Paulina Tobiasz-Lis

4. SOCIAL RELATIONS IN GATED COMMUNITIES BASED ON THE CITY OF ŁÓDŹ

4.1. Introduction

Gated communities have become one of the most hotly debated issues when it comes to cities in Poland. It is partly due to the fact that these communities are symbolic of the social, economic and cultural trans-formations which have taken place in Poland in the last two decades. Their number, scale and variety give rise to a number of questions asked by both sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, urban planners as well as the citizens living on both sides of the gate. The interest in the issue of gated communities and other forms of public space undergoing privatization stems from their origin and development on a given area as well as social costs and benefits of such solutions. Authors frequently emphasize negative aspects of putting up walls, i.e. not only physical changes in the space of a city but also changes in the social live of its citizens (Owczarek 2007).

This article draws on the concept of territorial social system, formulated on the basis of socio-economic geography in the late 1980s. The concept was to verify the types of internal and external relations together with the relations towards the occupied territory based on the inhabitants of gated communities. The research presented gated communities in the city of Łódź as a territorial social subsystem of a city, internal relations of inhabitants towards each other and towards the occupied territory as well as external relations towards the "neighbors from outside the gate". As a result, the research provided both the reasons and most importantly the social effects of "fencing off". The dynamics of the development of gated communities in Poland and their repercussions are difficult to predict. The question whether they will result in the long-run in tightening or rather loosening the social bonds between the citizens of big cities remains unanswered.

This article consists of four parts. First of all, it provides an overview of definitions and views concerning the reasons for the emergence of gated communities in Poland and around the world. There is no one exact

definition nor a uniform genesis of this phenomenon in the literature concerning this issue. The article refers to the concept of territorial social system put forward by Z. Chojnicki (1988) and its interpretation in terms of the environment of a big city by J. Kotus (2006). Secondly, the article presents gated communities in the city of Łódź from the perspective of developers' advertisements in local press and on the Internet. Parts three and four provide a confrontation of the above-mentioned adverts with the opinions and behavior of the inhabitants of these communities. Furthermore, gated communities in the city of Łódź have been presented as a territorial social sub-system; finally, the article brings up the motives and consequences of "fencing off" and depicts social relations both internal – between the inhabitants – and external – with their neighbors from open communities on the scale of integration-disintegration.

4.2. Definitions and the origin of the phenomenon of gated communities

Prior to discussing any conceptions explaining the phenomenon of gated communities it has to be highlighted that these communities are part of a territorial social system which takes the form of a city; thus it is a subsystem in which a community of people occupies a given territory on permanent basis (Chojnicki 1988). This subsystem is shaped on the basis of its inhabitants, social relations – both internal and external – on the scale of their integration-disintegration, which form its structure and materially isolated stratum of material basis with clear-cut spatial boundaries constituting the so-called external surroundings (Kotus 2006).

The attempts at defining the phenomenon of gating city space presented below are mainly based on specific features of the territory and the boundaries of gated communities. The issues of inhabitants and social relations are brought up only in the literature concerning the origins and functioning of such communities.

The term '*defensible space*' was first used by O. Newman in his article about a clear-cut and semi-private space which is said to belong to a person whose guests might consider it their hosts territory. Newman claims that creating such spaces increases the sense of safety and control in their inhabitants and results in more frequent contacts with neighbors, which leads in turn to closer bonds between neighbors (Bańka 2002; Bell et al. 2004).

The definitions of gated communities clearly refer to Newman's conception which is understood as a space separated from the surroundings through an adequately designed façade of buildings as well as the form, arrangement, layout of the elements of their nearest surroundings such as: high green belts, enclosures (fences, walls) and gates, which make it unable for trespassers to enter the grounds of such a community. Apart from

physical barriers, such communities are frequently guarded by security companies and surveillance systems. The access to private houses, streets, sidewalks and social infrastructure inside these gated communities is limited (Low 2003). E. Blakely and M. Snyder (1997) also stress the fact that they do not discuss "multi-family, dense type of housing; condominiums with security systems and guards" but rather housing estates "whose fences and walls exclude them from any public access to streets, sidewalks, parks, beaches, rivers and playgrounds (…) and other facilities which would be otherwise open to and used by all citizens" (Gądecki 2007 after Blakely, Snyder 1997). Less restrictive definitions comprise more varied forms of housing estates, the estates which seem more adaptable to Polish conditions. E. McKenzie (2003) examines gated communities in terms of a broader category of the so-called common interest housing estates; however, much as there exist features which make such a procedure possible, it seems that physical enclosure (walls, fences, security guards) place them under a different category of fragmentation and privatization of public space.

Nonetheless, there is a question of whether or not defensible space brings anticipated effects defined by Newman; in other words, does this conception translate into tightening of social bonds between the inhabitants of gated communities? Current research data suggests that the term 'gated communities' should be changed into 'gated estates' in the Polish context (Gądecki 2009).

The author of this article has assumed possibly the broadest definition of gated communities, according to which these communities refer to housing estates which differ from others in the kind and intensity of their physical isolation from their surroundings. Their main feature is isolation from the public space of a city, which turns them into private spaces with clear-cut boundaries.

There are two seemingly competing attempts at explaining the reasons and dynamics of the creation and expansion of gated communities around the world. They draw on the motifs of fear and prestige which according to J. Gądecki (2009) should be regarded as the elements of the same, neoliberal thinking about urban space.

G. Simmel (2006) wrote about the inhabitants of a city as a group of people always interested in incentives and a fast pace of life. One of the side--effects of such a lifestyle were supposed to be anonymity, lack of closer bonds between neighbors and a decreasing interest in other people's lives. Taking into consideration these conclusions concerning the accumulation of stimuli and a nervous anxiety caused by a contemporary metropolis, it seems that the urban atmosphere itself may bring about the need for protection, isolation and tranquility. The increasing sense of danger in metropolitan cities, particularly among the more affluent strata of the society, is one of the reasons for gating (Jałowiecki, Krajewska, Olejniczak 2003). Gating is one of

three phenomena induced by the process of metropolization, which lead to radical transformations in urban space, including a fundamental limitation of public space characteristic to a traditional city (Jałowiecki 2007)[1]. Thus, the creation of gated communities takes place on a global scale; however, geographical and historical variety suggests exercising caution in formulating universal theories of the genesis of gated communities and point to local socio-cultural grounds of their origin.

In some areas gated communities are a reflection of traditional models of segregation based on religious grounds, while in others they reflect specific separation on ideological or economic grounds; finally, in many parts of the world, particularly in South American countries, theses communities are a symptom of the crisis of the state. According to B. Jałowiecki (2000), in the so-called post-communist countries, including Poland, gated communities may be perceived as a kind of reaction to the communist past, when the need for private property was heavily suppressed, and now it has emerged in the form of overly protected houses. Simultaneously, there has been a rapid appearance of a new, economically-successful middle class which tends to mark their social status in the urban space more than their counterparts in West-European countries. This is also a reaction to the trend of blending various social groups in public housing in Poland in the 1960s, which resulted in a growing frustration of the society.

In sum, the phenomenon of fencing off urban space has to be considered as a *glocal* phenomenon (Gąsior-Niemiec et al. 2007). The appearance of gated communities in Poland and around the world is a complex process whose origin may be explained by both global and local factors. These factors are closely connected with political, economic and cultural transformations, which take place at a different pace on both a local and global scale.

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[1] The process of metropolitization affects three independent phenomena radically transforming urban space, including crucial limitations to public space characteristic of a traditional city:

1. Changing of central multipurpose neighborhoods in a city into a relatively uniform office space, construction of perfect business neighborhoods,
2. Changing trade organization, which is concentrated in specially arranged buildings located outside central metropolitan areas,
3. Increasing sense of danger, especially among the better-off strata of society, which constitutes one of the causes for the emergence of gated communities (Jałowiecki 2007).

4.3. Gated communities in the city of Łódź from a developer's point of view

As the real estate market develops, there are bigger expectations as to the houses and flats offered on the market. The choice concerning the manner and place of residence is clearly conditioned on the need to having a safe and comfortable home, fulfilling a specific lifestyle and keeping one's privacy. The feeling of safety, just like the feeling of order and self-confidence or satisfaction, belongs to the group of needs that are universal and common to all human beings, regardless of their social surroundings (Karwińska 2008). However, there is no connection between an objective level of safety and its subjective perception, which has been corroborated by research conducted both in Poland and in the USA (Gądecki 2009). According to the research conducted by from the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS), the sense of safety was at a low level in Poland at the threshold of transformation processes. In 1993, Poland was perceived as a safe country only by 26% of respondents, with 67% claiming to feel safe in the immediate vicinity of their homes. Such a situation may be cited as an explanation to the process of gating of urban space, which appeared in Poland in the 1990s. According to the latest data from CBOS, 69% of the Polish feel safe in their country and as many as 88% consider their place of residence safe and peaceful[2]. Safety is the main reason for gating, irrespective of how safe the area is. As a result, the number of guarded housing developments is not decreasing on the real estate market. In fact, the tendency is quite the opposite, i.e. the only houses on offer these days are those located in gated communities.

It may be concluded from the analysis of housing advertisements posted on the internet by housing developers in the city of Łódź that investors try to attract their costumers using the techniques based on the above-mentioned fundamental needs – safety and contact with nature – to create a new kind of living space. They display the security elements of apartments, houses and even entire estates, garages in the ground floor, prestige and advantages of the location such as an easy access to the city center, green belts, aesthetics and extraordinary architecture, as well as the elements of leisure and recreational infrastructure including a sauna, indoor swimming pool and modern playgrounds. The marketing strategy is thus devised in such a way as to offer a bit more than just sheer selling apartments. In that case, a house also offers a feeling of pleasure, comfort and a certain atmosphere.

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[2] „The sense of safety and opinions concerning the work of the police force", a message from the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS), May 2009, Warsaw, BS 74/2009. Study conducted on 20 April 2009 on a randomly selected adult representative group of 1 094 people.

Consequently there is a pack of leisure and pleasure activities included in the offer – housing estates offer free activities which are normally paid. In sum, it is not just an apartment that is offered to a prospective inhabitant but rather a lifestyle:

"this place is perfectly connected", "this hosing estate is located in a peaceful and quiet part of the city", "the architecture is a classic elegance", "safety and comfort is provided by a fence, twenty-four-hour security and surveillance", "the entire property is fenced and equipped with electronically--controlled gates and a twenty-four-hour discreet surveillance", "the whole property is equipped with surveillance cameras", "entry to the garage is secured with a remote controlled gate and protected by a security guard", "we have set a place for a security building", "the ant-burglary door given in a standard offer, provided with all certificates required by insurance agencies", "an integral part of the premises is a porter's lodge with a system of access supervision", "we have designed lawns, flowerbeds and walking paths between the buildings", "we are going to create an enclosed enclave of peace and quiet", "the green spots will be complemented by decorative structures", "arranged green areas with playgrounds for children"[3].

The estates described in the above-mentioned offers are supposed to be "city oases" – fenced off from the ordinary world, bathed in green areas, which enable safe and harmonious life in the changing world. Developers defend themselves claiming that their investments are fenced off because such are the expectations of their customers; however, a dynamic development of this segment of the housing market observed in the city of Łódź, where all the offers on the primary market involve the apartments in gated communities, brings up a question why people have to live in such communities?

4.4. Social relations in gated communities

Territorial subsystems of a municipal society are closely connected with certain territorial communities present in every city. The following picture illustrates internal relations within particular territorial communities as well as external relations between these communities and towards the occupied territory on the scale of integration-disintegration (fig. 1). As for gated communities, we define their inhabitants as a community of neighbors who form a social structure that shows a different level of integration and lives in a clearly isolated area (Kotus 2006).

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[3] http://www.brelocum.pl/, http://www.treedevelopment.com/, http://www.uscheiblera.pl/, http://www.hirny.pl/, www.lcc.pl, www.atal.pl.

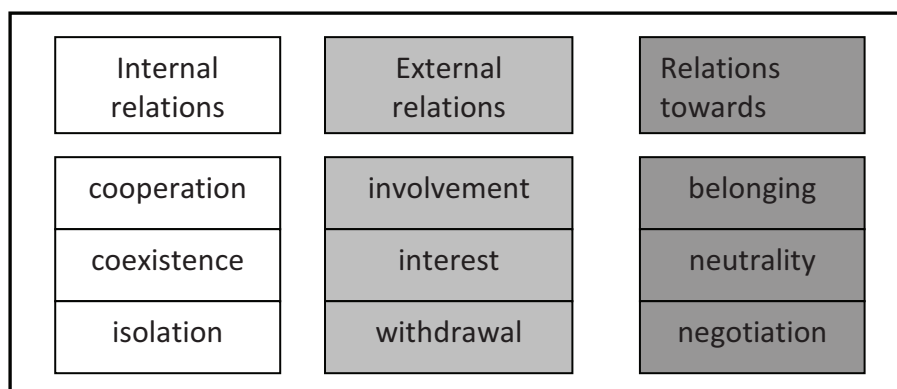| Internal relations	External relations	Relations towards
cooperation	involvement	belonging
coexistence	interest	neutrality
isolation	withdrawal	negotiation

Fig. 1. Types of relations in territorial subsystems of a municipal society

Source: J. Kotus (2006)

The above analysis has been prepared on the basis of questionnaire surveys and comments posted on internet forums dedicated to the inhabitants of gates communities in the city of Łódź. What considerably hindered conducting typical social research was the limited availability of respondents in the survey, thus the second source of data has been used. The survey is based on 50 interviews conducted with the inhabitants of gated communities which had just gone out with their pets or were spending time with their offspring in a playground. The vast majority of respondents were interviewed through the gate. Furthermore, longer comments posted on internet forums have been treated as detailed interviews. It has to be mentioned that those comments were taken solely from the forums of those gate communities which were used for making direct questionnaire surveys.

It may be concluded from the analysis of the comments posted on internet forums that there are examples of cooperation in internal relations which unite a given community. Thanks to a virtual community, it might be said that there is a social bond and community among neighbors, one in which people cooperate and may become a real force capable of introducing changes in hard times such as problems with developers or neighbors from outside the gate. Cooperation "leads to a consolidation of a community in the direction of a complete internal integration and takes the form of occasional, and sometimes cyclic cooperation of individuals with their neighbors" (Kotus 2006). Nonetheless, the same comments posted on internet forums by the inhabitants of gated communities are most often connected with a conflict – either with a developer or a land agent or people from outside. Thus, they reflect the external relations of withdrawal disintegrating particular communities within territorial subsystems of a city. One example might be

the following comment posted by "krzyzak" on the forum of Osiedle Szlacheckie in Łódź, which received eighteen replies:

"(…) I have recently noticed that the playground has been used by children from the entire neighborhood. They jump over the fence and they have already caused damages to some toys. Someone should talk to them or maybe even ask them to leave the premises (…)"[4],

"(…) Since we own the apartments, I think that it should be our children who play in these playgrounds, and not strangers (even if they are children) (…)"[5].

The majority of responses, just like the above example, concerns the methods of limiting access to an estate to people from outside. Any different opinion on the spatial or social isolation of the inhabitants of gated communities meets with a rapid critical response. The following comment posted by "Brychu_Carin" illustrates the problem of social disintegration in a city, which is caused by realizing the need of the growing stratum of city elites who seek safe accommodation in an isolated and homogeneous community. The author clearly defines those who "lurk" behind the gate – the inhabitants of open estates.

"(…) we can already notice some disturbing situations which take place within our shared community. Carmin has seen a group of children with their kindergarten teachers leaving our playground today (…). The issue of the inhabitants of other blocks who lurk next to our gate just to take a shortcut through our premises, because the sidewalk is obviously too far, is a well known problem to all forum members (…). Let's decide what we actually want – protection of our property at the cost of frequent disputes with the inhabitants of neighboring blocks or an estate open to everyone, including vandals, bums, petty thieves and winos, who would really like to knock down a cheap wine in a sandpit (…). We don't live in cooperative apartments where property is extremely dispersed and no one identifies with it; this is our piece of land – our own and each other's (…)"[6].

The above comment also reflects the relations of the inhabitants of gated communities towards the occupied territory. There seem to be very strong and positive references to taking care of the living space in these communities, the sense of possession, both of which characterize the social relations of belonging towards the occupied territory. They may play a stimulating role which helps people make contacts within one social subsystem based on territory, which in this case means the inhabitants of one's own gated community, but there are no contacts made with the other subsystems in the form of the neighbors from outside. As has been presented

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[4] http://lodz-szlacheckie.mojeosiedle.pl
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

above, gated communities exemplify a social subsystem with a clear-cut enclosed territory and an spatially isolated character. Many a time there are protective signs in the immediate vicinity of such communities, which are both a symbolic and real barrier aimed at strangers; there are also appropriating signs serving as a means of marking the territory and informing potential trespassers that it is occupied (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Protective signs (fence) and appropriating signs (road sign, D–40: residential area with additional information about private property)

Source: self-prepared

4.5. Gated communities from the perspective of the inhabitants of the city of Łódź

When asked about the reasons for choosing life in a gated community, the inhabitants of such estates in the city of Łódź cited safety in the first place (52%), followed by peace and quiet as well as isolation from the rest of the neighborhood guaranteed by the localization of these communities (42%). Safety, however, needs to be considered here in a wider perspective that just in the context of the sense of fear of crime; is should be looked upon as associated with coherent, predictable and controlled surroundings. Although as little as 6 percent of the surveyed pointed to prestige as the main factor affecting the choice of the place of residence, it is obvious that living in a protected estate is regarded as equivalent to success in life. Some examples of these so-called exceptionally "good addresses" include Barciński Park, Osiedle Kaczeńcowe, Osiedle Słoneczny Park.

The value of the territory a given person lives on is best exemplified on the basis of their attitude to a house which in turn defines a man and enables him or her to communicate this definition to the outer world (Bańka 2002).

The vast majority of respondents (90%) expressed satisfaction with their place of residence. The inhabitants of these estates value first and foremost a safer parking place, the presence of well-groomed green areas as well as the fact that they can leave their children unattended on a playground thanks to the fence and the gate. Owing to this simple fact parents know that their children will not leave the premises of the estate and will be surrounded by the children they know.

"(…) I have been living in a protected estate and I am very satisfied because: since fencing off the estate no cars or other things have been stolen; the inhabitants can go for a walk at any time of day or night; the premises are clean and neat, the staircases are not damaged. I do not even dare thinking what it would all look like if the estate were opened up again. Living in the ground floor I would have to live behind bars, just like in prison (…)"[7].

"Safety. Awareness that there is someone protecting your flat and keeps the intruders away. Furthermore, it is well-kept because it may be accessed only by the inhabitants or their guests. Thanks to this such places as staircases, facades and green areas are not spoilt or damaged"[8].

However, what seems to be particularly interesting to analyze, in the light of the above-discussed positive internal relations of cooperation, are the disadvantages of gated communities pointed at by the inhabitants themselves. They mostly concern the social sphere, i.e. contacts and relations with neighbors. These have been judged as positive be merely 5 percent of the respondents, with as many as 20 percent of the surveyed claiming they are negative. This situation may stem from the age and lifestyle of the respondents, which is typical for the new emerging metropolitan class – the so-called "garage-to-garage" community – consisting of people who move among privatized urban spaces: a gated community, an office block and a shopping center. Coming late home, the inhabitants of gated communities simply do not have enough time to make new contacts with their neighbors; these contacts actually boil down to a casual "hello" exchanged in an underground garage or an elevator. Such a type of neighborly contacts in P. Kryczka's typology, used also in the studies conducted by CBOS, is often called a "conventional" or "ceremonious" neighborhood and constituted the most common neighbor relations declared by the Polish in 2008[9]. It thus leads to a conclusion that traditional contacts typical of traditional communities vanish in gated communities and take the form of virtual

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[7] *Szczęśliwa za płotem*, Gazeta Stołeczna, issued on 14.09.2006.

[8] Miłosz M., *Ludzie cenią prywatność*, Rzeczpospolita, issued on 10.09.2008.

[9] *Contacts between neighbors in the place of abode*, a message from the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS), June 2008, Warsaw, BS 92/2009. Study conducted on 11–14 April 2008 on a randomly selected adult representative group of 110 people.

contacts. Neighbors get in touch through internet forums, with cyberspace being their most common meeting place. This fact is corroborated by the research conducted in the United States by E. Blakely and M. Snyder (1997), who proved that living in gated communities weakens social bonds (Gądecki 2007 after Blakely, Snyder 1997).

4.6. Summary

Gated communities which appeared in Poland in the 1990s are a global phenomenon, yet there is also local socio-cultural conditioning that determine their peculiarity. Among the factors affecting the image of gated communities in Poland are such processes as the government transformation, which has lasted in Poland for over twenty years. This is the main reason why the phenomenon of fencing off estates, which is typical of cities in North and South America, has been so widespread in Poland and is deemed exceptional in Europe.

An analysis of the developers' offers with their latest investments shows that they aim at meeting the expectations of the customers of the real estate market by satisfying their two fundamental needs: safety and peace. They also emphasize the prestige of living in a gated community, which according to many authors is the second next to safety global reason for gating. The inhabitants of these communities are supposed to be the representatives of the newly emerging metropolitan class – i.e. young, educated, well-earning and need-ridden people who are not satisfied living in a socialist-era block of flats.

The inhabitants of gated communities consider fencing off as a factor increasing the sense of safety and aesthetic values of their surroundings as well as improving the leisure and recreational infrastructure. On the other hand, one of the biggest drawbacks of such communities is their influence on social bonds which weaken, leading to the creation of gated enclaves, in which the most prominent is the protection of one own's property and the biggest problem is the neighbor. Communication between the inhabitants of gated communities has shifted from the courtyard to virtual networks, which may be best proved by the analysis of the comments posted on internet neighborhood forums. Thus, living in a spatially isolated estate implies more or less tight isolation from a local community and its problems, which leads to the emergence of the "new elite" through the privatization of the public space.

To sum up the discussion on the privatization of the space of a modern metropolis in the form of gated communities, it must be said that this phenomenon contributes to the disintegration of the territorial social system of a city, particularity in terms of external social relations. What also needs to

be verified are the effects of gating of housing estates expected by O. Newman when he defined protected space. It turns out that although the social contacts between the inhabitants of gated communities may be classified as the relations of cooperation, in reality they take place mainly via the internet, with the real social bonds drastically loosening.

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STRESZCZENIE

RELACJE SPOŁECZNE W OSIEDLACH GRODZONYCH NA PRZYKŁADZIE ŁODZI

Osiedla grodzone są obecnie jednym z najszerzej i najczęściej dyskutowanych problemów polskich miast. Stanowią zjawisko o charakterze globalnym, jednak lokalne uwarunkowania społeczno-kulturowe decydują o ich specyfice. W Polsce są niekwestionowanym symbolem przemian społecznych, ekonomicznych i kulturowych, które dokonały się w ostatnim dwudziestoleciu.

Z przeprowadzonych badań wynika, iż oferty deweloperów prezentujące ich najnowsze inwestycje wychodzą naprzeciw wymaganiom klientów rynku nieruchomości, zapewniając dwie najważniejsze potrzeby: bezpieczeństwa i spokoju. Akcentują także prestiż zamieszkiwania w osiedlach typu *gated communities*, który w świetle literatury ma być drugim obok bezpieczeństwa motywem grodzenia się o charakterze globalnym. Ich mieszkańcami mają być przedstawiciele rodzącej się w Polsce tzw. klasy metropolitalnej, a więc ludzie młodzi, wykształceni, dobrze zarabiający i posiadający potrzeby, których nie zaspokoi blokowisko doby socjalizmu.

W niniejszym opracowaniu zaprezentowano łódzkie osiedla zamknięte, jako terytorialny podsystem społeczny o charakterze wspólnotowym w mieście, wewnętrzne wzajemne relacje mieszkańców wobec siebie i wobec zajmowanego terytorium oraz relacje zewnętrzne wobec sąsiadów „zza bramy”. Wskazano zarówno przyczyny, ale przede wszystkim społeczne efekty „grodzenia się” uzyskane w trakcie prowadzonych badań.

Badania społeczne przeprowadzone zarówno wewnątrz osiedli grodzonych, jak i w ich najbliższym sąsiedztwie pokazały, iż grodzenie przestrzeni miejskiej przyczynia się do dezintegracji terytorialnego systemu społecznego miasta, zwłaszcza w obrębie społecznych relacji zewnętrznych. Należy również poddać weryfikacji efekty grodzenia osiedli mieszkaniowych, których spodziewał się O. Newman definiując przestrzeń bronioną. Okazuje się bowiem, że chociaż kontakty sąsiedzkie mieszkańców osiedli typu *gated communities* można zakwalifikować do relacji kooperacji, to odbywają się one przede wszystkim poprzez sieć internetu, a realne więzi społeczne ulegają zdecydowanemu rozluźnieniu.