

# East European Politics & Societies

<http://eep.sagepub.com>

---

## **A Glimpse over the Rising Walls: The Reflection of Post-Communist Transformation in the Polish Discourse of Gated Communities**

Anna Gasiór-Niemiec, Georg Glasze and Robert Pütz  
*East European Politics and Societies* 2009; 23; 244  
DOI: 10.1177/0888325408328749

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://eep.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/23/2/244>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

[American Council of Learned Societies](#)

**Additional services and information for *East European Politics & Societies* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://eep.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://eep.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations** <http://eep.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/23/2/244>

# A Glimpse over the Rising Walls

## The Reflection of Post-Communist Transformation in the Polish Discourse of Gated Communities

Anna Gąsior-Niemiec

*University of Rzeszów, Poland*

Georg Glasze

*University of Mainz, Germany*

Robert Pütz

*University of Frankfurt, Germany*

The authors focus on societal perceptions of the Polish post-communist transformation as reflected in the rising discourse of gated communities. Guarded, (video-) controlled and/or walled housing estates have been on the sprawl in the Polish metropolises throughout the 1990s and 2000s. However, only recently they have been discursively constructed—under the banner of “gated communities”—as a social and political issue in the country. The authors look at this issue from a vantage point offered by Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse, which allows the authors to combine a spatial and a linguistic analytical perspective. The analysis emphasizes the manner in which societal perceptions of borders surrounding gated communities overlap with perceptions of boundaries being inscribed in the social structure of post-communist Poland, while the resulting socio-spatial configurations are taken to signify political cleavages inherent in the Polish nation.

**Keywords:** *discourse; gated communities; Laclau, Mouffe; Poland; post-communist transformation*

The spread of guarded, (video-)controlled and/or walled housing estates has become one of the most topical issues both in scientific and popular debates on urban development world-wide over the last two decades. Recently the emergence of such a debate has also been noted in post-communist countries, such as Poland. The emblematic notion of “gated communities” constitutes an umbrella term that seems to encompass all those types of housing estates that are perceived as functioning as if they were heterotopias of sorts,<sup>1</sup> that is, as if they were located extraterritorially vis-à-vis “normal” (social/public) space. Appreciated or condemned, contemporary gated communities constitute a challenge both to societies and social scientists.

---

**Authors’ Note:** The idea for this article was conceived while Anna Gąsior-Niemiec was part of an interdisciplinary research team (Un-)Sicherheit und Stadt, headed by Robert Pütz and Georg Glasze. The financial support of the Volkswagen Stiftung, which helped establish our cooperation is gratefully appreciated.

On one hand, they may be interpreted as a novel socio-spatial form produced by advanced capitalism, postmodernity, and globalization. They thus signal development of new social geographies, mark increasing estheticization, and commodification of space. They testify to ongoing shifts and modifications in the organization of cities and social life in general, evidencing changes in the sphere of governance that are only to be expected in an era of post-Fordism and neoliberalism.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, they could be taken as harbingers of social crises and anomie, pointing to a collapse of models, values, rules, and norms that underpinned the success of the European (Western) civilization. To the late modern societies they might signify an ominous transition from a stage of the welfare state to a stage of a Hobbesian state of warfare. They then become a spatial icon of risk society<sup>3</sup> or a perfect building bloc of the carceral city.<sup>4</sup>

Leaving the extreme grand interpretations aside, it seems, nonetheless, true that debates triggered by the phenomenon of gated communities touch on issues that might be fundamental not only to the shape of the city but also to the organization of social life in general. They reveal controversies that could have a bearing on the way society is both conceptualized and lived in a very near future. In the debates, there clash, for instance, opinions concerning conceptions of the public and the private, the right to security versus the right to access, the value of social heterogeneity versus the advantages of social homogeneity, the efficiency of the market versus the merits of statist, moral-political economy. The problematic of the nature, uses, and limits of the public/social space features are at the background of all of those clashing conceptions.<sup>5</sup>

Although these fundamental problems are raised in practically all of the debates on gated communities, their exact formulations, responses to them, and resolutions offered are strongly flavoured by local circumstances. The local flavour depends inter alia on local effects of macroeconomic factors, trajectories of the existing political regimes, prevalent social myths, city planning traditions, and so forth. Undoubtedly, the local flavour is strongly influenced by the very material shape, scale, and spatial dispersion of the gated communities, too. Lastly, the local flavour depends on the manner in which the phenomenon of gated communities has been constructed as an object of public debate.

The present analysis serves to illustrate empirically the intertwining of the global and local factors. However, what interests us most are societal perceptions of the Polish post-communist transformation that we find reflected in this currently rising debate in the country. Guarded, (video) controlled and/or walled housing estates have been on the sprawl in the Polish metropolises throughout the 1990s and 2000s. However, only very recently they were discursively constructed—under the banner of gated communities—as a social and political issue in the country. We look at this issue from a vantage point offered by Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse, which allows us to combine a spatial and a linguistic analytical perspective. Our analysis emphasizes the manner in which the discursive production of borders in the debates

on gated communities overlaps with the boundaries being inscribed in the debates on social structure of post-communist Poland, while the resulting socio-spatial configurations are taken to signify political cleavages inherent in the Polish nation.

### **The Emergence of Gated Communities as a Public Issue in Poland**

In the early 2000s, there appeared in a few Polish quality dailies and weeklies a series of highly evocative journalist interventions that highlighted the topic of a specific type of housing estates that, according to the journalists, seemed to have been invading the Polish urban/social landscape.<sup>6</sup> The press articles were soon followed by a number of interviews with Polish academicians, foreign researchers, and civil society activists who further emphasized threats to the urban life that were taken to be inherent in those guarded, (video-)controlled, walled, and/or gated housing estates. The estates have been progressively lumped together into the category of “*osiedla grodzone/osiedla za płotem*” —rough Polish equivalents to the English “gated communities.”

Subsequently, there sprang up a number of public debates, research reports, scientific conferences, and publications pertinent to the topic.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, there appeared a few quasi-political manifestoes that directly or indirectly related the issue of gated communities to the direction of social and political change in Poland after 1989.<sup>8</sup> Together, they all have triggered and contributed to the creation of a tightly interwoven and mutually reinforcing—but at the same time far from unanimous—web of a Polish version of a debate on the world-wide known phenomenon of gated communities.<sup>9</sup>

This initially elite-driven discursive skeleton has been rapidly fleshed out with animated discussions carried out in a variety of local press and the Internet forums, both public and private, which were spontaneously attended by local readership and numerous Polish Internet users, representing a kind of a contemporary public opinion.<sup>10</sup> Quasi-artistic happenings, staged by opponents of gated communities across the city of Warsaw, complemented the developing discourse with additional nonlinguistic and linguistic elements.<sup>11</sup>

A closer look at the rules, structure, and contents of this public debate reveals that the issue of gated communities has actually played a role of a catalyst for an articulation of a set of much more general and encompassing views on the social, economic, and political situation in post-communist Poland. Triggered by heated discussions over the signs of socially un/acceptable fragmentation of the Polish cities by walls and gates surrounding the guarded housing estates, more general criteria underpinning the desired structure, legitimate regionalization, and governance of the social/public space<sup>12</sup> in the country have been articulated in/through the discussion.

Moreover, on their basis, fundamentally differing, competing visions of a desired social and political order in post-communist Poland may be reconstructed. Frequently, the presentation of the competing visions has been accompanied by a discursive constitution and manifestation of antagonistic collective identities. Thus the issue of physical borders (such as walls, gates, and fences) implanted in the Polish urban space has overlapped with the issue of symbolic boundaries just being inscribed in the social structure. Not unexpectedly, reflexes of some foreign/global discourses have played a role in the debates as well. In all of them the spatial has been clearly taken to signify social and political cleavages inherent in the Polish society and nation.

The discussion on gated communities in Poland reflects also a paradoxical status of the spatial vis-à-vis the social and the political which seems quite typical of many current debates on social life and its organization in the era of globalization.<sup>13</sup> Far from testifying to the recently announced death of territory and/or the victory of the postmodern spaces of flows over the modern spaces of places,<sup>14</sup> the views articulated in the analyzed discourse actually seem to demonstrate vividly that an image of a bounded and structured space constitutes an indelible aspect of an image of a desired (local) social and political order.

Ceasing to be perceived as an objective and/or solidly material category that functions as a container for social life, space can be seen as invented and imagined in many different ways that are reflected, for instance, in the particular regimes of its regionalization, narratives through which spatial configurations are reproduced, in artefacts and signs purposefully implanted in space as meaning articulations of sorts. Analyses and interpretations of the regimes of regionalization of space are thus likely to reveal which criteria are claimed at a particular historical moment to be politically and socially valid as justifications to maintain/change spatial cleavages, and divides.<sup>15</sup>

Spatial divisions—marked and coded with material-symbolic icons, borders and boundaries—are interpreted as scripts instructing individuals and social groups how to inhabit the given space and how to move within/across its boundaries. They could also be claimed to constitute incentives for the individuals and social groups to play/reject their roles in the social and political order of which the spatial divisions are an integral part.<sup>16</sup> However, to be perceived, interpreted, and acted on in terms congruent with prevalent—desired or contested—images of the social structure and political order, the spatial divisions and their material-symbolic markers (correlates) must be made meaningful. In other words, they must become integrated in complex meaning-conferring societal infrastructures, called discourses.<sup>17</sup> The spatial divisions, their material-symbolic markers, and their interpretations become then socially and politically “performative.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Applying Discourse Theory to Analyses of Socio-spatial Phenomena**

Conflict-ridden articulations of socio-spatial issues in public debates, such as the gated community issue, provide an opportunity to explore some of heuristic advantages of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse as a framework for analyses of sociopolitical transformations.<sup>19</sup> Unlike many other discourse analytical approaches, Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse seems to offer a fairly consistent general framework for such social science analyses. Apart from being oriented to processes of meaning creation in/through discourse and showing a great sensitivity to the role of the political in the processes, the theory contains several fundamental claims that address both the nature of social reality and the nature of our knowledge about it.

Furthermore, it lends some credible justification to those research strategies that postulate spaces as discursively produced.<sup>20</sup> The strategies succeed most when focused on tracing constructions of identitarian borders and boundaries implanted in space, practices of social exclusion, and narratives that make seem legitimate and/or natural processes of Othering, involving the production of political borders and construction of social stereotypes.

Simplifying, Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse could be best characterized as rooted in the Kantian philosophical tradition of inquiry into "conditions of possibility for our perceptions, utterances and actions."<sup>21</sup> Laclau and Mouffe are thus more than sceptical about possibilities we have of gaining a direct access to and thus unmediated knowledge of (social) reality.<sup>22</sup> However, while Kant's interest rested with universal mental categories that condition/mediate human perception and understanding of the world, Laclau and Mouffe are dedicated to an investigation of historically specific (contingent) discursive preconditions of social reality.<sup>23</sup>

They see all forms of social reality as emerging against the background of discourses that might generally be defined as "relational systems of signification" in which "semantic aspects of language" and "pragmatic aspects of action" are interweaved.<sup>24</sup> On the grounds of Laclau and Mouffe's theory it might then be concluded that whatever we say, think, imagine, and do—before it becomes socially "real," that is, before it may be evaluated, supported, contested, or acted on as part of the world we are (would/would not like to be) in—has to be articulated and endowed with a meaning (identity) by rules governed by the logics of difference/equivalence.<sup>25</sup>

In a manner initially resembling structuralist conceptions of language, the logic of difference serves in Laclau and Mouffe's theory to build/delimit the meaning (identity) of a discursive object by differentiating it from other objects. By contrast, the logic of equivalence acts to reinforce/re-center the meaning (identity) of the discursive object by liking and linking it to yet other objects that are perceived as akin and/or related. The same rules apply to processes of discursive constitution of individual and collective.

Social identity formation (i.e., acquisition of social meaning by individuals and groups) is done through an identification/demarcation of the Other, which is accompanied by a concomitant attempt to “increase” the Self through an interpellation of as many equivalents to it as possible. At the same time, the “Us” becomes clearly demarcated from a “constitutive outside”—and often the demarcation of the Us from the Other is strengthened by linking it to the demarcation of “here” (our space) and “there” (the outside/their space).<sup>26</sup> The discursive production of spaces and boundaries as regionalizations produce thus and stabilise the social order.<sup>27</sup> The articulations are accompanied by attempts at suppressing a threat associated with antagonistic differences, for instance by barring the radical Other from both inhabiting “our” space and assuming “subject positions” within “our” discourse.<sup>28</sup>

Successful articulations of such chains of difference/equivalence bring thus stabilization to the identity of discursive objects and, in the case of social groups, legitimate their claims and demands pertaining the spatial, social, and political order of which they are (would like to be) part. Inter alia, they legitimate criteria according to which space may be divided into ordered “regions” that are perceived as of Ours and anomic “anti-regions” that are represented as of Others. The construction and justification of frontiers, borders, and boundaries follow, further coupling social/political and spatial criteria of demarcation.<sup>29</sup>

The stabilization of any particular chain of meaning is, ultimately, dependent on results of struggles between competing holistic socio-spatial projects. It succeeds in particular when one of them manages to be articulated as a consensual, hegemonic political project, able to mobilize support on part of a wide spectrum of social actors. Conversely, repeated and/or prolonged failure to articulate a hegemonic project may lead to disintegration of whole discourses and delegitimization of the existing socio-political regimes. Alternatively, hegemonic discourses may collapse when disrupted by some external dislocatory events or fail because of their own, internal weaknesses.<sup>30</sup>

Successful hegemonic articulations are able to bring a temporary closure to chaotic fluidity (perceived as meaninglessness and anomie) typical of a social system in crisis/transformation mainly because they constitute a basis on which holistic collective representations and images of *localized* society (total political myths) can be built. In Torfing’s words, only such articulations succeed in real tipping of the discursive (socio-spatial) balance which “manage to provide a credible principle upon which to read past, present, and future events, and capture people’s hearts and minds.”<sup>31</sup> The societal myths feedback, in turn, the hegemonic discourses and legitimate their materialization (sedimentation) through structures of social action, including concurrent regimes of regionalization.

Discourses are then, according to Laclau and Mouffe, relational systems of historically specific signifying practices that confer identities (meanings) on social objects primarily by means of two complementary logics: this of difference and that of equivalence. As such, discourses not only “decide” what is socially valid at a

particular historical conjunction but also actually delimit the shape and scope of the social by designating certain objects (for instance social groups, practices, spatial forms, symbols) as legitimate/illegitimate and others as altogether incommensurable with the dominant socio-spatial and/or political order.

The incommensurable objects mark the boundaries beyond which the order collapses or slides into spaces of chaos and disorder (meaninglessness and anomie). From the vantage point of Laclau and Mouffe's theory, spatiality is thus inherent in discursive constitution of social reality. It could, therefore, be assumed that one of the most fundamental aims of discourse analysis conducted in terms of Laclau and Mouffe's theory is to reveal and deconstruct spatial layouts, frontiers, borders, and boundaries of the social and political orders that are articulated in/through discourse. How are demarcations of "Us" and the "Other" articulated with demarcations between "here" and "there"?

Looking at articulations of such spatial layouts, frontiers, borders, and boundaries may result in mapping out of the structure and functions of spaces at a given historical conjunction. Likewise, categories of social actors, their identities and rules of their cohabitation might be "read off" such analyses.<sup>32</sup> There follows an analysis of borders between the "regions" occupied by legitimate collective actors and "borderlands" or "frontiers" where they meet their Others. These partial analyses can then be complemented with findings concerning social and political myths expressed in the discourse and possible linkages that these may have with external meta-discursive structures, including geopolitical and macroeconomic ones. Such an analytical approach seems thus particularly suitable to social systems under transformation, such as the systems of post-communist countries exemplified in this article by Poland.

### **Polish Gated Communities—a Discourse Analysis**

Guarded and walled housing estates have appeared as an object of public debate in Poland only very recently under the umbrella name of *gated communities*. The discussion broke out by emphasizing the speed and scale at which this type of spatial form occupied urban space in the country. In the capital city of Warsaw alone about three hundred of such housing estates have been counted so far.<sup>33</sup> Several analyses of the supply side of the housing market indicate that many such gated communities are just being built or have already been planned to be built in the city.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly as in other countries (at least in Western and Central Europe and the United States), Polish researchers state that this type of housing estates is specifically designed for (marketed, sold to) and lived in mainly by relatively young, aged 30 to 40 representatives of new middle classes.<sup>35</sup> The trend is held to have been most probably initiated by foreign (Western) professionals and experts who came to Poland with big Western corporations at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The corporations often invested in providing high standard (meaning also

as a rule: exclusive and gated) housing conditions for their employees.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the 1990s, Polish realtors and indigenous new middle classes had gregariously joined the trend.

Guarded and gated housing estates erected in the Polish cities are quite often located erratically in the urban space, both in its central areas and in the nearer and outer peripheries.<sup>37</sup> They are built as single multi-floor blocks of flats (*apartamentowce*), groups of blocks of flats, as small housing estates composed of a few such blocks, quarters of single- and two-family row houses, and, in extreme cases, as large housing complexes, consisting of multiple high-rise blocks of flats.<sup>38</sup> Quite frequently, they directly neighbour either pre-war tenant buildings or high-rise blocks of flats built during the communist rule, primarily between 1960 and 1980. Such erratic topography, resulting in immediate perception of the city space being fragmented, is probably one of the major reasons why the Polish discourse of gated communities seems focused more on issues such as the dismembering of the city and disappearance (meaning privatization and degradation) of public space and less on the issue of security that may be dominant elsewhere.<sup>39</sup>

The gated communities mushroom thus in the Polish cities appropriating what has so far been perceived as public, or freely accessible space. They are squeezed in as luxurious in-fills between older, less glamorous buildings (e.g., in the district of Śródmieście); they are implanted in old backyards that used to be shared by residents of several neighbouring poor tenant buildings (e.g., in the district of Praga Północ) and rise up high in other locations, towering over a much lower local architecture (e.g., in the district of Wola, Saska Kępa) or consuming last patches of “wild” Varsovian green areas (e.g., in the district of Kabaty, Zielone Zacisze). They tighten the ever-denser cordon around the capital city axis of prestige in the district of Wilanów. Vis-à-vis their classy walls, fences, and gates appear ever more frequently their caricatures. Older housing estates (e.g., in the district of Grochów) and even whole, multi-acre post-socialist large housing estates (e.g., in the district of Chomiczówka) want to be walled and gated (closed off) as well.

Even the very superficial overview of the location, dispersion, design, and outlook of the housing estates—which, in accordance with the tenets of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse, are treated here as signs and signifiers building the Polish discourse on gated communities *alongside* utterances and texts—indicates unsettled criteria of regionalization of social/public space in the post-communist city. On the other hand, it reveals a tendency to strong demarcation of borders between the two major categories of housing estates—gated (new) and non-gated (old), as well as a presence of antagonistic relations between the two major “housing classes”<sup>40</sup> that are discursively attributed to the two types of housing estates.

Despite statistically measurable considerable differentiation of the actual socio-economic statuses and lifestyles of the residents (especially the residents of the older housing estates),<sup>41</sup> within the debate on gated communities the supporters as well as the opponents create a homogenous identity of an *Us* (either the *Us* of the inhabitants

of gated communities or the Us of the dwellers not living in gated communities). These constitutions of identities go along with a discursive constitution of a threatening but nonetheless constitutive outside. That is to say that both, the “critics” and the “promoters” of gated communities, constitute a specific *Other*. It is worthwhile stressing that in a discourse theoretic perspective the critics and the promoters are conceived as speaking positions in a discourse and not as a group of social actors.

In turn, out of an array of the border markers (correlates), walls, fences, and gates are most meaningful “housing class” boundary demarcation elements as evidenced by the speaking positions of the opponents and the supporters in the Polish debate on gated communities. Those markers are interpreted by the critics of gated communities as unnecessarily exclusive and ostentatiously aggressive, that is, illegitimate. One of the discourse participants captures the predominant interpretation in precise terms, stating: “I am not against intercoms, locked entrance doors to buildings and monitored backyards. But you cannot just wall off whole housing estates. This creates a city-camp.”<sup>42</sup>

Another, less sociologically inclined discourse participant who, nonetheless, is even more perceptive of the emotions with which the Polish gated communities discourse is permeated, commented on the immediacy of the border markers by writing: “. . . you could build new housing estates without walls . . . But why, let’s build a wall, let’s call ourselves a park *lesny brodno* and let’s screw the neighbourhood. The neighbours are all thieves, hobos and slobs no doubt” (*mieszkaniec\_brodna*).<sup>43</sup>

The density and immediacy of the boundary and border correlates triggers thus processes of physical and symbolic constitution and delimitation of the two, not only different but also antagonistic, “housing classes.” One is constituted discursively by the speaking position critics and the other by the speaking position promoters. The constitution of these speaking positions goes along with a constitution of an Us and an Other, whereby an Us is connected either to an inside (a gated community) or an inside (normal Polish society), respectively. Thus, despite the factual differentiation of socioeconomic and lifestyle features of the city residents in all types of housing estates, on the basis of the material-symbolic border markers inscribed in the city space, only two dominant collective identities are articulated in the Polish debate on gated communities.

The collective identity of the “gated community housing class” is most frequently characterized by a chain of equivalence composed of references to the cult of money, consumerism, Americanization, poor intellectual capabilities, and lacking social/moral competences. As one of the discourse participants confesses in an Internet forum, “residents of those ‘temples of civilization’ are people raised on glossy magazines, American TV programmes and fed by tales told by wealthy acquaintances . . . devoid of independent reasoning, fooled by developers creating around the modern block housing estates (*blokowiska*)<sup>44</sup> an atmosphere of nice and peaceful life close to the nature” (Pyzuchna).

The collective identity of the people populating the remaining space of the city is presented by the promoters not less one-sidedly: "If someone is used to dilapidated stinking tenant houses where drunkards piss in the backyard and women are called names and there is dirt lying everywhere (*syf*) and rats all over, the person may feel ill at ease in such cultured (*kulturalnych*) apartment houses" (Venus22). Clear-cut dichotomies are emphasized in the collective characteristics: wealth versus poverty, culture versus (primitive) nature, success versus failure, high standard of living and safety versus low standard and threat, orderliness versus slobery (*menelstwo*).

Such dichotomization provokes resistance, which leads to further escalation of the controversy since no reconciliation between the positions is possible. Articulating resistance to the imposed collective identities, the discourse participants inadvertently reinforce the dichotomization by introducing further dichotomizing stereotypes. Those include wisdom versus stupidity, knowledge versus ignorance, normal life versus life in unnatural enclaves. An apt example is provided by an intervention of an Internet forum discussant who replied directly to the Venus22 quoted before:

... a complete lack of knowledge of anything apart and outside of an apartment house  
 ... of course, we cook on open fire in front of our blocks of flats, we wash our clothes in a running stream, we, the primitive people living outside apartment houses;—I am about to start up a company offering—"Blood-freezing Experience! Tales about the Life of People Commuting on Public Transportation!" Target: Barbie dolls who have not seen any world outside their apartment houses, private schools, and glamorous cars (Kochanica-francuza).

In accordance with the images of the collective identities, the Polish gated communities are thus populated by brainless *nouveaux riches*, slaves of commercials, egoists blindly believing in American propaganda, people alienated from the Polish reality.<sup>45</sup> The remaining space of the city is, in turn, a realm of low or lacking standards, primitive people, uncultured slobery, chaos, and overwhelming—literal and metaphorical—filth. The correlates of borders between the gated communities and the remaining city space are then held to signal quite unequivocally the division of the city into ordered regions that are inhabited and used by Us (residents of the gated communities) and anomic space beyond their borders that is populated by Them (predominantly "losers" of the Polish transformation but apparently also tourists and visitors—interpreted as vagrants and trespassers, aimlessly and/or threateningly wandering through the city).

Apart from the already mentioned "region" border markers—gates, walls, fences, supplemented with guards, concierges, video cameras, intercoms, electronic keys, notice-boards and warnings, graphic symbols prohibiting unauthorized access, chains, and paddles—no less conspicuous and functional seem those access barriers that are based on an architectural or environmental design. The widespread practice of so-called vertical segmentation of newly erected residential buildings is their good

example.<sup>46</sup> It activates a social script implying denial, exclusion, and/or limiting access of certain categories of people to certain urban spaces.

The practice involves building elevated, fortress-like courtyards and ground floors, often devoid of any points of passage (steps, doors, windows), whose inside is taken up by parking lots, storage rooms, or commercial units. Another version of the practice entails constructing spiralling or zigzagging steps, peppered with all sorts of metal barriers, which lead up to an elevated internal yard of the housing area, simultaneously acting as devices to hinder “illegitimate” walking, running, skating, and biking. Yet another option is represented by surrounding strips of spiky plants that, in addition, may be wrapped in a sort of a protective cage made of steel.

The design and function of the spatial elements are clearly linked to the designation of the space outside of the gated communities as anomic. They thus serve primarily to isolate and defend the gated community residents from external chaos, disorder, and anomie. They are to bar and fend off the access of threatening Others to the enclaves of luxury, peace, orderliness, and order. Such, at least, are the interpretations of those spatially coded social scripts voiced by both critics and promoters of gated communities in the Polish city.

One of the critics tried to convey undesirable consequences of the divisive socio-spatial scripts: “Instead of somehow integrating themselves with their neighbours, doing something useful it is just simplest for them to build a wall. And if a wall is not enough, to employ guards with rifles. And if this is still not safe enough—to buy a military tank” (*krehbiel*). The irony and sarcasm included in such interventions as well as attempts at “shaming” the gated communities’ promoters miss, however, their point as a typical reaction in an Internet forum shows: “I pay so much dough for the house and the guards exactly not to mix with the slobs and the underclass (*cholota*). Beat it to your slums in the city and do not mix here with people who are better than you” (*arius5*).

As already mentioned, in those locations where guarded and gated housing estates are built directly next to or vis-à-vis the older buildings, ever more frequently “copies” of border markers typical of gated communities are put up. They include chains, gates, walls, fences, notice-boards, no-access signs, and, less often, security personnel. It seems that the installation of the copies is of reactive nature and could be interpreted as a kind of engaging into an anti-dialogue between the two antagonistic “housing classes,” which takes place by means of inscribing the border and security artefacts in the surroundings. The strikingly differentiated quality and design of the originals and the copies (the latter seem much less “classy”) are immediately transferred to the overall characteristics of the collective identities of the “housing classes.” In the process, the anti-dialogue between the original and copied border correlates makes some areas of Warsaw start resembling a dystopic landscape of the “carceral city.”<sup>47</sup>

The resemblance does not escape the attention of the gated communities discourse participants. In their exchanges there often appear metaphors such as “ghetto,” “enclave,” “Gulag,” “camp,” and “concentration camp.” In September of 2006 when

a group of activists, protesting against creating in Warsaw a “homogenous paradise of the middle class” which “means hell to the city,” staged a happening called “Alteglobalists close down gated communities,” one could read in their leaflet: “The tendency of better off people to exclude lower classes from the common space by building fences and walls around guarded housing estates destroys social bonds and spoils the character of the city . . . Wherever one looks, sees fenced parking spaces, guards, shelters, steel nets, and ever newer housing ‘camps.’ First new housing estates are walled, then old ones, and then only transportation corridors for cars, protected by steel fences will remain an ordinary sight . . .”<sup>48</sup>

There also appear locations where gated communities are not only marked off by the above listed border correlates but are also isolated from the neighbourhood by areas that could be interpreted either as *frontiers* or *commons*.<sup>49</sup> These are, for instance, wild or half-wild green areas, local transportation axes—lanes and footpaths, unattended patches of land lying on the outer perimeter of the gated communities, and the like. They are also constituted by local elements of urban transportation, petty commerce, and cleaning infrastructure, such as bus shelters, kiosks, footbridges, street billboards, litter bins, and garbage disposal areas.

If they are taken to be frontiers, their “looks” might be indicative of the climate typical of encounters between Us and Them. If they are taken to be commons, their looks might be seen as a register of the status and rules of use of the shared space (non-public and non-private), observed by either of the discursively constructed “housing classes.” Both approaches might give an insight into the cohabitation of the two self-constituted “classes” within the space of the post-communist city. The looks of those frontiers and commons evidence, in general, far-reaching degradation. It not only testifies to antagonistic relations between the two “housing classes” but also signals a lack of broader consensus over the status, functions, and rules of use applying to common, non-privatized space. It goes without saying that the overall impression of collapsed social norms and nonexistent social (and, more narrowly, public) control (anomie) is thus further reinforced. The frontiers/commons seem mercilessly appropriated and abused in the practices.

A report titled “*Stare bloki kontra nowe grodzone osiedle*” shows very well emotions evoked by practices triggered by the discourse.<sup>50</sup> The journalist reports on the looks and rules of use of the commons, quoting people who take either of the sides in the conflict between a new “*Stoneczny Skwer*” (Sunny Square) and an (apparently nameless) old housing estate in one of Warsaw’s districts. Comments added by the journalist to complaints voiced by inhabitants of the non-gated housing estate reveal his empathy toward the critics (“victims”) of gated communities: “They are arrogant and do not pay attention to the neighbourhood . . . They call us ‘those from ugly blocks’—complains an elderly lady. ‘*The beautiful*’ are divided from ‘*the ugly*’ by a *free access green strip*.’ When the new blocks of flats started to be populated, suddenly the litter cabins in the old housing estate ceased to be sufficient to dispose of the litter . . . Then . . . suddenly there appeared to be a shortage of parking space next

to the old blocks of flats.”<sup>51</sup> As in several other cases across Warsaw, the residents of the newly built gated community had the city authorities prohibit parking cars in front of their housing estate so as to have a peaceful and quiet direct neighbourhood. However, the residents felt no constraint to park their own cars on the lanes and sidewalks in front of the old—“ugly”—housing estates. This evoked bad emotions on part of the residents of the ugly blocks of flats.

Even worst emotions were provoked when the gated community residents started to walk their dogs in non-gated green squares pertaining to the old blocks of flats and treat the squares as free-use dog toilets. As explained by Beata Mikołajewska, a chief executive of the Arenda Company, which manages the Sunny Square gated community, the green area within the perimeter of the Sunny Square gated community “is taken care of by a professional gardener. The community had thus decided that dog owners should walk their dogs outside the community walls.” Asked to react to complaints raised by those from the “ugly blocks,” she points out that the “*inhabitants of the old housing estate cannot prohibit anyone to walk in the nearby free access green area because it belongs to the city . . .*”<sup>52</sup>

The analysis conducted so far shows that in the Polish debate on gated communities not only the societal perceptions of social stratification differences are articulated, but also those of quite divergent styles of inhabiting the city/society by the two discursively constituted “housing classes.”<sup>53</sup> By extension, the discourse allows for presentation and coalescence of fundamentally differing sets of norms regulating social life in the situation “after communism.” The sets of norms, attributed to either of the two “housing classes,” apparently stem from radically opposed visions of a desired social order and political regime in the country that coexist within the Polish public opinion.

Based on the collected data, we may claim that two fairly clear-cut visions of a desired social order and political regime in the country after communism might be distinguished. One of them seems to replicate in a rather crude manner most dogmatic tenets of an ideal social order underpinned by neoliberalism.<sup>54</sup> This vision is not unexpectedly both articulated by promoters of gated communities and attributed to them by their critics. The discourse participants express this vision by stressing the fundamental role of the market economy, private ownership, money, and individual liberties as the basic and sufficient criteria to structure the social and political space of the country. Proponents of this vision seem neither interested in nor sympathetic to issues that exceed the perimeter of their individual needs, interests, and preferences.

Typically, the proponents of this vision use arguments such as: “This is a fact, I live in a guarded housing estate . . . I wonder if those alterglobalists realize that there exists something called private ownership . . . we have capitalism here, and this means the cult of ownership . . .” (anika1983).— “The closed housing estate is closed to keep all kinds of the slobbery and the underclass (*swolocz*) outside and to maintain within it peace and quiet and not to let in any filth (*syf*) from the outside as this is the luxury I pay for because such is my whim . . . if you want space buy it for

yourself” (o90)— “I have made my choice and paid for it and any comments are unwelcome because criticizing my choice and the costs it involves you invade my private life and pry into my income” (uyu).

The other, competing vision is less homogenous in terms of its ideological underpinnings. Nonetheless, it might be seen as largely premised on classical social democratic ideals. Its proponents often invoke the Scandinavian model of social order and political regime. On the other hand, however, the vision betrays strong linkages with a traditional ethos of the Polish intelligentsia, associated with the nineteenth century positivist ideals of organic work.<sup>55</sup> Both types of ideological influences make the vision’s proponents emphasize common good, social solidarity, and the dominant role of the intelligentsia as a kind of a patron of other social classes and a guardian of societal/national values.

Yet another stream of ideological influences visible in this vision might be related to the reversal of a stereotype of Eastern European backwardness<sup>56</sup> and, on the other hand, to the impact of some of post-materialist discourses functioning under the umbrella label of alterglobalization.<sup>57</sup> This ideological inspiration is illustrated by interventions appealing to Poles to stop building gated communities and to return instead to “normalcy” and “good civilization.” For example an Internet forum discussant, stressing his personal experience of living in Western Europe, asks in the context his interlocutors and opponents: “Why can’t you built *normal* quarter districts as in other *civilized* cities, with houses facing the street so that it looks like a city . . . ?” (helmigm).<sup>58</sup>

The critics of gated communities highlight also a topos of an ideal Polish national community that has been lost in the new post-communist reality. One of them articulates a typically dichotomized image of a “true” (old, homely) and “false” (new, alienated) Polish national society. Through the image he also constructs antagonistic collective identities and divergent sets of values and life styles seemingly typical of the Us and the Other:

In my old tenant building . . . *everyone knew anyone else* . . . Kids used to play while adults sat on a bench and it was good . . . And in an apartment house flats are bought by yuppies (*krawaciarze*) . . . they get back to their flats and no one even moves to go outside to meet someone, talk to them. *They have acquaintances all over the world but do not even know their neighbour living next door.* When I go to my old tenant building, *I feel at home* and my kid as well because we know everyone and you can talk to anyone there and not as in those apartment where one *gets back to rest as if to a hotel*” (acorns).<sup>59</sup>

Such dichotomist images provoke instantaneous reactions by the promoters of gated communities, who straightforwardly state: “I pay and I demand and am not at all interested in what is going on outside my own backyard. What’s wrong with it? Not everybody has to be interested in the ‘misery of this world.’ Some shit (*maja w dupie to*) on what there is outside of their walls and have the right to do so” (ppo).

They also stress the advantages of the new socioeconomic and political regime in Poland, opposing it sarcastically to the views of those whom they label as “orphans left by the fall of communism”: “Right. It is so much more homely to live in a 30-year block of flats built of big cement slabs . . . where *the majority of neighbours are unemployed alcoholics and pathological families*” (facet 123).<sup>60</sup>

Again, what is registered in the discourse is an attempt to construct dichotomized, antagonistic collective identities based on images of spatial structures into which, however, a temporal dimension is also infiltrated, producing a picture of the “classes,” which are distant from one another both in space and in time. A hegemonic struggle going on in the discourse is also evidenced by the play of the notions of the “good” and “bad,” “norm,” and “pathology.” The gated community “housing class” is self-portrayed as rightful winners, beneficiaries, and supporters of the post-communist transformation—as *the* desired post-communist norm. Those who live outside of gated communities are, in turn, lumped together into the category of wilful losers, degenerate outcasts, and immoral parasites, presumably produced by (and faithful to) the corrupt ideals of the previous political regime.

The articulation of the elements of the two competing visions of social order and political regime is then accompanied in the Polish discourse of gated communities by presentation/constitution of antagonistic values, interests, and identities of contemporary Poles. Although all collective identities are constituted on the basis of the classical dichotomy between Us and Them,<sup>61</sup> in the analyzed discourse the dichotomy assumes the shape of aggressive, mutual exclusion, verging on negation of the right of the other to existence. The particular participants in the gated communities discourse, claiming to be representatives of interests and values shared by either of the two “housing classes” or, alternatively, by the whole Polish Nation, rather often voice their convictions that there is simply *no room in the national space* for their opponents and the anti-values they represent.

Such a conviction appears both among critics and promoters of gated communities. Notably, particular articulations of the conviction are typically anchored in other, nonlocal discourses that are to legitimate claims put forward by the local discourse participants. One of the critics announces then the following appeal to the promoters of gated communities in Poland, clearly making a detour to the topos of “European values”: “*If you like to gate yourselves off, go to America. This is EUROPE here and values different than in the USA.* It is here that we have the smallest social inequalities, the highest standard of living [ . . . ] and no one will gate oneself off here. It is here that we have the true civil society and the voice against the building of such housing estates is its proof” (liberal)<sup>62</sup> In an echo-like manner, one of the proponents of gated communities uses an argument perhaps less sophisticated but equally well grounded in another meta-discourse: “Dude, why don’t you go and see a shrink??? . . . I’ll give you a piece of advice—go to the communist China; you’ll feel at home there” (aga).<sup>63</sup>

The critics of gated communities are in the analyzed discourse as a rule identified as followers of communism. They are taken to be either heirs to old commies (*komuchy*) and/or hobos (*menele*) living as if in the previous political epoch. Alternatively, they are seen as alterglobalist weirdos who want to fraternize with the old and new hobos of all sorts. All of them presumably are frustrated and envious of the successful winners of the Polish transformation: “As usual the radical leftist pigs (*lewactwo*) mercilessly defend their rights” (ak); “there is nothing like block hooligans (*dresiarstwo*)<sup>64</sup> and hobos (*menelstwo*) building the healthy tissue of the city. And there is nothing like justifying with an imbecile ideology the usual human and typically Polish envy” (jood).

A critic who points out social inequalities as a real background to the voluntary flight of rich Poles behind the gates is immediately attacked in an Internet forum as a perverted ideologue: “In his opinion one first must solve the poverty problem in the city and not build walls which will separate the rich from the poor. The *bloody Marxist ideologist*, a pitiful soul which *has contracted the virus of socialism*” (Sarcasm).<sup>65</sup>

The overall attitude of the promoters toward the critics of gated communities in Poland is vividly captured by the following intervention. At the same time, this particular intervention exemplifies the grounds on which the arguments of the critics are usually rejected without any reasoned discussion: “*Any inferiority complexes? Lack of self-esteem? Parents still living as if in the previous system* and not able to notice that the world has changed? Judging by the vocabulary used, the latter, I believe. We the bourgeois (*burżuje*) and high society (*jaśnie państwo*)—are actually people who work hard here and thanks to their work can afford a flat in a location which they like and do not want to share the place with half of the city” (Dzioucha\_z\_lasu).<sup>66</sup>

Arguments stressing radical differences between the competing visions of the sociopolitical order appear also in those interventions that focus on the topos of a “solidary state.” In one of the Internet-based debates, this topos was invoked by a critic who presented the political norms and social practices identified with Sweden as a model to follow in the post-communist Poland. A number of reactions to his argument, highlighting the need to introduce a fairer distribution of benefits and costs of the Polish post-communist transformation, illustrate quite well the tenor of the ideological exchange between the critics and the promoters: “A solidary state—since the poor are beaten up and abused, let the rich be beaten up and abused, too—prohibit to buy flats in guarded and walled estates and liquidate the private security providers as well” (N)—“And a solidary state where no one is beaten up and abused cannot be pictured in your little mind of course, can it? For it would require increased public investments and a fairer distribution which would affect income of yours and of other capitalist boars similar to you, so it is clear that you think it is impossible” (tal).

Articulating social and political antagonisms focused on interpretations of gated communities as a socio-spatial practice emerged in the wake of the post-communist transformation, implemented here and now, the Polish discourse participants articulate then simultaneously more general values, interest, and affiliations, important from the

vantage point of their preferred visions of the Polish society, the state, and the nation. In the discourse, which initially could seem apolitical and very concrete, they thus also constitute competing expectations regarding the social, economic, and political rules of the game in Poland after communism. It is quite clear—both from the analysis of the argumentation strategies and the very aggressive linguistic tools deployed by most of the discourse participants—that the expectations and claims legitimating them are presented by the antagonists as exclusive “candidates for Truth.”

In other words, it is quite clear that no shared “credible principle upon which to read past, present, and future events, and capture people’s hearts and minds” emerges from the exchanges.<sup>67</sup> No outline of a holistic social/political myth, encompassing both “housing classes” is articulated in/through the Polish discourse of gated communities, either. The argumentation strategies and discursive stigmatizations deployed by representatives of both sides of the discursive exchange act as mechanisms to exclude rather than integrate the antagonists in the sphere of the legitimate/commensurable—just as walls and gates erected around the housing estates serve to fend them off ordered/secure space.

This impression is straightforwardly reconfirmed by mutually incompatible conceptions of society emerging from the analyzed discourse. While both sides explicitly reject linkages with real socialism and its compromised conception of society, the conceptions of civil society that they present as desirable vividly clash. In another polemic with a critic, a promoter of gated communities in Poland defends for example the idea of gating private enclaves within the city with an argument that smacks of some knowledge of Alexis de Tocqueville’s rhetoric. He claims that “civil society is exactly when citizens who felt need gathered in one location<sup>68</sup> and my child goes out and plays safely in the playground. Can you say the same about your child in an open access housing estate?” (o90).

The critic’s reply reveals a diametrically different (smacking of traditionally Polish, intelligentsia-driven) conception of civil society. He responds: “You did make me laugh—calling a closed estate civil society is a typically *nouveau riche*—rural backwater thing (*burackie*), Orwellian (if you know what it means) standing the issue on its head. People who live there are a bunch of egoists who do not give a damn about what is going on in their city because they live by the rule ‘I pay and I demand and apart from this leave me all alone’” (ja). In other words, it is again made clear by the exchange participants that no outline of a holistic, consensual political myth, encompassing both self-constituted “housing classes” has been articulated in/through the Polish discourse of gated communities.

## Conclusion

In the present article we have analyzed a controversy surrounding the phenomenon of gated communities in contemporary Poland, treating it predominantly as

lenses through which an insight into societal perceptions of post-communist transformation might be derived. The conflict-ridden appearance of the debate provided us with an opportunity to explore some of the heuristic advantages of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse in analyses and interpretations of social and political transformations. Following a presentation of this analytical framework, we thus focused on a local debate of gated communities, including an overview and interpretation of material-symbolic markers (correlates) typical of the spatial form in contemporary Poland.

We found out that gated communities appear to all of the discussants as a radically novel socio-spatial form that is disrupting the existing structure of the social/public space in the country. Their appearance seems also to challenge the rules that have regulated so far and/or in the past(s) the functioning of the social/public space in the Polish society. The attempted change is primarily (although not exclusively) interpreted as an innovation emerging in the wake of the systemic transformation initiated in 1989. As such, it provokes an antagonistic struggle not only over legitimacy of the new rules regulating the spatial but also over legitimacy of the whole process of post-communist transformation and over desirability of the new social-political order emerging in its wake.

The discursive construction of antagonistic collective identities has been associated inter alia with the putting forward of dichotomist claims reflecting mutually exclusive visions of a desired social and political order in the country after communism. These spontaneous, both powerful and aggressive articulations may be interpreted as expressions of deeply rooted societal perceptions regarding the il/legitimate existence of unbridgeable socioeconomic and political cleavages in the post-communist Poland. They seem also to evidence an absence of a total social/political myth, able to command a consensus at the level of the whole society/nation. The clash of mutually exclusive articulations, verging on undemocratic claims that deny the right of existence to one's discursive opponents might signal that the struggle for a hegemonic political closure of the Polish systemic transformation is still—almost twenty years after its beginning—far from finished.

## Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," retrieved 2 February 2007, from <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/>.
2. Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis. Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
3. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992).
4. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, 1999).
5. Georg Glasze et al., "Introduction: Global and Local Perspectives on the Rise of Private Neighbourhoods," in *Private Cities. Global and Local Perspectives*, eds. Georg Glasze et al. (London, New York: Routledge & Francis Taylor, 2006): 1-8.
6. Dariusz Bartoszewicz, "Berlińczyk bada warszawskie osiedla zamknięte," *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2004, retrieved 10 December 2006, from <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,34862,2370444.html>; Dariusz

Bartoszewicz et al. "Zamknięte osiedla, czyli getta dla bogatych," *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2005, retrieved 10 December 2006, from <http://www.gazetawyborcza.pl/1,75248,2785902.html>; Mariusz Czubaj, "Polska plotem podzielona," *Polityka* 30, 30 July 2005: 4-20.

7. A "Warsaw" issue of *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* 4, no. 26 (2006); Katarzyna Zaborska, "Osiedla za murem—bezpieczne domy szczęśliwych ludzi? (zaproszenie na wykład)," *PR News* 26 (April 2006), retrieved 8 January 2006, from <http://www.tf.pl/view.php?art=24914>.

8. Krystyna Kłosek-Kozłowska, "Miasto enklaw strzeżonych," n.d., retrieved 10 December 2006, from <http://www.urbanista.pl/arch/5705.php>; Krzysztof Nawratek, "Wspólnota pogardy. A może strzeżone osiedla nie są takie złe?" retrieved 10 December 2006, from [architekci.pl/architektura/index.php?id\\_dzialu=77&id\\_fragment=2207&od=0](http://architekci.pl/architektura/index.php?id_dzialu=77&id_fragment=2207&od=0).

9. The contributions in theme issues of *Environment and Planning B*, 2002 B, 29, no. 3; *Geographica Helvetica* 58, no. 4 (2003); and *Housing Studies* 20, no. 2 (2005).

10. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989). It might be surmised that the public opinion represented by the Polish Internet users is roughly equivalent to the new middle class because of relatively high prices for the Internet provision and its concentration in big cities—cf. Jonak Łukasz et al., *Re: internet – społeczne aspekty medium. Polskie konteksty i interpretacje* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2006). Notably, the amount and "quality" of vulgarities appearing in the utterances are rather striking and should become an object of a separate analysis.

11. Dariusz Bartoszewicz, "Alterglobaliści zamykają grodzone osiedla," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2006, retrieved 8 January 2007, from <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,34862,3614453.html>; "Warszawa: Anarchiści przeciw strzeżonym osiedlom," retrieved 8 January 2007, from <http://pl.indymedia.org/pl/2006/09/23055.shtml>.

12. Although the categories of social/public/private space are not discussed in detail in the article, it needs to be noticed that they loom at the background of the discursive battles over gated communities in Poland just as elsewhere (cf. Glasze et al., *Private Cities*). In the Polish case there is, however, some additional ambiguity and tension inscribed in the issue that stem from the still collectively remembered quasi-communitarian use of the term "social" as opposed to both "public" (meaning state) and "private" during the state socialist period.

13. Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalizacja i co z tego dla ludzi wynika* (Warszawa: PIW, 2000); David Newman, "Borders and Bordering: Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2, (May 2006): 171-186.

14. Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: Vol. I The Rise of the Network Society; Vol. II The Power of Identity; Vol. III The End of Millennium* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); John Urry, "Sociology of Time and Space," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory. Second Edition*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

15. Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994); Carraig O'Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics. The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: Borderlines 6, 1996); Sebastian Lentz, "More Gates, Less Community," in *Private Cities. Global and Local Perspectives*, eds. Georg Glasze et al. (London, New York: Routledge& Francis Taylor, 2006): 209.

16. James Q. Wilson et al., "Broken Windows. The Police and Neighbourhood Safety," *The Atlantic Monthly* 249, no. 3 (1982): 29-38; Krzysztof Nawratek, *Ideologie w przestrzeni. Próby demistyfikacji* (Kraków: Universitas, 2005).

17. Ernesto Laclau et al., *Hegemony and the Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

18. Georg Glasze et al. *Diskurs-Stadt-Kriminalität. Städtische (Un-)Sicherheiten aus der Perspektive von Stadtforschung und Kriminalgeographie* (Bielefeld:[transcript] Verlag, 2005), 44; cf. also Anna Gąsior-Niemiec, *(New) Regionalism in Poland: Europeanization and Myth-making* (unpublished PhD dissertation, submitted at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, 2003: ch. IV and V).

19. David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000); Laclau et al., *Hegemony*; Philips et al., *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002); Jacob Torfing, "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics. Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David Howarth et al. (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2004): 1-31.
20. Glasze et al. *Diskurs*, 41.
21. Torfing, "Discourse Theory," 9.
22. Glasze et al. *Diskurs*, 44.
23. Ernesto Laclau, "Dyskurs," in *Przewodnik po współczesnej filozofii politycznej*, eds. Robert E. Goodin et al. (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 2002): 555.
24. Torfing, "Discourse Theory," 14; cf. Laclau, "Discourse," 555; Laclau et al. *Hegemony*, ch. 3.
25. Howarth, *Discourse*, 106-107; Annika Mattissek, "Diskursive Konstitution von Sicherheit im öffentlichen Raum am Beispiel Frankfurt am Main," in Glasze et al., *Diskurs*, 105-136; Philips et al., *Discourse Analysis*, 42-43.
26. Georg Glasze, "Die Diskurstheorie nach Laclau und Mouffe," (a chapter from a habilitation dissertation submitted at the Department of Geography, University of Mainz, 2008).
27. Georg Glasze et al., "Sprachorientierte Forschungsansätze in der Humangeographie nach dem linguistic turn," *Geographische Zeitschrift* (2008, forthcoming).
28. Howarth, *Discourse*, 105-109; Laclau et al., *Hegemony*, 115; Mattissek, "Diskursive Konstitution," 117-130; Philips et al., *Discourse Analysis*, 40-43.
29. Newman, "Borders;" Mattissek, "Diskursive Konstitution."
30. Torfing, "Discourse Theory," 16; David Howarth, "Applying Discourse Theory: The Method of Articulation," in Howarth et al., *Discourse Theory*, 316-349.
31. Torfing, "Discourse Theory," 15; Philips et al., *Discourse Analysis*, 38-40.
32. Philips et al., *Discourse Analysis*, 46; cf. also Newman, "Borders," 176-177.
33. Czubaj, "Polska plotem," Bohdan Jałowiecki, "Czy Warszawa staje się miastem Trzeciego Świata?" *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* 4, 26 (2006): 48-60; Bohdan Jałowiecki et al., "Klasa metropolitalna w przestrzeni Warszawy," in *Spoleczna mapa Warszawy. Interdyscyplinarne studium metropolii warszawskiej*, eds. Janusz Grzelak et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2004): 132-146; Henrik Werth, "Transformation zur geschlossenen Stadt? Geschlossene Wohnkomplexe in Polens Hauptstadt Warschau," *Europa Regional* 13, no. 4 (2005): 155-161. A paper by Anna Gąsior-Niemiec et al., "Grodzenie miasta – casus Warszawy," *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* 4, no. 30 (2007): 5-30 contains a thorough presentation and discussion of the types of gated communities found in Warsaw, while for instance Marta Dymnicka, "Osiedla za bramą a ciągłość kulturowa i społeczna w kształtowaniu przestrzeni miejskiej," in *Gettoizacja polskiej przestrzeni miejskiej*, eds. Bohdan Jałowiecki et al. (Warszawa: Academica Wydawnictwo SWPS, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2007): 53-72; and Maria Lewicka et al. "Osiedla zamknięte – czy istnieje alternatywa?" *Kolokwia Psychologiczne*, 16 (2007): 135-152 offer succinct overviews of typologies found in scientific literature on the subject.
34. Lewicka et al., "Osiedla zamknięte."
35. Jałowiecki et al., "Klasa metropolitalna," 133-138; Lewicka et al., "Osiedla zamknięte"; cf. a Russian case study in Lentz, "More Gates," 206-209.
36. Krystyna Iglicka et al., "Cudzoziemscy specjaliści w aglomeracji warszawskiej," In *Spoleczna mapa Warszawy*, eds. J. Grzelak et al., 368-388; cf. also Lentz, "More Gates," 209-210, 215.
37. A topographic map of Warsaw by Werth, showing the spatial distribution of gated communities as of 2004 is available at <http://eela1.blox.pl/html/1310721,262146,14,15.html?10,2004>; see also a topographic map of Warsaw's district of Ursynów in Gąsior-Niemiec et al., "Grodzenie miasta," 23.
38. The Varsovian "Marina Mokotów" housing estate is the most known/infamous of such large gated housing estates, stretching over thirty-four hectares in the middle of the centrally located district of Mokotów.

39. Bohdan Jałowicki, "Fragmentacja i prywatyzacja przestrzeni," in Jałowicki et al. *Gettoizacja*, 22; cf. also Bartoszewicz, "Berlińczyk bada"; Georg Glasze et al., "Varsovie – Logement sécurisé: un marché en hausse," *Urbanisme* 337 (2004): 61-63; Czubaj, "Polska plotem"; Gąsior-Niemiec et al., "Grodzenie miasta"; Bohdan Jałowicki, "Czy Warszawa staje się"; Tatiana Klonowicz et al., "Warszawiaków powody do szczęścia," in Grzelak et al., *Spoleczna mapa Warszawy*, 63-82.

40. The use of the term "class" is in the article divorced from the classical Marxist connotations. Rather, it follows Laclau and Mouffe's reinterpretation of the concept as discussed in Matissek, "Diskursive Konstitution," 115-116. Moreover, our use of the term "housing classes" is only vaguely related to the original concept by John Rex as discussed for example in John Rex et al., *Race, Community and Conflict* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

41. Cichomski, "Zróżnicowania społeczne mieszkańców Warszawy w perspektywie porównawczej," in Grzelak et al., *Spoleczna mapa Warszawy*, 11-27.

42. Jacek Fenderson quoted in Bartoszewicz, "Alterglobaliści zamykają."

43. In the parentheses following quotations, nicknames used by an Internet forum discussants are provided. The quotations are taken from exchanges registered at an Internet forum affiliated at *Gazeta Wýborcza* that were retrieved 10 April 2007, from <http://szukaj.gazeta.pl/szukaj/0,52000.html?slowo=grodzenie>. The following exchanges were analysed in detail: "Rajskie życie w tzw. apartamentowcach"; "A oto efekty mieszkania w apartamentowcu"; "Totalny bezsens"; "życie w tzw. apartamentowcach"; "Ja jestem przeciw grodzonym osiedlom, ale . . ."; "A dlaczego miasto wygląda jak kolchoz????"; "Alterglobaliści zamykają grodzone osiedla"; "Typowa wiejska mentalność . . ."; "Zawsze dozorczy zamykali na noc brame!"; "Lewacy! Tacy jesteście <<tolerancyjni>>?"; "Grodzone osiedla — policzek dla etosu Solidarności"; "Grodzone osiedla — getta klasy średniej"; "Kontrola na bramce"; "Ja jestem uczulony na zapach moczu"; "Motloch zazdrości." A full database of the analyzed exchanges is available from the authors of this article.

44. Terms in italics, put in parentheses within the quotations, are those Polish vernacular (usually extremely derogative) expressions that have no exact equivalent in English.

45. Notably, such collective images are further reinforced in social science literature: cf. Jałowicki, "Fragmentacja"; Jałowicki et al. "Klasa metropolitalna."

46. Gąsior-Niemiec et al., "Grodzenie miasta."

47. Davis, *City of Quartz*.

48. "Warszawa: Anarchiści"; cf. Klonowicz et al., "Warszawiaków powody," 74-77; Nawratek, *Ideologie w przestrzeni*, 155-167.

49. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

50. "Stare bloki kontra nowe grodzone osiedle," retrieved 10 December 2006 from [www.neww.org.pl/pl.php/news/news/1.html?&nw=2719&re=1](http://www.neww.org.pl/pl.php/news/news/1.html?&nw=2719&re=1).

51. Ibid. Italics added by authors.

52. Ibid. Italics added by authors.

53. A Russian case study by Lentz, "More Gates."

54. Harvey, *A Brief History*.

55. "Andrzej Walicki w rozmowie z Krytyką Polityczną: Społeczeństwo bez mózgu i sumienia?" *Krytyka Polityczna*, no. 1 (Summer 2002): 57-83.

56. Ewa Thompson, "W kolejce po aprobatę. Kolonialna mentalność polskich elit," *Europa Tygodnik Idei (Dziennik)* 180, no. 37 (16 September 2007): 8-9.

57. Artur Domosławski, "Globalizacja i kontestacja," in *Globalizacja i co dalej?*, ed. Stefan Amsterdamski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2004): 71-84.

58. Italics added by authors.

59. Italics added by authors.

60. Italics added by authors.

61. Newman, "Borders," 176.

62. Italics added by authors.

63. The use of the communist meta-discourse exemplified by contemporary China betrays, of course, both ignorance and ideological ardour on part of aga.

64. The term *block hooligans* is used as a rough English equivalent of the Polish vernacular *blokersi* referring to dislodged youth from pathological families typically inhabiting some of the poorer, working class post-state-socialist neighborhoods.

65. Italics added by authors.

66. Italics added by authors.

67. Torfing, "Discourse Theory," 15.

68. That is, they gathered to build a wall around their housing estate.

**Anna Çaşior-Niemiec** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Rzeszów in Poland. Her interests lie in the fields of political sociology and sociology of space, with current research projects focusing mainly on new modes of governance in post-communist countries. Before coming to Rzeszów, she was a research associate at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences and a project coordinator at the National Centre for Research and Development in Warsaw.

**Georg Glasze** is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Geography at the University of Mainz in Germany. His research interests lie in urban studies (recent projects: rise of new forms of private urban governance like BIDs and private residential neighbourhoods; discourses of urban insecurities in an international comparison), political/cultural geography and on social/political theories in human geography (especially discourse theory in human geography).

**Robert Pütz** is Professor of Human Geography in the Department of Human Geography at the University of Frankfurt an main. His main interest revolves around contemporary economic and social geographies in metropolitan areas. Before coming to Frankfurt in 2004, he was Professor of Social Geography at the University of Osnabrück.