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The Demystification of Gating

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1 Introduction - Learning from *Tacitus*

Sine ira et studio - without anger and fondness. Since the roman historian Tacitus it has become the cornerstone and measurement of every scientific investigation that political belief and scientific inquiry should be rigidly separated. It is this point that Rowland Atkinson's response (2008) misses to Tony Manzi & Bill Smith Bowers (2006) on gated communities when he writes that "on the basis of the evidence and of my own political beliefs I would argue with conviction that gated communities are problematic" (Atkinson, 2008: 7). Moreover, he declares that "we need to second-guess how gated communities will fuel further social anxieties, increase social separation and reflect broader social inequalities in exclusive and physical ways. This may be seen as the basic political and analytical commitment required of analysts of all development" (Atkinson, 2008: 6).

This paper argues in concordance with Tacitus that the 'problematic issue' in the research of gated communities is not the subject itself but rather the extremely strong political commitment of the researchers studying them. Gated communities are, *a fortiori*, subjects of political and social discussion and thus research on gated enclaves cannot easily be separated from the overall political and social bias of the researchers. As in most political and social discourses, however, two basic approaches emerge: the market-driven process approach and the politics-driven process approach (Cséfalvay, 2007). The *market-driven process approach* conceptualises the rise of gated communities via rational and economically rooted choices with the emphasis here lying on the question of the allocation and production of local public goods and services. In this approach gated communities are seen as a market-based solution to the provision of these goods and services under restrictions of a 'club economy'. The *politics-driven process approach* to gated communities, on the other hand, represents the results as the exclusionary political behaviour and practices of the affluent. It stresses the question of the distribution of public goods and services, and argues that gated communities create the problem rather than embodying the solution.

The main thesis of this paper is that the examination on gated communities requires that a proper connection be made between the market-driven and the politics-driven approach. The scientific challenge is not to discredit one or other of these approaches; the real achievement is rather to find bridges between them. Processes, such as segregation and fragmentation, phenomena, such as crime prevention and the private provision of public goods could to some extent be seen as the consequences of choices made by homeowners, developers, and local governments, but the choices themselves cannot be explained solely via these processes. Thus we should concentrate on the inquiry of the rational motivations of homeowners, developers, and local governments. In other words: the notion of gated communities should be demystified.

2 The Market-driven Process Approach

Gated Communities are Solutions to Market and State Failures

Researchers representing the market-driven process approach argue that gated communities are answers to both market and state failures (Foldvary, 1994). According to the market failure theory, the market is unable to produce certain goods and services if exclusive consumption cannot be guaranteed, as price could not then be attained (Cowen, 1988). While the market cannot easily answer the free rider problem, market failure theory argues that the free rider problem ought to be resolved by the state or local government providing these goods and services as they have the necessary power to levy taxes to raise financing and to catch free riders. The production of public goods and services via state or local governments comes however at the price of increased bureaucracy, a lack of efficiency, and high costs. These are the failures of state intervention.

Despite these market and state failures, gated communities offer, under specific conditions, a solution to the problem of the market provision of public goods and services (see *table 1*). In gated communities the inhabitants privately finance the commonly owned and used goods and services. As a result the inhabitants have the right to exclusively consume these goods and services, so free riders do not have access. Controlling access to the residential area is therefore a vital part of this solution.

Gated Communities as Providers of ‘Club’ Goods

Market provision of local public goods is both feasible and efficient but underlies the need to pay attention to a number of special limitations such as control of access to public goods, the ability to exclude free riders and the necessity of having a relatively small number of more or less homogenous consumers. As Webster (2001) and Glasze (2005) argue, gated communities operate like clubs to maintain these limitations and thus can best be described by means of the theory of clubs developed by Buchanan (1965). In light of this, it is not surprising that in many parts of the world gated communities have their predecessors in golf, tennis, and country clubs.

This solution to the market provision of public goods and services is coupled with a number of social benefits, such as increased responsibility, greater self-government, and better accountability, achievements that local governments cannot always match. In this respect gated communities can be identified using Hirschman’s terms (1970) as an ‘exit’ option. The homogenous social structure is also a crucial feature of a club economy because people with similar social status and interests are more willing to pay for goods in common use and services than in a community with a heterogeneous social structure. The segregation of people in gated communities is hence the rational consequence of their working mechanism, following the rules of the club economy approach. Using the dichotomy developed by Putnam (2000) gated communities increase the bonding social capital through intensive social contacts among their inhabitants on the one hand, and cause a loss of bridging social capital, which connects different classes and ethnic groups in the society, on the other.

Gated Communities and Crime Prevention at the Local Level

Security is one of the most important public services, and the rise of gated communities can be seen as a part of the ongoing shift of the crime prevention task from the central and local government level to the neighbourhood level. This shift has two main features: first, the creation of a number of physical and environmental barriers, and second, bolstering the cohesion of community in order to prevent crime. These two elements were described by Jeffrey (1971) as

“crime prevention through environmental design”, and by Newman (1972) with the rather practical concept of “defensible space”. Gated communities with their walls, fences, and gates are extreme cases of crime prevention at the local level; the community’s “eye on the streets“ (Jacobs 1961) replaced through the eyes of video cameras and private security guards.

Gated Communities in the Marketplace for Local Governments

Gated communities are not, however, merely solutions to the market provision of public goods and services; they are also a solution to the fulfilment of the diverse preferences of the people concerned. Tiebout (1956) stresses that market economies feature a turbulent marketplace for local governments, too, where they compete with each other by providing a package of local taxes and public services, in order to attract (affluent) taxpayers. In this marketplace, consumers/residents vote with their feet and choose those communities that can match their requirements better than others.

As Tiebout notes, it is an essential assumption that “there are a large number of communities in which the consumer-voters may choose to live” (Tiebout, 1956: 419). The more local governments offer specific package of taxes and public services the stronger will be the competition among them and the easier it will be for people to find places to suit their preferences. In this respect, gated communities can be seen as new elements increasing competition among providers of locally bounded public goods. There is however a profound difference here in that gated communities provide local public goods in a Sub-Tieboutian world at the level of neighbourhoods, while Tiebout preferred competition to take place among local governments with their own jurisdictions (Banerjee, 2007).

Table 1 Characteristics of the two main paradigms in the research of gated communities

	Market-driven process approach	Politics-driven process approach
Research question	Allocation and production of public goods and services	Distribution of public goods and services
Living in gated communities	Rational choice of the people (<i>homo economicus</i>)	Exclusionary behaviour of the people (<i>homo politicians</i>)
Public goods and services	Market provision under restrictions of club economy	Exclusionary provision for the affluent
Economic context	Solution to failures both of the market and the state by providing public goods and services in a club realm	Result of social polarisation caused by the shift from <i>Fordism</i> to <i>Post-Fordism</i> and by the globalisation of economy
Territorial context	Marketplace for local governments providing a package of taxes and services	Fragmentation of the metropolitan areas into socially homogenous and exclusionary enclaves
Social context	Exit option for the affluent from the overcrowded and over-regulated cities	Self-segregation and withdrawal of the affluent because of exclusionary behaviour
Governance context	More personal responsibility and accountability at the neighbourhood level	Less functions at local government level
Social capital	Bolstering ‘bonding’ social capital	Weakening ‘bridging’ social capital
Crime	The decreasing efficiency of the state and local governments in crime prevention drives the affluent to built their own security measures	The fear of the affluent of crime drives the market, and causes the displacement of crime from affluent to poor areas
Physical barriers of the gated communities	Crime prevention through environmental design and defensible space at neighbourhood level	Militarization of urban space and the architecture of fear

Political Questions: Homogeneity, Double Taxation, and Segregation

This difference between competition on the Tieboutian level and the marketplace on the Sub-Tieboutian level raises three legitimate political questions. The first question concerns the issue of income redistribution which was strongly expressed in Atkinson’s response (2008). Normally, local public goods are provided by local governments and are financed by taxpayers living in the area of jurisdiction. As Gans (1967) recognised, it is desirable that communities remain socially heterogeneous in order to provide income redistribution from the rich to the poor and to finance public services benefiting the poor locally. In this sense, Gans favours the principle of *selective homogeneity*, i.e. a heterogeneous social structure on the level of communities with own jurisdiction to provide income redistribution on the one hand, and homogenous social structure on

the level of neighbourhoods to strengthen the (bonding) social capital on the other. Despite this notion, gated communities with a homogenous social structure sometimes aspire to become towns with their own jurisdiction – something that had already happened in Southern California in a number of cases (Le Goix, 2005).

The second crucial political question in this marketplace for local governments is the problem of double taxation. Inhabitants of gated communities pay their local taxes to the appropriate local governments, which finance public goods and services for the community as whole. They do not normally however consume goods and services provided by local governments, as they have these already behind their gates. On the other hand, they pay fees to the micro-governments of gated communities to maintain the commonly used and owned goods and services, with exclusive enjoyment rights. Inhabitants of gated communities are therefore taxed twice, once for public goods and services they do not consume, and once for public goods and services they consume within the gated communities.

The third political question is the often-criticised segregation of these affluent enclaves. But as Webster (2001) points out, there is a causal linkage between the double taxation and the social character of gated communities. To live in a gated community means that inhabitants pay for public goods and services twice, and that is certainly easier for inhabitants belonging to the affluent classes than those belonging to the lower classes.

3 The politics-driven process approach

The Fall of Public Man and the Loss of Public Spaces

Theoretically, the critics of gated communities looked back to diverse theses describing the social consequences of rapid economic change in the last two decades. Sennett (1992) theorises the fall of public man and the rise of individualism, which are expressed in the city structure by the vanishing of traditional public spaces. Reich (1991) notes the “secession of the successful”; in other words, the withdrawal of the winners of economic change from the public sphere. Lasch (1995) argues that the “revolt of the elites” leads to the exclusionary behaviour of the affluent. All of these theses highlight that the rising individualism and exclusionary behaviour of the affluent create a social climate conducive to gated communities.

Social Polarisation Linked with Territorial Exclusion

The main thesis of this research approach is that the widening social gap causes a widening territorial gap between rich and poor, and that these two gaps influence each other. *Social polarisation* leads to the creation of gated enclaves for the rich in the city structure on the one hand, and to social polarisation expressed by these physical barriers on the other. As Atkinson & Blandy (2005: 180) write: “Where the wall starts a new social area begins, whether one lives inside or out”.

Segregation is certainly not a new phenomenon in urban development, but the self-segregation of the affluent with physical and environmental barriers is a development not observed in the last few centuries. Moreover, the gated enclaves emphasise not just the social divide between rich and poor, but also express the unequal access to public goods and services of different social groups. The walls and the self-governments of gated communities show, according to the adherents of this approach, that the rich no longer have anything in common with the other parts of society.

Crime Drives the Market

Similarly, scholars emphasise the linkage between the segregation of the affluent and their fear of crime. Low (2003) argues that gated communities are both physical manifestations of the politics of fear and expressions of self-segregation. Because of the fear of crime, gated communities were built with a number of security measures such as walls, gates, and guards and these measures simply exacerbate segregation. Low (2003:18) notes that the safe environment of these gated communities “excludes all those who are considered dangerous. But while this strategy may work for the privileged few living within the protected area, it has the drawback of diminishing collective responsibility for the safety of society as whole”. Through the rise of gated enclaves, a new divide between the haves and the have-nots evolves. Even more, gated communities could lead to a “displacement of crime away from increasingly hardened targets, inhabited by those who can afford access to security, toward those areas which present softer targets” (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005: 185).

Regulation Theory and the Fragmentation of Cities

Most criticisms of gated communities are based on regulation theory, which focuses on shifts from *Fordist*-type standardised mass production to *post-Fordist* flexible production and from a Keynesian to a more neo-liberal economic policy in the developed countries (Aglietta, 1976; Lipietz, 1998; Amin, 2000). Changes in economic policy, the withdrawal of the state as a service provider, privatisation and the deregulation of the economy in particular influence the development of gated communities both on the demand and the supply sides. On the demand side the middle class shrinks, the gap between rich and poor widens and the disposable income of the affluent increases enormously. On the supply side, privatisation and deregulation create a favourable investment climate for the developers of gated communities.

Soja (2000) and Sorkin (1992) describe the consequences of this in the city landscape as a *fragmentation* into ‘theme parks’, such as shopping malls, edge cities, and gated communities. Through the vanishing of vital public spaces, the city landscape becomes a chaotic mixture of enclaves with a more or less homogenous social structure, and a more or less restricted level of access for the general public. Davis (1998) goes further and sees gated communities as manifestations of the “militarization of urban space” and, conclusively, of the class struggle for space. As such, while in the past the housing market forced the poor into the more or less closed ghettos in the cities, today the affluent segregate themselves within their own exclusionary and fortified enclaves.

Political Questions: New Enclavism and the Scale of Segregation

The main target of this critical approach is the new segregation, or using the term invented by Atkinson & Blandy (2005), the new enclavism. Atkinson points out that the “idea of new enclavism was put forward to bring such development firmly back into the frame of studies on segregation, arguing that the concentration of affluence is implicated in a broader socio-spatial contract that can be located between poorer and more affluent neighbourhoods and mediated through local and central states” (Atkinson, 2008: 3).

But even Atkinson’s term - “new enclavism” - stresses that gated communities constitute small-scale segregation. The scale of segregation is crucial because this is the borderline between traditional segregation patterns experienced during the first decades of the post-war period and the new segregation patterns created by gated communities over the last few decades. In the metropolitan areas, traditional segregation was manifest on a large-scale: the inner-city districts around the Central Business District were occupied by different marginal groups, while the affluent moved further away out into the suburb. Despite this the new segregation initiated by gated communities is characterised rather by *small enclaves in the city fabric*. Consequently, the traditional pattern of urban segregation has shaped the social structure in a way that social

distance had become geographical distance. In the case of the new segregation by gated enclaves, however, the poor are no longer out of sight because rich and poor live in relative proximity (Webster, 2001).

Moreover, research shows that the geographical location of gated communities mostly follows the socio-spatial structure of the given areas; upper middle-class gated communities are situated mostly in upper middle-class districts, and lower middle-class enclaves in lower middle-class districts (Le Goix, 2005). Gated communities lying on the borderline of areas with significantly different social groups are rather exceptional cases.

The scale of segregation also reveals the question of redistribution which is the heart of Atkinson's critique of gated communities when he writes that the concentrations of affluent represent "a threat to the ability of the state to redistribute resources to poorer social groups" (Atkinson, 2008: 4). Historically, in respect of large-scale traditional segregation the affluent simply moved with their taxes into the suburbs creating villages with their own jurisdictions, and therefore the poor in the inner-city districts could not benefit from the redistribution of their taxes and resultant welfare. In the case of the small-scale new segregation encapsulated by reference to gated enclaves, however, there is a *spill-over effect* with taxes benefiting the less affluent, as rich and poor continue to live in the same jurisdiction (Webster, 2001).

4 Regionally Determined Driving Forces Behind the Development of Gated Communities

While theorists are strongly divided into two camps empirical research findings show that gated communities can be found in very diverse parts of the world under very different geographical, economic, social, legal, and political conditions (Galsze *et al*, 2005). Taking a closer look at these conditions, however, three regionally determined combinations of driving forces emerge (see *table 2*).

Gated Community as Innovation (North America)

North America is certainly the main innovator in terms of gated communities, but this innovation is influenced by a number of often very different factors. Low (2003) argues that gated communities are rooted in the broad "culture of fear" of Americans (Glassner, 1999) and fortified enclaves are direct expressions of the fear of crime. Soja (2000), on the other hand, stresses that gated enclaves are more the result of a change from mass production and consumption to flexible patterns of production and consumption, resulting in a fragmentation of the city landscape: boundless urban sprawl, edge cities, and gated communities for the affluent.

Countering this, McKenzie (2003) points out that the rise of gated communities can be described by the triangle of developers, local governments, and homeowners, with each having its own interests to forward. Developers want to produce high density dwellings to make a profit; offering dwellings in a package with some commonly owned and used goods and services in exchange. Local governments aspire to attract affluent taxpayers, without the need for local infrastructure expenditure. And homeowners want to live in a safe environment with a wide range of amenities and exclusive access. Similarly, Le Goix (2005) stresses the mutual benefit in this triangle. Because of a lack of financial resources at the local government level the costs of infrastructure shift initially to the private developers who often simply 'back end' these costs in the price of the individual property quoted to the end-consumer. In return, homeowners get exclusionary rights to use this infrastructure. Lastly, Blakely & Snyder (1997) list a number of social factors behind this innovation, such as increasing the property value, searching for

community, preferring a homogenous social environment, expressing prestige and governing the collectively used and owned amenities.

Table 2 The regionally determined driving forces behind the development of gated communities

	Transformation	Consequences	
		Demand side	Supply side
North America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from <i>Fordism to Post-Fordism</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - culture of fear, - search for a (homogenous) community, - search for more personal responsibility and accountability, - expressing prestige 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exit option from overregulated cities, - less resources of local governments to finance public infrastructure
South America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from authoritarianism to democracy, - from import-substituting industrialisation to an export-led growth model, - integration into the global economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing social polarisation - increasing crime in mega-cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weakening regulation by state and local government - traditions of country clubs
Southern Europe, Eastern Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from central planning to the market economy, - from authoritarianism to democracy, - integration into the European Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing social polarisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weakening regulation by state and local government

Transformation Combined with Housing Traditions (South America)

In South America, the rise of gated communities can be traced back both to the rapid economic and social transformations encouraged by globalisation and to the influence of the traditional housing system (Borsdorf, 2002). In Argentina and Brazil, *country clubs* were early precursors of gated communities for the affluent, and the condominiums in the inner-cities for the rather modest middle-class (Janoschka, 2002). The second factor is the transformation in economic policy during the last two decades from an import-substituting industrialisation towards an export-led growth model, which widened the gap between the small number of winners and the majority of losers. To fulfil the requirements of the winners, the old country clubs had to be formed into gated communities for permanent residents. Elsewhere, developers built new gated enclaves following the country clubs' model.

In some cases, dramatic worsening of public safety and increasing crime influenced the demand side, and as Caldeira (2000) showed in respect of the example of São Paulo, apprehension of *crime drives the market* especially in mega-cities. The strong symbiosis between the enclaves of the rich and the traditional squatter settlements ("*favelas*") of the poor is a unique feature of gated communities in South America (Coy & Pöhler, 2002). The gated enclaves of the affluent increase the demand for personal services, which will be satisfied by, in Esping-

Andersen's (1993) terms, the "service proletariat" settled in *favelas* built in close proximity to the gated communities.

The Fundamental Change in the Economic and Social System (South Europe and Eastern Europe)

The profound change from authoritarianism to democracy and the adoption of the market economy led to the rise of gated enclaves in Southern and in Eastern Europe. During this transformation regulatory tools, framed by state and local authorities, weakened giving private developers on the supply side a broader avenue to supplant them with new services. On the demand side, the change in the political and economic constellation - especially after the *defeat of communism* in 1990 - led to increasing social polarisation, inspiring the transformation's winners to seek safe but exclusive and prestigious housing. Gated communities in the metropolitan region of Madrid (Wehrhahn, 2003), Lisbon (Raposo, 2003), and Moscow (Lentz & Lindner, 2003) are well-known examples of this development.

Where Gated Communities are Missing (Central Europe)

Remarkably no gated communities have emerged in Central Europe (Glasze, 2002), and if we want to really understand the gated communities concept we have to ask why this is so. In countries characterised as social market economies like Germany, Austria or Denmark, both state and local governments are able to provide a wide range of vital public spaces and services, and therefore there is no need to establish goods and services exclusively and privately within gated communities. On the other hand, state and local governments have a very strong regulatory framework, which put the public interest before the private interest of developers and homeowners in urban planning. This indicates the thesis that the reason for gated communities is in many parts of the world simply one of state failure; the inability of the state and the local governments concerned to reflect the needs of the people and to provide the public goods and services required.

5 Concluding Remarks - The Need for Demystification

Two Theses - One Explanation

In the research on gated communities two distinct paradigms exist, there is however only one feasible explanation for the phenomenon. Political factors certainly play an important role in the rise of gated communities, but these factors do not give a plausible explanation in themselves for this type of development. Processes such as social polarisation, territorial segregation, the shift from *Fordist*-type to *Post-Fordist*-types of production and regulation, the fragmentation of city landscapes et., can perhaps describe the changes in urban structure, but they say little about the *causes* of these changes. Moreover, they offer no explanation for the decisions of the most important players in the rise of gated communities, such as the developers, homeowners, and local government.

People moving to gated communities do so because they want to use the amenities offered by the residential parks, and not because they want to segregate themselves from society more generally. People wish to use the facilities of the community, financed by themselves, and therefore move into gated communities, not to practice their exclusionary behaviour. People want to live in a safe environment, and therefore pay guards and have walls, not to militarise the urban space and fortify environment. In most cases people want simply to live in a safe environment with a number of commonly used goods and services at their disposal, and they certainly pay for these. If homeowners of gated communities pay for these goods and services it is a logical

consequence that they want to exclude those who do not pay from also using them. Developers merely want to make profit; therefore they offer dwellings in a package with public goods and services attached. Local governments want to attract affluent taxpayers and therefore offer land and flexible regulation.

Conclusively, a thorough examination of gated communities should be based primarily on the market-driven approach, and scientific inquiry should be focused basically on the motivations of homeowners, developers, and local governments in the process of the worldwide development of gated communities.

Response Versus Solution

The requirement to free ourselves from the politics-driven approach to the analysis of gated communities does not indicate, however, that the policy questions raised by gated communities are irrelevant. The research evidences in the very diverse parts of the world show that gated communities should rather be seen as responses to various ongoing transformation processes. They are responses, although this is not to say that they are automatically ‘desirable and proper’ solutions from different political points of views and/or systems of values.

Consequently it is important to discuss policy questions such as the traditional *vs.* new segregation, the homogeneity *vs.* heterogeneity of residential areas, double taxation *vs.* state redistribution, market provision *vs.* the (local) state provision of public goods and services, governance on the municipal level *vs.* governance at the neighbourhood level etc. These are legitimate policy questions and thus should be handled as *political* problems. Moreover, investigating policies dealing with gated communities in different countries, or developing new policy alternatives, also count as well justified scientific questions worthy of further study.

The discussion of such policies is of vital importance in the continuing research on gated communities. The discrediting of other research perspectives on the basis of our “own political beliefs” in the manner attempted by Atkinson (Atkinson, 2008: 7), should not, however, be part of the debate. Similarly, the rather old-fashioned notion of the need to promote the freedom of science and research requires that the public declaration of the “political and analytical commitment” of the analysts in the way that Atkinson demands (Atkinson, 2008: 6) should be eschewed.

Back to Tacitus

Since the early 1990’s the major metropolitan regions of the world have been facing a new challenge in the emergence of private urban governance and the rise of gated communities. If we want to understand these processes we need, primarily, to use the market-driven process approach. If we want to discuss the social and political consequences of this we can seek to some extent to apply the politics-driven process approach. Reflecting on this perhaps Tacitus did say it best, *sine ira et studio*.

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