2.2 Mivida and Emaar Misr .................................................................................... 12
   2.3 Definitions ..................................................................................................................... 13
      2.3.1 Gated community ................................................................................................. 13
      2.3.2 Neoliberalism and the neoliberal city .................................................................. 13
   2.4 Urban planning in Cairo and its neoliberal turn ............................................................. 14
      2.4.1 Gated communities in Cairo .............................................................................. 15

3. Methodology and method ...................................................................................................... 16
   3.1 Methodology .................................................................................................................. 16
      3.1.1 The relation between theory and empirics ......................................................... 16
   3.2 Method .......................................................................................................................... 17
      3.2.1 Qualitative methods, text, and discourse ........................................................... 17
      3.2.2 The respondents ............................................................................................... 18
   3.3 Material .......................................................................................................................... 18
      3.3.1 Mivida’s signature brochure .............................................................................. 18
      3.3.2 The interviews ................................................................................................... 19
   3.4 (Self)reflections ............................................................................................................ 19
      3.4.1 Researching the elite ......................................................................................... 20
      3.4.2 Language ............................................................................................................ 20
      3.4.3 Distance to the “field” .................................................................................... 21

4. Theoretical framework ........................................................................................................... 21
   4.1 Gated communities as part of the accumulation process ................................................. 21
   4.2 Neoliberal cultural politics of life .................................................................................. 23
      4.2.1 Departure and definitions: “life” ....................................................................... 23
      4.2.1 Hegemony .......................................................................................................... 23
      4.2.1 Biopolitics of life ............................................................................................... 25
   4.3 Concluding: the Gramscian-Foucauldian approach ....................................................... 26
5. Analysis of Mivida’s signature brochure .................................................27
  5.1 General description .................................................................................27
  5.2 Biopolitics of life ....................................................................................28
    5.1.1 The neoliberal subject ........................................................................28
    5.1.2 Generalization of the enterprise form ..................................................29
    5.1.3 Outro ..................................................................................................30
  5.3 Hegemony ..................................................................................................30
    5.3.1 The narrative of the good life ..............................................................31
    5.3.2 The right resident ..............................................................................31
    5.3.3 Outro ..................................................................................................32
  5.4 Conclusion of the brochure analysis .........................................................33
6. Analysis of the interviews ...........................................................................33
  6.1 Biopolitics of life ....................................................................................34
    6.1.1 The neoliberal subject: choosing life ..................................................34
    6.1.2 The neoliberal subject: economic man ..................................................36
    6.1.3 The neoliberal subject: leaving the state ..............................................37
  6.2 Hegemony ..................................................................................................38
    6.2.1 The narrative of the good life ..............................................................38
    6.2.2 The narrative of the good urban ...........................................................40
    6.2.3 Localizing ‘the trans-metropolitan elite’ ..............................................41
  6.3 Contradictions ..........................................................................................44
    6.3.1 Problems with and within the gates ....................................................45
    6.3.2 The unnatural place ..........................................................................46
  6.4 Conclusion of the interview analysis .........................................................46
7. Reflections and final remarks .....................................................................47
8. Summary ....................................................................................................49
   References ...................................................................................................50
Appendix I – Interview design ....................................................................53
Appendix II – Pictures from Mivida’s brochure ............................................57
Appendix III – Santa Barabara style .............................................................58

Figure 1.1 ...........................................................................................................4
Figure 2.1 .........................................................................................................8
Figure 2.2 .........................................................................................................10
Figure 2.3 .........................................................................................................11
Figure 2.4 .........................................................................................................11
Figure 2.5 .........................................................................................................12
Figure 2.6 .........................................................................................................12
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM

Figure 1.1: Advertisement by Emaar Misr in Cairo: “10 minutes from anywhere”. Photo by the author.

Cairo is not only a dual and segregated city but an urban landscape sprung out of colonial, modern and globalized processes and practices (Kuppinger 2009). Cairo is also a neoliberal city, as part of Egypt’s neoliberal development. The neoliberalization process (e.g. Mitchell 2002, pp. 272-303), that goes back forty years, has made a big impact on the Egyptian society, with growing social and income gaps as well as increasing economic growth (Maher 2011, pp. 33-38). Even so, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (henceforth WB) have held Egypt as a good example of economic success (Maher 2011, p. 37; Mitchell 2002, pp. 272-73). In the urban landscape of Cairo; one manifestation of this socioeconomic development are the gated communities and the discourses surrounding them, with which this essay will concern. But these urban enclaves are not the dominant physical feature of the city, and they do not contain a large amount of the city’s residents (Tarbush 2012, pp. 171-72). In 2006, 602 000 people lived in the new desert towns around Cairo, thus these desert towns absorbed a small amount of the growing population (WB 2008, p. 12). Still, while travelling through the main roads of Cairo I meet advertisement about new residential areas located there, together with promises about greenery and a better life (Fig 1.1). The advertisement mirrors an imaginary ascent. The gated communities of Cairo are part of the Egyptian popular culture and the expansion into the desert is held as important for Cairo’s modern future (Sims 2010, p. 170). They are an urban development real estate trend (holding both shopping malls and housing) and are seen as important places within the urban landscape (Almatarneh 2013, pp. 2, 4). This can be described as what Swati Chattopadhyay (2012, p. 87) calls urban visuality; the urban visuality sheds light on certain places, actors, and activities, leaving most of the built environment in the shadows. The development of gated communities is what has become visualized in the city, often as a good urban development.

In the same visualization the 'ashwa'iyats, informal urban areas (Sims 2011, p. 307), are seen as a risk (e.g. as a place containing crime, violence, and political
resistance) – even though they cover more than half of the city surface and houses around 60 percent of its residents (Tarbush 2012, pp. 171-72). Not only the ‘ashwa’iyyats as a place is seen as a risk, but the people living there become a danger as noted by Eric Denis (2006). It is in relation to this risk people move to gated communities (e.g. Denis, p. 51). And yet, when it comes to violent crime Cairo is one of the safest cities in the world (Sims 2010, p. 3). Through the urban visuality, the ‘ashwa’iyyats’ geographies of life are left unappreciated:

The needs, identities, problems, hopes, and political ideals of the people in these new neighborhoods thus receive little attention and yet it is these dimensions that fundamentally constitute public life and it is through such dimensions that the contested character of, and resistance to, neoliberal globalization finds expressions (Singerman 2009, p. 6).

Not only are the people living here excluded from the inside of the gates (unless they work there), they are also excluded from the urban development and are instead seen as “the problem” or “internal other” (Singerman 2009, p. 21).

Gated communities should also be seen in relation to the housing crises in Cairo. The majority of Cairo’s population cannot afford their housing, but at the same time the vacancy rate in Cairo is estimated at 20-30 percent (Fahmi & Sutton 2008, pp. 278-79; WB 2008, p. 36). This is partly due to high rents and bad planning that result in long distances between work and home but also due to financial real estate speculation (Singerman 2009, p. 7; Fahmi & Sutton 2008, p. 279; Sims 2010, p. 140). One of the solutions presented in 1990s to the housing shortage during the 1970-80s was investments by the private sector in the real estate market. Instead of solving the problem this led to more empty, luxury apartments and villas of which some are located within the gated communities (Fahmi & Sutton 2008, p. 284; WB 2008, pp. 31-32; Sims 2010, p. 140).

These are some of the problems shadowed by the urban visuality, problems that affect the daily lives of many Cairenes. But, the urban visuality is contested by the “the neoliberal generation” engaging in city making, protesting and struggling in the city (Singerman 2009, p. 28).

Gated communities are not the dominant feature of the city, though I will argue, they dominate the image. A minority of the people living in Cairo formulates the urban visuality; where certain spaces become good and other spaces are seen as something bad or as a risk. At the same time what is being visualized as something good is also part of the problem, e.g. the housing crises and growing gaps within society. This essay is delimited to a discussion of the meanings of life embedded within the Mivida and Al Rehab gated communities in Cairo. It will discuss how meanings work within the landscape. Not only meanings about what is seen as wrong but also the neutralized meanings ascribed to what is seen as a natural or a good activity or space. I will therefore describe and discuss the imagining of urban space as a manifestation of social relations, more specifically how the meanings ascribed to two gated communities can be understood as narratives about a good life.
1.2 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of my study is to understand the neoliberal cultural politics of life surrounding two gated communities in Cairo. These politics of life are outlined through the Gramscian notion of hegemony and the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, as a discourse about the commonsensical good life within a neoliberal context. The first part of my study consists of an analysis of promotional material produced by a real estate developer. The second part consists of an analysis of conducted interviews with people working with and living in two chosen gated communities.

Questions posed in the study are:

Within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt, can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated within a signature brochure produced by a real estate developer?

Can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated by actors within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt?

1.3 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Gated communities are generally in the academia and media seen with criticism; as privatized spaces for high-income living restraining freedom of movement and deepening the social polarization (Lemanski 2009). Here I present selected literature in the field. Some of the literature will throughout the study be explained further, and deeper renderings are in those cases here left out.

Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder (1997) have analyzed gated communities in the US, looking at the spread of, and the differences and similarities between, them. The authors identify how the gated areas can be choices of lifestyle, prestige and security, but they also place them in the social fabric of the country. They concluding by arguing that the gated communities are not a solution to the problem they are responding to. Instead they are part of the wide social transformations in the city, e.g. segregation (Blakely & Snyder 1997). Teresa Caldeira shows the effect of gated communities (what she calls fortified enclaves) on public space and public life, in São Paulo, Brazil. By looking at the advertisement she shows how the urban residential segregation deepens the rhetoric about violent crime and fear in the city and widens the social gaps (Caldeira 1999, pp. 115-18).

Others have also written about spatial organization and social meanings embedded in them, as well as about neoliberal spatial development. E.g. Ortega (2012) writes about Manila’s suburban fringe and the gated communities and

---

1 The exceptions are researchers seeing the protecting mechanism of the communities, also lifting employment, economic efficiency and financial retention are as arguments (Lemanski 2009).
exclusive neighborhoods there as grounded within neoliberal restructuring.

Concerning gated communities within the Egyptian neoliberal context, Denis (2009) has written about myths of fear and risk imposing social exclusion, in relation to the gated luxurious areas and Petra Kupping (2004) has discussed the marketing and construction of them. These are two studies that I rely on in my essay. After my field study a new study was published concerning gated communities in Cairo Rana Tawfiq Almatarneh’s Choices and changes in the housing market and community preferences: Reasons for the emergence of gated communities in Egypt (2013). The study both shows how the gated privatized compounds are part of a wider trend in Egypt, and discusses how the developers’ promotional perspectives “re-shape people’s desires and wants” (Almatarneh 2013, p. 1). In many cases the result of this study correlate with the results of mine, though our theoretical departures are not the same. Being a dissertation it is also more extensive. Because of the time of publishing this study is more scarcely interspersed in my study. I have also leaned on Safaa Marafi’s (2011) insightful description of Al Rehab, which is one of the chosen communities for my essay. She describes the segregation and tensions in the city, showing how people move to gated communities for safety and class reasons, but how (at the same time) the fear of “the others” does not disappear, despite walls and vast security systems. Also, Ghonimi et al (2011) have written about the role of gated communities in the urban fabric, holding a critical perspective on them as not being suitable in or compatible with the Egyptian economic, social and ecological context. Mitchell (2002), as well, gives an essential introduction to the subject, and also Abaza (2006) should be highlighted, discussing urban change, e.g. shopping malls, which sometimes are located in gated communities or at least should be seen in relation to them.

In relation to these studies, my essay uses and confirms most conclusions. However, I use different theoretical perspectives, and in some ways also another perception of the problem (cf. Almatarneh 2013).

For an introduction to Cairo the books Cairo Cosmopolitan (ed. Singerman & Amar 2006), Cairo Contested (ed. Singerman 2009) and Understanding Cairo (Sims 2010) are useful. Concerning Egypt see Rule of Experts (Mitchell 2002) and for an introduction in Swedish I recommend Per Björklund’s Arvet efter Mubarak (2011). More references to studies within this field will follow in the essay.
2. BACKGROUND

2.1 EGYPT AND CAIRO

2.1.1 EGYPT: BRIEF HISTORY UNTIL TODAY

Egypt (Fig. 2.1) (officially The Arab Republic of Egypt) is located in the north east of Africa, and the official language is Arabic. The population was in 2011 estimated to 82,537,000 of which 43 percent lived in urban areas (Britannica 2012; Hopwood et al. 2012a). Egypt became independent from the United Kingdom after World War II (Hopwood et al. 2012b) and thus ended a long history of colonization. A coup d’état in 1952 brought the military to power and the military are still today a strong political force, as well as an economic actor e.g. owning a substantial amount of land (Cole 2012, p. 487; WB 2008, p. 22; Abul-Magd 2011).
The neoliberal development and the political repression in the country have met resistance. Strikes and demonstrations led up to the revolution in January 2010, when tens of thousands of people gathered protesting in Cairo and other big cities in northern Egypt (Maher 2011, pp. 26-38; Björklund 2011, pp. 55-58, 316-25; Marafi 2011, pp. 104-12; Cole 2012, pp. 487-88). The president Husni Mubarak resigned 11 February 2011, after three weeks of mass protests (Björklund 2011, p. 315). After Mubarak’s resignation the military came to power. The first election was held in 2012 and the Freedom and Justice Party, founded by the Muslim Brotherhood won (Svahn 2012). The sitting president is Mohammed Mursi, leader of the Freedom and Justice Party. The political situation in the country is still characterized by protests and instability (Björklund 2012). The resistance leading up to the revolution and the recent protests should be seen in relation to daily conflicts and protests within the globalized neoliberal context. In Egypt, the resistance against neoliberal globalization has been diverse; including feminist groups, Islamic groups, unions, and different groups on the political left (Singerman 2009, p. 20). Some of this resistance, e.g. the Islamic resistance, has been seen as a risk and danger coupled with the ‘ashwa’iyyats. This risk discourse is partly what has led to policies of reconstruction of space as well as the creation of “luxury enclaves” known as gated communities (Singerman 2009, p. 7).

2.1.2 CAIRO

Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is the core of the larger metropolitan area Greater Cairo Region (henceforth GCR). The population in the city of Cairo was in 2004 estimated to about 7, 6 million residents. GCR, one of the most densely populated urban areas globally, has almost 17 million inhabitants. Besides including the city of Cairo GCR also includes the cities of Giza, Shourbra Al-Khauma and Helwan. The mosaic pattern of the city of Cairo is described by Kuppinger (2009) as "elements from different historical eras displaying vastly varying styles and spatial conceptualizations that produced a multitude of spatial forms and social and cultural practices". This mosaic pattern Cairo reflects Egypt’s history of colonialism, modernization and globalization. This previous colonial capital and regional center of the postcolonial time is today contested not only by internal political struggles but also by global competition. Political and economic dynamics are changing and newcomers and “urban novice” such as Dubai challenges Cairo’s past role as a regional capital (Kuppinger 2009).

GCR is also an important place for the agglomeration of economic activities; in 2000 83 percent of all foreign establishments in Egypt could be found here, making Cairo an important portal to the globalized economy (Denis & Vignal in WB 2008, p. 14). Together with its geographical position GCR is described as having “comparative locational advantages in addition to its agglomeration economies” (WB 2008, p. 14). This hints about Cairo’s important and dominant role within the economy of Egypt, it is also in this center my chosen gated communities are located.
2.2 LOCALIZING MY STUDY

I have chosen to delimit my study to two gated communities in GCR, Al Rehab and Mivida. Both communities are located in New Cairo (Fig. 2.2 and 2.3 below). New Cairo is located in the eastern part of GCR and contains luxurious neighborhoods, foreign language universities, offices for multinational companies and industrial parks (Singerman 2009, p. 14). It was developed as one of the new desert cities, and the planning followed Western standards with residential blocks, boulevards and green areas. In 2006 the vacancy rate was 64.1 percent (Sims 2010, pp. 170-72).

Figure 2.2: Cairo (New Cairo is here mentioned as New Cairo City). Source: Fahmi & Sutton 2008. With permission from the author.
2.2.1 AL REHAB AND TALAAT MOUSTAFA GROUP

Al Rehab is one of the bigger compounds in Cairo (Fig. 2.3, no. 7; Fig. 2.4; cf. Fig 2.6). With around 200,000 residents it feels like a city when I enter the area. That is also the aim of the developer: “Al Rehab is the first city built by the private
sector in Egypt having comprehensive services to cater for all needs of its residents.” (TMG Holding 2011) Al Rehab is developed by Talaat Moustafa Group Holding (henceforth TMG), one of Egypt’s largest real estate developer, visioning the “establishing self-sustained residential city and community complexes for the upper and middle classes” (TMG Holding 2009a-b). Its revenue is estimated to EGP 17.5 billion\(^2\) (Almatarneh 2013, p. 14).

2.2.2 MIVIDA AND EMAAR MISR

Figure 2.5: A model of Mivida at Emaar Misr Sales-center, Cairo. Photo by the author.

Figure 2.6: Location of Mivida. Source: Emaar Misr 2011e

\(^{2}\) With an currency exchange rate of EGP 1 = USD 0.15, EGP 17.5 billion = USD 2.6 billion
Mivida (see Fig. 2.5, 2.6) is a new community under construction described as “a fully integrated community allowing residents access to every convenience imaginable. This includes playgrounds, community centers, a business park, thriving hotels and boulevard style shopping in a bustling town center.” (Emaar Misr 2011c). Mivida is developed by Emaar Misr, “one of the largest foreign direct investor in Egypt’s real estate sector” (Emaar Misr 2011a). Emaar Misr is part of Emaar Development: a holding company within real estate, contracting and consultancy, and tourism investment located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Their revenue is USD 17.5 billion (Almatarneh 2013, p. 14) or, as expressed by Emaar Misr they have “an investment portfolio of EGP 31.67 billion” (Emaar Misr 2011a). Being one of the world’s largest property developers they seek “to build an entire lifestyle” (Emaar Misr 2011b; Emaar properties PJSC 2010). Emaar Development develops communities for high class or upper middle class individuals in the Middle East and North Africa (Almatarneh 2013, p. 14).

2.3 DEFINITIONS

2.3.1 GATED COMMUNITY

Defined by its physical characteristics such as a perimeter enclosure, surveillance and access control, gated communities apply to areas under shifting territorial strategies. Areas such as walled residential and commercial estates patrolled by security guards; gated schools and shops; and blocks of apartments with a keypad entry system, can fall within the definition. The definition can also be based on the private and/or collective governance controlling a certain space. The space predominantly imagined as a gated community is a residential area surrounded by walls and private security. Even though local explanations for the establishment of gated communities should be sought, common factors are described as “rising violent crime and decreased confidence in public security” (Lemanski 2009). Gated communities are often described as a North American phenomenon and trend (Lemanski 2009; cf. Almatarneh 2013, pp. 3-4).

Mivida and Al Rehab can be defined as walled residential and commercial estate. I will in the analysis comment on how they relate to the above definitions. With this brief background to the concept I will now continue to contextualize my study.

2.3.2 NEOLIBERALISM AND THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

I want to understand the symbolism and material manifestation of gated communities through their embeddedness within neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is here understood as a “coherent set of practices, policies, and ideas including free-market ideology, deregulation and the cutback of social services” (Huber 2012, p. 299). I want to use the notion of the neoliberal cultural politics of life outlined by
Matthew T. Huber to discuss how “neoliberalism succeeded as a popular political project” (Huber 2012, p. 299), where all of us in some way become neoliberal actors. I here use an understanding of the neoliberal city developed by David Harvey (1989) who describes the neoliberal city within the accumulation process and the global flows of capital. The “process of city making” is here “both product and condition of ongoing social processes of transformation in the most recent phase of capitalist development” (Harvey 1989, p. 3). Like in all cities, both in the global South and the global North, one must understand the local practices of global processes. Also, how history reflects upon today matters. In the case of Cairo histories of colonial, authoritarian, modern and neoliberal spatial logics interact, and therefore the city requires its own understanding (cf. Chattopadhyay 2012). This coincides with an understanding of neoliberalism as not solely creating spaces open for global flows of economic integration and exchange values – but also as an ongoing spatially grounded contradictory process, which constitutes an uneven urban landscape (Ortega 2012, p. 1123; cf. Parnell & Robinson 2012).

Today cities compete on regional and global scales to attract capital. In what is conceptualized as the entrepreneurial city there is a public-private partnership between different actors “focusing on investment and economic development with the speculative construction of place” (Harvey 1989, p. 8; cf. Clarke 2012). The city tries to secure its comparative strength within both the domain of production and consumption (Harvey 1989, pp. 8-9). Public-private partnerships, “inter-urban competition” (Harvey 1989, p. 10), and branding are also present in Cairo (e.g. WB 2008, p. 21). Urban spaces undergo changes to keep up with the speed of competitiveness, partly leading to the commodification of the heritage and the privatizing of space making “spaces become economically and culturally removed from their territories and displaced into global realms” (Singerman 2009, p. 18; Kuppinger cited in Singerman 2009, p. 19) One example of commodified, privatized and speculatively constructed space are the gated communities.

2.4 URBAN PLANNING IN CAIRO AND ITS NEOLIBERAL TURN

The urban planning in Cairo, during the second half of the twentieth century, has shifted from a “social welfare mode of regulation” (launched by Gamal Abdel Nasser (presidency 1956-1970)) to a “neo-liberal mode of regulation”. President Anwar el-Sadat (presidency 1970-1981), known for his liberal economic reconstruction called Infitah (openness), opened up for foreign investments and strengthened the private sector in the country. Under Infitah the urban domain became a site for capitalistic formation and commercial and speculative ventures (el Shakry 2006, pp. 73-94; cf. Sims 2010, pp. 45-89). I will further down explain how this development correlates with the ascent of gated communities. First will I present the current development plans.

In 2008 a new strategic urban development plan, Cairo 2050, was presented by the General Organization for Physical Planning (henceforth GOPP). A number of organizations such as the UN Development program and the WB collaborated in the project (Tarbush 2012, p. 173; Deknatel 2012). The plan was inspired by other
global cities like Sidney and Paris, and formulated a solution to problems in Cairo; e.g. the 'ashwa'iyyats covering more than half of city surface of Cairo and housing around 60 percent of its residents. The answer to the problem was re-localization of the informal settlements to new satellite towns. The core of the city would be rebuilt for e.g. tourist centers, office towers, and wide boulevards (Tarbush 2012, p. 171-72). The modernization of Cairo is to be built with mega-projects to compete with other global metropolises (Tarbush 2012, p. 176). This correlates to how Cairo by the Egyptian state is seen as the “Tiger of the Nile”, formulating the city as a growth engine in the region. This modernization project let dictums of globalization as well as of neo-liberalization shape the city (Singerman 2009, pp. 3, 9). After the fall of Mubarak a reworking of the visionary Cairo 2050 has begun by UN-Habitat and the GOPP (Deknatel 2012).

A development plan for the country also affects how Cairo is visualized; in Egypt 712 seven future urban cores are in focus, Cairo being the “cultural and spiritual” capital (Egypt 712 2011, p. 7). This shows how Cairo is visualized both in the present and future in relation to other global metropolises such as Paris and Sidney, reflecting how the city follows a neoliberal logic about how to present itself. More concrete, the market oriented urban planning has plowed the way for the production of the gated desert areas, and this plan continues on that path (e.g. Tarbush 2012, p. 176, 179). It is within this context the meanings and discourses of Mivida and Al Rehab should be understood.

2.4.1 GATED COMMUNITIES IN CAIRO

Gated communities have since the 1980s spread around Egypt (Mitchell 2002, pp. 271-72). The gated communities are part of the most dramatic changes of the neoliberal reforms: the geographic and physical transformation of Cairo - the city surface has doubled since the mid-1990s (Björklund 2011, p. 114). Cairo expanded through new gated and luxurious neighborhoods, around the old city and beyond the city crowd into the desert. Private actors were invited to the creation of these new urban centers, which lead to housing construction for the higher end of the housing market. It was the materialization of the largest real estate increase ever seen in Egypt, made possible through foreign capital and the new financial speculative frontier within real estate (Mitchell 2002, p. 273; Sims 2010, p. 208). During the 1990s the Egyptian government sold state-owned land cheap for the building of infrastructure vital for the new towns and the gated communities within them (Mitchell 2002, pp. 274-75; Denis 2006, p. 53). Part of this was the Ministry of Housing’s closeout in 1994 of desert land to private actors and luxury construction projects. This exemplifies the entrepreneurial city and public-private partnership described above.

Despite a limited market for the residential luxury around 350 companies planned expensive housing for 600,000 residences. The construction sometimes leads to vacant villas and apartments; part of the housing crisis in Cairo mentioned before. Thus, the new desert towns remained empty, with not enough

---

3 One example of spectacular projects is an indoor ski slope being planned within a mall in 6th October city outside Cairo (Roscoe 2012).
households being able to move there (Denis 2006, pp. 52-53; Sims 2010, p. 140). Still present today is the trend of secluded real estate development (cf. Almatarneh 2013).

Denis further describes gated communities in Cairo as manifestations of risk-discourses. They are legitimized in relation to the urban risk, and become private-democracies when the state is seen as fallible. They call upon a nostalgic reminiscent of the colonial-liberal era before the independence-struggles of Egypt, but, are now reformulated into neoliberal discourses as a way to reconcile a new mode of production. In fact, Denis argues, these exclusive geographies become a risk in themselves; constructing social risks within the neoliberal geography (Denis 2006, pp. 54-8, 67-8). I will in the analysis illuminate how Mivida and Al Rehab relate to this description; as well this is a context important for the reader to know of.

3. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of a study is present throughout the whole process (Warrington 1997, p. 104). The methodological history of human geography holds different paradigms and therefore also different theoretical frameworks and methods. Since the beginning of the 1980s the methodology within the field of human geography has been influenced by humanist, radical, feminist, and post-structural tendencies (Cloke et al 2004, pp. 22-31). Positioned within this methodological landscape my study brings together theories from different fields while using qualitative methods. By being a study within human geography it discusses spatial relationships and how humans interrelate with their environment (Graham 2005, p. 13), in my case how meanings of life are part of a spatial materialization as well as a discursive visualization of power relations.

3.1.1 THE RELATION BETWEEN THEORY AND EMPIRICS

My study is placed within the field of critical urban studies, drawing inspiration from both so-called radical geography (inspired by Marxian theories) and what are seen as postmodern theories. I do this with some distance to the debates about their differences and instead look at how their theoretical insights can be used when perceiving "the city as a multilevel semiotic site", as well as a multilevel material site (Parker & Site 2012, pp. 470, 472; Graham 2005, pp. 12-13, 27-30).

My aim with the theories is to try to interpret meanings, and see how they work, how they are a part of the constitution of the matter, or the object. I hold a dialectical view of the nature of reality as well as a dialectical view of how to
understand this reality – thus ontology and epistemology are here intertwined (but not the same) (Westin 2010, p. 46). The theoretical concepts are used as windows to look out from, trying to grasp reality. And what I see through the windows are not separate categories, but part of the same scenery (Harvey 2006, pp. 2, 4).

I here understand the urban as a mentality, a feeling or something social (Westin 2010, p. 193), but the city also as a thing, a physical reality where people meet becomes a “socio-material field of acting” (Westin 2010, p. 193 in relation to Østerberg 1990, my translation). The socio-material field of acting is where the urban as a thing (of physical boundaries and possibilities) and also a non-thing (a feeling or atmosphere) meet (cf. Westin 2010, p. 193-94). This is relevant in my essay to understand the use of my theories, which both are chosen in relation to the urban space being a thing as well as a non-thing.

While studying the urban, a relationship between the urban and urban theory is being reproduced, therefore the following questions should be posed, “what is the contribution of the city to urban theory?”, and what is theory contributing to the city (Parker & Site 2012, p. 470)? For me this is especially relevant concerning how I use theories placed within a Western tradition of knowledge – emphasizing how the researcher affects the study and its results (Cloke et al 2004, pp. 28-9; Parker & Site 2012, pp. 470, 472; cf. Parnell & Robinson 2012). I have therefore, in relation to the choice of theory, tried to understand the Egyptian context, or at least a part of it. For that reason this essay is not strictly divided into a theoretical part and an empirical part, since the literature I have used is interrelated. I have let different point of thoughts meet to create new thoughts – the problems I have met have led my way (cf. Westin 2010, p. 10). Especially and consciously I have tried to build bridges between literatures about gated communities in general, Cairo and Egypt in general and the combination of the two in relation to my theories. I have also chosen to let my problems be answered by what I enjoy to read and what feels relevant to create my own rhizome of knowledge and thought (cf. Colebrook 2010, pp. 101-31).

3.2 METHOD

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE METHODS, TEXT AND DISCOURSE

I am using a qualitative method in my study. Qualitative methods are good to use in unknown contexts to get to know these contexts through the people living in them (Brockington & Sullivan 2003, p. 59). My two methods are interviews and text studies. I here place “text” in a broad notion including images, movies and so on (Bergström & Boréus 2005, p. 323). The text I am studying is a signature brochure about Mivida. Six semi-structured interviews (described below) have been held with in total seven respondents relating to my chosen gated

---

4 Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of writing as a rhizome is explained as a system of roots meeting and creating new points of connections, shaping a movement along a surface (in relation to writing as a tree with a center from what a network of branches creates a hierarchal structure) (Colebrook: 2010, p. 106).
communities. The aim of these chosen methods is to understand the discourses surrounding gated communities, as well as the formulation of these. Discourse is here defined as “a certain way of talking about and understanding the world (or a segment of the word)” (Winther & Phillips 2000, p. 7, my translation) Discourses are something that gives meaning to our social and physical realities. Not being a coherent entity, it can be contested by other experiences and interpretations (Hajer 1995, pp. 44-5, 56, 65). This can be seen as a general description of discourse. I also want to, through Gramsci, understand discourses (understood as consent, commonsense and hegemony) as part of the productive forces in society. This will be deeper outlined in chapter 4.

When doing my analyses I have used this understanding of discourse and through my theoretical framework I have identified categories and subcategories (Crang 2005, pp. 220-31). I have through this categorization of the text (see material below) answered my research questions. The reader should also be aware that the words “meaning” and “discourse” are often used similarly in the text.

3.2.2 THE RESPONDENTS

My chosen respondents represent different actors important to the realization of gated communities. The respondents are two residents of Al Rehab, two real estate agents active in the two compounds, one cost engineer in a company working for the developer Emaar Misr, one person from the design team and one from the marketing team at Emaar Misr working on the Mivida development.

My aim was to find the respondents through a snowball-selection using my contacts (Valentine 2005, pp. 117-18). I found some of my respondents through this selection, but, this selection also took time. Thus, I established my own contacts with the respondents in the end, which resulted in interviews I been waiting for in weeks.

My respondents are the agents formulating the discourses (as professionals) or the actors reproducing them (by purchasing a real estate). This means that I have chosen to do a generalization through the respondents' positions; either by their profession or their ability to/choice of consumption (Cloke et al 2004, p. 157). Instead of seeing these positions as separate from their personas I want to emphasize them as humans relating to wants and desires and presumably attempting to live good lives. This relates to Ervin Goffman’s ideas about a two-sidedness of people where they both have their internal, personal role and their official role (Cloke et al 2004, p. 158). While doing the interviews my respondent’s reflections about their answers also showed how they sometimes positioned themselves within their profession and sometimes outside their profession, as will be noticed in the analysis-chapters.

3.3 MATERIAL

3.3.1 MIVIDA’S SIGNATURE BROCHURE
Found on Mivida’s homepage the signature brochure (13 pages) describes this new compound (Emaar Misr 2011d). Being one of the first things the eventual future residents meet when searching for information about their new home I find this an important text for the understanding of the (re)production of meanings of life in Mivida. This was also one of the information materials I received from the visit at the sales center of Emaar Misr in Cairo. Through the brochure Emaar Misr communicates to the reader about Mivida but also about the company, making it an interesting secondary material to analyze.

In the analysis-chapter, all the excerpts (if not stated otherwise) are taken from Mivida’s signature brochure, because of non-numbered pages in the brochure the references have been left out.

### 3.3.2 THE INTERVIEWS

The conducted interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix I) and I have been following Clokes et al’s (2004, pp. 152) writings about Jennifer Mason’s structure for semi-structured qualitative interviews, allowing me a flexible crosscutting between my wider research questions and smaller “mini” questions. This structure made me free to follow the answers from the respondents, thus finding things I did not search for. After a few interviews I found some questions more suitable than others, therefore I did a slight reworking of the interview design.

The interviews have given me my primary material to analyze (Cloke et al 2004, pp. 219). While conducting the interviews I recorded them, this helped me to concentrate on the conversation with no need to take careful notes, allowing me to be more flexible (Cloke et al 2004, p. 152). All interviews were conducted in English in environments chosen by the respondents; at their offices, two times in cafés and once in the respondent’s home. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes. I have asked the respondents if they wanted to be anonymous, which none of them wanted.

When rendering the interviews in excerpts I have put comma characters and points for the reader to follow easier. I have put --- to show when I have left out words or when words could not be heard while transcribing. I have when referring to the respondents written their name as well as their relation to the compounds (e.g. Khaled, real estate agent). The respondents when referring to Al Rehab often name it Rehab or Rehab City which is more common in daily speak. Emaar Misr is sometimes referred to as only Emaar.

### 3.4 (SELF)REFLECTIONS

Being the one choosing what and who to study I will affect the results of the study. Even if the aim of the method is to bring up thoughts and experiences of other people I will in the end influence the material through the way I listen, read, code and analyze it (Brockington & Sullivan 2003, pp. 68-70). Below I will
discuss some of the factors during my stay in Cairo that have influenced my results.

3.4.1 RESEARCHING THE ELITE

Studying the elite, or the privileged, can create an understanding of the practices and cultures of those holding powerful positions, as well as an understanding of the (re)produced power being used to marginalize “the weak”. In a situation of expanding gaps between the wealthy and the poor this is important. For an understanding of local realities created partly by the elite’s political and economic global networks, the elite’s glocal embeddedness needs to be studied (Scheyvens et al 2003, pp. 183-84). But the identification of the elite is not obvious, often this identification is done through the position of the researcher. The elite is not a group with a fixed position, meaning that even during the interview the relation between the interviewer and the respondent can change. This and some general problems when studying the elite should be noted. Practical issues concerning the access to networks are relevant, the elite being a group with power to exclude the researcher as well. Likewise, issues of positionality are present when balancing personal and official communication and contact; this also affects how to access the field (Scheyvens et al 2003, pp. 185-86).

During my time in Egypt these issues were present, both in my way to figure out how the find my respondents and how to communicate with and relate to them. Working with one of the world’s biggest developer, as well as living behind walls made my respondents sometimes hard to reach. I tried to overcome this by establishing contacts close to the groups where I wanted to find respondents. As mentioned above this resulted in me making my own contact with the respondents, realizing this was easier. I also found myself “cultivating insiderness” trying to relate to those living in the compounds as well as trying to “talk-the-talk” with my respondents. This was also blended with a cultivated naivety, trying to get as clear answers as possible (Scheyvens et al 2003, p. 186) – as well as emphasizing why they should take time to meet me. How I established contacts and also my position towards them reflects some aspects of “moving/acting in the field” – which affect the material I am analyzing.

3.4.2 LANGUAGE

I chose to conduct my interviews in English. My respondents were all fluent in English and one was also a native English speaker. Though, in most cases this meant that neither I nor my respondents spoke our native language. Sometimes this brought difficulties in expressing ourselves as well as understanding each other, this was however a limited concern. For me the absence of an interpreter meant that I was more able to directly respond and react to what was being said. Even so, that the interviews were conducted in English, with a majority of non-
native English speakers should be taking into account when taking part of the interview-material.

3.4.3 DISTANCE TO THE “FIELD”

While being in Egypt I lived in Downtown, i.e. central Cairo far from the gated communities I was studying. This meant hours on the metro, in bus or taxi to reach my respondents and to visit the compounds. Besides being time consuming this also held me from doing more extensive ethnographical fieldwork at the sites. For my study, as not being ethnographic, this instead gave me possibilities to see more of Cairo which is where the gated communities and discourses I am studying should be placed. Also, living right next to the Interior Ministry and a few blocks from the Tahrir Square placed me right beside the battlefield of the new protests in November 2012. When in my room working on the essay, the sound of traffic reached me, reminding me of the crowdedness and the pollution that the people moving to gated desert areas are trying to avoid. Also, the sound from the protesters (and the repression against them) made me aware of the city seen as a political and violent risk of riots and uprisings.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 GATED COMMUNITIES AS PART OF THE ACCUMULATION PROCESS

A gated community is a place made up by commodities. Villas, apartments, shops, food courts, services and security are all central in the creation of these sometimes called “integrated” communities (TMG Holding 2009a; Emaar Misr 2011c). Everything you need should be in one place, just around the corner. In a way, the whole community itself becomes a commodity (Fahmi & Sutton 2008, p. 280; e.g. Almatarneh 2013). Agencies marketing property in gated communities also argue that they not only sell units, but a whole community or a lifestyle (see Khaled, chap. 6). I argue that a gated community in itself, offering services and a way of life, is being sold and bought as a commodity. I also argue that this correlate to theories of the neoliberal city and the commodification of urban space – the transformation of the desert into flourishing blocks of luxury housing is a way to brand and sell spaces of the city in an aim to attract flows of capital (and people with capital) (Denis 2006, p. 61). In what follows I will explain how gated communities can be conceptualized as a place and a commodity with imagined use-values and fictitious capital.
Gated communities are embedded in a certain mode of accumulation. This mode of accumulation embeds both consumption and production. The consumption and production cannot be separated as “[the] production creates the material for consumption, dictates also the manner or mode of consumption, at the same time as it provides the motive for consumption through the creation of new social wants and needs” as well as “consumption also provides the motive of production through the representation of idealized human desires as specific human wants and needs” (Harvey 2006, p. 80; cf. Marx 1973 [1857], p. 98-100). Here I want to emphasize something Huber chooses to call “imagined use-value” (Huber 2009, p. 476). Not only understanding the use-value as the mere use of a commodity, for example a house being a shelter, I see also use-value as deeper meanings and narratives embedded in the commodity, creating a desire to consume; ensuring the circulation of commodities and also a certain spatial urban formation (Harvey 2006, p. 5-9). This means that the use-values tied to a certain commodity ensures not only the consumption but also the production of it, thus a deeper understanding of these meanings is needed to grasp the dialectic relation between consumption and production.

Being a commodified space also brings the gated community in the midst of in another part of the accumulation process, in the process not of producing value but in the distribution of value e.g. realizing profit through ground-rent (henceforth rent) (Harvey 2012; Harvey 2006, pp. 331, 367; Marx 1973 [1857], p. 95). A place has a price, rent, that is partly constituted by the possibility to realize profit from value produced elsewhere. It is in relation to this that the place and the land should be seen as a commodity; the conditions of the land is not ‘by nature given’ but created through social relations and transformations of nature that also commodifies it. By changing the place e.g. by constructing and producing buildings on it – the rent also changes (Harvey 2006, pp. 336-37). That is; the price of a house (being a commodity) is partly a manifestation of the rent, but also a manifestation of the production of the building.

Through investments in the land it becomes fictitious capital, meaning that the investor hopes for a certain development to bring profit (Harvey 2006, pp. 347, 266). This expected value creates a potential land rent i.e. a rent gap. One way to close the rent gap, and to realize the potential rent, is to build something as a way to ensure “the highest and best uses” of the place (Harvey 2006, pp. 368, 367-62). To build a gated community and to invest there, I argue, is a way both to create and fill the rent gap.

Here a gated community as place and commodity brings with it an imagined use-value, certain meanings are being tied to the place and the commodity (cf. Almatarneh, pp. 2, 9). A gated community thus becomes fictitious capital in the search by investors to secure a future profit. The imagined use-values embracing a place (imaginatively) ensure a realization of both consumption and profit – tying together the circulation of commodities and value. To further describe and understand how these imagined use-values and the fictitious capital are being

---

5 I here leave out a discussion about the commodity circulation and the value theory, see further Huber 2012, 2009 and Harvey 2006
6 See Huber 2009 for a discussion about the imagined use-value of gasoline and its role for both the exchange value and “the American way of life”, suburbanization and so on.
7 Here see the useful study of Eric Clark (1987) for a discussion about rent gap and urban change. For a discussion about different sorts of rents and their application in an urban environment see Harvey 2006, chap. 11 and 2009 (Social justice and the city).
manifested I want to use the Gramscian and Foucauldian-inspired concept of a cultural politics of life.

4.2 NEOLIBERAL CULTURAL POLITICS OF LIFE

4.2.1 DEPARTURES AND DEFINITIONS: “LIFE”

I have chosen to take my inspiration from Matthew T. Huber’s notion of a cultural politics of life formulated through Gramscian-Foucauldian theories in his article *Refined Politics* (2012). In this article he uses this approach to understand a neoliberal way of life commonly known as “the American way of life”, for which oil is central; he argues that petroleum products give life to neoliberal forms of common sense (Huber 2012, p. 298). I want to discuss how the materialization of gated communities stands in a dialectical relation to the (re)production of neoliberal forms of common sense, described by Huber as a cultural politics of “life”:

“The cultural politics of life focusses on how wider narrative make normative claims about particular modes of living as a universal model. The materiality and cultural politics of life always invokes historically specific forms of spatial practice entangled with normative visions of what constitutes ‘the good life’.” (Huber 2012, pp. 298-99)

The concept of “life” is theoretical embedded in “the real-life process” (Marx & Engels 1945-1946, p. 61) situated “as the central object of historical materialist inquiry” (Huber 2012, p. 298; cf. Huber 2009, pp. 466, 469, 471). The cultural politics of life is both drawn from the Gramscian concept of common sense/good sense and good life as well as the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics. This has in recent debate been combined with Marx’s critique of capital, for example by Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri (Huber 2012). Within the context of gated communities I want to discuss how their material manifestation in the city can be understood through the concept of the neoliberal cultural politics of life. Before that, I will in what follows go through my Gramscian-Foucauldian approach.

4.2.1 HEGEMONY

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1930) describes the domination of the bourgeoisie over the working class in the capitalist society using the concept of hegemony (Anderson 1976, p. 20^8) Hegemony is built up by both consent and coercion, exercised through the political society, i.e. the state, and the civil society (Hoare

^8 For the history of the concept see Anderson 1976, pp. 15-18.
& Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 248). *Consent* is created within the popular masses by domination of a group over the social life. The dominant group is given its powers by its position within the production. The state legally uses its *coercive* power to discipline those who do not consent (Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 145). The power relations in society are normalized through consent and also ensured by the lines drawn by the repressive powers of the state.

The relation between the civil society and the state is partly mediated through the state’s ideological functions, such as education, law and “public opinion” (Anderson 1976, p. 31), used to formulate and generalize a cultural and moral level throughout society. The cultural and moral level parallels “the forces of production and [---] the interests of the dominant class” (Anderson 1976, p. 31). The material reality of the workplace and the need for a certain model of accumulation are not separated from the cultural consent or the repressive coercion, instead they are inseparable from “a specific mode of living and thinking and feeling life” (Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 597) The control of morality also controls the way the work get done (Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 597), or in my case, how the consumption gets done and how the city develops.

The common sense and the cultural politics of life

The consent constitutes what Gramsci calls the *common sense*, meaning the unconscious way of understanding and seeing the world (Hoare & Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 625). The common sense is the collective understanding and socializing of the present; meaning it is a historical product. It is therefore not permanent or rigid, but transformative and always reformulating ordinary life. The common sense or the “good sense” is “the most widespread conception of life and of man” (Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 630), but it can also differ from the diverse social groups within society (Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 630). Consent and the common sense create the way of being or living, and also the cultural politics of life.

Here consent, the common sense and the making of hegemony creates a new human, or a new cultural politics of life, suitable to the changes within the “productive process” (Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 572; Hoare & Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 559). In this the consumption also takes place, you become what you buy, and also how you live. The social life and its reproduction, visible in e.g. trends and fashion, are symbolic and material manifestations of consent, common sense and hegemony (Gramsci [1971] 1999, “673). Gramsci makes these conceptualizations in the context of Americanism and Fordism. My aim is to discuss the cultural politics of life and hegemonic formulations within the discourses of gated communities as part of the neoliberal urban development (being seen as a mode of accumulation) of Cairo. The imagined use-values are here a sort of cultural politics of life, where a narrative of good life is created. How and what it includes is what I will study.

In conclusion, hegemony can be seen as a lived process or a “lived system of meanings and values” (Williams 1977, p. 110 cited by Huber 2012, p. 298); “On the one hand, the geographies of life itself must be materially produced out of particular relations with energy – relations with food, heating fuel, transportation fuel, and so on. On the other hand, these historically sedimented and energized
geographies themselves produce a particular cultural politics of ‘life.’” (Huber 2012, p. 298). In the case of gated communities they compose the physical structure (buildings, parks and people) that are geographies of life. These geographies also produce a certain type of cultural politics of life. By focusing on the cultural politics of life light can be shed on the daily practices reproducing the symbolic as well as the material reality (Huber 2012, p. 298-99, Anderson 1976, p. 20-33).

4.2.1 BIOPOLITICS OF LIFE

Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism 1978-79 contribute with a micro-perspective on the cultural politics of life above described through the macro-structural use of the concept of hegemony. In The birth of biopolitics Foucault outlines biopolitics as "the attempt, starting from the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race...” (Foucault 2008, p. 317). The social body of a neoliberal society governed by competition and the biopolitics, is conceptualized through the enterprise form (Foucault 2008, p. 148-49). The enterprise form is created by the possibility for the individual to its “own” private space, such as the suburb, the house or the car. The enterprise form and the own private space is formulated through what Röstuw (as a part of the German neoliberalism explained by Foucault) saw as ”vitalpolitik”, or translated; politics of life. This politics of life produces a culture coinciding with the logic of the market. To avoid the feeling of alienation, created by the generalization of the enterprise form, anchor points through which we can find meaning are shaped through the politics of life (Huber 2012, pp. 300-01; Foucault 2008, pp. 242-43). The politics of life, the anchor points, hence is what correlates with the notion of hegemony and common sense – also this politics of life takes part in the formulation of narratives of e.g. the good life.

When seeing the society through the basic unit of the enterprise the role of private property is essential, not only in the economic domain but also in the social domain. To own your house illustrates this; “[c]onstructing a social fabric in which precisely the basic unity would have the form of an enterprise, for what is private property if not an enterprise? What is a house if not at enterprise?” (Foucault 2008, p. 148). Here the enterprise form, and the “own life”, is the generalization of the market in domains not primary economic; “[i]t is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, into what could be called the formative power of society” (Foucault 2008, p. 148). The enterprise thus means that the generalization of the market becomes the formative power of society, and is essential for the construction of the social fabric.

*Governmentality and economic man*
The "own" life (re)produces the neoliberal subject. People’s choice (of housing for example) makes up the substratum for the entrepreneurial logic and subjectivity, where one produces one’s own life. “Economic man”, becomes here the person that is left alone, to act on the market (i.e. in the society) (Foucault 2008, p. 267-279). What Foucault calls governmentality makes in this way the solitary human in the neoliberal state responsible for both poverty and illness.

Through the concept governmentality the government is not seen as an institution but as “the activity that consists in governing people's conduct within the framework of, and using the instrument, of the state” (Foucault 2008, p. 318). Lemke (2001, p. 1) describes this notion of governmentality as a theoretical and analytical way to understand the modern state and those power techniques and forms of knowledge embedded in it. Here, neoliberalism is not seen as an ideology or an economic reality but as a political project trying to create a reality it claims already exists. The idea of the market reproduces the market – creating the generalization of the market logic (Lemke 2001, p. 13; Foucault 2008, pp. 143-47). This is relevant when discussing how Cairo and gated communities there are parts of a neoliberal urban development, creating what it claims already exist. This correlates with the notion of hegemony, and the neutralization of a narrative described as a neoliberal cultural politics of life – which will be summed up in what follows.

4.3 CONCLUDING: THE GRAMSCIAN-FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH

This Gramscian-Foucauldian approach makes up the notion of the neoliberal cultural politics of life. The neoliberal the cultural politics of life will help me understand how imagined use-values are constituted in relation to gated communities as being a placed commodity. I want to show how the discourses of a cultural politics of life not only aim to sell a certain commodity and realize rent but also work as a regulatory scheme in the urban fabric – this understood in relation to the neo liberal urban development of Cairo. By telling a story about a city-living excluding the majority of the city boundaries are being drawn not only on the maps of the city or by the gates – but also in the story of the whole city. Thus are these imaginative boundaries necessary to shed light on, also to begin to grasp the complex relations between this mental perception and the material manifestations of the urban. Now follows my two analyzes chapters, where I will discuss the material from the signature brochure and the interviews. I use the theories outlined above to work through my material.
5. ANALYSIS OF MIVIDA’S SIGNATURE BROCHURE

In this chapter the first part of the analysis follows: the discourse analysis of Mivida’s signature brochure (Emaar Misr 2011d). This analysis will answer the first question of my study; within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt, can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated within a signature brochure produced by a real estate developer? I will describe the brochure and thereafter follows the analysis, first through my Foucauldian micro-perspective and then through my Gramscian macro-perspective. Subchapters are decided both through the theories and the material of the brochure. They constitute analytic boundaries that often overlap — a concluding subchapter seeks to overbridge these boundaries. This analysis will show how the developer Emaar Misr presents its project.

5.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Introduced by the title “Mivida, where life comes together” every spread have its own heading (in total eleven), some with sub-headings and illustrations. The brochure begins stating, under the heading Where life comes together, how “you” (the reader) is the inspiration and benchmark for the planning of Mivida. Under the heading Urban lifestyle and suburban living perfectly combined the reader finds a summary of the place and its closeness to other places such as the airport, what services are available as well as its natural harmony. A picture shows laughing young women and men around a living-room table. You deserve the perfect home and the perfect setting for it is at Mivida describes the residences and districts, picturing three children together with what are presumably their grandparents in a garden. Under the heading Master plan the suburban lifestyle is described next to a picture of the compound from above. Enhanced wellbeing and tranquility are what you’ll discover at Mivida is followed by a summary of the community, retail and healthcare services, picturing laughing women with shopping bags at a café. The education services are described under They say children are the future, that’s why Mivida promises the perfect start in life, pictured with children studying in the green grass. The compound’s hospitality; the offering of a hotel and its business park are described next to a picture of laughing women and men at a restaurant, under the rubric A balanced life, where work and leisure are seamlessly integrated, awaits you at Mivida. After that a seductive narrative about the day-to-day life in Mivida, under the heading A more convenient, well rounded lifestyle the one you strive for is what you’ll find at Mivida, is pictured with children, women and men consorting around a barbeque outdoors. Under the heading Inspiring aesthetics are brought to you through renowned architecture styles follows a description of the Italian/Mediterranean and Arabian-influenced architecture, picturing the residences. Moving into the residence a picture of a living-room is shown under the heading A premier lifestyle, world class facilities and perfectly-finished homes are brought to you in the shape of Mivida, telling about the “fully-fitted homes” Mivida delivers. The
last spread is a “letter” from the developer; *Emaar: from us to you*, introducing itself. Like in the beginning the final message now states urging; *Discover Mivida – where life comes together*. This description leads me to the analysis of the brochure.

5.2 BIOPOLITICS OF LIFE

I will here discuss if the Foucauldian perspective is present in the brochure. Can the enterprise form – as a generalization of the logic of the market into other domains (e.g. “home”) – be found in the description of Mivida?

I want to remind the reader about the theoretical context. I see neoliberalism as a political project (e.g. Lemke 2001, p. 13; Huber 2012, p. 299), reproducing itself through all domains within society (e.g. Foucault 2008, p. 148). Gated communities can be seen as a part of that neoliberal development, being a privatized space made up by property-units (e.g. Harvey 1989, p. 3). The property units (and Mivida itself as a commodity) need to be bought for the realization of profit – the discourses and meanings surrounding Mivida thus is a way to secure this consumption and realization (Harvey 2006, pp. 5-9, 367). By creating a neoliberal subject through the meanings of *choice, life* and *choice of life* this cyclic movement may continue. I will now turn to the brochure to seek the answers.

5.1.1 THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

In the description of Mivida the future residents are in focus; their demands, preferences and tastes are manifested in the new place. This correlates to the enterprise form as constituting the privatized living space – the individual’s own space. Through this is the neoliberal subject constituted (e.g. Huber 2012, pp. 300-01; Foucault 2008, pp. 242-43, 247, 318). The following excerpts illuminate this: “[y]ou are an individual with unique preferences” and: “[w]e took your tastes into account and created your new life within a vibrant, integrated community” and; “[h]ealthcare: You demand the best for your family”, and lastly; “[y]ou insist upon world-class facilities, the finest teachers, the latest --- assured by the knowledge that they are receiving the highest quality private education.”

The quotes illustrate that what “you demand”, “prefer” and “your taste” have become a focus for the production of a place and its units. Indeed, it is “a place where every facet of your life is considered”. Your life becomes a product, but the developer also claims that you from the beginning (by having demands, preferences and tastes) are part of the creation of the community – *you* are the inspiration; Mivida “drew inspiration from you”. The focus is on the individual (‘s choice) and this is what creates and produces life; you choose your new life, it being a commodity. With the ability to choose some alternative parts of the
construction you are also involved in the production of this product of life. This is shown in the following excerpt: “[y]our home at Mivida is created in a way that you can start your new life from the moment you arrive: it’s a fully finished product. --- You even have the option to have built-in wardrobes as well as kitchen cabinetry.” Every facet of life; “home” and “community”, are here constituted as the individuals own privatized living space. The individual (as an economic actor) chooses and produces her/his own life – accordingly is the neoliberal subject constituted (cf. Foucault 2008) I will now move on to discuss the enterprise form more generally.

5.1.2 GENERALIZATION OF THE ENTERPRISE FORM

The notion of the enterprise form means that the concept of competition is not only present in economic activities but also in other non-economic domains, all parts of life falls under the logic of the market, also the home (Foucault 2008, pp. 148, 242-43). The developer Emaar Misr describes its work as follows:

> From an intangible nothing to a tangible something, creating is a journey that we undertake with relish. We do not build houses; we build homes. We do not build projects; we build communities. And when we build communities, we know that we’re building them for you.

More and deeper meanings are ascribed to what Emaar Misr produces. The excerpt states that Emaar Misr builds “homes” and “communities”, not only houses and projects. This shows how the economic activity and production hold embedded meanings; “home” and “community”. These not necessarily economic domains therefore become included in an economic logic. This illustrates how the developer’s way of describing its project not only sees the person living there as an economic agent, but the “home” also becomes commodified.

Emaar Misr not only produces “home” and “community” but also “life”. Following excerpts illustrate how the meaning of life is formulated. Emaar Misr states: “[w]e created a life that comes together – we created Mivida”, they take every “aspect of your life”, to create your home. In this way, when you buy a property in Mivida, you do not only buy a home but a whole life, a fully integrated lifestyle; “[y]ou’ll find a contemporary yet stylish business park close to home --- all created with your need for full functionality in mind. --- You’ll be able to integrate your working and home life – seamlessly.” Thus your home becomes a life and a lifestyle calculated, developed and sold as a commodity – the enterprise form is generalized.
5.1.3 OUTRO

The focus on the individual and its uniqueness can be seen as placed within a neoliberal discourse. This is not a story about a common effort for a collective living – it is a story about “choices”, taste and an individualistic effort and urge to live a certain way. The subject is expected to want and to buy not only a house and home, but a community and a lifestyle – Mivida becomes your own lived property (cf. Foucault 2008, pp. 148, 318). The lifestyle, constituted through the private property, falls within the enterprise form. A person’s privately owned living space within Mivida becomes a lucid example of the enterprise form within the neoliberal society. I argue also that a politics of life produces the essence of Mivida; balanced, natural, “where life comes together” – being anchor points of meaning within a society where competition is generalized (cf. Huber 2012, pp. 300-01; Foucault 2008, pp. 242-03).

5.3 HEGEMONY

With a chilled, soft drink in hand, you admire the magnificent sunset. Life seems just a little simpler and sweeter, as the beauty of nature and the colours of Mivida make you realize that your life is filled with vibrancy and balance.

With the excerpt above I want to emphasize the mediated feeling in the brochure. Before I discuss this I again want to illuminate the theories. I here use my Gramscian perspective to answer my first research question. My theoretical departure is the creation of common sense; the way to see the world, and hegemony; how the common sense becomes a lived process securing the interests of a certain class. These “interests” are here broadly defined as the way of this class to secure its position within society. Part of this is consent; the silent agreement of common sense, constituting hegemony. This can be understood as a neutralization of the class interest; a life only available for the few becomes the dream of life for many (Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 31, 145, 572, 597; and Hoare & Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 625, 559).

The commonsensical meanings of Mivida, understood as imagined use-value and fictitious capital, are a way to ensure a specific mode of accumulation and to seal a rent gap (e.g. Harvey 1989, 2006; Anderson 1976, p. 31; Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 597). I will now analyze how narratives of the good life are present in the brochure.
5.3.1 THE NARRATIVE OF THE GOOD LIFE

I will start with excerpts illustrating the life in Mivida. I here want to understand how common sense about a good life is formulated. This will illustrate a neutralization of the meanings of the good life – the interpretations given to us are the only ones possible. Positive adjectives such as “free” and “perfectly combined” are tied to the descriptions. Mivida is described as: “[y]ou imagine clean air, invigorating open spaces, pedestrian walkways and urban trails: the kind of plays where children run free and neighbours enjoy chats”, and: “[u]rban lifestyle and suburban living perfectly combined”. Following excerpts also contend that the “life you love” is to be found in Mivida:

Mivida is a superlatively planned, all-encompassing integrated development that compels you to live the life you love. Mivida was designed with your lifestyle requirements as a priority: it’s where harmonious living comes naturally.

It is the “optimum living” that is presented in the brochure: “…Mivida has it all”, “the model of living”, “an overall lifestyle”, and “walkways, greenery and safe spaces”. “Emaar living” tries to construct common sense about what life should be, and states that this life is to be found in Mivida. Looking back to the initial excerpt of this chapter the descriptions are loaded with adjectives relating to claims about a “simpler” and “sweeter” life, “filled with vibrancy and balance”. And this life is “unlike any other”, thus hindering other interpretations of life to be valid. In line with this logic the characteristics of Mivida have been neutralized. Often the world “life” is exchanged for the word “urban”, and consequently this also is a narrative about the good urban (or suburban).

While describing this suburban lifestyle something else glimpses: “Mivida uniquely combines the serenity of the suburban lifestyle that you seek with the diversity and eclecticism of the urban life you are not willing to compromise on”. This quote, together with: “unlike any other” and “a location that offers more to your lifestyle than anywhere else” shows that Mivida is created in relation to other places. Hence, the good life and the good urban are formulated in relation to other places. Maybe where the “safe space” cannot be found, and where you have to “compromise” on the “eclecticism of urban life”. Maybe this is the uniqueness of the place; that it cannot be found anywhere else. Boundaries are drawn, and this is a political act (Blakely & Snyder 1997, p. 1). Therefore follows now a discussion about who is going to live in Mivida, a discussion correlating with the class-aspect within the concept of hegemony.

5.3.2 THE RIGHT RESIDENT

Hegemony understood as a neutralization of a certain class interests (Anderson 1976, p. 31; Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 145, 597) can be found in the brochure. By referring to international standards in the description of homes, facilities and education I argue this is being done. Descriptions such as “world-class facilities”,...
“highest private education” and “the world’s finest brands --- for Cairo’s worldly shoppers” are used. In the same way as the descriptions above are neutralized, these services are also neutralized (cf. Huber 2012, pp. 298-99). But, it is an expensive standard, only available for a certain socio-economic strata, thus this is about class.

When describing Mivida, wealthy places are put in relation to each other. Emaar Misr, as an international developer, emphasizes other of its projects; such as “the tallest tower in the world, the Burj Dubai”. The persons living in these places are put in relation to each other, thus becomes the resident in Mivida a neighbor to someone living in Dubai, or at least similar to others who are partakers of the "highest quality private education”. This is not unique in the case of gated communities in Cairo. Denis (2006, p. 50) illustrates how gated communities become a place for “trans-metropolitan elite”, a global elite that is bound together in a space of wealth where places such as Mivida can be found (cf. Baeten 2012).

The trans-metropolitan wealthy life can be seen in the pictures (see Appendix II), here you find children, women and men laughing; living the good life. The environments and consumption of drinks and food depicts the wealthy class. They are part of the following scenery: “[i]maginative architecture and outstanding design comes in form of an eclectic mix of architectural elements inspired by an array of fascinating places – Santa Barbara (see Appendix III) being just one of them.” Here a “hybrid, globalized Americano-Mediterranean lifestyle” (Denis 2006, p. 49), can be seen within the mix of “Italian/Mediterranean and Arabian-influenced styles” – also correlating with Mivida being part of a trans-metropolitan elite i.e. as a hegemonic neutralization of class interests. The description also states that people living there are similar to each other: “Mivida is a place where neighbours instinctively get to know one another and form positive, lasting relationships they can truly cherish” and; “neighbours you can relate to”. The quotes illustrate what has been argued above; that a certain socioeconomic strata is included in Mivida, and thus are the meanings of life ascribed to Mivida also ascribed to a certain class.

5.3.3 OUTRO

I have argued that the good life is described as common sense, meaning that it is seen as something natural i.e. not contested. Also, this common sense is created in relation to a certain class. This shows that my Gramscian perspective can be applied to the description of Mivida. But this only concerns the formulation of common sense, the claim for validity. It does not examine if consent or hegemony is created; if the narrative of the good life is seen as valid by those reading the brochure. This will be more examined in the following analytic-chapter. First I will conclude this chapter.
5.4 CONCLUSION OF THE BROCHURE ANALYSIS

Within the brochure I find a neoliberal cultural politics of life. Home, community and lifestyle become a form of property you can buy, and that you are expected to buy – constituting both the neoliberal subject and the lived geography through a generalization of the enterprise form. As well are certain characteristics tied to Mivida, the good life is supposedly to be found there – thus are the meanings ascribed to Mivida also neutralized as the only valid description of the good life. Equally, Mivida is put in relation to other places of wealth, as well as to the people living in these places. A certain type of resident is expected to live in Mivida. This coincides with the notion of hegemony; understood as commonsense being normalized class-notions. Here a place with an embedded neoliberal cultural politics of life relates to a certain class – with the capital wanted for the competitiveness of cities worldwide (see Harvey 1989). This helps me answer my first research question; within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt, can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated within a signature brochure produced by a real estate developer? The answer is that a commonsensical neoliberal cultural politics of life can be interpreted within the discourses in the signature brochure. Now follows an analysis to answer my second research question.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Mivida and Al Rehab can be understood as being both commodities with use-values tied to them making consumers want to purchase them, as well as places with fictitious capital deciding the wants for e.g. investors to invest there (e.g. Fahmi & Sutton 200, p. 280; Huber 2009, p. 476; Harvey 2006, pp. 5-9, 367). This is the theoretical substratum for a understanding of the neoliberal cultural politics of life, outlined through my Gramscian-Foucauldian approach. In following quote the notion of the place, also being a commodity can be read:

When we sell Rehab, --- we tell people we don’t sell units, we sell lifestyle, this is the concept. I don’t sell like apartments or square meter I sell you the whole project. I sell the clean streets, I sell you the surfaces around you, I sell you the concept itself, nothing else, so this is how we sell it. (Khaled, real estate agent)

I will in this chapter answer the second question of my study; can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated by actors within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt? My analysis will follow in subchapters based of my theoretical framework as well as by my material. I will here move from my Foucauldian micro-perspective to my Gramscian macro-perspective. The subchapters here as well construct analytic boundaries, boundaries that in reality are not drawn. E.g. some excerpts could be understood through both the Foucauldian and Gramscian perspectives, but are only discussed
through one of them. I will in the last and concluding chapter try to overcome some of the boundaries to see the links binding together the neoliberal cultural politics of life.

6.1 BIOPOLITICS OF LIFE

I will here discuss if the enterprise form, as a reproduction and production of the logic of the market, can be found in the meanings constituting Mivida and Al Rehab. I have three sections for this discussion, hoping that in a clear way illustrate how the neoliberal subject is discursively put to life.

6.1.1 THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT: CHOOSING LIFE

Foucault describes a politics of life coinciding with the logic of the market. Thus the logic of the market is generalized into other domains – this is partly done through the enterprise form; the form through which the own private space, home or life is fulfilled (e.g. Foucault 2008, pp. 148-49, 242-43). I will here discuss the material from following perspectives; firstly that it is seen as a choice (to buy a home there and so on) constituting the resident as a co-producer/economic agent. Secondly, that what the resident chooses likewise falls under the logic of the market.

To live in Al Rehab or Mivida is often seen as a choice of life. As Noha (resident) expresses it: “it’s a lifestyle at the end of the day. You chose what you really like to do, you want to stay in a calm place with no traffic no crowd --- then you stay inside Rehab for weeks, for months”. Life, as something constituted through choices, correlates to the notion of economic man as responsible for its own situation – it is through the choices of life that the privatized living space is fulfilled. The future resident not only chooses the place, but also the design of the home. The buyer becomes the co-creator and thus in that way also produces the place. The buyer not only buys a home but the possibility to decide the design of it; to create it:

In terms of the villas we have different styles; we have like Santa Barbara style which is what you might find in California maybe. We have Arab style, which is like, they use like more Arabic influences, and then you have Tuscan style which is more Mediterranean. So, you can pick which style you want --- almost. You can do what you want to a certain extent; you have [a] choice. --- You have further selection items where you can chose what type of marble [for] your kitchen table tops. --- If you like a wooden pergola deck, you can chose, there are small variations to make it your own space, but essentially it’s the same shell. The fasad will be how you want to do it, or the interior will be how you want to do it. So it up to you what you want. (Kashif, cost ingineer)
The developer opens up for the possibilities to choose, but this is also paid for by the buyer: “We don’t really build until the unit is sold, so part of the expenditure come from the owner of the house himself” (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr). Once again it is shown how the buyer produces its own home:

This is Mivida, the deliver will be half finished so it will be finished on the outside but half-finished from inside. If you want to buy a property you buy it and you will do your finishing from inside the property. --- You just buy the units and do extra finishing by yourself. (Asmaa, real estate marketing)

You do not only finance and choose a villa or apartment, you choose a home. A home filled with meanings. You get something more than the unit to live in e.g. certain advantages: “they have security 24/7, they are very secure. --- That is why you find people who can pay and sacrifices paying a lot to get these advantages” (Asmaa, real estate marketing). Khaled (real estate agent) exemplifies this in the case of Al Rehab. Not only does one buy square meters, but access to the world of Al Rehab: “sometimes they have even bigger houses outside, so the price in Rehab it’s of course more expensive and they sacrifice the big place and they come here and get like a smaller area, but they just want to get in Rehab.” Here, the characteristics of the places become, as Dania expresses it, the selling edges. That what is ascribed to the places is what sells them: “the selling edge of Mivida and the marketing positioning of the project is that it is a truly green community and environmentally friendly and ecofriendly” (Dania, marketing group Emaar Misr). Also other advantages are ascribed to Mivida as a “destination” that you never have to leave:

Destination means that you have everything you need within the gated community. You don’t need to go out, there is [a] hospital, there is a business park. So, people will be working there, they will be getting medical attention there, they will be eating there. --- Doing basically more or less anything that you want to do, you don’t need to go out of the gated community. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

This destination holds a certain meaning, or a status that the resident has to pay for:

They pay for the name, first of all for the name of Emaar. They pay for the trust and the credibility --- and this --- has a price, you know. They pay for the facilities, for the location that we have picked, for the master planning that is done in a very smart way, the design of the homes. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

The quotes illustrate how the buyer becomes an economic agent, with the possibility (i.e. money) to buy the own home. The buyer in a way produces the home – partly by choosing the designing details of the home and by investing in a building not fully finished. The excerpts further illustrate how your choice is a choice of life, that gives you access to a destination that holds a certain status.

---

9 This green framing of Mivida can be explained through Hajer’s analysis about environmentalism, claiming that the ecologic modernization, as part of a sustainability discourse, correlates with the neoliberal project (Hajer 1995, p. 102).
This exemplifies how “life” and “home” are constituted through the logic of the market – by being bought and produced by the buyer, and by being commodified as the “advantages” you pay for. This correlates with Foucault’s notion of politics of life and the enterprise form.

Below will a discussion about how purchasing a home becomes economic rational follow.

6.1.2 THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT: ECONOMIC MAN

I will demonstrate how buying a unit in Mivida or Al Rehab is seen as an investment. This coincides with Foucault’s notion of biopolitics, where an economic rationality reproduces the neoliberal subject (e.g. Foucault 2008, pp. 267-279). In following excerpts this is shown: “[t]here are a lot of apartments that are still empty, owned by people so they invest by doing rentals” (Dina, resident), and: “[s]ometimes they buy an investment, so they buy one unit for themselves and then another unit to sell --- because in real estate as you start building, the house becomes more expensive” (Dania, marketing group Emaar Misr). This correlates with the concept of the enterprise form as a basic unit in a society governed by competition (Foucault 2008, pp. 148-49). One does not only buy a home, it is also a future income. The resident not only becomes someone with a home as a place to live, but an economic agent acting on the market (i.e. real estate market). You calculate, and also reflect on how this can be an investment in relation to the political situation in the country:

I think the way that the current political situation is, the instability with the local currency, it makes sense to put your money in like bricks in a house, because it retains its value. If you have like a ton of note underneath your bag in a suitcase I mean --- like the value of the Egyptian pounds and dollar fluctuates so what you have now can be worth half that like the next day or the next week... But I mean if you have like bricks and mortar and like something intangible --- it’s much less likely to go down in value, especially something which is high in demand like Mivida. (Kashif, cost engineer)

The enterprise from is generalized into non-economic domains. To buy a home is not only about the home, it becomes something that is expected to bring profit in the future, thus becoming fictitious capital (e.g. Harvey 2006, pp. 347, 266). As seeing real estate property as investment is common in Egypt, this is not surprising to find (Sims 2010, p. 167), still the excerpts can be put in relation to my theories. I will now move on to a discussion about gated communities’ relation to the state and government, and how the developer in a way becomes the government.
Gated communities can be seen as an alternative to the state, this follows Foucault’s notion of governmentality where the individual i.e. economic man is responsible for ones’ own situation (Foucault 2008, p. 318). The homeowner purchases a home in a certain environment suitable for her/his needs and wants – making sure she/he gets what is needed. The idea of the market here (re)produces itself (cf. Lemke 2001, p. 13) when a developer, a private enterprise, creates a gated living space, thus functions as a state. It can be seen in following excerpt:

In some respects maybe they trust Emaar to provide services more than they trust --- their own government. --- In their community they will be paying money, like a subsistence fee, when you buy a property you pay seven percent of the property’s value on top, which caters for like maintenance fees for the site. --- You pay once in the beginning, you pay it and you know this, you know that your streets will be clean, you know there won’t be garbage on the streets. --- Emaar will be your government really. If you have a, in Mivida have a problem, you go to Emaar, you won’t go to the government, so maybe it’s a way of sharing the risk. (Kashif, cost engineer)

As can be read there is a mistrust of the government, and this is solved through the privatized space where ones capital makes it possible to instead trust the developer. Also, the developers become the agents with the solution for the urban problems, which can be read in the following excerpt:

Of course if I'm the government and I find like developer like Talaat Moustafa, this area of desert and you know all this development and of course he increase the main reason to increase the prices around, create new communities around it. You have to give him for that. (Khaled, real estate agent)

The quote states that the developer TMG does something good, almost a favor when building a compound in the desert. Also, in following excerpt this is present. The developer (Emaar Misr) is willing to take a risk, and by doing so helps solving the problems of the city:

So basically the government helps the investors who are willing to take the risk and move people in to more remote areas, in order to decrease the traffic and the congestion from central Cairo. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

Here Foucault’s notion of how the market becomes the solution by being generalized within all domains is present. The state is lacking something, instead the market, in the manifestation of real estate developers, does the (good) work. This is also present in literature about gated communities seen as a privatized solution for a lacking state or government (Denis 2006, p. 50; Lemanski 2009). I will now leave my Foucauldian perspective and discuss the notion of hegemony.
6.2 HEGEMONY

I will argue that the discourses surrounding Mivida and Al Rehab becomes a claim for neutralization of a certain class’ interests. In a commonsensical way the good life becomes a solution not only for the individual (as is shown above), but also to the problems of the city (cf. Anderson 1976, p. 31; Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 630, 673; Hoare & Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 625). I will show how narratives about life and the good urban life are formulated by my respondents. Through the same line of thought, I will also show how these narratives relate to certain places and humans.

6.2.1 THE NARRATIVE OF THE GOOD LIFE

The life within the gates

My respondents have told me about the good life that can be found in Mivida and Al Rehab. I will discuss how this coincides with my Gramscian perspective; describing a commonsensical truth formulated through consent (Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 630, 673; Hoare & Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 625).

Al Rehab is described: “the place is offering values like clean, --- cleanliness, quiet easier life, convenience; these are things that the place is offering. Maybe serenity, fresh air, this is something they are offering” (Dina, resident). And:

    Well I would describe Rehab as a --- trying to make a nice place for living in the middle of the desert, that is not very far away from the city, but is far enough to make it quiet and more like fresh air and cleaner air somehow.  
    But, to me Rehab actually is considered like a really nice place to live and a quite area and everything and I do enjoy that part. (Noha, resident)

Above, words and descriptions like “cleanliness”, “easier”, “convenience”, “serenity”, and “quiet” are present when describing the compounds. A nice place is clearly something holding these characteristic. These two excerpts exemplify what which, in a commonsensical way, is ascribed to Al Rehab – this is what life is supposed to be. As have been shown before these are the selling edges, these are the meanings making the buyer wanting to buy the villa or apartment.

    With these quotes I want to show some of the characteristic ascribed to the good life. These descriptions are present in this whole analysis-chapter, not at least when describing the places in relation to other parts of Cairo, which is what will be shown in following subsection.

Looking outside, seeing other places

The value of a place is defined in relation to other places (e.g. Harvey 2006, pp. 337-41). This also is true in this case of Mivida and Al Rehab. They are contrasted
with less wealthy city-areas but are also put in a near relation to wealthy city-areas. They are in a dual relationship to other parts of Cairo, either as *not holding* the bad (e.g. crowdedness) or as *holding* what is good (e.g. greenery, reputation). The narratives of the good life in Mivida and Al Rehab as normative claims visualize other parts of the city as something negative.

Following quotes illustrate how Al Rehab, and gated communities in general, are put in a negative relation to other parts of the city: “you don’t have safety. There [are] no gated communities, you don’t have the greenery. --- It’s the whole entire lifestyle that people who live in Downtown Cairo [central area in Cairo] don’t get” (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr). And:

> I think the issue that you’re going to be living in a better place, like aiming to live in a better place in general, [be]cause Rehab is a quite area, not crowded. It [has] some greenery and things like that. It’s a new place, --- kind of reputation, like if you had said you are living in Rehab and if you are living in Shubra, I mean that gives you a different kind of reputation somehow. So I guess people intend to go for that somehow. (Noha, resident)

Above, Dania explains how the lifestyle in a gated community not is present in Downtown Cairo, while Noha says that living in Rehab brings a different (better) reputation than living in Shubra.

Following excerpt illustrates how Mivida and Al Rehab are ascribed the same characteristic as other good places:

> In terms of [North] American suburbia you have like quiet defined communities, I mean you would have like a, --- not villa type living, but you know like a large plot area for your house, for your living space, and then you would have like a community club nearby, like a sports club nearby, or a golf club nearby. --- And also the name of some of the villas they have there are Santa Barbara. So I think the idea is, I don’t know, maybe they like to aspire to like that type of living. (Kashif, cost engineer)

The lifestyle described correlates to an (North) American lifestyle. What Denis (2006, p. 49) describes as a hybrid version of an American lifestyle once again is exemplified. This type of living is further described in relation to foreigners as residents: “in New Cairo you find foreigners, a lot of foreigners, because they live like secured there. They prefer to live there in New Cairo” (Asmaa, real estate marketing). And: “you can find a lot of foreigners here I think they find something similar to the quality of life they want --- I mean they find life easier here, they find the greenery” (Dina, resident) Here, I argue, that the narrative of a good life at one level correlates to an idea of a non-Egyptian living (as has been discussed by Murphy 2011). Yet, this is also contradicted, for example is the target group of Mivida mostly Egyptians (or Egyptians living abroad) (Dania marketing team Emaar Misr), it is also stated that the compounds contain Egyptian values (Dina, resident). Lastly I want to illustrate how the compounds as a narrative of good life are argued to make the country look better:

> For people living there it makes the country or the town looks better, even if you don’t live there, even if you don’t get these advantages. But it makes your home, your country look good. You know what, I [am] talking personally, when I was there I [felt] like proud, even if I don’t live there. --- I
feel like proud, it’s good, it’s very good to find that there are luxury villas and swimming pools and gardens. It’s good, yeah, it’s better than you look too bad places or not good places. You will find that in your country now we have this kind of living and it’s good, I'm happy for it. (Asmaa, real estate marketing)

I here argued that the narrative of a good life becomes commonsensical and therefore hegemonic in its claim for legitimacy. This is shown in the depiction of the good life in Mivida and Al Rehab, a description that is put in a both positive and negative relation to other places. This correlates as well to the neoliberal city, where places are formulated to make the city or the country look good (e.g. Harvey 1989, pp. 8-10). The depicted life is an urban life; hence, the following section will discuss a narrative of the good urban.

6.2.2 THE NARRATIVE OF THE GOOD URBAN

Mivida and Al Rehab hold meanings about a good urban life. The urbanism is here defined through Westins conceptualization of the urban both as a mentality and physical reality; a socio-material field of acting (Westin 2010, p. 193). The urban as well is conceptualized as being both a product and condition of the global flows of capital, yet it is locally transformed (Harvey 1989, p. 3; cf. Chattopadhyay 2012). These perceptions sees the urban as a dialectical field of imaginative (meanings and symbols) and material manifestations. Thus, the idea of the material ‘reality’, also affects our perception of this reality. E.g. has Almatarneh noticed this correlation between “the quality of life” and “the qualities of the city” (Almatarneh 2013, p. 12) in the depiction of gated areas in Cairo. Through these lines of thoughts, the notion of hegemony and common sense will be searched for in the excerpts; is it possible to find a commonsensical narrative of the good urban? I will argue that this is possible. In the following quotes I will show how the areas are seen as good urban spaces.

Dina (resident) describes Al Rehab: “it's a better version of a town --- it's trying to hold --- the most characteristics of any town but in a --- better landscaping and relevant services, an easier life, it's an easier life.” Asmaa (real estate marketing) also describes the compounds; “it looks better because you know you have like --- luxury buildings and --- beautiful, beautiful shape for the compounds. It’s very good organized and built very good, it looks good”.

Mivida and Al Rehab are described not only as a good urbanism, but are held as examples of a solution for the problems in central Cairo, such as pollution, crowdedness and violence. In the following excerpts this is described: “I guess the main reason for people to live there is to avoid having to live in the city, with all the problems that come with it, living in the city” (Kashif, cost engineer). Khaled (real estate agent) states that Al Rehab is one of “the most successful projects in Cairo”, concerning its facilities, therefore it solves the problems:

Rehab we can describe like one of the most successful projects in Cairo, maybe in Egypt. Because the project is, you can say it’s, it has everything that any person --- wants, he needs --- like in terms of services,
entertainment, security. --- The main advantage of Rehab; it's solving all the troubles or problems you're facing outside Rehab, in Cairo especially.

Mivida is, by Dania (market group Emaar Misr), described as an “urbanizing” that “take[s] away the traffic a little bit from the central Cairo”. It is not only Al Rehab and Mivida, but all “new areas, new urban, new communities” outside Cairo that is the solution (Khaled). Asmaa (real estate marketing) also tells us about how the compounds. Besides making the city look good, they provide work opportunities; consequently they have a good impact on the city:

Now in Egypt we have this infrastructure and this high living standard of compounds because --- it makes Cairo looks like good, [Cairo] looks better than 20 years ago --- what affect us even if you don't live there, you'll be affected, because it's very. --- Work, you know what, work opportunities as I told you. They need like labor and people to work there, security guards and everything so it makes like [an] active, active cycle.

The quotes above illustrate that in relation to the urban, the narratives and meanings ascribed to the compounds as well become discursive claims of universality and neutrality. This is done while describing other parts of Cairo or other activities in Cairo as problems or troubles. This includes people; in the following excerpt explains Dania (market group Emaar Misr) how the place (the desert land turning into Mivida) has changed to something nice and that it is certain people (with visions) who will live there:

It was a yellow piece of land that has no water, no plants, nothing. And you have changed that and made that into something that is nice and livable. The reason everybody is moving to those two areas is because we are suffocating in Cairo and people who have a vision and who though in the future they knew that people cannot live in Cairo any more than that, and all of the work and all the important banks and hospitals are in Cairo. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

The life described is an urban life, and the perceptions of the urban can be understood through the theories about common sense, where Mivida and Al Rehab, are described as examples of the good urban and as solutions for the problems in Cairo. These places are valued in relation to other places, following the logic of the neoliberal city. They are as well put in relation to certain people, which brings me to the subchapter where I will discuss the class-aspect within the concept of hegemony.

6.2.3 LOCALIZING ‘THE TRANS-METROPOLITAN ELITE’

I will display how the meanings of life in Mivida and Al Rehab, described by my respondents, relate to a certain socioeconomic group; a certain class, what Denis (2006, p. 50) calls a “trans-metropolitan elite”. It will be a discussion not only about class and how people stand in relation to one another. It also will discuss Mivida and Al Rehabs relation to other places, where meanings, similar to the ones I have illuminated, can be found. Likewise, the class I search for can be
found here. The theoretical base for this discussion is hegemony understood as the common sense of a certain class. A common sense that claims to be politically and socially qualified to be transferred to other socioeconomic-strata – thus the interests of a few become the desires of many, or at least a commonsensical way to live (Anderson 1976, p. 31; Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 145, 597). I will throughout the analysis show how this relates to the neoliberal city.

Relation between places

Different geographical scales interact in the descriptions of Al Rehab and Mivida. Gated communities in Cairo are not only locally embedded but are also regionally and globally so. They are described as neoliberal privatized places that connect a “trans-metropolitan elite worldwide” (Denis 2006, p. 50). Mivida and Rehab are as well part of a city-structure that connects the elite locally. This is e.g. described by Baeten (2012) concerning the Öresundsregion in Sweden and Denmark, where a new landscape of wealth binds together certain profitable activities and people. In the case of Cairo, this is shown by Sims (2010, p. 177) describing how the Ring Road binds together New Cairo with other upscale areas (such as Maadi, Heliopolis, and Cairo Airport). The roads bring together a socioeconomic group to meet and formulate something that can be understood as a hegemonic common sense.

This discussion will show how gated communities are situated within the neoliberal city, where cities compete with each other for investors and capital (e.g. Harvey 1989). This is one of the dimensions where hegemony and also the neoliberal cultural politics of life are formulated. I argue that people move between different places with meanings, and that these meanings are present in the discourses surrounding Mivida and Al Rehab. This can be seen in the following excerpt; “myself I used to live in Dubai for 8 years and saw the hub of real estate there and I saw how they developed projects and once I got to Egypt I definitely choose Rehab as the right place to live” (Khaled, real estate agent). Khaled is not alone; though the compounds’ target group is Egyptians, some of the residents have lived a broad for a while:

The majority of our buyers are from Egypt, so almost 80 percent are Egyptians and 20 percent vary between like different either Egyptians living abroad... Like if they are working in the Gulf Area, especially they work in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and they have heard of Emaar and they have seen the Burj there – they really start trusting the company. And they buy homes for themselves, for one day return to Egypt or for the children. Like in the long term, if they want to like get married and settle at home in Egypt. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

Above, it is clear how Mivida and Al Rehab are regionally embedded and how, as Khaled says, other “hubs of real estate” are put in relation to them. This not only concerns the residents, but also the developer as is shown below:

So Emaar Misr is part of Emaar properties whose headquarters [are] in Dubai. Emaar have built the tallest building in the world --- which is Burj Dubai, the biggest mall in the world which is the Dubai mall, they’ve built a
dancing fountain in Dubai which was also -- built by the same people who did Bellagio. -- We have projects in more than eleven destinations around the world including Pakistan and Turkey, the states and India and Egypt and Syria. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

It becomes clear that Emaar Misr as being part of an international developer holds a certain glow. The destinations built by the developer, and likewise the spectacular projects such as Burj Dubai are here important, and gives Mivida its glow – hoping to bring success and future revenues (cf. Harvey 2006, pp. 347, 266). Hence are the meanings in one place transferred to another.

I further want to illuminate how a global scale in the depictions is present. The meanings about the mode of living, or the mode of owning, in the compounds are aspiring to be like in the United States. – correlating with how gated communities is a privatized space for a trans-metropolitan elite (cf. Denis 2006, p. 50):

In Egypt we, people who have money like this, like to have this, like to have two, like The States. I found this kind of living style in The States. They can buy an apartment in New York and still have a house in South Carolina or any place else. (Asmaa, real estate marketing)

This is also expressed by Kashif (cost engineer):

It’s a gated compound, catering for, like, people of a higher social economic status. Its aim, as I see it, is to provide like a standard of living which people necessarily don’t have in Egypt, a standard of living which is comparable to what you might expect in Europe or what you might expect more so in America. Like the concept -- they are going off to, is much more similar to America than Europe, these self-contained districts.

Besides these regional and global scales, a local scale is present. Mivida and Al Rehab are often put in relation to other wealthy parts of Cairo (cf. Sims 2010, p. 177):

They can go anywhere they want, for example the American University is only 5 minutes away, and then if you walk straight there [are] --- a million other compounds. They can go to different compound and visit their friends and there is anything they need. --- You can find like banks and hospitals schools clubs other clubs if you want other major like department stores, Carrefour, you know the whole sale supermarket, so basically there's alternatives for everything you have in Mivida; if you want to send your kids to a different school or different club or there is a lot of other options. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

The descriptions illustrate how upscale places are connected with each other, creating a landscape of wealth. Commonsensical meanings are transferred between places, thus formulating and constituting the space within a neoliberal urban planning. But, who are the people moving themselves between and within the local, regional and global geographical scales and places? Who lives in Mivida and Al Rehab? In the following section I will shed light on this.
Describing the residents

Following excerpts describe the target groups of the compounds and the meanings attributed to them. The residents in Al Rehab are often described as A- and B-class (Dina, resident). In Mivida the socioeconomic group is defined as A-class (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr). I asked about the meaning of these class definitions and got these answers: “A-class are basically crème de la crème of the society who make a lot of money a month compared to everyone else, and by a lot of money in Egypt that’s EGP 8000+ a month” (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr). And:

By A-class we mean like socioeconomic class, well educated, they dress well, you know. They are not like a butcher that has a lot of money, no, they are educated people that have like a futuristic plan and can tell you know this is a good investment and if they decide to sell it later on. You know so this is a class definition. (Dania, marketing team Emaar Misr)

The quotes illustrate that the definition of the A-class not only is about the income; it is about education and futuristic plans. Also other meanings are put in relation to people living in the compounds. Following excerpt states that it is important people who live in the compounds, and they are a specific category in need of the safety: “security because people pay to live life safe. You have like a category that lives in compounds, it is important people like business men, like important people. They pay much money to live secure” (Asmaa, real estate marketing).

Concluding, the excerpts above correlate to what earlier have been found; buying or renting in a compound are seen as an investment. Furthermore, buying in Mivida should be seen as an investment by the buyer, which is expected from someone in the A-class. The residents are seen as important people with a need for extra security. This illustrates how the discourses and meanings about a good life or a good urban are put in relation to a certain strata of the society; the A- and B-class, or the A-class, – correlating to hegemony as being the common sense about the good life, decided by the class-interest of those in power (e.g. Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 145; Anderson 1976, p. 31). Even if I here do not study the exact positions of the residents within the Egyptian society, the descriptions of the residents illuminate how they both are important and “the crème de la crème” within society. Therefore is it also they who are the neoliberal subjects in the hegemonic and commonsensical narratives described before, they who tell the story.

6.3 CONTRADICTIONS

I want to raise some of the contradictions and reflections expressed by my

---

10 The median household income in Egypt 2004-2005 was EGP 992 per month (Sims 2010, p. 39); approximately 147 USD.
respondents. This illustrates how the hegemonic meanings or the neoliberal cultural politics, while being (re)produced also is filled with contradictions. A discourse should not be seen as a coherent entity corresponding with reality, but instead as constantly changing. Being changeable, a discourse can also be contested (Hajer 1995, pp. 44-5, 56, 65). Some of the nuances expressed by the respondents in their feelings about the compounds will be shown. I have generalized these reflections and contradictions into two subsections, which do not reflect all the nuances from the interviews but mirrors what the most recurring contradictions were.

6.3.1 PROBLEMS WITH AND WITHIN THE GATES

Some respondents expressed concerns about the problems with and within the gated communities, e.g. concerns regarding the crowdedness or the future crowdedness:

It didn’t solve the traffic problem, this is not a solution for the traffic problem. What happen is that you extend the traffic somewhere else, because all the people in the morning, we have to all go, --- go to other places to work. --- And by the end of the day there is also a rush hour, all coming back to their living places. (Dina, resident)

Dina also expresses: “I think this area of New Cairo will become crowded very soon, I think that it will be like an extent of Cairo”. The problems the communities are expected to solve are described as present within them (in Al Rehab) or surrounding them (New Cairo). Sometimes it is expressed that the gated communities are not a solution, instead they are a problem:

It's breaking the community and it's like telling some people you are not allowed to come here, and it's creating a sense of segregation. I think it's, for the whole picture I don’t think --- it would be good socially. --- When I look at the bigger picture with all of these, because it’s becoming a trend, and all the people now are coming to the new compounds and more compounds are being built so I'm not sure what’s the result of this in the long run, but I think we are gonna be like more and more gated, and all the people outside will be the people left, left alone --- It’s gonna cause a problem sometime. (Dina, resident)

And:

Because you don’t have to interact with anyone else so you don’t see the problems in the country that you live in --- but you have a situation where one sort of people, one type of people and a certain socioeconomic group, who have no idea about the lives of people in other socioeconomic groups, they just won’t mix. (Kashif, cost engineer)

The excerpts illustrate a feeling of ambivalence, or a misbelief, to the gated communities as being a solution. They instead become the problem, excluding and
polarizing the people. Also, beyond the idyll of the nice and good life the residents experience living there as being isolated from the rest of the country. This again contests the idea of the good life inside the gates: “because it isolates you from the real space. You live in an overall country, you don’t live in just Rehab” (Noha, resident).

6.3.2 THE UNNATURAL PLACE

Even though Mivida and Al Rehab are explained as good places; lively and fulfilled, the respondents sometimes expressed that something is missing. It is expressed that Al Rehab and Mivida are places with no tradition or no heritage, that they are or will become empty:

Maybe because this is a new place and all the families here are new, --- you don’t find a lot of culture in here, or you don’t find --- a lot of heritage behind the things. It’s relatively new, maybe after 30 or 40 years we can have like a unique culture for the place maybe, I'm not sure. But I mean this is something you would feel outside in each neighborhood in Egypt. You would find its own flavors for example. (Dina, resident)

This is seen as something negative, as if something was missing:

“I think it’s kind of plastic, it’s like unreal place to live, like when I walk around the area it’s green area and everything, but I don’t feel that it’s something natural or beautiful. --- When I go walking in Downtown in the middle of the day and it’s so filled with people and everything you find a certain beauty that relates to this country and relates to the personality of the place somehow. But Rehab to me is like a place without personality yet, maybe it will develop a certain personality on the long run”. (Noha, resident)

Instead, as reflected in other quotes (above) this personality is to be found in older parts of Cairo (like Downtown) which is an area before described in negative terms.

I here find a gap between what the developers try to create and how the residents perceive their living-environment (cf. Westin 2010). I here argue that this not only reflects my respondents as thinking and feeling human beings and agents (Graham 2005, pp. 25-27), but it shows how the cultural politics of life as being a discourse with hegemonic claims, is in a complex battle with other discourses and experiences of space, life and the urban. With this in mind I will now conclude my analysis of the interviews.

6.4 CONCLUSION OF THE INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

I have discussed the interviews to answer my question; can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated by actors within the
context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt? I argue that a neoliberal cultural politics of life can be interpreted.

I have in the interviews found that the enterprise form is present; the gated communities are seen as investments, as well as a rational choice for the individual wanting to live in an upscale-area. The compounds are seen in relation to the city of Cairo as a solution and thus in a way the developers become the government providing all that is necessary to its residents. Thus, the residents become neoliberal subjects while solving both individual problems as well as collective problems through moving to, and investing in, a privatized living space; a gated communities. This follows Foucault’s notion of biopolitics, the enterprise form and governmentality (Foucault 2008, pp. 143-49, 242-43, 317-18). I have also found the narrative of the good life and the urban reflected in the interviews – characteristics, objectively positive hence neutralized, are ascribed to the life in Mivida and Al Rehab. These characteristic are sometimes put in relation to a North American or European lifestyle. The compounds, as an urban development, become a solution to the problems in Cairo, making the city and the country look better. Furthermore, I have found that these narratives only include certain people and wealthy places – correlating with common sense is a neutralization of a certain class’ interests (e.g. Anderson 1976, p. 31; Gramsci [1971] 1999, pp. 597, 630; Hoare & Smith in Gramsci [1971] 1999, p. 625) - reflecting how the trans-metropolitan elite can be found in these narratives and places (Denis 2006, p. 50). This relates to my Gramscian perspective. But, discourses meet with other storylines and experiences of the geographies of life (cf. Hajer 1995, pp. 56, 65), as have been reflected in the interviews. Problems such as crowdedness can be found within the gates, and the communities are seen as problems; polarizing and exclusionary within the urban fabric. Al Rehab is also experienced as a plastic unnatural place. Maybe it is this gap that the developers try to overcome with their commonsensical narrative about the good urban life, in their attempt to find the highest and best use of the desert land surround Cairo (cf. Harvey 2006, pp. 331, 367-72). As I have shown this narrative is also told by e.g. residents and real estate agents. The neoliberal cultural politics of life here complete the imagined use-value which are a part of the gated communities as being commodities with price and places with (futuristic and fictitious) value (Harvey 2006, pp. 347, 266) – localized on one of the neoliberal metropolises in the world.

7. REFLECTIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

I have in this essay searched for a cultural politics of life. A hegemonic claim of the commonsensical narrative of the good urban life was found. The cultural politics of life is here understood as meanings constituting the communities both as commodities and as places. These meanings become a way to ensure future revenues for the developer (or the real estate agent), but also a way to warrant a bigger accumulation process of which the whole city of Cairo is part. Cairo as a neoliberal metropolis has certain places, e.g. Mivida and Rehab that strengthens the comparative advantages of the city in relation to other metropolises. The aim
to reconstruct the city in line with this scheme can also be found in the future development plans of Cairo, such as Cairo 2050 and Egypt 712.

It is important to bear in mind that this is about people, or as been discussed in this essay; it is about class. I would not argue that all residents of Cairo think about the gated communities in the deserts outskirts of the city – they are too far away both in physical distance and mental distance. For many, the dream of life in these compounds is not even worth dreaming. That make the claims and ostentions (of good life, as a solution) made by the developers even more curious. This is why it is necessary to understand the neoliberal cultural politics of life as both formulated through a battle between discourses, and as formulated through the material class conflicts in the society; bonded in a dialectic relationship. The neoliberal cultural politics of life found in the discourses surrounding Mivida and Al Rehab, as part of the neoliberal city, is a class conflict. It is formulated for the benefits of certain groups, and it is brutally delegitimizing other forms of life-dreaming and city-making. In the same way are these both physical boundaries (through gates, ring roads, boulevards and displacements) and mental boundaries including some people (with the right capital and status) and excluding others (with less money and lower status). Thus the formulated neoliberal cultural politics of life is part of an imaginary-scheme also affecting those not invited, as well as those not even dreaming of entering.

I here want to emphasize the contestations made by my respondents. Some of them expressed criticism against these boundaries. This show how the hegemonic claim interpreted in the material also is contested. In a similar way is the neoliberal city contested, through protests and demonstrations.

This qualitative study does not generalize the conclusions made. My conclusions are only drawn from Mivida and Al Rehab. It is also their contextual relation to the city (as described above) that is discussed. Likewise are my conclusions drawn from my material, thus does the presented conclusions necessary correlate to e.g. other interpretations done by residents or real estate agents. Probably this is not the case. However, as I have mentioned before, my conclusion correlates with more extensive studies of gated communities in Cairo showing the developers emphasis on lifestyle, trying to re-shape the desires of people (Almatarneh 2013, pp. 8-9; Denis 2006). To understand the correlation between the neoliberal cultural politics of life with a more general description of gated communities in Cairo, more research needs to be implemented. Also, in relation to Mivida and Al Rehab other studies are required to fully grasp the complexity of these places. It could be meaningful to examine the interpretation of gated communities by those living (mentally and physically) far away from them as well as differences between diverse narratives of the places (e.g. formulated by residents and developers). It would also be interesting and useful with a more quantitative understanding of the flows of capital in this space of wealth. The conclusions made should also be discussed in relation to other places. For example; how is public space transformed in Sweden, and how does this relate to a neoliberal development? To further understand the boundaries drawn both mentally and physically in the urban landscape questions such as these could be posed.
8. SUMMARY

The gated communities of Cairo are perceived, through the urban visuality, as a modern and good urban development. Other parts of the city, such as the 'ashwa'iyyats, are shadowed, seen as a problem and a risk. At the same time the gated areas can be seen as a part of the problem; e.g. by contributing to the segregation of the city and the housing shortage. They must be seen in the context of Cairo, where dictums of neoliberalism and modernization (among others) have shaped the urban landscape.

I comprehended the urban both as mentality and matter, thus in this essay I try to grasp this complex relationship. The essay is concerned with the imagined meanings of life ascribed to Mivida and Al Rehab, two gated communities in the Greater Cairo Region, Egypt. My research questions are; within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt, can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated within a signature brochure produced by a real estate developer? And: can a neoliberal cultural politics of life be interpreted in the discourses formulated by actors within the context of gated communities in Cairo, Egypt?

My departure is life, conceptualized as a neoliberal cultural politics of life coinciding with a quest for why the neoliberal political project succeeded (or is succeeding) – this comes together with help from theories from Foucault and Gramsci. My purpose has been to discuss how this cultural politics of life, understood as imagined use-vales tied to the communities as commodities and as fictitious capital tied to communities as places, can be interpreted within promotional material and in interviews conducted with relevant actors. This is a qualitative attempt to grasp the (re)produced discourses constituting Mivida and Al-Rehab both as places and commodities within the neoliberal city.

I argue that the answer to my research questions is yes. Commonsensical narratives about the good life and the good urban life have been found in the material. These narratives are formulated in relation to other places. Mivida and Al Rehab are positively compared with places such as North America and Dubai as holding similar characteristics, and they are as well connected with wealthy city-areas of Cairo. Thus, local, regional, and global scales are present in the descriptions of the good life within the compounds. Likewise, Mivida and Al Rehab are described as not holding the bad characteristics as other parts of Cairo, thus they are contrasted with less wealthy city-areas. These narratives also tell about the neoliberal subject, choosing and investing in life. They tell as well about the developers; as a government, which create the solution to the problems in Cairo – in the form of privatized lived geographies. It is a privatized living-space only including some – thus are the narratives also interpreted as a neutralization of a certain class’ interest.

These narratives are by my interviewees also contested, illustrating how the discourses stand in battle with each other. The results of the study should be seen in the context of the neoliberal city, consequently are these narratives physically grounded, shaping boundaries in the urban landscape – letting the story of the few affect the realities of many.
REFERENCES


http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.asej.2012.11.003 [2013-02-10]


Colebrook, Claire. (2010). Gilles Deleuze: en introduktion, Göteborg: Korpen


November. [2012-12-5]. Partly produced by Remal Foundation.

Emaar Misr. (2011). a-e:

a: Overview Emaar Misr.

b: Emaar Misr
http://www.emaarmisr.com/ [2012-11-29]


Hopwood et al. 2012 a-b:


Murphy, J.A. (2011). The nationalist neoliberalism of your desires: the case of Egypt, Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies, Development Studies Brown University

List of Conducted Interviews
Khaled (real estate agent), 2012-12-05.
At the office of Al Rehab Homes, Al Rehab
Noha (resident.) 2012-12-20.
In the interviewees home, Al Rehab
At a café, Al Rehab
Kashif (cost engineer, at a company working for Emaar Misr). 2012-12-01.
At a café
Asmaa (real estate marketing). 2012-12-21.
At the office of Diarna Real estate.
Dania (marketing team Emaar Misr) & Shaimaa (design team Emaar Misr). 2012-12-16.
At Emaar Misr’s sales center
## APPENDIX I – INTERVIEW DESIGN

### Interview guide I for people working with the planning of MIVIDA

**Introductory explanation**

**BACKGROUND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief social/personal characteristic</th>
<th>Name, age, living, occupation, nationality, education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**DESCRIPTION GATED COMMUNITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe Mivida?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Construction & Purpose**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why build it? Financing Other agents?Politics?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Living**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you get to live in Mivida?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kind of people is going to live in the community? Egyptians?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of work do the residents have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age? People working there. Others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lifestyle**

|------------------------------------------------|

**Relation to other parts of Cairo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to get there</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The need to go/leave from there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences/Similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this kind of residential living relate to other parts of Cairo?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relations between people within Mivida. Where can these relations be found elsewhere in (1) Cairo (2) Egypt (4) The world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differences/Similarities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Urban development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does it need do succeed? Obstacles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is a good urban development? MIVIDA, part of that? Future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Interview guide for people living inside of Al-Rehab

### Introductory explanation

**BACKGROUND**

| Brief social/personal characteristic | Name, age, living, occupation, nationality, education |

**DESCRIPTION GATED COMMUNITIES**

| How would you describe Al-Rehab? |

**Moving there**

| When? From? Why? |

**Living**

| Who lives in Al-Rehab? |
| Other reasons? |
| Families? Age? Occupations? |

**Lifestyle**

| Facilities? Services? Shoppin? |

**Relation to other parts of Cairo**

| How to get there |
| The need to go/leave from there |
| Differences/Similarities |
| How does this kind of residential living relate to other parts of Cairo? |

**Community**

| Relations between people within al-Rehab. Where can these relations be found elsewhere in (1) Cairo (2) Egypt (4) The world |
| Differences/Similarities |

**Urban development**

| Natural Agents |
| What does it need do succeed? |
| Obstacles? |
| What do you think is a good urban development? Al-Rehab, part of that? |
| Future |
Interview guide for real estate agents

Introductory explanation

BACKGROUND

Brief characteristic  Name of agency, working area

DESCRIPTION

Living  Who? (Families, age, occupations, nationality, class, ethnicity)

Moving there  Anyone? Reasons? What makes it possible?


Relation to other parts of Cairo  How to get there The need to go/leave from there Differences/Similarities How does this kind of residential living relate to other parts of Cairo?

Community  Relations between people

Urban development  Natural Agents What does it need do succeed? Obstacles? Good urban development? Future
# Interview guide II for people working with the planning of MIVIDA

## Introductory explanation

### BACKGROUND

**Brief social/personal characteristic**

Name, age, living, occupation, nationality, education  
Description of Emaar Misr

**DESCRIPTION GATED COMMUNITIES**

How would you describe Mivida?

**Construction & Purpose**

Why build it?  
Financing  
Other agents?  
Politics?

**Living**

How do you get to live in Mivida?  
What kind of people is going to live in the community? Egyptians?  
What kind of work do the residents have?  
Age?  
People working there. Others.  
Facilities and Services? Green areas? School, health?  
Family, young people? Religion? Values?

**Relation to other parts of Cairo**

The need to go/leave from there  
Differences/Similarities  
How does this kind of residential living relate to other parts of Cairo?

**Community**

Relations between people within Mivida. Where can these relations be found elsewhere in (1) Cairo (2) Egypt (4) The world  
Differences/Similarities

**Security**

From what? The revolution.

**Others**

Where, why, what’s going to happened with them?

**Urban development**

Natural  
Agents  
What does it need do succeed?  
Obstacles?  
What do you think is a good urban development? MIVIDA, part of that? Future
APPENDIX II – PICTURES FROM MIVIDA’S BROCHURE

Source: Emaar Misr Mivida Signature Brochure
APPENDIX III – SANTA BARBARA STYLE

Model house of a villa, Santa Barbara Style. Photo by the writer.