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Gated Communities in Lithuania: The Problem of Territorial Integration

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

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Uždaros gyvenvietės Lietuvoje: teritorinės integracijos problema

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Object of the research and the research problem

Gated communities (GCs) are a fast-growing global phenomenon attracting an increasing attention from scientists in various fields. In the dissertation, as in previous studies in Lithuania, GCs are described as residential quarters and communities with a common enclosed territory with restricted access, which is constantly guarded and monitored. There are a number of reasons and motives inducing residents to choose this particular type of community; Lithuanian homeowners favor being close to nature, privacy, a safe environment with people of similar status in their neighbourhoods, as well as motives for economic benefits (investment in real estate) (Krupickaitė et al., 2014; Pociūtė et al., 2008). The academic literature is also prevailed by several different theoretical assumptions explaining the development of GCs, of which the supply-demand discussion, the discourse on GCs as a theory of economic efficiency of *club goods*, a *culture of fear* and *urban fear* are most often analyzed; this study applies the approaches of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, the sociological idea of the distribution of power in a city, based on Michel Foucault, etc. This phenomenon, having emerged in Lithuania relatively lately – only two decades ago, when in 2000 the development of the first gated community of Bendorėliai in the suburbs of Vilnius was built – is rapidly spreading in the suburbs of major Lithuanian cities, becoming a common form of suburban settlement; at the same time, the importance of GCs is growing as well.

In the academic literature, GCs are controversial as a result of their social polarization, the fragmentation and restriction of public space, and the formation of preconditions for social and territorial segregation and differentiation. Such communities are seen as a contradiction to sustainable urban development as a result of their intensive suburbanisation, both the cause and consequence of social segregation in society. The problem of GCs as a factor segregating

society makes it necessary to look for opportunities and ways to reduce the negative impact of this unsustainable symbol of urban development on society. The need to live in an enclosed physical and social environment as part of intensive suburbanisation highlights the importance of territorial residential integration – one of the most relevant fields of social geography and sociology research, and one of the most challenging tasks of sustainable urban development in the 21st century (Blinnikov et al., 2006; Borsdorf et al., 2016; Burneika et al., 2017; Gelezeau, 2008). Despite the fact that urban planning practices increasingly emphasize the importance of sustainability in modern urban development and residential integration as one of the top priority fields for development, the extent of segregation and differentiation in modern societies is not diminishing. Social diversity management tactics still do not help to eliminate social polarization and segregation from undesirable neighbourhood practices (Bitušikova et al., 2010; Cruz et al., 2009; Landman, 2006), and continue to legitimize the development of unsustainable urban development models.

1.2. Academic novelty of the dissertation

The academic novelty of the dissertation research consists of three aspects. The first is related to the problem of territorial and social integration of GCs and its possibility studies in both Lithuanian and global scientific literature. Territorial residential segregation is one of the most relevant fields of social geography research (Musterd et al., 2009), while GCs are one of the most distinct forms and symbols of this segregation, intensively studied in many countries around the world. The results of research carried out over the last two decades have shown that GCs located in different regions of the world tend to be caused by different reasons, are characterized by diverse developmental characteristics, and have different impact on society. One of the most important research topics in this field of study in the 21st century is the problem of the segregation effect of GCs on society,

recognized and emphasized in the scientific works of urban geographers and sociologists from a number of countries (Atkinson et al., 2004; Blakely et al., 1997; Le Goix, 2005; Lemanski, 2006; Low, 2011; Manzi et al., 2005; Roitman, 2005; Vesselinov, 2008). And while research into the role of GCs in sustainable urban development is gaining importance, the problem of their territorial isolation, the issues of sustainability of the social and physical environment and social well-being, and urban vitality, the potential for sustainable development and refusal of GCs are becoming increasingly important; however, research on their integration is still scarce (Sabatini et al., 2007; Salcedo et al., 2004; Ramoroka et al., 2014; Perez, 2011) while existing studies often emphasize only the importance of integration for the society without discussing complex integration conditions.

In Lithuania, research on GCs has been carried out for more than a decade, and this phenomenon is becoming a valuable field of research for sociologists, geographers, urbanists and architects. The characteristics and morphological aspects of GCs, the causes and circumstances of their emergence, the impact of their development on the growth of social differentiation and segregation (Krupickaitė et al., 2009, 2010, 2014; Pociūtė et al., 2008; Pociūtė-Sereikienė et al., 2016), the sociological aspects of community spirit, attitudes and images of GCs (Čiupailaitė, 2012, 2014; Šimatonytė, 2014; Steikūnaitė, 2015), characteristics of architectural expression (Baleišytė, 2015) are analyzed. This context discloses the lack of research on the issue of integration of GCs and the importance of assessing its possibilities.

The second aspect of the academic novelty of this dissertation is related to the complexity and interdisciplinarity of the concept of research on GCs. Although attempts by researchers from different fields to conceptualize particular aspects of the research on GCs are especially valuable, the lack of a complex assessment of the phenomenon reveals the importance of having an interdisciplinary concept of geographical and sociological research on the integration of GCs. The development of GCs is seen in this dissertation as taking

part within complex social and urban conditions and structures, the study of which also combines three structured levels of research: the physical, social and mental aspects of the phenomenon.

The novelty of this study is also supplemented by the database of GCs in the suburbs of three major Lithuanian cities created in the course of the research. GCs were recorded in previous studies in Lithuania (Pociūtė et al., 2008; Krupickaitė et al., 2010) but their exact number was not assessed; in addition, the focus was only on the region of Vilnius. Any official recording of GCs does not exist in Lithuania; previous data are fragmentary and becoming rapidly outdated due to the continuous suburbanization of large cities. The development or planning of individual GCs in the cities and district municipalities of Šiauliai and Panevėžys, including those in the district municipality of Mažeikiai and the municipality of Elektrėnai is reported; however, this study is aimed at creating a database of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda suburbs – in their areas of intense development.

1.3. Aim and research objectives of the dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is to reveal the preconditions of territorial residential integration of GCs in Lithuania.

In order to achieve this aim, five objectives have been set:

1. To analyze the theoretical preconditions for the development of GCs in a sociological and economic perspective.

2. To conceptualize an interdisciplinary complex integration research model of GCs.

3. To compile a database of GCs in Lithuanian metropolitan regions and to define their morphological characteristics, prevalence trends and territorial aspects.

4. To reveal the diversity of social interactions of the residents of GCs and to understand the nature of their self-identification and value positioning.

5. To assess the conditions and presumptions of a possible integration of GCs in Lithuania.

1.4. Positions defended

1. Aiming to understand the significance of GCs for the social and urban environment, the complexity of this phenomenon should be taken into account in two aspects:

- a. causal links binding different social groups and forming social structures;
- b. structural levels encompassing the physical expression of GCs, the social behaviour of their residents, and mental attitudes as a whole.

2. GCs express an aspiration for more efficient and practical management of living spaces as a collectively consumed good.

3. The search for a safe living environment in GCs defines the growing need to control social security, living spaces and unwanted social processes.

4. The increasing level of objective public security and the rapidly growing number of GCs lead to a weakening of their physical 'gatedness'.

5. The negative impact of GCs on territorial and social integration would be reduced by the creation of a favourable external social environment and the formation of an open-minded society.

1.5. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of four chapters. The first chapter reviews Lithuanian and foreign scientific literature on the topic of GCs and territorial residential integration. The second part is devoted to the analysis of the theoretical assumptions of the development of GCs and the presentation of the theoretical model of the research based on them. The theoretical basis of the dissertation consists of two main theoretical directions: economic, represented by the *club goods* theory, and sociological, analyzed in the perspective of discourses of *fear* and *power*. The complex conditions for the development of GCs in the

context of the symbiosis of market actors and social structures are also analyzed.

The third part – research methodologies – presents the main concepts and the methodological conception of the research, and describes the course of empirical research likewise. The methodological conception of the research is based on the determination of three levels of research: physical, social, and mental. The first stage of the empirical research is assigned to the physical level of the research – the creation of a database of GCs and the analysis of their morphological characteristics and network structure. In the second – qualitative – stage of the research, semi-structured qualitative interviews were aimed at revealing the expression of social and mental research levels.

The results of the research are presented in the fourth part of the dissertation. On the basis of the analysis of the database of suburban GCs in Lithuania, the physical morphological (internal structure) characteristics and the external expression of the territorial distribution (network structure) are revealed. On the basis of the results of the research of social practices and mental attitudes of the residents of GCs, the preconditions and trends of possible integration of GCs are evaluated at the end of the dissertation.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Symbiosis of market actors and social structures

Theoretical approaches explaining the phenomenon of GCs often begin with a supply-demand narrative (Guzey et al., 2010; Le Goix et al., 2008; Low, 2003; Sabatini et al., 2007). The debate over which of the main driving forces – residents, real estate developers or local authorities – is dominant leads to this process being seen as a complex phenomenon causally linking different groups, shaping certain social structures, as well as being both the cause and consequence of these multidimensional market processes. The involvement of the three

main market players in the mechanism of development of GCs creates what Elena Vesselinov et al. (2007) have called a *gating machine*, i.e. a set of interests and actions of the local government, real estate developers and the middle-class population that ensures the spread of GCs.

Aiming to understand the relationship between the phenomenon of GCs and the processes of social segregation and integration, the dissertation uses the main statements of the structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). The structuration theory sees *social practices* that implement social action and reproduce social life as a major field of social science research. A. Giddens defines *structuration* as a mode, state, or condition that ensures the creation and recreation of social systems through social interactions and structures social relationships in time and space where structure not only limits and constrains (by rules) but also enables (by resources) an actor to act.

By applying the structuration theory to the research of gated communities (Roitman, 2008; Roitman et al., 2010), social practices are seen as an essential research concept, assuming that the context of coexistence automatically presupposes social interactions. Therefore, research of social practices in the context of GCs focuses on the relationships between different social groups living at a short distance, enabling us to explain how individuals interact with each other and with their social systems by creating a daily life that is limited in its social structure rules and resources, and individual motivations and preferences.

The analysis of the conditions of development of GCs allows forming a development model for a complex phenomenon linking different social groups with causal relations and forming social structures; in them, the development of GCs is conceptually seen both as a structural social mechanism and as an individual action. This interaction of market actors and social structures covers the involvement of three main actors (local government, real estate developers and residents-buyers) that in the process of GC development act depending on both structural and subjective factors.

The supply and demand discussion in this process is mainly based on the demand perspective in the theoretical literature (Guzey et al., 2010, Low 2003, Sabatini et al. 2007), although in the case of Eastern and Central Europe, developers of gated housing projects take up the more dominant role (Kovacs et al., 2014). In this dissertation, the development of the phenomenon is understood both as a result of market supply and at the same time as a ‘driving force’ of a system generating the need for further ‘gating’. The beginning of the phenomenon of GCs in Lithuania is related with the emergence of supply, although the accelerated process of ‘teaching consumers what to want’ also began to generate demand and the need for ‘gating’.

2.2. Economic efficiency perspective: GCs as *clubs*

The economic efficiency perspective in the dissertation is analyzed within the framework of the theory of *club goods*. It is a rational model according to which people aiming to satisfy their needs for goods and services as efficiently as possible gather in collective consumption (club) spaces. The theory explains the development of GCs and their attractiveness to residents as an intermediate option distinguishing club goods among traditional pure public and private goods (Glasze, 2005; Webster, 2002). GCs are considered here as ‘clubs’ that ensure the efficient and effective supply of goods by separating ‘non-members’ from their overuse (Pow, 2009; Vesselinov et al., 2007).

Economic efficiency within the framework of this theory is considered to be the main motive for the creation of GCs, stimulating the gathering of the population with equal need for goods into mechanisms of collective consumption that minimize costs and maximize benefits. These, in turn, lead to the restructuring of governance and consumption in the city by a territorial fragmentation of urban space into socially homogeneous micro-societies based on collective consumption (Glasze, 2003; Le Goix et al., 2008; Webster, 2002). In this context, security and the provision of services and infrastructure are considered to be one of the essential services used

collectively by GCs, although the research of this dissertation also revealed the importance of maintaining order within the common territory, exercising control over the physical environment, preventing access to unwanted ‘non-members’, and ensuring child-friendly spaces as a more practical form of management of club goods in Lithuania.

2.3. Sociological perspective: discourses of *fear* and *power*

The discourse of *urban fear* representing the sociological perspective of the development of GCs helps to understand the development of GCs by assessing them both as causes and consequences of various fears prevailing in society. Data from studies on GCs (Blakely et al., 1997; Lemanski, 2006; Low, 2003; Vilalta, 2011; Wu, 2005; etc.) in various regions of the world show that fear and the pursuit of a sense of security are among the main motives for choosing to live in a GC. However, all too often, fear and the feeling of insecurity are referred to as the *fear of crime* (Lemanski, 2006; Low, 2003), although they have little to do with actual victimization. In criminology and urban sociology research, the fear of crime is increasingly understood in a broader context, as criminal activities that are the cause of such insecurities no longer explain this phenomenon (Michailovič, 2012). This general feeling of insecurity in the city, prompting the formation of GCs, can be described through several main components of this fear:

1. *Fear of change*. Rapid demographic, economic and social changes have led to an increase in insecurity, instability and uncertainty about the future, linked to fear of poverty, fear of change and fear of an uncertain future, as well as doubts regarding the stability of one’s neighbourhood and living environment (Blakely et al., 1997; Guzey et al., 2010; Lemanski, 2006).

2. *Fear of disorder and the loss of control*. Insecurity due to modern lifestyles and quality of life, as well as perceptions of disorder in people’s consciousness, are associated with the risk of becoming a

victim of crime (Michailovič, 2012). When met with an inability to control their living environment and tensions among different social groups, people attempt to distance themselves from this perceived disorder by erecting gates and fences that separate the world in which we feel vulnerable (Guzey et al., 2010; Blakely et al., 1997).

3. *Fear of differences and urban social diversity*. This aspect covers anxiety about the presence of other races, nationalities, ethnic or social groups in one's close environment, where the avoidance of accidental social contacts becomes an expression of fear that promotes isolation (Lemanski, 2006; Wu, 2005). As the awareness of one's social environment and the people surrounding it becomes scarce, possibilities to control it become less available (Michailovič, 2012); this is what is feared and what we try to distance ourselves from.

4. *Fear of 'others'*. The fear of 'other' is interpreted (Lemanski, 2004; Low, 2003) as a concept of dualistic thinking where the social or psychological separation of 'good' from 'bad' is used as an instrument for managing fear and anxiety. This division is physically reflected in GCs when 'the good' ('we') are inside and 'the bad' ('they') that threaten the stability of the neighbourhood remain behind the gate (Low, 2003). To describe these fears, Russell Belk (2017) uses the concept of *urban pollution*: what is 'out of place' contradicts our cherished classifications as *acceptable-unacceptable*, *safe-unsafe* or *inside-outside* is 'unclean'. Therefore the 'purification rituals' of the living environment – the rising of gates and fences, the installation of video surveillance, the hiring of security guards aimed at maintaining social order; the more homogeneous and controlled the environment, the easier it is to identify individuals who 'do not belong here' (Belk, 2017).

The reasons for the predominance of various fears in society are explained by the concept of the *culture of fear* (Glassner, 1999, 2010), based on the existence of a great industry of fear, profiting from the perception that security and crime are uncontrollable. The 'psychological seduction' using safe spaces becomes much more effective as the importance and coverage of the media grows, and the

overreaction to actual insecurity overwhelms the society and stimulates the population's need for 'gating' (Glassner, 2010). The physical expression of this need to feel safe – gated communities – is expected to ensure social security and maintain a better social environment, however inevitably turning the rest behind the fence into 'them', 'others', or 'bad'.

The research of the dissertation confirms the theoretical assumptions that the need for security of the residents of GCs is too often associated with the threat of victimization; the label of fear of crime hides a broader context of fear and anxiety. The analysis of the situation in Lithuania revealed the importance of fear of disorder and loss of control, non-acceptance of differences and urban diversity, the fear of 'other' and 'otherness', which is expressed through the need to control and 'purify' one's living environment, and fear of unwanted social processes.

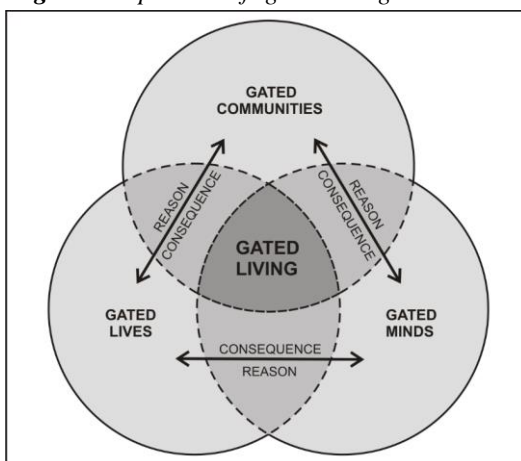
The aspiration to control the social environment for fear or other reasons links GCs with the urban *power* discourse. Using Michel Foucault's idea that power is spatially localized in the city, the creation and development of GCs is seen as a new spatial form of power expression typical of postmodern cities (Grant et al., 2004; Low, 2005; Rofe, 2006; Salcedo et al., 2004). The connection between power and space is implemented through forms of 'control architecture': the fences and gates of GCs reflect the architectural dimension of power and discipline and its implementation in space. These environmental control techniques aim at the feeling that fears are managed and a desirable and fully secure social environment that dichotomizes the urban structure into those with and without power is created (Grant et al., 2004; Rofe, 2006).

2.4. Theoretical model of the research

The theoretical model of the dissertation research is based on the definition of three conceptual levels of GCs' integration – mental, social and physical. The initial theoretical presumption distinguishing

the three conceptual levels is Stanley D. Brunn's (2006) approach that the model of *gated living* is shaped not only by *gated communities* as a physical expression and architectural form, but also by the existence of a *gated mind* caused by various fears and a *gated life* as a voluntary conscious or unconscious choice of residents (Fig. 1). The analysis of the theoretical assumptions of the development of GCs substantiates this phenomenon as a dynamic complex theoretical concept, all three levels of which are both causes and consequences, but are not necessarily equally distributed in space. A certain group of people materialize their 'gated mind' by creating a physical space that ensures the realization of material goods and that connects fear with economic efficiency through power.

Fig. 1. Components of 'gated living'



Source: according to S. D. Brunn (2006).

The nature of 'gatedness' in the theoretical approach is associated with the expression of urban fear, the negation of urban diversity, and the need for social control of the immediate environment, forming a psychologically 'gated mentality' – a voluntary mode of thinking first realized mentally, and perhaps only then followed by a physical isolation both from an insecure urban environment and from the whole

insecure world. These assumptions describe the *mental level* of the integration process (Table 1), reflecting a symbolic self-identification with one's inhabited territory, a sense of belonging, and pride, another social group assessment depending on the individual's personal values, attitudes, views, experiences, knowledge and emotions. The mental level of integration focuses on the expression of psychological factors and is closely related to the concept of *symbolic integration* presented by Francisco Sabatini and Rodrigo Salcedo (2007).

The gated life created at the *social level* of integration is expressed through the nature of social contacts, activities and communication. Social level is conceptualized by *social fragmentation* and *institutional fragmentation* (according to Roitman et al., 2010), *community integration* and *functional integration* (according to Sabatini et al., 2007), the concepts of *social integration* and *systemic integration* (according to Giddens, 1984), and *social* and *economic factors* of the impact of GCs on the external environment (according to Pociūtė-Sereikienė et al., 2016). The conceptualization of social level is based on the subjective and structural aspects of the development of GCs within the framework of structuration theory, as well as the interaction of individuals with social systems through social practices.

Finally, with these processes acting through architectural forms, a physical expression of gated living – a gated community – is created. At the *physical level*, gated living is realized in urban space by localizing power, where its possessors form barriers of segregation to those who do not possess it. The concept of the physical level of integration is related to the concepts of *spatial fragmentation* (according to Roitman et al., 2010) and *functional integration* (according to Sabatini et al. 2007); the aspects of the research of possible integration at this level are supplemented by *natural* and *barrier factors* of the impact of GCs on the external environment (according to Pociūtė-Sereikienė et al., 2016).

This multidimensional theoretical concept applied in the dissertation links the realization of urban fear and the 'gated mind'

with the assurance of material (club) goods expressed through physical forms of power.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Scope and object of the research

The research area of GCs (the research regions of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda-Seaside) covers the areas of the most intense suburbanization processes in the country – the suburban parts of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipėda metropolitan regions. The boundaries of the latter are defined on the basis of the boundaries of suburban territories of Lithuanian metropolitan regions distinguished by Donatas Burneika and co-authors (Burneika et al., 2017). Suburban areas in metropolitan regions include partially urbanized, sprawling suburbs, located in the territories of municipalities adjacent to a city, and have a growing population, mostly relocated from a neighbouring large city. To emphasize these conditions and character of the spread of GCs, in the dissertation they are called *suburban gated communities*, excluding from the study gated housing developments (mainly apartment buildings) in the central parts of metropolitan regions.

Based on the practice of previous research in Lithuania (Pociūtė-Sereikienė et al., 2016), a gated community is a group of residential houses the territory of which is fenced and safeguarded, thus restricting the access of other persons to it and ensuring constant surveillance. When defining the object of the dissertation research, only those groups of residential houses that meet two main criteria are considered GCs: 1) fencing of the common territory (or otherwise restricted access to the territory for pedestrians or cars); 2) maintenance of permanent security and territory surveillance measures (security guards, video surveillance). Such communities or neighbourhoods stand out from the territory and infrastructure, as they are jointly managed and used exclusively by their residents. It is

necessary to distinguish between the concepts of *gated* and *fenced*. Fencing a common area and restricting access by a gate or road barrier does not mean that the community is gated; fenced neighbourhoods are considered GCs only if constant security and surveillance is ensured by video surveillance cameras or a security guard.

3.2. Concept of integration research

The concept of the present study is based on a three-level methodological model (Table 1) developed on the basis of theoretical approaches explaining the phenomenon of GCs and methodological approaches used in the research of GCs in other countries. The first, *physical* level of territorial residential integration is based on the analysis of the current physical condition. It is characterized by an internal sublevel, called the morphological level, and reflects the internal spatial structure of GCs. The external sublevel focuses on the structure of a network and territorial aspects of GCs.

Table 1. Methodological conception of integration research

| LEVELS OF INTEGRATION | SUBLEVELS | RESEARCH CONCEPT |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1. PHYSICAL | 1.1. INTERNAL <i>Morphological (internal structure)</i> 1.2. EXTERNAL <i>Infrastructural (network structure)</i> | Analysis of the current physical condition |
| 2. SOCIAL | 2.1. INTERNAL <i>Individual (subjective)</i> 2.2. EXTERNAL <i>Institutional (structural)</i> | Qualitative concept: social practices |
| 3. MENTAL | 3.1. INTERNAL <i>Self-identifying (self-directed)</i> 3.2. EXTERNAL <i>Values-positioning (directed to others)</i> | Qualitative concept: mental attitudes |

The *social* level of integration is based on the analysis of social relations and is characterized through the distinguishing of internal

(individual) and external (institutional) sublevels. The internal sublevel here reflects the presence or absence of direct individual social connections, community cooperation, and close relationships. The external sublevel describes the socio-institutional and economic-political component represented through participation in religious or other solidarity groups, the use of social and engineering urban infrastructure, involvement in the labor market, and democratic processes. Social level is represented by the qualitative concept of research implemented through the analysis of *social practices* carried out by different groups. The concept of social practice is defined on the basis of Sonia Roitman's (2008) concept of neighbourhood social practice and research aspects.

The *mental* level of integration research focuses on the expression of psychological and emotional factors. The qualitative concept of the research here consists of the disclosure of individuals' personal experiences, values and attitudes, in connection with the concept of *viewpoints* proposed by Sonia Roitman (2008) as a component representing the subjective side of an individual. The internal (self-identifying) sublevel of the research is focused on the general viewpoints and attitudes of the individual towards certain objects, phenomena or processes and their position in them; the external (values-positioning) sublevel defines an individual's viewpoint towards another social group.

The methodological concept enables the evaluation of the phenomenon under study as one dynamic and complex, covering three structural levels of research, and a set of social and urban conditions; the methodological concept also provides a presumption for assessing the perspectives of possible integration of GCs in the complex conditions of their development.

3.3. Research process and applied methods

Empirical research starts from the level of physical integration, covering the creation of a database of GCs as a basis for analysing the

morphological characteristics and network structure of GCs and for further research of social and mental level integration.

During the first stage of the empirical research, data on GCs in the suburbs of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda were collected by recording information on their physical morphological features. The collection of data on GCs is complicated due to their fragmentation and the spread of information in various sources. To create the most comprehensive possible database of GCs, the sources of information as diverse as possible were analyzed to identify them. Among the most important were various online sources of information: websites of real estate sales and new housing projects, websites of homeowner associations or social networking groups, e-media, and publications. The parallel analysis of cartographic sources and aerial photographic data helped both to identify GCs and to analyze their spatial structure. During the field research, all suburban GCs were circuited and visited by car.

On the basis of the collected data, a comprehensive database of suburban GCs has been created. The complex data search provides a basis to assume that the majority of GCs built or under construction in the suburbs of metropolitan areas between 2000 and 2020 were identified and recorded. A total of 129 suburban communities or neighbourhoods with a set of features of GCs were identified. There were also found nearly 390 other detached neighbourhoods that are either not guarded, not entirely fenced, or too small to be considered GCs. The research also identified 8 former GCs that became open communities. In total, over 700 housing objects that are built or under construction were analyzed.

In the second stage of the empirical research, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with residents of GCs. The social level integration research was analyzed using Sonia Roitman's (Roitman, 2008; Roitman et al., 2010) concept of neighbourhood *social practice*, treating it as regular and conscious collective actions emerging in the context of being together and encouraging or discouraging social interaction. The list of social practices (Table 2),

following the example of Sonia Roitman, was compiled on the basis of a case study of the Neris kilpos gated community (Krupickaitė et al., 2010, 2014), supplementing them with a survey of local government representatives conducted by the Lithuanian Social Research Centre in 2015–2016 (Pociūtė-Sereikienė et al., 2016) and the author of the dissertation at the end of 2019. After generalizing those data, 6 groups of social practices were defined, indicating the most relevant aspects of social behavior of GCs’ residents in Lithuania. On the basis of social practices, interview guidelines were prepared aiming to reveal the integrating or segregating character of the GCs’ connection with the surrounding social environment.

Table 2. *Social practices*

| Groups of social practices | Social practices |
|--|---|
| 1. Institutional communication between GC and external communities | 1.1. Inter-community cooperation 1.2. Problem solving between communities 1.3. Community communication with local authorities |
| 2. Social relations between GC and external communities | 2.1. Individual communication between adults 2.2. Individual communication between children 2.2. Events and celebrations |
| 3. Work relations between GC and external communities | 3.1. Job provision within GC 3.2. Provision of services within GC 3.2. Trade relations with external residents |
| 4. Use of public space outside GC | 4.1. Use of public space for recreation 4.2. Taking care of the environment 4.3. Control of public space |
| 5. Use of social infrastructure and services | 5.1. Educational institutions 5.2. Use of public transport 5.3. Shopping and other services 5.4. Religious practices |
| 6. Participation in social and political process | 6.1. Participation in electoral process 6.2. Assistance and charity activities 6.3. Interest in local realities and social activity |

The mental level of integration was studied to reveal certain *mental attitudes* of GCs' residents towards their own and neighboring communities that have not yet been researched. Interview guidelines were drawn in an attempt to deepen the already noticed and reveal new aspects of the 'gated mind' expressed through personal values, knowledge, and feelings. The internal (self-identification) sublevel of the research emphasizes aspects of a symbolic sense of identification with one's own community and belonging to the surrounding areas, including a sense of prestige and pride in one's living space, responsibility for it, and emotional attachment to it. The external (values-positioning) sublevel is focused on the study of attitudes towards another social group, including both the study of available knowledge and formed opinions about the surrounding communities and people living there, and the analysis of the flow of attitudes in the opposite direction – how, in their view, their community is seen by external communities.

When compiling the research sample, physically (both internally and externally) different GCs were selected in all study regions: 4 communities in Vilnius, 2 communities in Kaunas and 1 community in the Klaipėda-Seaside region. A total of 19 interviews were conducted with residents from 7 GCs, mostly remotely. It is important to note that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with aggravated conditions for both conducting face-to-face interviews and examining the social behaviour and psychological well-being of the research participants during quarantine.

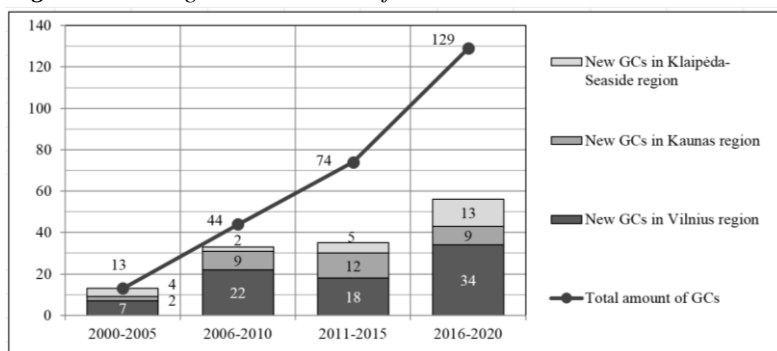
For the analysis of qualitative data, a method of thematic analysis was chosen, based on data analysis on *Prior-Research-Driven Approach* (Boyatzis, 1998). The interpretation of the research data was aimed at revealing not only the meanings and concepts the research participants wanted to convey, directly responding to the research question, but also their unconscious and indirect communication, as well as their understanding of the social context as conditions that may affect meanings conveyed by the research participants.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Physical research level: morphological and territorial structure

The beginning of the development of GCs in Lithuania is considered to be the year 2000, when the construction of the first gated community of Bendorėliai in the suburbs of Vilnius was started (although the project was not fully completed). The first gated housing projects were developed in Lithuania by ‘importing’ the American tradition model of GC, together offering an arranged housing infrastructure, a number of services, and security (Krupickaitė et al., 2010). Until 2005, 13 GCs (or certain open-type communities that became gated) were built in the suburbs of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda, and with the rise of the economy and the popularity of the new housing model, their number had risen to 44 by 2010. The effects of the economic crisis in 2008, although adjusting the pace of construction, did not have any significant impact on the popularity of GCs: in the period of 2011–2015, another 35 new GCs were built (although most of the former GCs became open), and in 2016–2020, another 56. In 2020, the number of GCs reached 129, of which 58% were in Vilnius, 24% in Kaunas, and 18% in Klaipėda suburbs (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. The change in the number of suburban GCs in 2000–2020



Source: Database of suburban GCs in Lithuania, 2020.

The analysis of the database of suburban GCs created during the first research stage revealed the *internal morphological structure* of GCs in Lithuania. Most suburban GCs in Lithuania have traditional horizontal structures, i.e., consist of individual or semi-detached (cottage type) houses (on average 20 houses). The average area of GC is nearly 3 ha. The internal structure of communities is usually formed by one straight street with residential houses on both sides of it; there is a small-sized leisure-recreational area with a playground. The access of unauthorized persons to GCs is restricted by an automatic road barrier or by a gate, restricting the access of pedestrians as well. Communities are usually surrounded by solid metal fences, but there are not many more significant physical barriers or visual fortifications – it is not a typical practice to hide from ‘outsiders’ using blind fences. However, it is important to maintain privacy within communities: individual plots are separated, if not by solid fences with enclosed yards, then at least by partial fences marking the boundaries of the plots. Security is ensured by video surveillance cameras, which, in addition to individual security measures, mostly monitor only the entry into the common territory. Warning signs at the entrance to the GC cautions of surveillance of the area with video cameras.

In Lithuania, GCs are developed and built as integral gated projects at the outset, with gates and monitoring facilities installed immediately after construction and landscaping works. Developers give the project a name (mostly associated with a specific landmark or natural object, adding the words ‘quarter’, ‘home’ or ‘valley’), which is taken over by an established resident association or social networking group.

Based on the chronological trends of the spread of GCs in 2000–2020 and the assessment of the predominant features of GCs, it was observed that with the gradual increase in the number of GCs over the last two decades, some characteristics of their ‘gatedness’ have gradually weakened, and a small part of GCs have become open (6% of all GCs). The increasing level of objective public security leads to a weakening expression of visual fortification and the strength of physical barriers and security guard employment (not necessarily

replaced by video surveillance measures). It also allows us to see into a partial analogue of the symbolic model of *panopticon* as an architectural mechanism of control and power – when security and order (for both external and internal residents) are ensured only by the awareness that one *can be* watched at any moment. As fences become a common feature of suburban settlements, not only complex GCs but also fenced and access-restricting (however unguarded and unmonitored) housing projects and neighbourhoods are rapidly gaining popularity; in such conditions, the suburban environment merges into a single maze of road barriers where safety measures are given less and less importance.

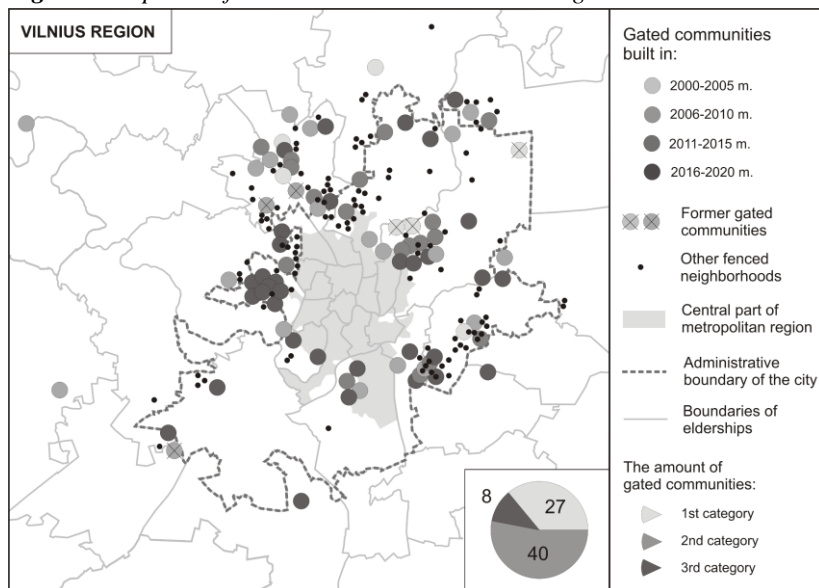
The analysis of the *external network structure* of GCs revealed that they are mostly developed in the peripheral parts of cities with real estate developers looking for compromise between the advantages provided by the natural environment and the level of infrastructure development. Although the suburbanization processes and the expansion of continuous areas of new constructions (not necessarily gated) has intensified since the second decade, the proximity of the natural environment is no longer a ‘mandatory’ feature of GCs. They are no longer developing in just sparsely urbanized areas, but on the contrary are often extending urban areas, and as a result, becoming increasingly rare in forming urban ‘islands’ surrounded by rural or natural areas. GCs in Lithuania are located on average 11.5 kilometers from the center of a metropolitan region; however, more often they still belong to the administrative territory of a city’s municipality. Like most newly built suburban settlements in Western countries, most of GCs form extended structures, i.e. they border with earlier built residential neighbourhoods or settlements and expand them.

The trends of GCs’ territorial prevalence in the suburbs of three major Lithuanian cities are not surprising – most of them are located in the Vilnius region (75 communities, or 58%), significantly less in Kaunas (31, or 24%) and Klaipėda-Seaside (23, or 18%) regions (Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig 5). In assessing the trends in the building process and population change in suburban areas (Baranauskienė, 2019; Burneika

et al., 2016; Ubarevičienė, Burneika, 2020), the prevalence of GCs reflects the main directions of the country’s suburbanization and the areas with the highest population growth rate and new construction developments.

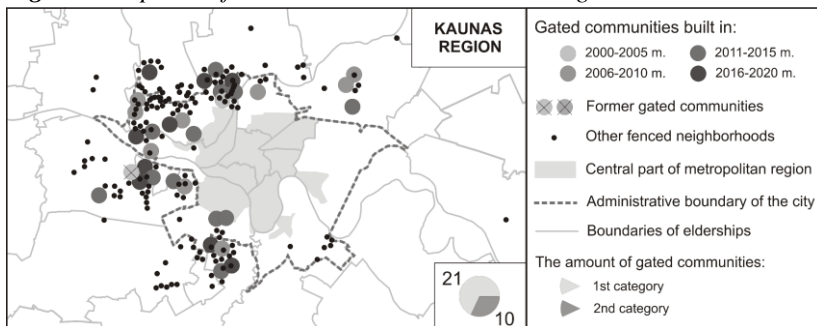
Meanwhile, the situation is ambiguous within the regions under study: fencing is spreading in the areas with the most rapid suburban growth; however, the ‘most gated’ and expressive GCs tend to settle not necessarily in areas of the most intensive suburbanization (in the Vilnius region – the woody parts of *Antakalnis* and *Bezdonys* elderships; in the Klaipėda-Seaside region – within the recreational coastal zone). In the Kaunas region, there is a tendency of a more intense but weaker physical expression and more spontaneous ‘gating’ – here GCs are characterised by their low ‘gatedness’, while fenced but unguarded neighbourhoods are being developed the most.

Fig. 3. *The spread of suburban GCs in the Vilnius region*



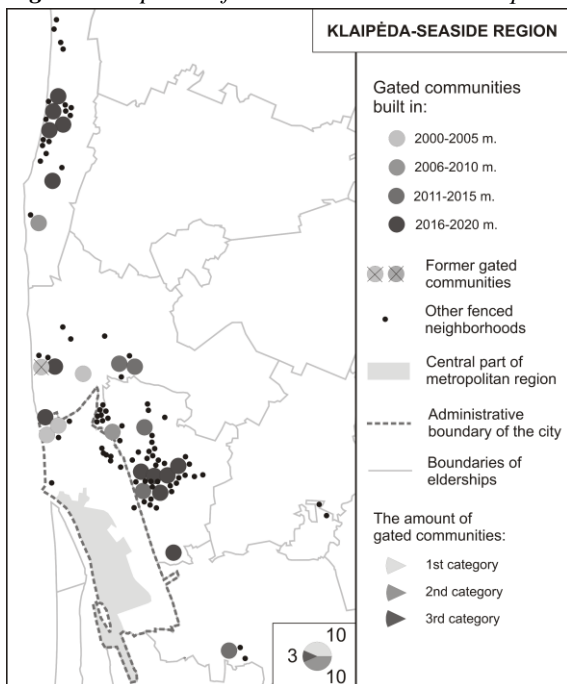
Source: Database of suburban GCs in Lithuania, 2020.

Fig. 4. The spread of suburban GCs in the Kaunas region



Source: Database of suburban GCs in Lithuania, 2020.

Fig. 5. The spread of suburban GCs in the Klaipėda-Seaside region



Source: Database of suburban GCs in Lithuania, 2020

4.2. Social research level: social practices

Social practices, as a key concept of the research of social relations in structuration theory, help to understand how the actions of social actors may or may not promote social interaction. Integration can be revealed when the social practices of GCs' residents disclose the social interactions with the outside residents that are expected due to the spatial proximity of different communities (Roitman, 2008). The analysis of the social research level, based on the interpretation of social practices in 19 cases of qualitative research in different GCs of Lithuania, reveals the diversity of the situation and provides a basis for making assumptions about certain perspective directions of possible integration. The possible impact of these social actions and habits on integration is anticipated by assessing, on the basis of interviewed residents, the potential positive, negative, neutral, or mixed impact of social practices on inter-community relations. These assessments are only assumptions; still they could become perspective trends for further quantitative representative research.

The possible integration in the context of social interactions could be projected in the future by promoting the expression of these social practices:

- *Inter-community cooperation*, especially when communities are concerning the same problems and pursuing common goals. The pace of integration in this respect could be significantly accelerated by active resident associations or community members acting as a catalyst.

- *Individual communication*, when accidental encounters and social interactions are fostered by the emergence of common 'points of contact', emergence of common interests and places of interest for children – the presence of attractive public spaces or recreational infrastructure outside GCs is of particular importance here.

- *Events and celebrations* – the practices of active and favourable 'older' local communities engaging 'timid newcomers' in common activities should be particularly important here.

- *Provision of services within GC*, in particular, beauty services and community-based exchange services between communities at similar social levels and other modern initiatives and ideas.

- *Trade relations with external residents*, when, instead of trade relations among communities of different income levels (rural people and newcomers), ‘markets’ on social networks or other modern exchange initiatives become more important, the potential popularity of which is reflected by the need to foster a community spirit of residents at a similar social level.

- *Use of public space for recreational purposes* – the fact that research participants do not tend to enclose themselves inside GCs and express the need for recreational zones in the public neighborhood suggests that the supply of such spaces would accelerate the integration of communities.

- *Use of educational institutions*, especially when the expression of this social practice is often (especially in areas of intensive suburbanization) determined not by a voluntary choice of the residents but by the possibility that parents have to acquire a place for their children in local educational institutions. Optimizing the network of kindergartens and schools could make a significant contribution to the process of GCs’ integration.

- *Religious practices*, however, only with a relatively large number of religious and practicing residents among the newcomers. A favourable approach to active and modern local religious communities (even on the part of non-believers) could have a strong potential in the process of community integration.

- *Interest in local realities and social activity* – this social practice is usually limited to individual and indirect participation within communities’ social network groups; however, it is in their context that the growing activity of residents and engagement in social processes can be predicted.

In summary, the emergence of common ‘points of contact’ among different communities, the promotion of local communities’ initiatives, the enhancement of the attractiveness and recreational

potential of the external environment, as well as the optimization of social and service infrastructure should be key measures in the territorial and social integration of GCs.

4.3. Mental research level: self-identification and other values

The results of the mental attitudes also cover an assessment of the positive, negative, neutral and mixed effects on the possible integration of GCs. The foresight of these possibilities is based on the concept (Brunn, 2006; Roitman, 2008) that the way individuals think about themselves and others can influence the social behaviour of residents and expression of social practices. Mental attitudes and viewpoints in the studied cases revealed the mixed character of the expression of the ‘gated mind’ and the possible impact on the formation of need for ‘gating’.

The analysis of *self-identification (internal) attitudes* allows us to anticipate the positive impact for integration. The extent of territorial identification and attachment to a community and surrounding areas did not reflect clear signs of ‘gatedness’: the fact that even those research participants strongly attached to their GC consider themselves part of the surrounding areas – they feel attached to the natural surroundings or associate themselves with a larger local community or suburb – presupposes positive opportunities for territorial integration, especially when those surrounding areas are attractive, orderly and viewed favourably. The feeling of pride and prestige in one’s own community should also not be a barrier to social integration, as these feelings are associated more with images of orderly and decent neighborhoods rather than with exclusivity.

Expressions of *values-positioning (external) attitudes* reveal a mixed situation, in which the noted avoidance of differences, diversity and ‘others’ representing the fear and the ‘gated mind’ should be a serious signal and a possible challenge in the formation of an open-minded society. The factor of exclusive privacy and the avoidance of outsiders critically important for the research participants can have a negative effect on integration: the category of ‘strangers’, according

to Stanley D. Brunn (2006), is one of the main components of a 'gated mind'. On the other hand, a favourable or neutral assessment of the surrounding communities and the motives of choosing to live in a GC should not be an obstacle to the integration process, even though the possible diversity of the situation and the effect of a 'socially acceptable' response are in some cases indicated by other signals: the expression of certain social practices, the description of conflict situations, identifying the uniqueness and prestigious image of their neighborhood, and the opinion that they are viewed unfavourably by locals, as well as the reluctance to connect themselves to local communities.

In most cases, the importance of 'gatedness' and a homogeneous neighbourhood was not related by the research participants to the need to distance themselves *from* an undesirable environment, but rather to the desire to connect *with* like-minded people for practical and domestic household reasons and the need to be defined by a symbolic identity and common territory. The expression of the attitude to security measures also reveals the motives for a more convenient and practical protection measures for the shared territory, the maintenance of order, and a child-friendly space as the management of common club goods. Under such conditions, physical and even social isolation may become less harmful.

4.4. Assumptions of GCs' territorial integration

Social practices and mental attitudes of residents from morphologically different GCs in different physical conditions revealed the diversity of the situation in the relation of GCs to their surrounding communities, as well as the dynamic multidimensional nature of the possible integration process. The analysis of the levels of social and mental research helps to understand the perspective assumptions of possible integration, which could turn into the trends of further representative quantitative research. The results of the research of social practices and mental attitudes provide a basis for

confirming the assumptions made by Stanley D. Brunn (2006) that the physical expression of GCs is not the only and not the determining component of gated living, but rather a means for a part of residents with a 'gated mind' to realize the need for a gated physical environment. At the same time, it can be expected that a large part of residents of GCs in Lithuania may realize this need not for reasons of internal 'gatedness', but for more practical, convenience-based and domestic reasons. The increasing number of fenced neighbourhoods in the suburbs, but at the same time the declining intensity of their 'gatedness' and fortification, may signify the ongoing transformations of the society within the context of the culture of fear. Supposedly, the need to 'fence in' becomes an expression of practicality, clarity and order rather than the result of urban fear. Under these conditions, physical and even social 'gatedness' would become less harmful – the research showed that in most cases, the emergence of common 'points of contact' or catalysts would encourage the research participants from GCs to maintain more intense social contact with the surrounding environment (especially as GCs are developing in a relatively homogeneous social environment in areas of rapid suburbanization), and the physical forms of 'gatedness' themselves have become more moderate over the past decade. And even though the research confirmed the reality of the ultimate demand of GC residents to distance themselves from an undesirable social environment (i.e., a pronounced 'gatedness' at the social and mental level), the disclosure of how diverse the investigated cases were suggests more positive prospects for the integration of GCs in the future.

These assumptions could only be confirmed by a representative quantitative survey of GCs' residents. However, by comprehensively seeing the problem of GC integration, it can be stated that the ways and forms of reducing their negative impact on society should cover not only physical but also social and mental measures – the formation of a favorable social environment and open-minded society should become an essential aspect for the social and territorial integration of GCs.

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