

Social and economic analysis of the Gated Communities in Moscow

Through research done at the University of Lausanne, academia in the Geneva Lake area has become a pole of competence in the study of gentrification, polarization, and fragmentation of spaces, as well as the standardization both of residential preferences and modes of life.

One way the urban dynamics mentioned above materialize is through **residential segregation**. In concrete terms, residential segregation refers to residential areas whose essential discriminatory features are strictly controlled entrances and a management system more autonomous than their surrounding areas, most notably through the provision of specialized services. Following Blakely's & Snyder's typology, these residential areas can be lifestyle communities (senior citizens, leisure communities built around golf courses, etc.), prestige communities (elite housing estates), or security zone communities (enclosed spaces).

In Switzerland, residential segregation often takes on the form of projects – be they completed or not – of development of security zone neighborhoods, enclosed holiday housing estates, or exclusive hotel complexes. At first glance, these projects may seem to stem from a long tradition, and yet their appearance on the Swiss landscape is actually quite recent. Hence, because of little or no local knowledge on residential segregation, Swiss analysts face major methodological hurdles when trying to assess the projects' financial packages and their possible social, economic, and environmental impacts. Attempts at understanding the actors' representations and expectations are equally daunting.

In this respect, Russian research is much better equipped. As a matter of fact, land capitalism has been thoroughly studied in Russia not only from the perspective of gated communities, particularly in the Moscow area, but also within the larger analytical framework of the modus operandi of real estate groups – some of which are active in Switzerland – that carry on these projects.

Working with the Russian Academy of Science, the research questions the theoretical frame of reference, evaluation methods, and monitoring and controlling methods we should use for creating the conditions, if not for expertise, at least for a better understanding of the social, economic, and land-based causes and effects of the need for security and community-based withdrawal.

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