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## **GATING A CITY: THE CASE OF WARSAW<sup>1</sup>**

The paper discusses the development of gated and guarded housing estates in Poland's capital, Warsaw. It contains a presentation of recent empirical findings based on a series of field research studies carried out since the 1990s in Warsaw, with a special focus on its largest residential district of Ursynów. Detailed mappings of the researched housing estates are included, which evidence their rapid spread in the district. An attempt at classifying the housing estates according to different clusters of their physical design is subsequently made. A functional analysis of their physical features is carried out against the background of a global discourse of in/security, which is considered to play a major role in the development of contemporary cities. However, several local factors, which have a bearing on gating the city of Warsaw, are also reflected upon.

Housing estates, guarded and monitored by video cameras and/or surrounded by walls (fences), frequently described in mass media, became one of more interesting topics of the scientific discourse in the last two decades. The process of the spreading of gated communities, as they are commonly called, and the development of a trans-disciplinary discourse around this social phenomenon, means that we may be dealing with a form of a social and spatial practice which needs to be recognised as an 'icon' of the society in an era of late modernity.

Sketching out the history of 'gated communities' as a social issue, Evan McKenzie reflects upon "an explosion not only in the interest in gated communities, but also in the literature addressing them in the 1990s" (MacKenzie 2006, p. 9), which was first observed in the United States of America. The US is usually indicated as the source of this already global phenomenon as well as the related scientific research and a theoretical reflection (ibid.; Blandy, Parsons, 2003). However, as Glasze, Webster, Frantz and other authors of the papers included in their publication on the gated community phenomenon in a comparative perspective (2006) prove, the North American inspirations are actually not that obvious, neither with respect to a potential 'export' of this specific spatial form, nor with respect to a theoretical/ philosophical/ social stimulus to popularise this idea. Numerous other factors, both global and local ones, must be taken into account when specific analyses of the phenomenon are conducted.

A review of the scientific literature on gated communities which has been produced so far seems to lead to the conclusion that in fact two main scientific

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared as part of cooperation between Anna Gąsior-Niemiec and the interdisciplinary research team '(Un)-Sicherheit und Stadt', of the Institutes of Geography in Mainz and Frankfurt am Mein. The team is headed by Robert Pütz and Georg Glasze. Our compliments are due to the Volkswagen Foundation which has financially supported our cooperation.

'narratives' have emerged, which aim to provide a general explanation of the causes and dynamics related to the rise and spread of this type of housing estates worldwide. Putting aside the quite frequently mentioned factor connecting the rise and spread of gated communities with certain natural human needs (cf. Lewicka, Zaborska 2007), we will reflect upon a story where the main factor is the opposition of a 'good' (i.e. efficient) market and 'not good' (i.e. inefficient) state and a story where the main thread includes an all-pervasive sense of lack of security.

According to the first of the stories, gated communities are an innovation (spatial, social, economic, political) which was created by internal dynamics of advanced capitalism, postmodernity and globalisation. They indicate the rise of new social geographies, reveal a growing aesthetisation and commodification of space, document radical shifts contemporarily brought about in the organisation of cities and social life in general, demonstrate changes in the sphere of governance (power) which simply should be expected in the age of post-Fordism and neo-liberalism (cf. Glasze, Webster, Frantz 2006).

According to the second of the stories, however, gated communities are a symptom of a major social crisis and anomie, demonstrate a decline of values, standards and rules of social life that the global success of the European (Western) civilisation was based upon. They might indicate that the societies which entered the stage of late modernity will most probably face a transition from the welfare state to the state of (Hobbesian) 'war of all against all'. In this interpretation, gated communities represent either a spatial embodiment of a risk society (Beck 2002) or another brick in the building of a carceral city, which was recognised as a dominant social and spatial organisational paradigm of the society in the age of modernity already a long time ago (cf. *ibid.*; Davis 1990; Foucault 1993, 1984).

In principle, the two stories may be regarded as complementary from the perspective of the changes which affected the cityscape of Warsaw, since they share the basic assumption that the existing spatial and social order has eroded and a new one is beginning to emerge instead. The hardly visible foundations of this new order that can be observed in the capital city of Poland are presumably a certain reflection of global transformations. It seems, however, that Warsaw is a special case, where the trends and interpretations recognised as global ones are strongly deformed by local factors (cf. Jałowicki 2006). Both the real-socialism past and an erratic course of the systemic transformation commenced in 1989 leave a strong mark on the genealogy, shape and (social and scientific) interpretation of gated communities that emerge within its limits. In other words, 'gating a city' in Warsaw should, in our opinion, be perceived as a clearly *glocal* process (cf. Bauman 1997).

Therefore, further in this paper, we reflect upon the growth of guarded and gated communities in Warsaw, taking into account both global and local factors which have a bearing on this process. The paper contains a presentation of empirical findings based on a series of field research studies carried out since

the 1990s in Warsaw, with a special focus on its largest residential district of Ursynów. Detailed mappings of the researched housing estates are included, which evidence their location and rapid spread in the district.

In order to systematise the knowledge about the phenomenon in question, we propose a typology of guarded and gated estates based on different configurations of their physical characteristics. Also, a functional analysis of their physical features is carried out against the background of a global discourse of in/security, which is presumed to play a major role in the development of contemporary cities. However, several local factors, which have a bearing on gating the city of Warsaw, are also reflected upon. These factors are in particular correlated with the course of the systemic transformation in Poland.

### 1. Gated communities as a *glocal* socio-spatial practice

Research indicates that gated communities<sup>2</sup> may be effectively discussed within the category of *glocal* phenomena (cf. Glasze, Webster, Frantz 2006; Turner 2007). Various forms of housing estates, guarded, monitored by video cameras and/or surrounded by walls (fences) can now be observed practically all over the world. In many regions of the globe, they are an integral part of globalisation driven by the market mechanisms, offering a ‘product’ advertised by an increasingly globalised real estate industry. In this context, they represent two most desired social features: security and prestige. Nevertheless, in each region where such forms of housing construction exist, a certain local colour is clearly reflected in their genesis, shape and growth dynamics.

In some areas, they reproduce traditional patterns of religious segregation (e.g. in Saudi Arabia); elsewhere they appear as innovations promoted by city planners (e.g. in Singapore), and in other places their rise is an emanation of a specific melange of ideological and economic factors (e.g. in the US). In many parts of the world, gated communities are predominantly a self-evident manifestation of a dysfunction in the rule of law (Latin America), while in others – they are embedded in a very long tradition of socio-spatial practices which were established (both physically and symbolically) to protect political and economic elites, which themselves were living in a different world than the masses they ruled (e.g. China) (cf. Glasze, Webster, Frantz 2006).

In countries defined as post-communist, including Poland, gated communities may in this sense be recognised (to a certain extent) as an element of legacy left after the communist past. In this light, contemporary gated communities reproduce patterns of a voluntary isolation from the surroundings which were characteristic of the communist and socialist *nomenklatura*. Thus, their purpose is still to ‘hide’, ‘protect’ and ‘honour’ their inhabitants vis-à-vis less privileged individuals and social groups (cf. Lentz 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> We will use the term ‘gated communities’ as a collective name for all types of housing which are perceived as *physically isolated* from their surroundings in the urban space.

As a matter of fact, the old *nomenklatura* did not disappear in many post-communist societies after 1989, and even managed to extend its privileges, especially in the economic sphere. On the other hand, a new post-communist *nomenklatura* emerged in that period, as well as an entire class of immediate, economic and symbolic beneficiaries of the post-communist systemic transformation. The latter includes in particular managers, senior officers, technical and scientific experts, or business-related professionals who created the so-called new (upper) middle class, sometimes identified with the metropolitan or creative class (cf. Wasilewski 1995; Jałowicki 2003, 2004; Raposo 2003; Florida 2005).

These classes constitute a pool of ‘natural’ candidates for residents and owners of housing units located in gated communities, especially in their present version, shaped by a globalised and cosmopolitan real estate industry<sup>3</sup> (cf. Lewicka, Zaborska 2007). An accelerated economic advancement of entire social groups emerging within the so far, flat social structure in countries such as Poland (with a simultaneous, equally rapid degradation of other social strata and groups), is related to a process of recomposition of the social status aspects (cf. Domański 2005). Beside an explicit intensification of a positive correlation between education and income, other important changes in this respect are brought about in the domain of status symbols, i.e. in a sphere where mechanisms and instruments used for symbolic and/or spatial demarcation of differences resulting from social stratification are shaped.

Thus, a new division in the social structure and especially a rapid economic polarisation of the Polish society in the period of systemic transformation are reflected in the lifestyle patterns and rules of everyday and ostentatious consumption (cf. Veblen 1971; Bourdieu 2005). Despite a tendency for individualisation of life trajectories and styles, the role of these patterns and rules is still to demark and reproduce boundaries between the reconstituting social groups and strata. The processes of demarcation of social boundaries and distances, commonly recognised as normal and typical processes for any society (cf. Newman, 2006), are particularly intensive in post-communist societies where this norm was officially denied or downplayed for many decades.

Therefore, the rapid spread of gated communities in Polish cities, especially in the capital city of Warsaw may be interpreted as a locally driven ‘exercise’ in the demarcation of social boundaries and distances by means of an ostentatious consumption of real estate products that are available in the Polish real estate market. This type of interpretation allows to better understand why representatives of the new middle class and candidates for this status make large invest-

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<sup>3</sup> Bohdan Jałowicki reflects in this context upon both the emergence of new urban (cosmopolitan) housing needs, typical for the metropolitan class and upon the chaotic colonisation of Polish cities by comprador practices. The practices, in the researcher’s opinion, are propagated in a situation of political and economic weakness of the governance structures in Polish metropolises, basically transforming them – especially Warsaw – into the Third World cities (2006; Jałowicki et al. 2003).

ments in the construction of visual, tangible and symbolic borders that housing estates of the 'gated community' type are surrounded by, and, in this way, in the demonstration of their own, voluntary isolation from the remaining social space, still perceived as 'egalitarian' one.

The hypothesis presented here is proved, among others, by a comparison of the results of a visual analysis of gated communities which demonstrates a high density of sometimes extremely sophisticated security measures, the main function of which is to deter any persons treated as outsiders or unauthorised ones from crossing these borders, with the results of the surveys in which both the present and potential residents of gated communities admit that they want to buy 'security', defining it in an inexplicit way as a certain aspect of prestige 'packaged' by a developer together with other elements of the 'quality of life', such as for example an attractive architectural design of the building, above-average internal design of an apartment, significantly increased standard of use of an apartment, availability of high quality and/or upmarket (individual and community) services, etc. (cf. Jałowicki 2004; Lewicka, Zaborska 2007).

It should be strongly emphasised, however, that despite the ambiguity of the notion, 'security' undoubtedly remains the feature by means of which gated communities are first of all 'encoded' and 'recognised' in the urban social space. Both their official name (Polish specialist literature most frequently refers to 'guarded communities') and their popular name disseminated by the mass media – 'gated communities' – confirm the significance of these rules of representation and perception.

At the same time, it should be explicitly said that both the surveys mentioned above and the analysis of the discourse of gated communities in the mass media or on the Internet prove that the definitional ambiguity of the notion of 'security' is in fact hiding its semantic transfiguration. It seems to refer not so much to security from a threat to health or life or even theft, but to security from 'contamination' through contact with the Other. While in the West, the Other is usually an immigrant, in Poland this may be a 'wino', a 'yobbo', a 'socialist relic' or an individual who simply did not achieve any economic success (cf. Mattissek 2005; Gaśsior-Niemiec 2007; Lewicka, Zaborska 2007, Turner 2007).

The contamination is comprehended here both in physical terms (for example encountering or even the very sight of a 'trespasser' who crossed the borders and broke into the 'secure space' of a gated community or a graffiti daubed on a wall of the building-behind-the-fence) as well as symbolic ones (for example a consent to/prevention of a joint play in a sand-box involving children from a gated community and children 'from the street' or from a neighbouring courtyard – if an 'open' one – by definition perceived as a 'wino-type' and/or degraded by communist anti-values (Gaśsior-Niemiec 2007; cf. McKenzie 2006:17).

Summing up, Warsaw's gated communities are undoubtedly written into the global growth of this type of socio-spatial development form. They are a product of a globalised real estate industry and an expression of an equally globalised discourse of in/security. The discourse is driven by social anxiety and sense of

uncertainty which arise in an atmosphere of global terrorism and mediatisation of crime, globalisation of diseases and epidemics and an inescapable march of neo-liberal logic, an ambivalent (non)presence of the state in many areas of social life, mass migration flows, as well as an increasingly progressing erosion of social control rules and mechanisms (cf. Beck 2002; Glasze, Pütz, Rolfes 2005; Turner 2007). In the capital of Poland, these factors are strongly reinforced and 'deformed' by the processes connected with a recomposition of the social structure which is taking place as a result of the country's systemic transformation.

## 2. Discourse of in/security in urban space

The twin issues – of security and insecurity (threat) – are emerging in debates and practices related to the urban space in many or, in fact, in all regions of the world. Ever more research is also conducted focusing, among others, on issues such as social effects of omnipresent video cameras continuously monitoring the urban space, a progressing growth of this industry which offers commercial (private) means for ensuring security, rapid growth of non-governmental organisations and public-private partnership schemes which are involved in activities aimed at collective securitisation, as well as more and more common strategies of *generation* of security through regionalisation of urban space, etc. (cf. Pütz, Glasze 2005; Turner 2007; cf. also Hettne, Söderbaum 2000).

It may be said that the issue of in/security in urban space has been developing along three trajectories, interconnected but different from one another, not only in analytical but also in organisational terms. The trajectories include: reconfiguration of public policy concerning collective security; commodification and privatisation of security as a commodity and/or a market service, and communalisation of strategies for generating secure space. Their tangible and symbolic complement includes an architectural inscribing of the 'secure/ insecure' code into urban space (cf. Ellin 1997).

However, a multidimensional, extremely intensive interest in issues of the policy, strategy and techniques of generating security in urban space – similarly to the actually existing, quite widespread *sense* of threat to security which is characteristic of many city inhabitants – cannot be explained on the basis of simple causal relationships pertaining to the growth of crime level (ibid.). Scientific research, police statistics and analyses carried out by specialist criminology centres and commercial ranking agencies connected with investment groups seem to straightforwardly question the existence of this type of correlations – in many cities which are perceived as insecure, statistics and analyses indicate that the level of crime not only did not increase but even decreased (cf. Pütz, Glasze 2005). The weakness of such cause-and-effect relationships is confirmed, also in Poland, by research conducted both by opinion poll centres, institutions responsible for collective security and by scientists (cf. e.g. CBOS 2004; Borowik 2004; KGP 2006; Gąsior-Niemiec 2007).

Many analyses point to an active role of mass media in this context, especially tabloid press, and, let us add, television – as one of the main sources of social ideas on the allegedly constantly growing wave of violence and crime in urban space (cf. Pfeiffer 2004; Pütz, Glasze 2005; Glasze, Pütz, Rolfes 2005). Research explicitly demonstrates that mass media systematically create the cause-and-effect relationships tangling up the entire social groups that by definition are presented as criminogenic. The largest number of examples was collected with respect to this issue in order to illustrate the process of criminalisation of minority ethnic groups and migrants in the countries of Western Europe (cf. Gebhardt 2001; Mattisek 2005).

This ‘constructivist’ role of mass media in the ‘spatialisation’ and ‘socialisation’ of the sense of insecurity is obviously facilitated and reinforced by the locally visible effects of global transformations – political, economic and cultural ones. ‘Fluidity’ of life trajectories, which is becoming typical not only for individuals now but for the entire social groups and local community circles, as well as an increasing ‘flexibility’ of social institutions (both the contemporary – such as institutions of the state, and the traditional ones – such as the institution of the family), clearly contribute to the sense of existential insecurity, a feeling of uprooting and the progressing disintegration of social control mechanisms.

The changes are accompanied, among others, by a visible decomposition and eradication of the regimes of symbolic demarcation of the boundaries of local space, occupied by ‘Us’. A hegemonic discourse of the borderless world and the actual porosity and permeability of political borders additionally reinforce this common feeling of a lack of being safely anchored in the social space, especially in the space of a large city.

In these conditions, the sense of a lack of security is addressed by the discourse of in/security itself, with its prevailing general strategy of increasing security through its close connection with space and production – by means of a regionalisation mechanism – of a discontinuous series of ‘secure spaces’ which, at the same time, are advertised by techniques typical of marketing, as ‘attractive’ and/or ‘prestigious’ spaces (cf. Pütz, Glasze 2005; Mattisek 2005; cf. also Gaśsior-Niemiec 2003). The practices of secure space production are connected with the establishment and institutionalisation of the entire social infrastructures of in/security (dispositives of in/security), i.e. network-based interrelated sets – players, regulations, artefacts and signs whose purpose is to ‘inscribe’ in/security into quite arbitrarily marked borders embracing certain ‘sections’ of urban space – its regions (Pütz, Glasze 2005; cf. also Foucault 1984, 1993).

Below, we present some selected results of a research project that we carried out, which involved, among others, registration and interpretation of attempts to ‘inscribe’ (embed) security into urban space by means of an entire range of artefacts and signs. The presented material is based, in particular, on an analysis of inscriptions made in the largest residential district of Warsaw – Ursynów. Given the rapid growth of its gated communities, the district begins to trans-

form itself into a maze of mini-regions, with their borders continuously marked out in space. Although the borders are determined in many different ways, one of the most emphatic ones is the use of artefacts and signs produced within the in/security infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Gated communities in Warsaw

The systemic transformation which has been taking place in Poland for nearly twenty years is visibly reflected in the space of the capital city, Warsaw. The development of the city aspiring to be ranked as one of the main (regional) metropolises in Central Europe is accompanied by radical, although to a large extent chaotic, changes in its cityscape. The changes refer, to a larger or smaller degree, to all aspects of the Warsaw cityscape. Nevertheless, it may be indicated that one of the most striking socio-spatial permutations took place in the area of housing construction.<sup>5</sup>

Grey, socialist blocks of flats tend to be replaced by modern luxury apartment buildings or entire complexes composed of residential buildings offering enhanced quality. Although the majority of the capital city's inhabitants still live in behemoths inherited from the previous system, the percentage of Varsovians who either have already taken up residence in the new generation of housing forms or have such ambitions or aspirations is growing (cf. Lewicka, Zaborska 2007). New housing complexes introduce a definitely new, albeit ambivalent, quality to the current order of the visual consumption of urban space, which is relatively undiversified. They are commonly regarded as a symptom of a significant improvement in the residential standards. However, the improvement in principle refers to a narrow, wealthier class of (permanent and temporary) inhabitants of Warsaw (cf. Jałowicki et al. 2003). From time to time, they also provide a subject for heated discussions and public debates which focus, inter alia, on the impact of this type of architecture on the shape and functioning of urban public space (Gašior-Niemiec, Glasze, Pütz 2009; cf. Jałowicki 2006).

Many of these modern buildings and building complexes are in fact residential areas which are 'turned back' and hermetically isolated from urban public space. Their spatial isolation is marked by clear borders created around them by means of numerous architectural measures, systems of signs and (textual and pictorial) symbols scattered around them and within them, as well as by means

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<sup>4</sup> Ursynów is an extremely interesting research case also due to the fact that it is systematically ranked among Warsaw's top districts regarded as attractive and safe.

<sup>5</sup> A considerable part of the empirical data used in this section of the paper comes from documents collected by Dorothea Lippok for the purpose of her dissertation, presented at the Faculty of Geography of the University of Mainz. The empirical research project and the dissertation writing process were supervised by Georg Glasze, PhD, and Professor Günter Meyer. The support of Professor Maria Lewicka, and her doctoral student Katarzyna Zaborska from the Faculty of Psychology of Warsaw University was extremely valuable during the field research in Warsaw.



of extended systems of control, supervision and surveillance which manifest themselves both in purely technical and man-operated forms.

Up to now, over two hundred housing estates of this type have been identified in Warsaw (Werth 2005; Jałowiecki 2003); subsequent ones are being finalised or constructed. In this way, entire areas of the capital city seem to transform into complicated mazes composed of such buildings, their complexes and sections of physical space surrounding them, clearly separated from their neighbourhood. At the same time, fewer and fewer open housing estates are being constructed where access is not made difficult and controlled in a sophisticated way. Ursynów, the biggest residential district located in the southern belt of the capital city, provides a striking example of this trend.<sup>6</sup>

The last phase of the field research that we conducted in mid-June 2006 resulted in a detailed topographic map of Ursynów, the content of which with respect to gated communities in question was compared with earlier topographic maps of the district prepared successively from 1990 to 2002. The topographic maps and their interpretations contained in a publication on gated communities in Warsaw issued in 2004 by Georg Glasze and Robert Pütz (2004) represented a particularly significant reference point. Thanks to this systematic and wide-ranging research, reconstruction of the history of gated communities in Ursynów was possible both in the spatial and chronological dimensions. The detailed visual documentation also facilitates the classification of many different elements of 'gating the city' in Warsaw, with a special focus on Ursynów. Based on this, a typology of guarded communities has been proposed (cf. Glasze 2001a; Glasze, Pütz 2004).

Research on Warsaw's monitored, guarded and gated communities was in certain periods conducted with a special focus on the components of the in/security infrastructure referred to in the previous part of the paper. It produced an inventory of these elements, supported by their description and the relevant photographic documentation. Some elements of the inventory and certain aspects of the description will be presented in the next part of the paper. According to an overriding logic guiding our paper, we want to emphasise that the presented elements, typologies and descriptions, as well as the related limited interpretations, should be viewed in relation to the assumption that they constitute signs of a discourse of in/security which is incorporated into the urban space of Warsaw, setting the borders of secure and insecure regions.

#### **4. Types of gated communities**

Starting from empirically observed examples, we can distinguish various types and categories of gated communities, classified according to different cri-

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<sup>6</sup> Although Ursynów is the most striking illustration of the growing tendency concerning gated communities in Warsaw's space, such processes are also very much advanced in other districts of Warsaw, such as Bemowo, Białoleka or Tarchomin (cf. Werth 2005).

teria. The genealogical criterion, highlighting the factors justifying their emergence is one of the criteria used for typologisation of these communities which were adopted as one of the earliest. Blakely and Snyder (1997:39 ff.), the most frequently quoted authors in the literature of the subject, identified the following types of gated communities based on the genealogical criterion: 'lifestyle communities', 'prestige communities', and 'security communities'. Quite a different type of classification may be proposed when physical attributes of these communities as well as features of the architectural design used for construction are adopted as the main criterion. Using these criteria, Glasze (2001a: 41) divided the entire range of 'gated communities' into gated apartment buildings – the so-called condominiums – and gated multi-building residential complexes, for which the original notion of 'gated communities' was coined. Gated communities 'proper' are subdivided into complexes of detached single-family homes, complexes of terraced houses and complexes of multi-storey apartment buildings. In practice, also mixed development types can be encountered.

In his paper on gated communities in Warsaw, Werth used a typology similar to that described above (2005:156). According to the facts that he established, condominiums are usually located in the central and most densely populated part of the city, where undeveloped plots for housing are relatively difficult to obtain. On the other hand, multi-building complexes, both composed of apartment buildings and houses, are built almost exclusively on the outskirts of the city. However, our research demonstrates that this is not an absolute regularity. The topographic maps of Ursynów present some exceptions to the rule.

#### 4.1. Condominiums located in the city centre

This category includes multi-storey apartment buildings and apartment building complexes. Housing units offered here are apartments in multi-storey buildings, designed according to a generally accepted standard or tailored to specific requirements of the future owners. Apart from private mini-spaces accommodating only the apartments, a characteristic feature of condominiums is collective ownership of the remaining usable space. According to Glasze, in this case, the creation of public enclaves within the privatised space of an estate can be observed (Glasze 2001b:169).

Larger apartment buildings are also located in the city centre; in extreme cases, they can accommodate even a few hundred housing units. Their specific structure, often simplified, with maximum functionality offered, spread vertically, composed of numerous storeys, is presumably caused by external limitations resulting from a low supply of plots for development in the city centre. U-shaped structures are quite typical of Warsaw. In this case, the 'enclosed' part of a building usually abuts directly on the street, while the 'open' part of a complex is isolated from the surroundings by protective strips of greenery, fences or walls. The solution consisting in the 'elevation' of the first floor designed for residential purposes or even the entire internal courtyard by one level is also of-

ten used, by constructing the so-called raised basement where various types of business premises are located (commercial or designed for private needs of the complex's residents), or an underground/semi-underground parking lot.

This type of physical separation of the residential part from the neighbouring and more distant surroundings, which may be defined as a vertical functional segmentation of a building, is a typical feature of Warsaw's gated communities. Where the bottom, 'isolating' segment is commercialised, it accommodates small shops, offices and service points which directly overlook (or not) the street beyond a given residential complex. Therefore, a group of tenants of such business premises can be very diversified. Next to small grocery shops, there are usually chemist's shops, mini veterinary and dental clinics, mini dry cleaner's, mobile telecommunications and Internet service outlets, travel agencies.

The floor areas of individual apartments in apartment buildings as a rule are significantly diversified, with the majority being medium-size apartments (up to 80 square metres). In many buildings, the apartment's floor area tends to increase together with the floor level in a building, i.e. the smallest apartments are located at the lower floors. The top floors are usually occupied by the largest apartments, often in the form of penthouses. The same rule applies to prices, i.e. the price of an apartment always depends on its location on a given floor.

This results from a number of clearly specified factors, such as a nicer view from the window, more sunlight, greater comfort of living due to a larger distance from the city noise, etc. A thesis may also be proposed that there is a hidden factor related to a larger overall distance both from the common area of the condominium and from the city itself. This type of spatial arrangement apparently results in the actual diversification of the allegedly homogenous population of the residential complexes in demographic and economic terms, despite the above-mentioned gentrification tendency (cf. Jałowicki et al. 2004).<sup>7</sup>

Apartment buildings tend to differ from residential buildings located within complexes by a significantly smaller number of storeys, bigger floor area of individual apartments and a bigger number of split-level apartments. Layout and infrastructure facilities in apartments are also more frequently customised, as early as at the design or construction phases, offering adjustments to satisfy the requirements of the future owner. Buildings of this type are often built as infill constructions, squeezed in between the existing older buildings in the city.

This is sometimes done while flagrantly breaching the interests of the residents of the neighbouring tenement houses when, for example, a new building is erected in a part of the existing internal 'courtyard' of a quarter. Apartments in

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<sup>7</sup> Lentz (2006) rightly points out that an apartment in a multi-storey building is not perceived as an indication of a low social and economic status in post-communist countries, unlike in Western countries (cf. also Borowik 2005). It is worth adding that, using arguments from Internet forums on the issue of gated communities in Poland, Polish multi-storey and crowded apartment buildings and condominiums may in fact be treated as a slightly more comfortable and nicer version of traditional tower blocks. This argument seems to be especially pertinent with respect to Ursynów where new quarters do resemble conglomerates of such mini tower blocks (prefabricated housing zones).

such infill buildings in the city centre reach very high prices and, consequently, it may be assumed that the population of these apartments is significantly more homogenous, at least in economic terms. It is worth adding that the present and prospective residents of new residential buildings of this type explicitly express their expectations about a high level of demographic and economic homogeneity of the 'communities' that inhabit them (Gašior-Niemiec 2007).<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.2. Individualised housing estates on the outskirts of the city

Estates of this type are divided into complexes of terraced houses and quarters of single-family or two-family houses. In this case, private houses, most often with adjacent small strips of greenery (gardens adjoining a house) constitute housing units. Small terraced houses are a less expensive alternative to private detached houses. Despite their standardised architectural form, external elements such as the driveway or the garden, belonging only to a given terraced house, give a feeling of at least some privacy and individuality. Streets within such estates are usually collectively owned by the residents.

As already mentioned, such estates are usually constructed on the outskirts of the city. In Warsaw, however, they can be found in rather untypical locations, both in districts located very close to the centre (e.g. Saska Kępa) and in districts located between the centre and the outskirts, such as Ursynów. The structure and arrangement of these Polish estates sometimes resemble the 'original' North American gated communities. However, they are not their identical copies. They differ from their prototypes by having a significantly poorer 'community' entertainment and leisure infrastructure. It is not standard in a Polish estate of this type to offer a swimming pool, a horse riding school, a fitness centre, etc., which are usually available in North and South America (Glasze 2003:86).

### 5. Security infrastructure in gated communities

Gated communities differ from other housing estates by the type and intensity of their physical demarcation from their surroundings. Ostentatious, multi-aspect isolation from a generally accessible urban space becomes their main distinguishing feature. Thus, they become private and/or semi-private spaces with clearly marked borders, accompanied by firm rules of access and protected by complex systems of artefacts, signs and control systems.

This demarcation is mostly achieved by an appropriate design of the building façade and the form, layout and configuration of the elements of their surrounding neighbourhood, especially protection elements such as strips of tall (or 'thorny') greenery, perimeters (fences, wire fences, walls) and gates. We have already mentioned a measure typical of Warsaw, such as the vertical functional

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<sup>8</sup> Caldeira mentions similar expectations or even demands in the case of his research in Latin America (2000:258 ff).

segmentation of buildings, which results in the ‘functionally’ justified elevation of the first storey designed for apartments and, consequently, its separation from the surrounding neighbourhood (common, semi-private or public space).

As far as elements of ‘gatedness’ are concerned, they may be either already ‘inscribed’ in the design or added to the building later (cf. Wehrheim 2002:175).<sup>9</sup> In the southern part of Ursynów, newly built housing estates and complexes are generally equipped with an extended system of security infrastructure components already at the designing phase. Access to them is often controlled by a new generation of ‘protection measures’, such as an electronic key (chip card) or an electronic lock activated by an individualised code. The standard includes tall perimeter fences made of metal bars or panels or (less frequently) wood, and gates lockable with a key or a padlock by the residents themselves, caretakers or security guards.

A visual strengthening of the physical demarcation of these residential structures is effected by a full range of artefacts and signs which are placed along the borders. In addition to chains, barriers and poles making it difficult to approach the borders of a site, ‘no admittance’ signs for vehicles and/or people and ‘no trespassing’ boards are often displayed. Ritual warning formulas, which emphasise the private status of the space isolated from its surroundings, are quite commonplace.

Thus, the borders of the privatised zone of an estate are written into the visual regime which encompasses the entire neighbourhood. Visual symbols and verbal signs in a way anticipate and reinforce the impact of the ‘proper’ (‘hard’) security infrastructure, i.e. fences, gates, security guards, etc. Additionally, numerous boards, posters and billboards fixed on or close to the perimeter fences, advertising security companies, produce an overall effect of reinforcing the in/security infrastructure itself. Such a view is characteristic of the entire Warsaw and particularly frequent in Ursynów.

From a psychological point of view, this visual demonstration of the prevalence and easy availability of the professional infrastructure used to control, supervise and protect may serve a double purpose (obviously apart from its ‘intrinsic’ function, i.e. advertising services of specific companies). Firstly, it may additionally discourage or deter potential trespassers. Secondly, it may contribute to the sense of security of the estate residents. However, in reality it may also provoke an opposite reaction if the signs demonstrating a widespread presence and availability of a professional security infrastructure are interpreted as an indication of the low security level of this space.

Maintenance of both the borders and the internal space of gated communities in a condition of active, socio-spatial isolation is ensured by extended technical and ‘human’ security measures. In the case of Ursynów, numerous estates

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Gating’ of old communities – prefabricated housing zones is also an increasingly popular phenomenon in Warsaw (more on the subject among others in Gaśsior-Niemiec, Glasze, Pütz 2009).

of this type are equipped not only with the above-mentioned gates, operated mechanically, automatically or electronically by the residents themselves or by a dedicated caretaker/security guard who may additionally be authorised by the housing community or a security company to check the identity of persons crossing the estate gate, which is normally reserved for the police. They are equally often equipped with alarm systems, automatic or operated by a security guard and/or the residents, strategically situated spot lights (sometimes revolving ones), systems of video cameras installed both along the physical borders of the estate and inside the estate (also in the buildings).

The staff epitomising and operating such an estate security infrastructure works in a 24-hour system, a night system or a patrol system. In the 24-hour system, the personnel includes for example caretakers, doormen, security guards and/or local equivalents of hotel concierges. In the night system, there usually are caretakers and guards who may also make use of guard dogs. This solution is most usually applied where caretakers and security guards perform their duties 'on foot', walking round the guarded space rather than watching from guardhouses/duty rooms.

Apart from the daily and 24-hour formula of guarding, Warsaw estates also use services of security patrols and intervention patrols which appear at the premises of a given estate in accordance with the frequency specified in the service contract or on call (in the case of an emergency). It is worth noticing that this type of security services is a literal copy of the operational pattern of the public city guards; it is, however, considered to be more effective. In this case, effectiveness is ensured both by competition among the service providers and – presumably first of all – by provisions of the contract concluded by the housing community's management board with a security company. In the case of non-performance and/or losses incurred by the community of residents, the security company may be subject to an adequate financial penalty. It is noticeable that security services in Ursynów are provided by a few large companies.

## 6. Demarcation of gated communities: typology

Not all estates in Warsaw that we have classified as 'gated' ones are equally separated from the urban public space as their borders and interiors are also 'marked' and 'protected' to varying degrees. In a nutshell, in order to highlight the differences in the degree of demarcation observed in Poland's capital city, based on the 'stocktaking' done as part of a field research project, we propose to tentatively distinguish three categories of gated communities. The categories differ in terms of their degree and type of physical isolation from the surrounding neighbourhoods and the type of governance exercised over the security infrastructure in a given estate.

- **Type 1:** includes the estates which are isolated and guarded in the least visible and ostensible way. There are two features distinguishing these estates from ordinary open estates. Firstly, they are physically separated from the

surroundings by a gate and/or another type of a perimeter fence. Secondly, access to the estates is controlled by the residents themselves by technical means such as a padlock or an electronic lock. These elements can guarantee a considerable degree of privacy to residents of these estates, at the same time leaving the actual control over administration of the borders of the space occupied by them in their own hands. Additionally, they simply provide a less expensive alternative to more extended and professionalised elements of security infrastructure.

- **Type 2:** includes the residential complexes which, apart from their physical separation from the surroundings and a lockable gate, are equipped with additional, medium-class demarcation elements. They may include, for example, video cameras installed at the entrance or a caretaker employed during the day to maintain order. Another possibility includes mobile patrols dispatched by a security company, based on a contract with the estate management board, with a pre-defined frequency to control the estate's security condition and/or its technical protection facilities.
- **Type 3:** includes the most isolated and guarded housing estates. In addition to a multi-dimensional physical demarcation (greenery, fence, barriers, external and internal gates, wide external pavement, a strip of 'no-man's land' outside the fence, vertical segmentation, etc.), the characteristic feature of these estates includes the presence of an extended security infrastructure. Instead of a part-time or mobile supervision, security teams composed of many persons operate outside and inside the premises. They use modern equipment to detect and deter 'trespassers'. They are also responsible for maintaining order inside the housing community. In this case, an issue relating not only to a high level of protection of the estate from the inside and from the outside, but also to an actual *loss* of control over security by the estate residents may be discussed.

## 7. Spatial distribution of gated communities in Ursynów

Ursynów, situated in the south of the area occupied by Warsaw, has become the biggest residential district of Warsaw<sup>10</sup> as a consequence of its huge spatial expansion in the 1970s and 1980s and as a result of a large-scale industrialised housing programme. In the 1970s and 1980s, a large number of standard, multi-storey residential buildings were erected and populated, creating in particular the present tower block estates, or 'prefabricated housing zones', of the so-called Wysoki Ursynów [High-rise Ursynów]. After a relatively short downturn in the trade cycle, already in the first years of the systemic transformation, both cooperative and private investors began to express their interest in a further develop-

<sup>10</sup> The present population of the district of Ursynów is approximately 130,000 ([www.ursynow.waw.pl](http://www.ursynow.waw.pl)).

ment of the housing resources in Ursynów, as well as in renovation and upgrading of the existing resources.

Despite the permanently underdeveloped service infrastructure and a large distance from the city centre, the mid-1990s already saw the second investment boom in the housing industry in Ursynów (cf. Fig. 1). An additional, huge stimulus reinforcing this trend could be observed at the time of launching the Metro line servicing the connection with the city centre in 1995, which significantly 'reduced' the distance between Ursynów and central Warsaw. Since the mid-1990s, we can speak of a prevalence of guarded and gated buildings, estates and complexes over buildings, estates and complexes constructed in the open system. Thus, as mentioned before, some parts of the district resemble a maze created by the perimeter fences of smaller and bigger residential enclaves, isolated from one another and from the surrounding public space which is reduced to strips of greenery and thoroughfares of various statuses – from municipal roads to 'nobody's' paths with trodden shortcuts between walls and fences.

The growth of these housing estates and complexes proceeded as a double-track process in the 1990s and after the year 2000. At first, plots of land available along the main street of Ursynów were developed with estates composed of multi-storey buildings. The characteristic features of these estates include, among others, an enclosed internal courtyard and commercial premises (shops and service points) on the ground floor of the buildings, producing an effect of the elevation of residential storeys and resulting in a vertical functional segmentation of the buildings. In the second phase of the investment boom, investors reached for plots of land available in the formerly developed central part of the district. They also started an expansion towards the district borders, almost approaching the Kabaty Forest boundaries. In the latter case, low apartment blocks and, first of all, quarters of terraced houses were built at the beginning.

As time went on and space resources available for housing purposes started to shrink, the above-mentioned type of buildings began to spread in the eastern and southern direction where the resources were significantly larger. In addition to investors' 'hunting' for building plots available under a programme aimed to complete the development in the older part of the district, investors started to systematically acquire plots in areas devoid of infrastructure. Thus, numerous quasi-apartment buildings were erected, as well as few quarters of terraced houses in the area of a relatively narrow, approximately two kilometre long strip of land in the eastern part of Ursynów. Almost all estates constructed there can be classified under type 2 or 3, according to the categories of gated community demarcation presented above.

Nevertheless, already in the second part of the 1990s, the housing construction began to expand in the direction of the southern borders of the district. As these areas had been used only for agricultural purposes, the investors were aware of a total lack of any infrastructure there. It was mainly the new Metro line that 'opened' that area for investors and helped to overcome their lack of



enthusiasm for plots with no technical infrastructure. The boom which began at that time has in fact been lasting until now.



Figure 1. Gated communities in Ursynów, Warsaw 2006.

Data sources:

Topographic Map of Poland 1 : 10,000: Warsaw – Górný Mokotów, N-34-139-A-c-3 (2002)

Topographic Map of Poland 1 : 10,000: Warsaw – Ursynów, N-34-139-C-a-1 (2002)

Topographic Map of Poland 1 : 10,000: Warsaw – Natolin, N-34-139-C-a-2 (2002)

Topographic Map 1 : 25,000: Warsaw – City Map, N-34-139-A-c (1990)

Topographic Map 1 : 25,000: Warsaw – City Map, N-34-139-C-a (1990)

However, buildings are being constructed here again within a very narrow strip of land. In consequence, the tendency that we have described in relation to designing 'infill buildings' in Śródmieście and other densely developed districts, is prevailing. Thus, many relatively high residential buildings are erected within an enclosed structure and a very clear vertical segmentation. They represent all three types of the classification of gated communities that we have identified above. An area 'appropriated' by individual housing estates and complexes grows as the distance from the main street increases. There are also small quarters of detached single-family houses, very clearly separated from the surroundings, located at the very borders in this part of the district. All the complexes here are surrounded by walls or other types of fencing and are equipped with extended supervision, control and security systems.

The development completion programmes in the central part of the district were continued also between 2002 and 2006. Their implementation involved both the extension of the housing estates and complexes existing there as well as the design and construction of new quarters and their parts. At present, numerous subsequent residential projects are being carried out in the entire area of Ursynów, with a large part of them situated at the district's borders. There are still substantial reserves of building plots available. Nevertheless, it seems that a lack of detailed plans concerning the extension of the Metro line in the direction towards the southern borders of the district as well as potential extension of nature conservation projects (with a particular focus on the 'Kabaty Forest' nature reserve) may define the limits for any further expansion of these housing estates in Ursynów.

## **8. Gating the city – summary**

Gated and guarded communities are no longer an exception in the Warsaw cityscape. Instead, they became its permanent element in the second half of the 1990s and after the year 2000. They are present and continue to grow both in the central districts of the city and on its outskirts. During this period, some of Warsaw's districts went through a real boom in the housing construction industry. Ursynów, which used to be the city's 'sleeping zone', was certainly one of these districts. The Ursynów investment boom definitely owes a lot to the opening of the Metro line which significantly shortened the time needed to commute to the centre and considerably improved the comfort of commuters. Many investors were attracted also by other factors, which included a relatively large availability of plots suitable for housing purposes. Another very important factor was the natural beauty of the surroundings with vast green areas.

The three factors caused an increased influx of investors and launched some marketing strategies targeting a new group of buyers of the housing industry products. Campaigns advertising new estates in Ursynów put more and more emphasis on the high standard of the housing fabric, attractiveness of the location and, with time, they increasingly focused on the components of security

infrastructure as one of the prerequisites for ‘enjoying’ the apartment’s high quality and the attractiveness of its location.

The marketing strategies also highlighted an attractive and growing homogeneity of the district in terms of the demographic and economic features of its residents. They emphasised a model resident of new Ursynów apartments and estates as a young, well-educated person with a high income, whose needs cannot be satisfied by bleak tower blocks from the socialist era. In this way, the ideal resident, promoted more or less openly in the developers’ advertising materials, was an additional ‘attractor’, targeting subsequent representatives of the new middle class to the guarded and gated communities in Ursynów, which were popping up like mushrooms.

Research on Ursynów’s – and Warsaw’s – enclosed, monitored, guarded and gated communities demonstrates that elements of the in/security infrastructure are present there on a large scale. Their multi-level and multi-dimensional inscription in space has a very strong effect of the ‘city-gatedness’ in Warsaw. The architectural configuration, design of buildings and their surrounding neighbourhood, their segmentation, numerous artefacts and signs of ‘enclosure’ eventually result in the disintegration of the city space as a specific urban, social and cultural integrity. In extreme cases, the ‘city’ is replaced by a maze of privatised or quasi-private mini-spaces and thoroughfares of various statuses, as demonstrated by some quarters of Ursynów.

Consequently, it can be proposed that what is being observed in this case is *de facto* an extension of enclave-like luxury ‘sleeping zones’ and a better quality of high-rise estates but not that of the city (cf. Jałowiecki 2006). Moreover, as a result, the visual regime of the city tends to be oversaturated with signs which focus the attention of its inhabitants, tourists or visiting businessmen first of all on in/security as the dominating attribute of its space. Thus, the global discourse of in/security becomes permanently anchored in the local space, being slowly internalised and naturalised. It overwhelms other discourses, especially those developing around the issue of the ‘quality of life’. To a large extent, it conceals local political, social and economic conditions (weakness of the governance structures, new configurations in the social structure, transfigurations of the status symbols, intensive exercises in defining boundaries between social groups, etc.).

The facts we have established so far clearly reflect this process. They also facilitate the comparison of data on the Polish version of gated communities with the data and interpretation presented in the literature of the subject. Therefore, we can state that an analysis of the social genesis of Warsaw’s gated communities seems to be in line with the conclusions reached for instance by Nogala (2000:73), who described voluntary spatial isolation in gated communities as a feature of polarised societies dominated by neo-liberal logic reinforced by the globalisation effect – in this case most comprehensively represented by the ‘real estate industry’ and the discourse of in/security.

Inscribing gated communities as a socio-spatial practice into the discourse of the 'quality of life', explicit identification and the economic, social and cultural characteristics (cf. Jałowiecki et al. 2004; Lewicka, Zaborska 2007) of their clientele – the Polish new (upper) middle class also reveal symptoms of a strong impact of the global trends. They bring to mind a slightly delayed and strongly locally disfigured echo of the 'post-materialistic revolution' (Inglehart 1997), as well as an effect of cosmopolitisation, connected first of all with the global mobility of transnational capital and the people it employs.

The process of establishing the Polish metropolitan class, described by Jałowiecki, with its typical lifestyles, defined by such features as individualism, privacy and exclusiveness (Jałowiecki 2004; cf. Florida 2005), is of a similar nature. In this context, it is easier to comprehend not only the common ('natural') consent of the Warsaw inhabitants to the gating and closing of its space (i.e. its regionalisation into secure and insecure zones), as well as the vagueness of the notion of 'security' itself, put up 'for sale' as part of a high-standard-apartment package (cf. Lewicka, Zaborska 2007).

The facts we have established make it also possible to conclude that in this case the issue is not the simple and one-sided 'colonisation' of the real estate market and model lifestyles by global discourses and practices. Gated communities in a Polish city are a *glocal* phenomenon *par excellence*, with a strong local colour. The rapid emergence and fast economic success of the new middle class in a country such as Poland (similarly to other post-communist countries) has led to a strong emphasis (much stronger than in the West) on social boundary-drawing, breaking the heretofore flat social structure. The efforts to make the boundaries visible also in the sphere of status symbols seem to be extremely intensive. Thus, the demand for gated communities may be treated as a pattern of ostentatious consumption serving this very purpose, spatialising the boundaries of social groups.

Although many researchers maintain on the basis of surveys that the main incentive which motivates people to reside in gated communities is the threat/insecurity factor (e.g. Lewicka, Zaborska 2007; Wehrhahn 2003), it seems that this slightly exaggerated assertion should be commented on and/or corrected, also taking into account other analytical data and tools focusing, among others, on the semantics of signs in space and discourse analysis (cf. Mattisek 2005; Gašior-Niemiec, Glasze, Pütz 2009; cf. also Raposo 2003; Lentz 2006; McKenzie 2006). In the case of Warsaw, extensive, sophisticated, fanciful and often very expensive elements of the in/security infrastructure as well as control and supervision regimes seem to almost equally serve to ensure protection against crime and institutionalisation of the desirable social order, at least on a local mini-scale.

The institutionalisation of this order is arbitrary and expensive; it seems maintainable to residents of gated communities (in a double sense: social and economic) only inside the walls of an enclave isolated from the outer urban space. This outer urban space is subject to stigmatisation as a region of chaos

and social anomie. Gating the city is expected to offer protection against the invasion of the elements of the former egalitarian space, which are no longer fitting into the demarcation logic of the new positions in the social structure, into the enclaved heterotopias (cf. Foucault 1967; Gaśsior-Niemiec, Glasze, Pütz 2009; cf. also Nawratek 2005).

It has to be borne in mind, however, that the production of this type of 'privatopias' (cf. McKenzie 2006) is carried out using the principles which question the very nature of the city as a dynamic, heterogeneous space, which is open for a meeting with the Other (cf. Simmel 2006). Privatopias operate in enclaves which have been separated from the fabric of the city and designed in minute detail, not only in architectural and functional terms, but also social ones, and are strictly supervised and controlled. They create an environment that the frightening Other, the contemporary *flaneur*, has no access to.<sup>11</sup>

When analysing other local variations of the trend to 'gate the city', Legnaro (1997) and Raposo (2003) openly claim that the new middle classes use in/security infrastructures and spatial segregation strategies to separate themselves from the confrontation with poverty, and to dissociate themselves from any participation in the satisfaction of many universal needs relating to everyday life in the society, also including separation from the very real need to increase the level of security. Such elites frequently externalise the undesirable and negative aspects of this segregation to the detriment of this 'egalitarian' outer space, as is proved by social conflicts which break out over the use of access roads, parking lots and pavements in the immediate vicinity of gated enclaves or the adjacent green areas.

As we can see, the causes which underlie the sudden and rapid growth of monitored, guarded and gated communities in Warsaw are complex, both global and local. They are closely connected with political, economic and cultural permutations which are taking place, at a varied pace and in a non-uniform shape, both in the global and local orders. The unfinished (never-ending?) systemic transformation and the accompanying social change certainly make some parameters of these permutations in Polish cities more poignant.

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<sup>11</sup> In this interpretation, attention should be paid to the extent to which this type of the 'fear of the Other' locally deforms the very idea of a cosmopolitan and tolerant metropolitan/creative class (cf. Florida 2005). In a similar context, Brian S. Turner reflects upon a 'new xenophobia' (2007).

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