THE ROLE OF DEVELOPERS IN THE FORMATION OF GATED COMMUNITIES IN PRAGUE

TOMÁŠ BRABEC, BRANISLAV MACHALA

Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Czechia

ABSTRACT

Existing literature on the formation of gated communities primarily focuses on the demand side. Mainstream theories pay attention to the fear of crime or social prestige. However, little attention has been paid to the role of supply factors. Prague, as a post-socialist city, has experienced a rapid growth of gated communities in recent years. This paper identifies the main driving forces behind the creation of gated communities in Prague. Our empirical research demonstrates that the creation of gated communities was not primarily initiated from supply side. We argue that the role of developers was critical in the formation of gated communities in Prague during the 2000s.

Keywords: Gated communities, Prague, Czechia, developers, postsocialist city

1. Introduction

This article discusses the role of developers in the emergence of gated communities in Czechia, with a dominant focus on Prague's residential market. The results of our research suggest that the neglected role of developers in literature may lead to an underestimation of the role of supply factors in the socio-spatial adaptation of the post-socialist city under capitalist conditions. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to investigate the role of developers in the creation of gated communities, and to offer an explanation of the main driving forces, which stood behind the significant increase of gated communities in Prague during the first decade of the new millennium.

One of the main research questions related to gated communities is to clarify the cause of their emergence. The most frequently mentioned causes of their origin include fear of crime, ambitions to raise one's social status or popularization of neoliberal economics (Cséfalvay, Webster 2012). Literature thus concentrates on the demand side and highlights the role of residents (Blakely, Snyder 1997; Low 2003; Xu, Yang 2008). However, we believe that one of the main driving forces behind gated communities in Central and Eastern European countries is the role of the development industry. Based on our research we propose that the supply side played a critical role in the creation of gated communities in Prague during the investigated time period.

In this paper we understand by gated communities residential objects which consist of at least two separated residential houses (condominiums, family houses, block of flats), which are fenced or access into or through such properties can be regulated by private security agencies. These objects usually have special covenants and restrictions for their inhabitants and people who neither reside nor have approval to enter cannot enter without authority (Blakely, Snyder 1997; Atkinson, Blandy 2005).

The gated community concept that originated in the USA is significantly different from those we find in post-socialist cities of Central and Eastern Europe. In the USA, Latin America or South Africa gated communities are strongly separated by high walls. The ones in Central and Easter Europe are smaller and the character of separation is not so severe. The walls are not always of great height; security agencies are sometimes completely missing (Hegedűs 2009). We suggest, however, that 'gated community' is a suitable term for enclosed housing in post-socialist cities and it does not contradict the most commonly used definitions (Blakely, Snyder 1997; Atkinson, Blandy 2005).

The term is widely accepted and used for communities in residential formations, which separate themselves from the neighbouring environment. Now, we may speculate to what extent or if at all in post-socialist context gated communities really are communities. Moreover, we know that in the case of Prague the vast majority of existing gated communities are newly built. Therefore, inner social integration, which turns out to be a community, is not necessary implied. However, the built up environment in the form of gated communities persists in urban milieu long enough to give sufficient preconditions, which contribute to creation of integrated communities. From the long-term perspective we therefore prefer to accept the term gated communities, in contrast to gated properties, in order to avoid misunderstandings in international discourse, overemphasis of local temporary peculiarities, and with the prediction that we expect that in such residential formations the creation of communities can be expected.

The article is divided into three main sections. Firstly, the article discusses the theoretical approaches to the origin of gated communities. The second section focuses on the role and influence of developers in the creation of the city environment. In the third part, we discuss the causes of gated community origin in Prague and the main driving force behind their quantitative growth. It is important to underline that in the article we focus primarily on the capital city of Czechia and its hinterland, as the majority of gated communities are concentrated in Prague.

2. Causes of and conditions for the emergence of gated communities

There are several explanations of the development of gated communities (e.g. Blakely, Snyder 1997; Cséfalvay 2011; Cséfalvay, Webster 2012; Low 2003; Xu, Yang 2008), but we should distinguish between specific causes and general conditions of the emergence of gated communities. While the conditions for the origin of gated communities are practically universal all over the world, e.g. various processes of post-industrial transformation such as the internationalization of capital and work forces, technological advance, growing insecurity, social polarization, innovative economics, globalization of the real estate market or neoliberal policy, the causes of origin are different in distinct geographical locations and it is impossible to form a universal theory for them (Hirt, Petrović 2011; Low 2003).

People move to gated communities because they have a fear of crime, related either to violence or property and they feel that enclosed or guarded homes are safer (Blakely, Snyder 1998; Landman 2000; Low 2003). In USA, Latin America or Africa – the fear of crime and violence is constantly growing. People fear the growing numbers of poor, immigrants, ethnic minorities and terrorists (Low 2003). Residents assume that a secure gated community environment will protect them from the world full of malignancy and violence (Blakely, Snyder 1997). This approach is very popular in countries with a high crime rate such as South Africa (Landman, Schönteich 2002), USA (Blakely, Snyder 1998) or Latin America (Roitman 2005; Durington 2006). The fear of crime is an important factor in gated community origin, but it can hardly be the only factor. Gated communities exist also in times of low crime occurrence (Blakely, Snyder 1997) and we can find them in places with relatively low crime rates (eg. Chile, rich countries of the Middle East or Western, Central and Eastern Europe). There is also an opposite situation – countries with higher crime rates, but with no occurrence of gated communities.

Another often mentioned cause of the origin of gated communities is the neoliberal theory of club goods, which explains their origin by the economic rationality of all involved participants (Glasze 2005; Webster 2001). According to this theory, gated communities are advantageous for local authorities that can profit from them. The main advantage is the liberation from public property and general services provision, such as maintenance of roads and sidewalks, snow plowing or securing safety (Glasze 2005). Local administration supports new residential construction because it does not have to bear the expenses for the construction of infrastructure and the construction raises the municipal income from concentrating socially strong tax payers (Le Goix 2005). Life in gated communities brings many positives for their residents. They use private administration, which in many aspects can be more effective than the local administration and they also profit from utilizing common facilities (swimming pool, tennis court). They feel safer here. The developers can profit from a successful project. The problem of the club goods theory is its inability to explain why gated communities expanded in the last two or three decades and only in some countries (Cséfalvay 2011). One of the theories might be that using club goods is directly connected to neoliberal politics preaching maximal economic freedom and enabling economically rational behavior for all individuals. Some other reasons for moving into gated communities are: improving social status (Blakely, Snyder 1997; Kajdanek 2009), securing better privacy with no outside cars, strange people or animals despoiling the surroundings (Blakely, Snyder 1997; Le Goix 2005). Residents are also attracted to gated communities by the social coexistence factor (Blakely, Snyder 1997) or sharing their living surroundings with equals. The origin of gated communities can be also understood as an escape behind the fences from all problems of the city and society (Atkinson, Blandy 2005). Another motivation for buying an enclosed and guarded property is its higher probability of revenue (Atkinson, Blandy 2005). Nowadays, people buy real estate as an investment and gated communities are safe (or at least people feel that it is the safest available option) from devaluation.

Only a few authors pay attention to the fact that gated communities can be driven by developers (Low 2003; Leisch 2002). However, developers can play a significant role in the origin of gated communities and therefore they are a relevant subject for a deeper analysis and understanding of their influence on these properties. In contemporary economics, innovations are the crucial factor to success and this refers also to the real estate market. Builders are under constant pressure to come up with new products. Although housing cannot be considered a frequent commodity (unlike a car or a telephone) it still requires innovation – such as launching gated communities on the residential market.

3. The influence of developers on urban environment

With the city changing from a place of production into a place of consumption, the role of demand and supply has changed. Satisfying necessary housing needs has been replaced by individual expectations, wishes and desires of customers that want to live in a place that fulfills their requirements. This change from satisfying needs to fulfilling desires has significantly strengthened the role of developers because the needs are always limited but wishes and desires are limitless (Coiacetto 2007a). The change was enabled by the modern production system, which uses sophisticated tools to convince people to buy or more precisely live in such districts and buildings that they in fact cannot afford (Ambrose 1994). The development industry plays an important role in urban development, in creation of new areas, influencing the value of land and creation of social and spatial city structure. Harvey (1975 quoted in Coiacetto 2007b) argues that the formation of social and spatial differentiation is rather created by a capitalist way of production than by autonomic spontaneous preferences of people. Coiacetto (2007b) summarized the role of developers in new development in the following points:

1. They have the ability to create a new community by organizing social events.
2. The key role of developers is to create an urbanized environment.
3. Development creates new space, which is mostly relevant to social homogeneity as a result of market specification and segmentation.

Developers like important real estate players make decisions, which emanate from market analyses, risk rates, financial demands, perception and opportunities. With every project the developer has to evaluate factors influencing investments, such as location, financial availability, land use permissions and marketing, while the goal to maximize profits remains (Ambrose 1994). The same applies to other areas of the economy, to be capable of competing means to be specialized. Smaller developers are usually more flexible and able to approach the customers more individually. On the other hand, bigger developers focus on big projects where they are able to apply mechanized procedures and volume effectiveness with larger projects. New players have a difficult position trying to fight the competition of new and well-established developers on the market. If the goal of a new developer is to strengthen his position in the market, then as a result of limited access to land he is forced to overpay for land and increase the price of the final product (see e.g. Coiacetto 2007b).

The role of marketing in development has gained importance with the active endeavor of developers to maximize their profits by increasing the credit of owned land. It is common for the developer to own the lot first and only then look for opportunity on the market (Coiacetto 2007b). For that reason, project marketing becomes more relevant, because it increases the prestige of the area and so the price (referring to strong characteristics of the project: quality of material, design, lifestyle etc.). Developers actively influence the price of the land with their marketing strategy in relation to the target group intended for the project. Marketing creates desires and expectations from customers and is a powerful tool influencing the preferences of the customer. Branding is used by developers to effectively "cover" the value of the area, while demand is aimed at the product instead of the location (Coiacetto 2007a); development and associating new projects with the lifestyle of its future customers is a part of actively influencing consumers' expectations. Branding of individual gated communities (Residence, Villa, Park) tries to emphasize the individuality and luxuriousness of the project itself, distracting the focus from the neighborhood. To distract the customers from neighborhood and to be able to raise the capital price per unit, developers use physical separation, active creation and emphasize the strengths of the project.

The active role of the developers in the urban space is also visible in the socio-spatial structure of the city. Coiacetto (2006) drew attention to the segmentation of selected groups of customers by the developers, which creates social homogeneity in residential areas. It is created by aiming the marketing strategy at a selected group of customers for which the residential area is created. However, it doesn't have to be income segmentation, but it can be based on for example lifestyle, life cycle phase, sexual orientation and career. Developers do not only create the urban area, they also form its social structure and while the new buildings form only a small part of all real estate, their influence on the actual market with their specific segmentation characteristics is much broader (Ball 1983; Healey 1998; Coiacetto 2007a).

4. Methodology

The role of developers in gated communities is analyzed through stories of the development of individual gated communities. Additionally, we describe the evolution of construction, spatial distribution and partly also social structure of gated communities in Prague and Czechia. For these purposes we have created a database of all gated communities within Czechia. Although we focus primarily on Prague, for the argument it is also important to evaluate the development of construction and the spatial distribution of gated communities in the whole of Czechia. This database was created by a content analysis of advertising materials from developers, real estate advertising and web pages and it contains all gated community objects with the following characteristics – name, location, name of the developer (investor), date of construction, number of housing units, average price of a housing unit per square meter, degree of physical separation (if it is a guarded or fenced area). The content analysis was updated with a field survey of almost every object, which confirmed whether individual objects really match all the criteria of a gated community or not. The database has been created continuously from 2007 and updated annually (mostly with information based on gated communities outside of Prague).

We used the database to evaluate the development of construction and spatial distribution of gated communities in Czechia and also for categorization of developers according to their scale (number of projects) into small and large. The rough categorization between small and large developers helps to distinguish between the more fragile real estate cycles and project oriented developers and those more established and procedurally mechanized large-scale developers. A clear line in such a division is hard to define. We decided to make the division according to number of realized projects at 10, which created a group of 8 big developers and 33 small ones. However, it became obvious also from interviews and documents (Ekospol 2013) that there are three big players (Central Group, Finep, Ekospol) in the Prague real estate market, which in recent years have controlled nearly half of the market.

Additionally, we have created a typology of Prague's gated communities that was used for the selection of case studies. According to the created database, we found a total of 59 residential projects with elements of gated communities (fenced, guarded). However, there is a significant internal heterogeneity, so for purposes of this article we decided to focus only on one type of gated community. These are gated communities with the highest physical separation – fenced and guarded residential objects, whose physical separation is clearly visible and physically are similar to those we know from the U.S., Latin America or South Africa. We found 20 such projects, for which we created a typology, according to available characteristics. We roughly divided the projects according to their age (year of construction) into old and new ones (the cut off year was 2006), according to their average price for luxury gated communities and less luxurious (the cut off amount was established at 100,000 CZK per m^2, which is typically used to define luxury real estate) by the size of the large and smaller (100 housing units) and different types of land on the horizontal (houses) and vertical (apartment buildings). Out of these four characteristics we could create a maximum of 16 types. However, in Prague we found five types of gated communities out of 16 theoretically possible and we could neglect the size of the object as this characteristic played a negligible role.

The interviewed developers reflected previously mentioned categorization of gated communities into five types. We therefore did five different interviews with developers representing created typology. During the interviews we tried to investigate the origin of the gated communities: what were the main reasons for designing the project as enclosed or guarded; to what extent these characteristics are requested from the demand side; how strong are the relations between gated community builders and their occupants; and to what extent can gated communities be considered as successful projects in comparison to other residential estates.

Because we wanted to verify information we used triangulation; we conducted interviews with professionals from Prague's real estate market, real estate agents and representatives of local administration (all together 7 interviews). Experts were selected primarily according to recommendations we got. During the summer 2013, 12 interviews with experts took place. Additionally, we conducted inquiries among residents of one of the gated communities in Prague. All together, we asked 20 respondents (between May and June 2009) how important was for them the fact that the project is fenced and guarded. However, the main emphasis of our research was on the development industry.

5. The development and spatial distribution of gated communities in Czechia

The first gated communities in Czechia started in Prague in the 1990s with the construction of Malá Šárka and Trinity Garden. These projects were aimed mainly at rich foreigners. After the revolution in 1989, a large number of qualified foreigners with high incomes from Western Europe started to move to Czechia, working as managers or employees of international companies (Sýkora 2001). These foreigners had little or no information about the security situation in Prague but they required higher privacy standards, as stressed by one of our respondents (a real estate agent):

> At the beginning the market evolved in a certain way, these foreigners were coming to the Czech Republic and in many cases they looked for safety, because they were new. The Czech Republic as a country also went through development and changes. Those clients had a little feeling that they will be in a safer environment there.
> Prague, 23. 7. 2012

The fact that the foreigners wanted to live in a closed neighborhood was also of great influence. We encounter such cases also in other countries, when foreign employees from western countries require a certain standard of living. These are mainly countries like Saudi Arabia (Glasze 2006) or China (Wu, Webber 2004), where we can find greater cultural differences in comparison with western standards. Further construction was undertaken in 2002. These were always very luxurious projects made for well off Czechs and foreigners. The year 2004 brought significant changes, the new construction of gated communities started to be accessible to less wealthy citizens. Since 2007 gated communities have slowly become standard on the real estate market in Prague. From this time

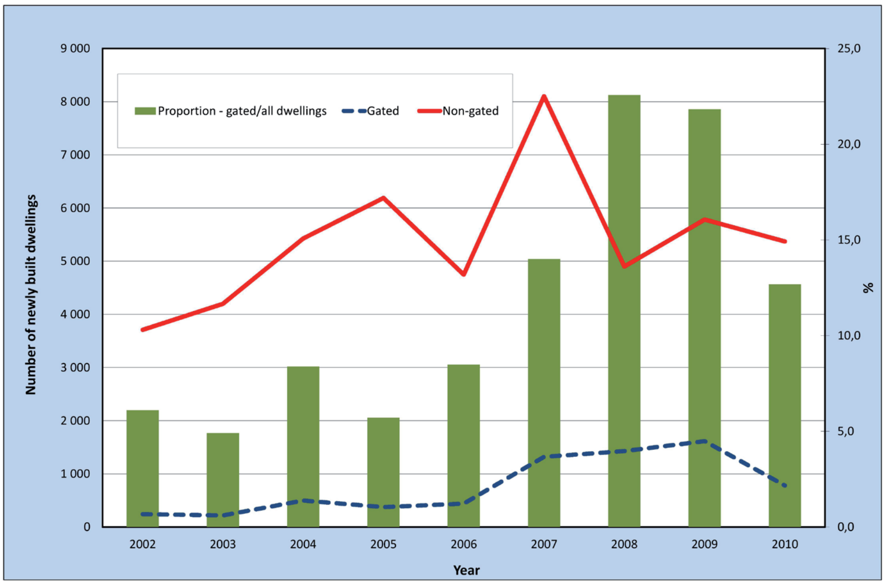

Fig. 1 Housing construction in Prague (2002–2010).
Source: own research; Bytová výstavba v územích České republiky v letech 1997–2011 Czech statistical office (2013)

Fig. 2 Territorial distributions of gated communities in Czechia, 2012.
Source: own research

15–22% of all newly built residential properties in Prague contains elements of gated communities (Figure 1). The majority of the new projects are designed in a less pompous way than the first gated communities in Prague. In total, the prices of properties in gated communities are still higher than in non-closed residential complexes. However, the differences between prices are not too high (see Kolarikova 2010). Since 2008, gated communities have also been constructed in other parts of Czechia.

Gated communities occur in various parts of Czechia (Figure 2). The highest occurrence is in Prague and its surroundings. Overall, we have identified 59 residential areas in Prague, which can be considered gated communities. Another 14 can be found in the remaining area of Czechia (5 of them are in the suburban area of Prague). Another cluster of gated communities can be found in Karlovy Vary (4 objects in total). However, this is specific to that city. In the previous few years, the city has experienced a significant inflow of wealthy Russians who buy flats or houses mostly as an investment (Sýkora et al. 2010). Two gated communities can be found in Brno, and one each in Plzeň, Liberec and Olomouc.

6. The causes of gated community development in Prague

As previously mentioned, the emergence of gated communities is a complex process that is conditioned by multiple factors such as social demand (fear of crime, social prestige), support from the local municipality and interests of private developers. Causes for the emergence of gated communities lie on the intersection between the demand and supply side. However, as we try to explain in various time-space conditions different sides can be dominant. We therefore want to avoid the simplification that one single factor (resident, local administration or developer) represents the cause of the emergence of gated communities. Moreover, it also cannot be excluded that the role and influence of the individual parties responsible for origination of gated communities in Czechia can change over time. However, our research clearly shows the dominance of developers as the most influential party during the first decade of the 21st century in Prague.

According to our respondents (experts on the real estate market), the origin of gated communities is produced mostly by small developers that try to compete in the market with innovative products. As we previously explained, smaller developers in particular have higher motivations and reasons to be involved in the emergence of gated communities. They usually do not own high quality land; or they as newcomers are forced to overpay for land and therefore segment more and focus on well off customers; their access to liquidity is not as accessible as large scale developers, so they try to maximize the capital value of the land; and obviously they are more flexible to customers' specific preferences than large developers with well-established procedures. On the other hand, large developers are more resistant to real estate cycles and are more predictable because as professionals they rely on market research and not only on the moods of the market. In the case of Prague, the real estate boom (Figure 1) was the time period when the mushrooming of gated communities happened.

The statement that smaller developers have a higher tendency to create gated communities has been also proved by analysis of our database. Since the 1990s, 59 residential projects with the elements of a gated community were built in Prague. Only three projects have been built by the biggest developers in Czechia, such as Central Group and Finep (none by Ekospol). In the case of Prague, 43 developers participated in the creation of gated communities, and nine of these can be considered as large developers (13 gated communities). The rest, about 78% of Prague gated communities were built by small and medium-sized developers. Approximately half of these residential objects were built as the first developers' projects (23 projects). This shows that smaller developers are trying to penetrate on the real estate market through innovation.

We have also mentioned that the biggest quantitative growth of gated communities on the real estate market was observed between 2007 and 2009. At this time many new developers emerged; the market was flooded with relatively easily accessible liquidity, which led to overconsumption. Developers during this real estate boom were affected by the general optimistic mood in the market and actively entered the process of gated community creation without deeper market analyses of demand. At that time gated communities still represented an innovative product in Prague's real estate market.

The heterogeneity among developers was confirmed during an interview with one of the biggest and most well established local developers:

> [Big developers] have their own business model, built on something different than the smaller ones. They aim for volume, addressing the biggest masses of people that need to live somewhere.
> Prague, 24. 7. 2012

Moreover, due to the high costs of reliable market analysis which only the big players in the real estate market can afford, smaller developers have a higher tendency to behave speculatively and according to the market mood and period of real estate cycle. It is even difficult to say who these small developers really are and many of them just enter the market during booms to extend their capital even if they have nothing to do with development. This aspect was pointed out several times during our interviews, especially by an expert from the agency for evaluation of real estate and small business market.

> From time to time some of them make amateur questionnaires, but they have so many mistakes that no relevant information can be gathered, some even make no questionnaires. The problem is connected with a real estate bubble; the developers have too much work when they have projects. They don't want information showing that the market is currently full and their project is not suitable.
> Prague, 24. 7. 2012

Another developer (a large foreign firm but not established in Czechia) has also pointed out that the decision-making process concerning the gated communities did not include asking people about their interest in safety and fencing. A real estate expert from Prague defined most developers on the local market as so called "gamblers" as they do not behave rationally according to market analysis. The interviews with representatives from the development industry showed that only a small group of developers conducts or orders a specific, deep market analysis surveying the preferences of consumers. This supports the idea of a weak connection between supply and demand side.

The spatial concentration of gated communities in Prague shows a higher rate of real estate market competition than in other Czech cities. Smaller developers using branding strategy effectively influence people to focus on the particular project and its strong advantages – innovations, which differentiate the project from its competitors.

The role of other parties has its influence as well. The position of the local administration is rather vague. Some representatives of local municipalities do not support the privatization of public spaces and, therefore, the creation of gated communities. On the other hand, others see no problem in the development of gated communities. Additionally, our research shows weak motivation of consumers to live in fenced areas. It can be proven by the fact that gated communities in Prague do not originate from existing residential properties, but are practically all newly built residential objects. Furthermore, there are also cases when the developer promised to build a residential project with elements of gated communities, but the residents decided not to have a private security agency or fence. Life inside gated communities brings also additional costs in the form of charges for the administration of a reception room or maintenance of common areas and not every person is willing to pay extra for this. It is especially true for residential properties of lower standard, which was confirmed by a real estate agent:

> In our experience, the fact they put a reception desk into an object of a lower standard with surveillance, higher privacy and safety led to the cancellation of the project because of the expenses they brought for the clients. Not that they moved out, but the services were cancelled.
> Prague, 23. 7. 2012

Additionally, a representative survey of public opinion on consumer preferences was performed by the INCOMA Company and shows similar results. This survey found that there is no strong demand for characteristics of gated communities, such as camera systems or area fencing. People would rather pay extra for storage areas, a nice view or better kitchen equipment than for higher household security. The main factors in housing selection are price, the size of the home, location or financing options. It is noticeable that higher security is required mainly by low-income households, as a consequence of fear of crime (INCOMA 2010). Yet these do not belong to the most frequent residents of gated communities. Our non-representative survey among the residents of one gated community in Prague has shown that residents were not highlighting fencing and a security agency as key factors. All residents considered the presence of fencing or security agency as "nice to have" but not a "must". According to the contacted professionals the security characteristics, enclosure or areas general protection have only a small influence on the choice of these estates.

The interviewed representatives of the development industry declared that the interest of their clients in gated communities was justified by the preference of higher quality physical and social environment with sufficient privacy rather than higher security. Residents of gated communities put more stress on utilizing different services such as a reception desk, someone to sign for your mail if you are not there, dog walking etc. Fences and physical barriers proved to be no key or primary factor for the decision process of the residents and were of little importance for them. The reasons in favor of physical fencing may be often very trivial: "The basic topic in Prague is dog turds", proclaimed one of the developers answering the question about enclosure of the residential areas. Other motives discussed above can also influence the origin of gated communities in Czechia. However, it is mostly the pursuit of social prestige that is difficult to quantify. The demand for gated communities is more of a condition for origin than the cause.

7. Conclusion

In this paper we primarily focus on the role of the development industry – especially developers – in the emergence of gated communities in Prague. We look closely at the role of the supply side in the creation of socio-spatial structure of the city, which we think is frequently overlooked in the literature. Our results have convinced us that developers play a vital role in the formation of these specific residential objects in the urban milieu. On the one hand, they communicate and actively influence their customers through marketing and branding in order to increase their desire to live in offered projects. This project-centered view in combination with a targeted segmentation of the client market causes social homogeneity of gated communities. *On* the other hand, the vast majority of developers do not have proper records and analysis about the market, so they rely on market moods in combination with the real estate cycle. The physical separation of objects from their surroundings has other benefits for the supply side, for instance increasing the capital value of the land, which can significantly differ from the neighborhood where the gated community is situated.

The emergence of gated communities is a complex process caused and conditioned by multiple factors such as social demand, the development industry or support form municipal authorities. Our research shows only a weak connection between the supply and demand sides and disputed the comfortable consensus that gated communities are a purely demand-driven phenomenon.

We came to the conclusion that during the first decade of the 21st century developers were the main driving force behind the construction of gated communities in Prague. The origin of gated communities is mostly in the interests of small and less experienced developers, as they are more flexible and adaptable than large mechanized developers primarily specializing in volume.

Despite many scientific articles published on this topic we still see future perspectives in researching the role of the supply and demand side in the creation of gated communities as well as their influence on the existing socio-spatial structure of the postsocialist city. However, this research must include all parties involved. Only complex evaluation can lead us to better justification and understanding of the socio-spatial transformation of postsocialist cities. In comparison with other postsocialist countries, there is still very little focus on this form of living in Czechia. This article wanted to fill this gap, but there are still many area of interest left, e.g. the role of the local municipality and developers in the socio-spatial structure of the built up environment, the sense of community in those residential objects, the consequences of gated communities on the social and physical environment.

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RESUMÉ

Role developerů na vytváření uzavřených rezidenčních areálů (gated communities) v Praze

Článek hodnotí příčiny a podmíněnosti vzniku uzavřených rezidenčních areálů (anglicky gated communities) v současném Česku, a to především v Praze, kde je koncentrace těchto areálů nejvyšší. Výzkumy v USA, Latinské Americe či Jihoafrické republice zdůrazňují, že na vzniku uzavřených rezidenčních areálů mají hlavní vliv rezidenti, kteří si tento typ bydlení vybírají, především ze strachu z kriminality či zvyšováním sociální prestiže spojeného s prostorovým odlišováním se od majoritní společnosti. Role developerů při výstavbě uzavřených rezidenčních areálů je v literatuře podceňována. Přitom jejich vliv na vytváření prostorové struktury města a vznik uzavřených areálů je mimořádný. Jsou aktérem, který aktivně ovlivňuje a vytváří očekávání a touhy zákazníků.

V článku jsme vycházeli z několika výzkumných metod. Jednak jsme za pomocí obsahové analýzy vytvořili databázi všech uzavřených rezidenčních areálů v Česku a jednak jsme provedli několik rozhovorů s developery, zástupci místních samospráv, odborníky na pražský realitní trh a rezidenty vybraného uzavřeného areálu. První uzavřené rezidenční areály v Česku začaly vznikat v Praze ve druhé polovině 90. let 20. století, přičemž se jednalo o luxusní rezidenční projekty určené především pro bohaté Čechy a cizince ze západní Evropy a USA. Od roku 2004 postupně dochází k zásadnímu přerodu, kdy začíná nová výstavba uzavřených rezidenčních areálů, které jsou dostupnější i méně majetným obyvatelům. Od roku 2007 se uzavřené rezidenční areály pomalu stávají standardem na pražském realitním trhu. Od této doby 15–22 % ze všech nově postavených rezidenčních objektů v Praze má prvky, jako je uzavření areálu nebo přítomnost soukromé bezpečností agentury. Postupem času také dochází k rozšiřování uzavřených rezidenčních areálů do dalších českých měst (82 % ze všech českých uzavřených rezidenčních areálů je ovšem stále lokalizováno v Praze).

Náš výzkum ukázal, že lidé nevyžadují nadstandardní prvky, jako je uzavření areálu či přítomnost bezpečností agentury. Jedinými poptávajícími po tomto nadstandardním bydlení byli relativně bohatší západní cizinci (především zaměstnanci nadnárodních firem), kteří vyžadovali vyšší bezpečnostní vybavení, protože nebyli tolik obeznámeni se situací v postsocialistickém prostoru. Hlavním motivem zákazníků ochotných si připlatit za tyto nadstandardní prvky, není primárně strach z kriminality. Rezidenti od bydlení v uzavřených rezidenčních areálech spíše očekávají kvalitnější fyzické a sociální prostředí s dostatkem soukromí.

Ukázalo se, že jsou to především developeři, kteří jsou hlavní hnací silou při výstavbě uzavřených rezidenčních areálů v Praze. Tento typ bydlení je chápán jako inovativní realitní produkt, jako něco, čím se odlišují od své konkurence. Na vzniku uzavřených areálů v Praze mají zájem především menší a častokrát i méně zkušení developeři, kteří se tak snaží proniknout na realitní trh. Menší developeři jsou flexibilnější a přizpůsobivější než developeři s mechanizovanými procesy produkce bydlení. Poptávka po uzavřených rezidenčních areálech není v Praze vysoká.

Tomáš Brabec, Branislav Machala
Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science
Department of Social Geography and Regional Development
Albertov 6, 128 43, Praha 2
Czechia
E-mail: tomas.brabec1@gmail.com, branislav.machala@gmail.com