

DOMINIKA VERGARA POLANSKA  
Södertörn University, Sweden

## **Gated Housing as a Reflection of Public-Private Divide: on the Popularity of Gated Communities in Poland**

*Abstract:* The aim of this article is to present explanatory set of factors to the popularity of gated housing in the Polish context. The explanation focuses on the divide between the public and the private sphere and encompasses economic, cultural and institutional explanations to the gating phenomenon. The empirical material consists of interviews, discourse analysis, a questionnaire, official reports and data, and legal regulation analysis. The Polish example display that both the remnants from the past and the contemporary ideals can be derived to the public-private divide. This divide has played a central role in the negotiations on urban space, the role of housing, and the identities and activities connected to housing and spatial issues since 1989. It is argued that the introduction of market economy followed by socio-economic inequalities, has resulted in specific forms of creative strategies for individual actions among Poles and to the popularity of gated housing.

*Keywords:* gated communities, post-socialist societies, Poland, housing, public-private divide, individualism

### **Introduction**

Poland is an interesting case to examine in regard to the number and the expansion of gated housing in Europe. Gated forms of housing in Poland have spread throughout the country in a quite short period of time, since mid 1990s, and the capital alone is estimated to hold as many as 200 to 400 gated communities (Werth 2005, Jałowicki & Łukowski 2007, Lewicka & Zaborska 2007). Even cities like Gdańsk (Polanska 2011), Wrocław (Kajdanek 2009) and Łódź (Tobiasz-Lis 2011) have had their shares of the gated housing and probably more cities if we trust the national media reports (Płock, Bydgoszcz, Białystok, Gdynia, Katowice, Kraków, Radom, Poznań, and Olsztyn), but the field is still under-researched. The spread of gated housing has been massive in Poland and researchers argue that a cultural change has been taking place where gated communities gain popularity and are sold by real estate developers with safety as central marketing strategy (Gądecki & Smigiel 2009).

The aim of this article is to present an explanatory set of factors to the popularity of gated housing in the Polish context. The explanation focuses on the divide between the public and the private sphere and encompasses economic, cultural and institutional explanations to the gating phenomenon. The research questions posed in the article are: — How is the housing market and current housing situation affecting the emergence and spread of gated housing in the country?

- What role do cultural and institutional explanations play for the emergence and spread of gating?
- Why is it important to separate the public and the private sphere when studying the phenomenon of gating in the Polish context?

The conclusions drawn in the article are grounded in the empirical material gathered between 2006 and 2010. The material consists among others of: nine interviews with people living in gated communities, two interviews with civil servants working with spatial planning issues, a questionnaire with 86 inhabitants of gated housing, an analysis of discourse on gated communities in 50 newspaper articles (published in 2003–2008), a study of statistical data and official reports on housing issues (development plans, statistical yearbooks, etc) and an analysis of the legislation on housing and spatial issues (and more specifically 15 legal acts on the regulation of housing and spatial issues) (for a more detailed presentation of the empirical material see Polanska 2011).

The article begins with a presentation of previous research on the topic of gated communities worldwide and in Poland and proceeds with a description of the Polish housing market and current housing situation. It continues with presenting the cultural and institutional explanations to the spread of gated housing in Poland and examines the institutional conditions in the country in relation to a special form of individualism that is closely connected to specific preferences in the field of housing. At last the public-private divide is discussed together with its connection to the gating phenomenon in the Polish context.

### **Previous Research**

Gated housing have been identified on almost every continent since the mid-1990s, and its increase, forms and attractiveness have been examined by researchers coming from, among others, geography, sociology, architecture, anthropology, economics and environmental psychology. North American urban researchers were the very first to elucidate the phenomenon of gating (see, for instance, Blakely & Snyder 1997; Low 2001; McKenzie 1994). They set the agenda and gave the phenomenon a definition, emphasizing the public restriction to the housing area secured by fences, walls and gates that, to some degree, include common resources available only to the residents (Blakely & Snyder 1997: 2). Since the now classical study of Blakely and Snyder “Fortress America: Gated communities in the United States” a significant number of literature has been produced on the topic of gated communities all over the world covering, for instance, Brazil (Caldeira 1996), South Africa (Jürgens & Landman 2007), China (Wu, 2005), Lebanon and Saudi Arabia (Glasze & Alkhayyal 2002), Australia (Burke & Sebaly 2001), and Canada (Townshend 2002). Literature on gated housing in West-European countries is also numerous since the end of 1990s and England is pointed out as the leading country in Western Europe to have the highest number of gated communities (Atkinson *et al.* 2004). The gating phenomenon was first observed in this part of Europe in the late 1980s and 1990s when it spread

along the coasts of Spain, France and Portugal to the bigger cities of these countries (Atkinson & Flint 2004; Glasze *et al.* 2006; Webster *et al.* 2002). In 2003 a group of British researchers published a report that systematically examined existent studies on gated communities in order to understand the phenomenon's popularity in the UK (Blandy *et al.* 2003). The report concludes that North American and English studies are outnumbering the field of gated communities' studies and unfortunately no studies of post-socialist countries are included in the report. In the beginning of the 2000s there are nevertheless academic studies of gated communities dropping in gradually from post-socialist countries, such as Bulgaria (Stoyanov & Frantz 2006, Hirt & Stanilov 2007), Russia (Blinnikov *et al.* 2006, Lentz 2006), Hungary (Bodnar 2001, Cséfalvay 2009), Romania (Negura 2009), Czech republic (Brabec & Sykora 2009), Lithuania (Krupickaite & Pociūtė 2009) and Poland, the country of interest here (see below for references).

The research field on gated housing in Poland is understudied and the official statistics on the expansion of the phenomenon is lacking. There is however a number of studies addressing the phenomenon to be mentioned. A lot of them concentrate on the sprawl of gated communities in the capital city, Warsaw, but there are some concerning other Polish cities like Gdańsk, Wrocław and Łódź (Polanska 2010a, 2010b, 2011, Kajdanek 2009, Tobiasz-Lis 2011).

Focusing on Warsaw we find one of the very first examinations of gated housing in the city done by Werth (2005) who appreciated the number of such developments to 200 and looked for its origins in the economic globalization, social polarization, weak urban planning and capital influx from abroad. We also find Chabowski (2007) who on the basis of gated housing in the capital city developed typologies concerning the forms, degree of closure and temporality of gated communities distinguishing a) gated communities close to other gated communities, b) housing fenced shortly after construction, c) fenced villa neighborhoods, d) fenced apartment buildings, e) secluded "island-neighborhoods," f) housing to be fenced soon. Owczarek (2007) on the other hand have on the basis of a questionnaire found that inhabitants of gated communities in Warsaw hold high education and high cultural capital together with relatively high incomes, but lack networks and frequent contacts with their neighbors. Zaborska's (2007) research concerns Warsaw's inhabitants' preferences in housing and housing ideals and she has found that secure and clean areas with nice neighbors are qualities that are valued higher than fences and surveillance among the respondents. Additionally in a study together with Lewicka, Zaborska found that 50 per cent of the visitors to a housing fair in Warsaw were willing to live behind gates (Lewicka & Zaborska 2007). Mostowska (2009) studied a gated community in Warsaw from within and concentrated on the provision of services and the enforcement on the behavior of neighbors and reached a comparable conclusion to Zaborska's stating that security play only a subordinate role among the motives for moving into gated housing and writes that "rather a sense of order, control, well-maintained space, peace, quietness and generally lack of nuisance that is the most important factor in an enclosed space" (Mostowska 2009: 72). Gąsior-Niemiec *et al.* (2007) have studied gated housing in the southern district of Warsaw, Ursynów, and argue that gating in this

area is a glocal phenomenon with the purpose of drawing physical boundaries between different social groups in the urban landscape of the city. A similar argument is brought forward in another article including Gąsior-Niemiec and other researchers stating that gated communities challenge the public space of today's Polish society at the same time reflecting the social structure of post-socialist Poland (2009). Górczyńskas (2012) study is one of the most recent on Warsaw and focuses on the district of Bielany, coming to conclusion that gated housing is the rule rather than the exception in the area and that the security aspects are dominating among the service functions that are offered by the gated communities in the area.

Furthermore Gądecki (2007, 2009) has examined the popular, professional and media discourse on gated communities and concludes in his studies that gated housing is portrayed as a housing form for the Polish middle class offering specific lifestyles and reflecting financial and social successes, new aesthetics, stability and wealth. In a study written together with Smigiel the authors conclude that gated housing in Central and Eastern Europe is "closely connected with societal uncertainty, the commodification of housing and a general privatization of urban space" (Gądecki & Smigiel 2009: 215).

Studies of other Polish cities have showed similar conclusions to the studies of Warsaw. Kajdanek's (2009) study of Wrocław and its suburbs show that security aspects in gated housing are much less important to inhabitants of this kind of housing than for example the prestige connected to gated housing. Tobiasz-Lis (2011) comes to similar conclusions by interviewing residents living within but also outside of gated communities in Łódź and discusses the importance of security, tranquility and prestige that gated forms of housing have to offer to their residents. Polanska's (2010a, 2010b, 2011) studies on Gdańsk demonstrate the importance of gated housing as social class markers, and she points out housing forms and conditions prevailing under state socialism in Poland as crucial for the emergence of small-scale, secluded and private housing accompanied with gates in the present times.

What is evident after an opening glance at the gated communities studies in the Polish context is firstly their novelty and young age (compared to studies on gated communities in US or Latin America for instance) and secondly the initial stage they are in, offering heterogeneous explanations to the phenomenon of gating. Moreover few have managed to give explanations to this multifaceted problem by involving economic, cultural and institutional levels at the same time. The ambition of this article is to present all these levels in the explanation of the popularity of gated housing in Poland and in this way develop the existent discussion on the emergence and spread of gated communities in the country. The aim is therefore to contribute to the research field by combining the institutional, cultural and economic factors in the light of the public-private divide.

### **The Polish Housing Market and Housing Conditions**

Fundamental economic changes have taken place in the Polish society since 1989. The introduction of market economy and the neoliberal approach have contributed

to socioeconomic polarization and the restructuring of urban space in Polish cities. One evident manifestation of the polarization processes is residential segregation. But the introduction of market economy has had some positive effects as well. Economic freedoms such as property rights or equity of private and public property are important to mention. Since the beginning of the 1990s the responsibility for spatial planning and housing construction lies on the municipal level in Poland. Stagnation in housing production characterized the first years of transformation and led to severe housing shortage in the country. The housing construction industry was ill prepared for the new conditions of competition and the modern technology (for a review of the years 1990–1997 see Merrill 2000).

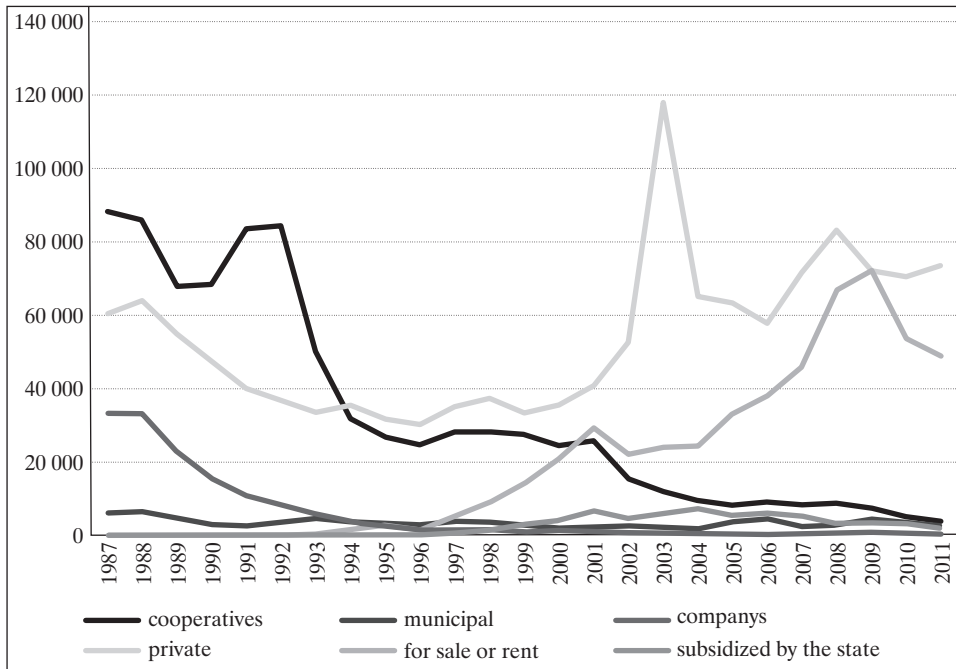
On the Polish housing market the following forms of production of new dwellings are to be distinguished: private (dwellings built by private persons, foundations or parishes, for private use or for sale or rent), cooperatives (for their members), companies (for their workers, both private and public sector), municipal (generally for low-income households, financed by the municipality), subsidized dwellings (by the state, non-profit), for sale or rent (profit-driven, financed by real estate developers or municipalities, including dwellings for rent that are profit-driven). The majority of newly built dwellings in Poland have since the mid 1990s been provided by private actors and entrepreneurs. The category of dwellings “for sale or rent” have steadily grown since the beginning of the 1990s and is today the largest category of housing provider in the country. The formerly largest housing provider, the cooperatives, have massively decreased their production from levels of 150 to 190 thousands of dwellings before 1989 to 3786 dwellings in 2011 (Polish Statistical Office 2011). Even companies as housing providers have lost their importance and are currently producing the smallest amount of new dwellings on the housing market.

As it is obvious in Figure 1 the provision of new dwellings have gone from cooperatives and companies as the main providers to private actors and entrepreneurs building housing with a profit-driven aim. This trend is interconnected with the Polish spatial politics under the 2000s and its allowing attitude towards new construction and private entrepreneurs while planning and questions of cohesion in the urban landscape together with low-income households’ needs have been put aside (Polanska 2011, Struyk 2000). The Polish spatial politics and the pro-construction attitude have resulted in a supply of new housing characterized by gates and surveillance (Polanska 2010a). Gated housing is a lucrative branch and is associated with larger profits for the real estate companies since the security devices and the design involve higher costs for the potential residents. Gądecki and Smigiel write:

In 2006, 30 per cent of the newly-built housing market in Poland was already in the hands of companies, mainly in major cities. The companies are becoming important new players on the market, most often controlling the entire investment process, from the design of the real estate to the sale. In contrast to communal housing or individual housing construction, the new market players offer a much more complex product that goes beyond the mere concept of housing; a special lifestyle is also suggested to potential inhabitants (2009: 201).

The extended process of restitution that Poland introduced after the fall of state socialism is another difficulty in the housing production sphere. As a result of the

Figure 1  
**Production of New Dwellings in Poland in the Years 1989–2011**



(source: Polish Statistical Office 2011)

introduction of state socialism in the country a lot of the existent housing stock and land was nationalized. Formerly privately owned dwellings, buildings and land was taken over by the state or the municipality. The market economy system re-introduced the property rights and a privatization process began. This meant that many Poles became owners of their dwellings but also a serious difficulty when the restitution process began and the former owners demanded the right to their property (Tosics 2005). Issues on tenure, property rights, compensation and ratification of the new owners became urgent and difficult to solve. Poland has been pointed out as one of the slowest post-socialist countries to solve the restitution and compensation issues for the expropriation of property (Karadjova 2004: 333). This resulted in unclear property conditions that together with limited municipal resources and the lack of revitalization programs funded by the state (except the thermo-isolation program) have created a favorable milieu for private investors and real estate companies. These investors and companies have in turn maneuvered towards the Polish middle class in the fragmented housing landscape tempting with exclusivity, safety and a special lifestyle (cf. Polanska 2011, Gadecki 2007, 2009).

The economic polarization since 1989 together with ineffective production of housing (a large supply of gated housing, housing affordable for middle and higher classes of the population and small supply of subsidized housing) is reflected in the

role the place of residence plays as social status marker in Poland, where prestige, privacy and safety are the leading words (Kajdanek 2009, Polanska 2010b, Tobiasz-Lis 2011). The residential space signals the social status and the public-private divide is of central importance here. The public space is together with the housing built under state socialism associated with the old, the deteriorating and the neglected, while the private represents the neat, the orderly and the exclusive. With this in mind gated housing becomes a representation of the private and exclusive way of living. A form of living to strive for among the ones who can afford it and a status marker for those who have “succeeded” (Polanska 2010b: 431).

### **Socialist Legacies and the Cultural Dimensions**

The socialist legacies, or the persisting effects of the former system, have in many respects left their mark on the cultural practices and in particular on the matters of housing. Interviews with residents of gated communities and the analysis of discourses on gated communities in the media point out the socialist past as associated with a specific living and housing standard, that is conflicting with the “new” order and the “new” practices within the housing sphere. A common opinion among the interviewed residents is that the old ways should be left behind and the new ways should be incorporated when it comes to the planning and designing of space. The old is linked to high-rise buildings, crowded living spaces and neighbors that know each other. The new way of living represents privacy and isolation from undesirable contacts and the ideal place of residence consists of few households, few levels and share a neat green yard (or other common resource), where outsiders hold limited access. The old high-rise complexes built under state socialism stand as an opposition to the present housing ideals and represent deteriorating spaces, older households, vandalism and other pathological behaviors (Polanska 2010b).

Security aspects are central when the residents discuss the motives for moving to gated communities (compare to Górczyńska 2012). Security is mentioned in the questionnaire as the most important reason for choosing gated housing among the respondents. The question is what these security aspects protect the residents in gated communities from? Reports on the fear of crime among Poles demonstrate that this fear has steadily decreased since the beginning of the 2000s and that the perceived safety in the place of residence of Poles successively increased to the levels of 80–90 per cent the last five years (CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre] 2011b). In other words, Poles have according to public opinion surveys become more safe and their fear for crime has lessened. This fact does therefore not explain the interest in gated housing and its popularity during the recent period of time or the need of increased securitization. Several studies on gated communities in Poland emphasize the role of prestige and status associated with these forms of living as crucial and the argumentation in this article joins this line of argumentation (Kajdanek 2009, Polanska 2010b, Tobiasz-Lis 2011). The explanations are to be found in the role that the home and the private sphere plays in the lives of Poles (in relation to the public,

but also in relation to the past), but also in the amplified socio-economic polarization that has been taken place in the country since the beginning of the 1990s. The cultural part of these explanations and the meaning of home will therefore be elaborated next.

The public sphere in Poland is closely related to the socialist past and stands in opposition to the private sphere, the home. Under state socialism the home represented safety in an environment where everybody could be a potential informer, while the public represents the state, a party that was considered an enemy and the opposite of the family and the closest ring of friends. Gądecki argues in his thesis that the late modernity in Polish society and the perceived risks, uncertainties, instabilities and discontinuities, especially evident in the cities, create the sphere of home as strong identification form where people feel free from socio-economic uncertainties (2009: 90). Studies on new generations of city residents in Poland confirm the finding that the closest family is a strong identity category among different collective identities in the Polish context (Kubicki 2011). The Polish sociologist Gliński discusses the resourceful individualism that is prevalent in the Polish society and argues that the family and the close friends are the places where individual interests are cultivated before collective values (Gliński 2004). The consumption of exclusive goods and services where money, power and prestige are manifested in the sphere of housing is a part of the hedonistic-consumer resourcefulness and the realization of certain self-actualization needs that Gliński points out as a contribution to the Polish crisis of democracy. He argues that the lack of collective values and the focus on the individual strategies among Poles weakens and hollows out the democratic conditions in the country.

The negative attitude towards the state and the distrust of the public have survived the state socialism in the Polish cultural consciousness and is coming to a head in the question on how housing should be designed and organized in the present. The majority of the interviewees wished for a private and small-scaled living space (low buildings, few households). They did not wish to live in long corridors of apartments in the high-rise buildings many of them grew up in. They wanted to live in spacious homes with neat and clean common spaces (cf. Mostowska 2009). It was explicit in the interviews that the current ideals of housing were to escape from the socialist housing. Researchers have pointed out that the post-socialistic urban architectures is in various ways trying to forget the past (Isański 2007). New housing is built in Poland that in many respects differs from the housing built under state socialism and the aim above all is to provide better standards (Gądecki 2007: 13, Polanska 2010a). The wish for small-scale housing is reflected in the marketing of gated communities where a term that captures this desirable quality is introduced and used widely in various advertisements, namely “kameralna zabudowa,” that is construction design that is small-scale, private and intended for a small group of people.

### **The Institutional Distrust as a Hinder**

The institutional explanations are intimately linked with the economic and the cultural conditions. The institutional dimension in the explanations to the spread and



popularity of gated communities in Poland consists of among others the low trust in the public institutions that is prevalent among the Polish population. Poland has in international comparisons the lowest levels of political participation and lowest social trust towards institutions (Gumkowska *et al.* 2006). Additionally public opinion polls show that the majority of Poles have lacked trust towards their parliament and government since 1999 until 2011 (CBOS 2011a). The research on trust states that basic social trust towards public institutions is a prerequisite for a well-functioning society (Blennberger 2009) and for transcending the gap between the state and the civil society (Fukuyama 1995). The low trust towards the public institutions among the Poles is one of the reasons to the growing individualization of interests at the expense of the common good and the collective values pointed out by Gliński (2004). In addition to the low trust in institutions Gliński mentions these institutions' inefficiency, the lack of a definition of and a vision of a common good, that in combination with the sense of a lack of empowerment among the population together with the efficiency of individual strategies results in a demoralization, consumerism, lack of authorities and an indifference to state and collective values (Gliński 2004: 432). Sociologists have traced this negative attitude towards the state to the socialist past. Sztompka (2004) explains the prevalent attitude in Poland as a remnant from the "bloc culture," a perception that the state is the provider of jobs and social services (health, education, leisure, child care and pensions). The introduction of market economy is described by him as quite radical in the Polish society:

When the new capitalist, market regime introduced competitive, individualistic principles, acknowledging differences of achievement, and when the new democratic, liberal state withdrew from various domains of life, leaving them to private efforts- wide groups perceived this as a breach of obligations by the state (Sztompka 2004: 177).

The distrustful attitude towards the state and its public institutions contributes to the already widespread individualism in the country, that in many respects reminds of the individualism prevalent under the period of state socialism. This form of individualism is created around the family and close friends and is active in competition for education, job opportunities, money, prestige and power (Sidorenko 2008: 110). It has also been called for "amoral familism" in studies of social groups in Poland in the 1980s (Tarkowska & Tarkowski 1990). In the international research there are theories on the high levels of corruption during the socialist system and their effects on the level of trust towards public institutions (Jowitt 1992). Müller and Skovajsa (2009) argue that the restrictions to the public sphere under state socialism resulted in a division of "us" and "them," a division between the civil society and the state in societies in Central Europe. In the case of Poland the "us" stood and still stands for the closest family and friends.

The situation is furthermore exacerbated by the present institutional problems that the Polish society is struggling with. A top-down regulation, the lack of cooperation between different levels within/between institutions, the lack of rules concerning cooperation and a weak third sector are some of the difficulties pointed out in studies of the Polish public institutions (Gliński 2004). An analysis of 15 legal acts on the

regulation of spatial planning and housing demonstrates visible loopholes in the institutional structures regarding the agreement between the regulating level (spatial planning) and the market (with private actors in majority), but also the lack of experience and rules on cooperation between the public and the private in questions regarding housing construction and spatial planning (for more info see Polanska 2011). Moreover, the Polish housing providing system is quite inefficient in producing new housing to low-income households and both state and the municipalities are producing a small number of dwellings for rent with a non-profit aim. All these shortcomings are mirrored in the attitude of the Poles towards democracy and their perception of influence on the public matters. As many as 72 per cent of the Poles have in opinion surveys answered that they lack influence on national matters (CBOS 2009) and only 40 per cent of them are satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country (CBOS 2012). The condition of the Polish society on the common values and the development of anomic individualism originates in institutional and cultural explanations. Withdrawing into the private sphere has become a question of costs, but also a question of inefficient public services and unsatisfied needs and also a tendency to satisfy these needs individually. Similar development has been observed in Hungary, where the changed role of the state as a service provider together with a weaker voice option results in stronger incentives “for citizens to move into gated communities” (Cséfalvay 2009b: 5). It is obvious even in the Polish case that inefficient public services encourage consumption of services and goods that are offered by the gated communities. In the recent years an observation has been made among Polish social scientists regarding the emergence of the metropolitan class in the urban areas, that is characterized by individualism, exclusivity and privacy (Jałowiecki 2004, Jałowiecki *et al.* 2003). Studies on gated communities confirm this by emphasizing the high cultural capital and relatively high incomes among the residents of gated housing (Owczarek 2007). Whatever this class is called, its evident preference for secluded and private housing creates a certain demand on the housing market and certain ideals in living standards and the role and function of housing.

### **The Public-Private Divide: Conclusions**

The Polish example display that both the remnants from the past and the contemporary ideals can be derived to the divide between the private and the public and has played an important role in the development of gated housing and the transformation of urban landscapes in the country. Gądecki *et al.* (2007) summarizes the gated housing’s expansion as dependent on global and local political, economic and cultural factors, that in different pace and extent strengthen certain aspects in the urban development. The starting point of this article is similar and the contribution lies in connecting the economic, institutional and cultural explanations with the public-private divide. The private symbolizes the home and the family while the public represents the state and the public institutions in the Polish context. Gated communities are the signs of the socio-economic status in a society where it is possible to

choose housing according to your status (in opposition to the past when the majority of housing in urban areas were allocated to the residents from above).

With the public-private divide in mind Table 1 is introduced in the text where the economic, cultural and institutional explanations are contributing to a more coherent picture of the phenomenon of gating and its popularity in Poland. The table is obviously structured around the public-private divide and summarizes the discussion on gated housing in Poland hitherto.

Table 1

**An Explanatory Set of Factors for the Spread and Popularity of Gated Housing in Poland**

	The public sphere	The private sphere
The Economic dimension	Market economy and the circulation of capital Economic polarization Ineffective production of goods and services (especially in relation to housing) The supply of new housing characterized by fences and securitization	Individual economic interests in focus, a special form of individual resourcefulness The importance of economic status and housing as social status marker Consumption of goods and services provided by the gated communities Limited alternatives in new housing (demand)
The Cultural dimension	The public sphere closely connected to the socialist past The wish for privacy and seclusion	The private sphere as a symbol for the present and new way of living Specific demands on forms of construction and security
The Institutional dimension	The public sphere (institutions) as untrustworthy The lack of sense of empowerment in relation to the public sphere Weak housing provision system and weak legal control of housing construction	Anomic form of individualism, the private as a guarantee for security and trust The private as a sense of empowerment Strong incentives among the affluent to move to gated housing

The standpoint of the table is that economic, cultural and institutional dimensions must be correlated with the divide between the public and the private in the Polish context. This divide has played a central role in the negotiations on urban space, the role of housing, and the identities and activities connected to housing and spatial issues since 1989. The public-private divide is superior to the three dimensions of economy, culture and institutions. It has been argued hitherto that the introduction of market economy in the country followed by socio-economic inequalities, has resulted in specific forms of creative strategies for individual actions among Poles and to the strengthening of the role of housing (location, standards, exclusivity, and so on). The economic, cultural and institutional dimensions in the model comprise the antagonism between the past and the present and how it is translated to the sphere of housing. It serves as an explanation to the increased demands for securitization of housing and

the privatization of lifestyles and housing in Poland and originates from a desire for seclusion and privacy free from the ubiquitous gazes of others.

Habermas' division between the public and the private sphere is interesting in the Polish context of gating. The symbolic meaning of the bourgeois home, as it is described by Habermas, derives from the capitalistic order, in which individuals are economic agents who are free from feudal hierarchies on the market; the home is considered as its opposite—a private sphere of emotions and subjective experiences (Habermas 1962/1989). In Habermas's model, the bourgeois home's private sphere is constructed in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere, which may be "conceived above all as the sphere of private people [that] comes together as a public" (Hohendahl 1992: 141). However, in Hohendahl's view, the boundary between the private and the public sphere have been eroding since the establishment of the liberal capitalist order. Different private interests in contemporary societies dissolve the ideal of public sphere by manipulating public opinion. The democratic process is hereby threatened, as the public sphere is seen by Habermas as a space where people have an opportunity to make their voices heard (Hohendahl 1992: 102). The dissolution of the public sphere by private interests has materialised in the Polish case, where gated forms of housing are becoming more and more popular in urban areas. It becomes increasingly difficult for the public to gather or, for that matter, to interact in a fragmented urban space. Gated communities take over public spaces such as parks, amenities and services and privatise them, thereby removing them from the public realm. They also make their residents passive by offering various services that no longer must be taken care of by the residents themselves. In Habermas's opinion, the residents become consumers of these services (no longer producers); they retire into the private sphere and abstain from taking part in the public sphere outside of their places of residence (such as the public services in health, education, transport and others). In this way, they destabilise local government structures (McKenzie 1994; 2003). On the other hand the people who live outside of the gated communities may lack a sense of community with those living inside the walls. The communicative aspect of the public sphere that Habermas emphasises is interpreted here as social interactions and communication that constitute the sense of community and belonging and form the democratic processes within a city. As the critics of Habermas point out, the traditional distinction between the public and the private excludes the questions traditionally associated with the private sphere, namely, household, economy and the good life (Hohendahl 1992: 105). In the case of post-socialist Poland, this division materialised in the question of housing. The fall of state socialism meant that many of the formerly public matters became private, including the sphere of housing. With the new system, new forms of order and normative regulation emerged, resulting in new needs for security (Łoś 2005), and the housing market became securitized in the form of gates, walls, "defensible construction of space" (cf. Newman 1972) and surveillance.

In conclusion, the phenomenon of gating in Poland is, compared to its counterparts in the West, following a dangerous path. It has developed under much shorter and more intense period of time and has less to do with the safety in Polish cities, but

more to do with a need of prestige markers among parts of the population (Jałowicki & Łukowski 2007). It is even more worrying seeing the specific role of the family in the Polish society as collective identity existing parallel with the development and popularity of exclusive housing behind gates, where wealthier social groups (of families) can exclude themselves from other groups and the rest of the city. These gated developments constitute “cities within cities” or “islands of wealth” (Szczepański & Tazbir 2007: 43) and are disconnected from the rest of the urban system, fostering a culture of non-participation and worshipping privatism and utopian ideas of the ideal housing (McKenzie 1994). These utopias reflect the uneven production of space in Polish cities and follow the spatial logic of neoliberalism pointed out by Davies as reviving “the most extreme colonial patterns of residential segregation and zoned consumption” creating “evil paradises” (Davies 2007: xiii). These “evil paradises” are located in cities that are often polycentric, experiencing severe socio-economic polarization and de-industrialization, where consumption is taking place in privatized spaces, reminding of the urbanization patterns of American cities (Dear 2000: 3). Gated communities become in this context the most apparent manifestations of success and wealth, threatening the significance of citizenship and social cohesion, reducing citizenship to duties consisting of “satisfying one’s obligations to private property” (McKenzie 1994: 196).

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*Biographical Note:* Dominika V. Polanska, Ph.D., holds the position of postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES) at the Södertörns University in Stockholm, Sweden. Her thesis “The emergence of the enclaves of wealth and poverty” was published in 2011 and examined urban processes of segregation in the post-socialist setting with a special focus on gated forms of housing and their popularity in Poland. Her more current research interests cover post-socialist civil society, social movements, housing policies and tenants’ movement in Poland.

E-mail: dominika.polanska@sh.se