
Gated Communities as the Factor of Spatial Integration

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Abstract

The context of residential integration is one of the most difficult tasks in the development of socially sustainable city. Despite the socio-spatial integration is generally considered as one of priority dimension of sustainable urban development, the segregation of modern societies in the new suburban neighbourhoods is still increasing (Blinnikov et. al., 2006; Borsdorf et. al., 2016; Burneika et. al., 2016; Čiupailait, 2014; Gelezeau, 2008; etc.). Planning and development policies tend to emphasize integration and sustainability (Cruz, Pinho, 2009; Landman, 2006) and the management of social diversity, as the main priority of sustainable cities, comprises the elimination of spatial segregation and social polarisation (Bitušikova, Luther, 2010). Unfortunately social diversity contrarily causes separation from undesirable neighbourhoods and creates unsustainable model of urban development.

Gated Communities (GCs) as the new style of residential developments appear to be one of the symbols of territorial and social segregation in public discourse. The effect of increasing number of GCs for residential integrity is evident and recognized by many urban geographers and sociologists who analyzed GCs in the context of social segregation (Atkinson, Flint, 2004; Blakely, Snyder, 1997; Borsdorf et. al., 2016; Coy, 2009; Csefalvay, 2007; Le Goix, 2005; Kovacs, 2014; Pociūt-Sereikien, Krupickait, 2016; etc.). In these circumstances it becomes important to discuss the possibilities of reduction of this segregating effect. Can the potential of GCs be used for residential integration? Is it possible to achieve social integrity by developing GCs? Even more, can GCs be expected to be 'sustainable' and become the core of territorial integration? Those and other questions are considered on this presentation.

Current researches on residential integration usually are concerning about ethnic or racial inclusion (Bolt et. al., 2010; Britton, 2011; Friedman, 2007; Hall, 2012; Kim, 2005; Liu, 2010; Musterd, Ostendorf, 2009; Timberlake, 2010), less, but also the issue of economic or social integration is analyzed (Balakrishnan, 2001; Cantor, Rosentraub, 2012; Keene et. al., 2013; Longhi et. al., 2013; etc.). The studies of GCs in the discourse of residential integration commonly are confined with identification of segregating effect. Even though the necessity of the elimination of residential segregation and socio-spatial differentiation is emphasized, there are rarely discussed about possibilities of the gated suburban neighbourhoods' integration into city life.

However, the integration issue is new in Lithuania; therefore, with this presentation we

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are seeking to show the findings from our country and answer to the main our topic question "are GCs factor of integration?" Our researches in Lithuania have showed that even though the phenomenon of GCs is not very prevalent, nevertheless it creates precondition of spatial segregation. Increasing trend of separation is in generally inherent to all new residential developments, not only for those which are physically walled and detached (Čiupailait, 2014). Continuing to this issue our presentation intends to discuss the assumptions of residential integration and the role of GCs in this discourse. The theoretical approaches of integration of GCs into city life are also analyzed as well as the recent social tendencies, which can be considered as the primary signals of possible integration. Finally, this presentation attempts to evaluate the perspectives of residential integration in terms of Lithuanian GCs.

The residential segregation in modern cities begins to gain new paradoxical features: segregation processes comprises the movement of wealthier population to lower social status areas (typically rural hinterlands), as the consequence increasing social mix within those areas and bringing them closer to the city average (Sykora, 2009), thus strengthen GCs neighbourhoods (Corvalan et. al., 2004; Salcedo, Torres, 2004). The changes in accessibility of GCs for wider population, not only for wealthy upper class residents, might also cause the increasing integration of new gated suburban (Blakely, 2007).

Also our researches in Lithuania have showed that the impact of GCs on residential integrity tends to be ambiguous: despite increasing residential segregation, lack of relations and even social tensions, the signs of some kind of integration newly appear. The greater activity of newcomers as a target example, and efforts to solve local problems (e.g. social infrastructure) tend to improve local social environment as well as promote activity and sense of community in local residential areas. Moreover, despite increasing number of GCs and growing separation tendencies, the residents still creates the definition and approach of good city based on sustainable city features (Steikūnait, 2015) and this could be seen as an impulse of residential integration and presumption of sustainable suburbs.

Keywords: Socio-spatial / territorial integration, spatial segregation, gated communities, residential integration, Lithuania