

# Gating in Russia: Exit into Private Communities, and Implications for Governance

Leonid Polishchuk and Yulia Sharygina

**Abstract** Gated communities are increasingly popular and visible in Russia, and the Russian experience with gating highlights heretofore little noticed causes and consequences of private communities in general. It shows that gating could be a social response to governance failures, when a society is unable to ensure government accountability and instead local communities take matters in their own hands. Such outcome reflects cultural traits in the society which preclude a “voice” response to governance failures and instead prompt apolitical “exit” into private communities. We argue that there is bilateral causality between gated communities and democratic accountability, so that dysfunctional municipal governance and private communities feed upon each other.

## 1 Introduction

Private communities, which separate themselves from the surrounding areas and provide certain services exclusively to community members, have become commonplace in urban and suburban landscapes around the world. More often than not such communities are surrounded by physical protective barriers preventing unauthorized entry, in which case they are known as gated communities (GCs); in what follows we use both terms interchangeably.

As part of GCs’ proliferation around the world, they are increasingly popular and visible in Russia, especially in the nation’s capital Moscow and other major cities. While gating *à la Russe* is of considerable interest in and of itself, we argue in this chapter that it also highlights heretofore little noticed causes and consequences of private communities in general.

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The prevailing view of GCs, which goes back to the seminal work of Blakely and Snyder (1997), is that they are a *market* response to inadequate provision by municipal governments of local public goods and services, most notably safety and security. GCs are supplied by developers who sense a niche in the real estate market, and bundle housing with otherwise missing public services. Such services are made available exclusively to community members as “club goods.” Developers provide necessary physical infrastructure (fences, security perimeters, utilities, public facilities, etc.), legal foundations (covenants, conditions, and restrictions—see McKenzie (1994), and managerial services necessary to run such communities in isolation from the rest of the surrounding (sub)urban space, and with reduced reliance on municipal governments. Essentially, developers hatch private micro-jurisdictions that outperform municipal governments and fill gaps and lacunae in public service delivery, albeit on the “members only” basis.

The Russian evidence reviewed below in the chapter conforms to such a view, but also shows that gating could be a *social* response to governance failures, when a society is unable to ensure government accountability and instead local communities take matters in their own hands and make do without underperforming governments, and with no attempt to discipline those. Viewed from this angle, gated communities could be considered, in the famous Hirschman (1970) dichotomy, as an “exit” into localized private solutions, as opposed to the “voice” option that would make use of democratic processes to improve municipal governments’ performance.

Such social response can be observed even when GCs are offered “turnkey” by developers, since by accepting the offered package of housing and club goods homeowners reveal their preference for local private solutions (Le Goix and Webster 2008), and signal mistrust in broader governance and democratic process. These attitudes are expressed especially clear when localities and even standalone apartment buildings retrofit themselves with fences and gates—a pattern which is sweeping across earlier built middle-class bedroom communities in Russia.

Retrofitted gating requires a collective action of the involved residents. Accountable and efficient municipal governance which would render lower-level community jurisdictions redundant is also an outcome of collective action, albeit of a different kind and larger scale. Popularity of gated communities demonstrates feasibility of the former kind of collective action and *unfeasibility* of the latter. This is an indication that social capital, understood as the capacity for collective action, exists mainly in the bonding form, when it is restricted to narrow groups defined by social class, locality boundaries, etc., rather than in the bridging one, in which case it could support broad societal coalitions (Putnam 1993). Furthermore, preference for “exit” into private communities is an indication of a lack of civic culture (Almond and Verba 1963), i.e. the sense of responsibility for the state of affairs in a political jurisdiction, trust in democratic institutions, and confidence in the ability to make a difference through the “voice” option. Civic culture is sorely missing in today’s Russia, and bonding social capital usually prevails over bridging one. Such cultural

configuration explains both the observed inadequacy of government-supplied public services (Polishchuk 2013a), and the massive reliance on GCs as a remedy.

Culture and cohesion are common themes in the burgeoning GC literature (Roitman 2010; Manzi and Smith-Bowers 2005), but mainly in the context of CGs' hypothesized impact on cohesion and community ties. The above reasoning points to a causality that runs in reverse, whereby culture is a prerequisite, rather than outcome, of GCs. Seen that way, GCs illustrate a more general pattern of a society which fails to resolve the agency problem vis-à-vis the government, is unable to ensure proper performance of public servants, and resorts instead to various ad hoc alternatives to accountable governance, such as grassroots community initiatives, informal economy, patronage etc. (Menyashev and Polishchuk 2015; Shagalov 2015a).

Dissatisfaction with public services which gives rise to GCs is often ascribed to insufficient public funds due to fiscal austerity, or to preference polarization when the median voter does not represent wealthier categories of citizens who need and can afford higher levels of public consumption and make up by switching to "club goods" available within smaller and more homogenous communities. However, these are not the only reasons for inadequate public service delivery, which could also be due to corruption, embezzlement, negligence and other governance pathologies caused by a lack of democratic accountability. Such democratic deficit and its adverse impact on public sector governance are commonly observed in Russia, and the Russian case illuminates the importance of this factor for the popularity of the GC model.

In fact, the causality between GCs and democratic accountability runs both ways, which the Russian case also illustrates. Massive exit into private communities makes public service delivery by local governments less essential and relevant for people's everyday life, and diverts attention of the society from government performance. We bring to bear recent advances in the theory of governance and social capital and the Russian realities to argue that GCs could exacerbate the service delivery problems that brought up this residential model in the first instance. This means that GCs could be a linchpin of a spiral where dysfunctional municipal governance and private communities feed upon each other, which naturally leads to the question about co-evolution of gating and conventional provision of local public services (Woo and Webster 2014), and about ultimate sustainability of "club cities" (Le Goix and Webster 2006).

This chapter proceeds as follows. In Sect. 2 we present a brief literature review on causes, consequences and assessment of GCs, which sets a framework for the subsequent analysis of the Russian case. Section 3 describes trends and patterns of GCs in Russia. Section 4 addresses private communities in Russia from the "exit-voice" perspective, and relates the observed patterns of GCs to norms and attitudes in the Russian society. Section 5 deals with the link between GC and municipal governance. Section 6 concludes.

## 2 Social Economics of Gated Communities

Private communities emerge as a spontaneous response to excess demand for local public services due to insufficient supply of such services by governments. Missing services could be procured privately—either individually, such as education, health care etc.—see e.g. Epplé and Romano (1996), or collectively, by a private community, in which case such services include, but not limited to, safety and security, parking, property upkeep, communal facilities, and internal rules governing public space—see e.g. Manzi and Smith-Bowers (2005).

GCs generate net efficiency gains for the involved parties, which are either split between developers<sup>1</sup> and community members, or accrue to community members only when such communities are self-organized. Proponents of GCs consider these gains as evidence of evolutionary process leading to improved delivery of local public goods (Foldvary 1994). Such optimistic view resonates with the evolutionary theory of institutional change originated by Alchian (1950) and Hayek (1973), according to which competitive selection produces superior institutions that outperform less efficient alternatives. In the case of GCs, such institutions involve private communities which step in where both market and governments fail (Bowles and Gintis 2002), and are arising at the intersection of market, state, and civil society (McKenzie 2003).

Private communities can be considered as micro-jurisdictions with their own membership, rules, governance, duties, taxes (maintenance fees) and exclusive benefits, and as such constitute *de facto* a new level of government. This metaphor is helpful inasmuch as it brings to bear the vast literature on national-subnational relations in exploring similar relations between municipal governments and private communities. One of the cornerstones of the above literature is the Decentralization Theorem (Oates 1972), which highlights inter-jurisdictional variation of preferences as the main argument for devolution of public goods delivery to lower level governments. Centralized provision offers to all jurisdictions a uniform package of public goods and taxes, whereas lower level governments can customize such packages to local needs and abilities to pay, which improves social welfare.

More detailed argument in support of GCs invokes, since Webster (2001), the advantages of club goods with controlled membership set at the level which maximizes net benefits for club members, preventing overuse (Buchanan 1965), and self-sorting into homogenous communities with similar preferences and income, which leads to efficient public goods delivery, impossible within larger jurisdictions where preferences and income are polarized (Tiebout 1956).

The above arguments lend significant normative support to GCs (Woo and Webster 2014), and explain why such communities attract more affluent households

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<sup>1</sup>When developers have market power, bundling housing with local services allows *de facto* price discrimination and hence increases developers' profit (Adams and Yellen 1976).

with greater need of security and higher ability to pay for it, than the rest of the population. This agrees with the view of GCs as, until recently, as a predominantly elite phenomenon (Manzi and Smith-Bowers 2005).

However, revealed preferences for GCs expressed by residents and developers do not prove social efficiency of this model (Le Goix and Webster 2008). Less sanguine outlook of GCs raises concerns about external costs borne outside of private communities (and possibly external benefits) which are not properly taken into account by community members. Such costs could be due to the fragmentation and loss of public space, hindrance to moving about the city, segregation based on wealth and status, opting out of government delivery of public goods and public revenue collection, etc. (Low 2003).

An important example of external costs generated by private communities is crime spillover. Extra security for community members, which is the most common rationale for gating, displaces crime to other, less protected, areas, and such spillovers trigger a “race-to-the-bottom”—type competition between communities, which leads to an equilibrium where total security expenditures exceed socially optimal level (Hakim et al. 1979; Helsley and Strange 1999).<sup>2</sup>

The theory of federalism recommends devolution of public good provision when preference variation between lower level jurisdictions is large in comparison with the magnitude of inter-jurisdictional spillovers. This general principle is applicable to GCs as well, in which case it requires empirical estimations of the benefits of customized delivery of public services within private communities, and of the costs which arise when GCs’ decisions are not coordinated with each other. However, such estimations alone would be of limited value, since the above normative arguments presume a “sterile” governance framework where public (communal) resources are put in the best use, subject to applicable rules and informational constraints. These assumptions are rather unrealistic, especially in developing and transition countries, including Russia, which are notorious for their governance pathologies, such as corruption, incompetence, and government capture.

A lack of performance by municipal (and upper levels) governments is another important reason for gating, independent of merits and demerits of club goods versus local public goods per se. GCs could be a pragmatic response to government failures reflecting the perceived inability to improve the provision of public services (such as law enforcement) by governments, and greater confidence in private communities as an effective alternative to underperforming governments. As argued in the Introduction, such apolitical “exit” into private communities reflects a certain social capital mix, which is characterized by a lack of civic culture and broad social cohesion. Instead, such traits are supplanted by bonding social capital restricted by

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<sup>2</sup>A similar effect is observed in tax competition between jurisdictions for mobile resources, which leads to equilibrium tax rates below what is socially optimal. This effect is the main rationale for tax harmonization across jurisdictions.

class, wealth, status, race, and ultimately by private communities' physical boundaries.<sup>3</sup>

Culture and governance explain why GCs—initially an elite phenomenon—are becoming increasingly popular among the middle class, when GCs do not any longer signal status and/or reflect higher demand for security of wealthier households (Manzi and Smith-Bowers 2005). Of the three main types and reasons for gating—lifestyle, prestige, and security (Blakely and Snyder 1997)—only the third pertains to middle-class GCs, and normative Decentralization Theorem-type arguments do not any longer apply, since gating is chosen by “average” communities, which exhibit no significant variation among themselves in demand for security, but share dissatisfaction with protection provided by government. In this case even “... poorer neighborhoods [are] taking a defensive posture against lawlessness [and] vote to erect gates where there were none” (Le Goix and Webster 2008).<sup>4</sup>

When the reliance on GCs reflects, instead of economic fundamentals, culture and culture-related governance failures, such market solutions could drive the urban setup further away from social optimum. As part of these distortions, GCs could be replacing municipal governments in public service delivery well in excess of what is justifiable by broad societal needs. This runs against the expectations that locations of GCs are chosen in areas with better public services (Woo and Webster 2014), in which case GCs and governments would be complements. According to Bowles and Gintis (2002), communities complement governments under well-designed institutions, whereas when institutions are poor, complementarity turns into substitution. The experience of GCs agrees with these observations, and indeed GCs emerge in response to spending cuts by local governments and their withdrawal from public service provision by offloading such services onto private communities (McKenzie 1994; Roitman 2010).

An important outcome of gating is its impact on the fabric of society. It is commonplace in the literature that GCs lead not only to physical, but also to social fragmentation, as they disrupt social ties beyond GC fences and undermine cohesion of the broader population (Gottdiener and Hutchison 2000; Manzi and Smith-Bowers 2005; Woo and Webster 2014). However, gating could be expected to facilitate social interaction and cohesion within private communities, by creating clearly expressed common interest and collective responsibility for private community upkeep—community presumes “mutual responsibility, significant interaction, and cooperative spirit” (Blakely and Snyder 1997). Indeed, GCs meet all of Ostrom's (2000) design principles for successful community self-organization, including strong and tangible participation incentives; stable and compact group with clear boundary rules; opportunities for frequent face-to-face communication; the ability to set internal rules and elect governance bodies; and government recognition.

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<sup>3</sup>Another explanation of the causal link between low cohesion and grassroots demand for GCs is the “fear of others” which leads to an exaggerated perception of insecurity and hence stronger need for gating—see e.g. Low et al. (2011).

<sup>4</sup>In addition, technological progress makes security perimeters cheaper and affordable to the middle class (Manzi and Smith-Bowers 2005).

According to Alesina and La Ferrara (2000), the overall impact of segregation on social interactions and group participation is negative—possible increase of interaction within segregated communities does not make up for depressed interaction across communities. Furthermore, the evidence of increased interaction and cohesion within private communities is sketchy at best (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Roitman 2010), in part because formal rules (usually pre-set without input from residents) often substitute for cohesion and personal communication (Blandy and Lister 2005).

While participation of private communities' residents in community affairs is a subject of debates in the literature, their loss of interest in municipal/urban affairs beyond the community walls is a predictable and firmly established outcome of gating. GCs cultivate civic disengagement and apathy (Low et al. 2011) and undermine democratic local governance and the sense of citizenship (Caldeira 2000; Roitman 2010). This could have far-reaching consequences for the efficiency and resource base of local governance. Political economists analyze the competition for loyalty and resources between official governance structures ("cities") and smaller groups ("clans"), and if clans take the upper hand, cities are turned into dysfunctional empty shells (Greif and Tabellini 2012). Private communities are similar to conventional clans, where ties are based on lineage and personal connection, in that both become alternative providers of vital public goods and as such supplant conventional governments.<sup>5</sup>

To the extent that GCs still communicate with local governments, the agenda of such communication is confined to the narrow interests of individual communities, rather than broader societal interests. Such narrow-mindedness and lack of "civicness" reduce the provision of public goods and erode democratic accountability (Nannicini et al. 2013). In its turn, opportunistic bureaucracy welcomes grassroots solutions of problems left unattended by governments, since such solutions reduce social costs of abuse of power, as "things are taken care of anyways," and enable even greater malfeasance. A theory developed by Menyashv and Polishchuk (2015) demonstrates that the capacity for private community-confined solutions adversely affects government accountability, and could leave the society worse-off, when the harm caused by political disincentives to supply public goods by governments exceeds the gains due to the availability of club goods supplied by private communities (for more on this see Sect. 5 of the Chapter). These general conclusions are vividly illustrated by GCs in Russia.

### 3 Gating in Russia: Trends and Patterns

The model of gated communities originated in the United States and subsequently spread around the world, sweeping Europe, Latin America, China and South-East Asia, Middle East, Latin America, etc. After the fall of communism GCs sprang to

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<sup>5</sup>Co-evolution of municipal governments and private communities is discussed in Woo and Webster (2014).

life in the former Eastern Bloc (Stoyanov and Frantz 2006; Polanska 2010), including Russia. Proliferation of GCs was driven in part by emulation of a successful American model, spearheaded by globalization, foreign investments and expatriate settlements, and projecting the image of a global culture (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Lentz 2006). However, various countries had their own rationales for gating, reflecting both contemporary realities and histories of GC-like settlement patterns that were converted into more conventional private communities.<sup>6</sup>

In the Russian case, American-type GCs were first established by foreign developers in the early 1990s, at which time they targeted primarily international clientele who wanted to maintain their customary lifestyle, comfort and safety amidst a chaotic transition characterized by breakdown of governance, public services, law and order. Self-contained GCs offered a natural solution, which was promptly replicated without “re-inventing the wheel” (Lentz 2006). This trend is exemplified by one of the first modern GC in Russia, *Pokrovsky Hill*, built by a US investor primarily for long-term expat residents, and a few other similar properties, such as *Vorob’evy Gory*, *Serebryannyj Bor*, *Alye Parusa* that followed (Blinnikov et al. 2006; Zotova 2012).

The GC model quickly became a symbol of status and prestige and attracted domestic nouveaux riches, known as the “new Russians,” most of them in the country’s capital, who were notorious for their conspicuous consumption and were able to afford a lifestyle far beyond the means of ordinary Russians. They showed clear preference for suburban private communities, given the congestion and pollution in the city core, and hence GC developers targeted prime locations in Moscow’s “Green Belt” (Blinnikov et al. 2006). Distance from the city—up to 50 km—provided further isolation, compounding massive physical walls with private security, closed circuit monitoring, etc. Due to remoteness of many locations and chronic traffic jams, contacts between private communities and the rest of the city were sporadic, and these communities supplied all the essential facilities and amenities of everyday life.

As it was elsewhere in the world, early GCs in Russia, in addition to copycatting international patterns of elite lifestyle, were a natural response of the powerful and wealthy<sup>7</sup> to a growing imbalance between personal wealth and private consumption, on the one hand, and the collapsing provision of public goods and services by governments of all levels, on the other. An additional strong reason for gating was a widespread perception in the broader society of the new economic order as fundamentally unjust and illegitimate (Frye 2006). The resulting insecurity of property rights required additional private protection, of which gating was an important part. As a rule, such GCs also guaranteed to residents uninterrupted access to

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<sup>6</sup>Antecedents of GCs around the world reflect class structure and hierarchies, ethnic, racial and religious divides, legacies of colonial rule and civil conflicts, chronic failures to control crime and violence, etc. (see Le Goix and Webster 2008).

<sup>7</sup>In the 1990s business moguls, known as the oligarchs, wielded strong influence over public policies. In the next decade many public servants and their family members amassed significant wealth and joined business elites as residents of prestigious GCs.



utilities and maintenance, when those from municipal utility providers were prone to accidents and outages (Lentz 2006).

To be sure, gating and, more generally, isolated self-sufficient communities were nothing new in the post-Soviet Russia. Thus, there was a well-known and firmly entrenched pattern of gated and guarded residencies of Soviet political and administrative elites, known as *nomenklatura* (Voslensky 1984); see e.g. (Lentz 2006; Blinnikov et al. 2006).<sup>8</sup> Another type of Soviet-time predecessor of GCs were dacha cooperatives, also based in suburbs with some kind of enclosure, sometimes designated for particular groups and professions, such as intellectual and artistic elites. Gates and fences were also standard around residences of military personnel and their families, as well as around those working in so-called “closed cities” built around facilities and installations of the Soviet military-industrial complex. Yet another spatially isolated group comprised foreign diplomats and their families. These antecedents (see also Trudolyubov (2015)) have merged with the “imported” GC model, creating a mix of tradition and modernity observed elsewhere in the world (Blakely and Snyder 1997).

Russian GCs in the 1990s and well into 2000s were almost entirely market-driven and not subject to any master plan or other types of urban planning. Such spontaneity was symptomatic of and typical for the Russian post-communist transition in general, where reformers saw their role in laying bare foundations for free market, expecting that unleashed market forces would take care of the rest.<sup>9</sup> Evidences of this laissez-faire approach can be seen in the GC locational and development practices which showed little regard of public interest and were commonly upsetting fragile ecosystem balances and claiming heretofore public parks, riversides and other areas of high recreational and environmental value (Blinnikov et al. 2006; Zotova 2012).

In addition to GCs, Russian elites’ spatial segregation from the rest of society was pursued on a parallel track of acquiring ownership in foreign real estate, often as a second home and/or a permanent residency for family members residing abroad. Foreign real estate ownership carried extra benefits of vacation property, asset diversification and capital flight vehicle, but otherwise the motivation and indeed trends of buying residencies abroad were similar to gating, both addressing

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<sup>8</sup>Gates and fences were an essential part of the public perception of *nomenklatura*’s lifestyle, as is illustrated by the following popular verse of the Russian poet Alexander Galich: “... there are fences in the suburb/and leaders behind the fences/... [where] there are manicured lawns/ and one can breathe easily/... and passersby are watched by snitches /from behind the fence”.

<sup>9</sup>See e.g. Polishchuk (2013a, b). Legal foundations for GCs involve a development permit (*zemleotvod*) obtained from a local government, which delineates boundaries of a development project and enters the area in the national land registry. Such permit affords the usufruct right and allows the exclusion of others via enclosure by fences and gates. The national Land Code passed in 2001 requires a conversion of the above rights into full private ownership or leasehold. Russian practice of issuing development permits facilitates self-contained communities, since developers are often required by local governments to build local public facilities as a permit condition. This is another evidence of offloading governments’ responsibilities onto private communities.

the same needs of security and quality of living commensurable with personal wealth, and unavailable for the general Russian population (Polishchuk 2015).

Steady economic growth experienced in Russia in 1999–2008 led to a real estate boom, including the upscale segments in the two main metropolises—Moscow and St. Petersburg, but also in other major cities. A majority of elite housing projects were undertaken in suburbs; thus by mid-2000s over 260 such complexes were developed within the 30 km range of Moscow, almost all of them with gates, fences and other kinds of security perimeters (Blinnikov et al. 2006).<sup>10</sup> Even of those few elite housing projects located in Moscow's core and tucked into a dense urban setting, almost 40 % were gated (Medvedkov and Medvedkov 2007). According to Zotova (2012), by 2010 Moscow and suburbs hosted over 500 such complexes, or more than half of those nation-wide. A third of these GCs residents were families of top managers of large (mostly state-controlled) corporations, a quarter—successful entrepreneurs, and more than 10 %—foreign business executives.

The economic growth benefits trickled down beyond the elite segment of the Russian society, and reached the emerging middle class with income approaching, and sometimes exceeding, the European level. As it happened earlier to the elites, rising personal consumption made the middle class in its turn acutely aware of the inadequacy of government services, which became a bottleneck on the way to higher living standards. The response of the middle class to this mismatch was similar, too—fences and gates penetrated and enclosed bedroom communities, usually surrounding the city core.<sup>11</sup> From mid-2000s onward, GCs in Russia ceased to be a purely elite phenomenon (Lentz 2006), and became a feature of middle-class living, at least in Moscow, and increasingly in other cities. In part this was an attempt to imitate, even with limited means, the upper class lifestyle, but more importantly, to enhance security and to supply privately some other amenities, such as parking, landscaping, and playgrounds (Zotova 2012).

Gates (operated by key-cards or manned by security personnel), fences, voice and video intercom and closed circuit systems are now standard features of new apartment building housing projects, positioned by developers as “premium,” “comfort,” “business,” etc. Various estimates and real estate statistics and reports, including those produced by consulting and realtor firms, summarized in Sharygina (2015), indicate that at least 75 % of all new residential housing projects completed in Moscow in the recent years were advertised in the above categories. While promoting such projects, developers emphasize secure and secluded lifestyle and availability of gated public areas and various in-house amenities as valuable added benefits which differentiate a project from the “economy class.” Therefore gating

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<sup>10</sup>Security perimeters around such projects are formidable—“at the minimum, ... guarded entry or checkpoint, ... at the maximum, ... ‘close connection to the local police station and canine unit’, ‘3-meter high concrete or metal fences along the perimeter’, ‘smart card entry/exit’ and ‘guards experienced in police and [secret service] methods’” (Blinnikov et al. 2006: 70).

<sup>11</sup>The middle class replicated the other above mentioned elite strategy—acquisition of foreign real estate. Russian ownership of housing units in Bulgaria, Spain, Latvia, China and many other countries run in the hundreds of thousands (Polishchuk 2015).

has become an essential (and indeed expected) feature of a real estate product for Moscow's middle and upper middle class.

Perhaps more tellingly, even earlier built residential complexes, initially with no gates and fences, are being increasingly retrofitted with those, forming "spontaneous" communities, as opposed to "planned" ones, supplied by developers (Lehavi 2009). Russian law allows for collective ownership by apartment building residents of the land surrounding the building. To take advantage of this provision, residents (represented by a condominium council or a management company) need to perform a cadastral survey of the area to be claimed, and have it approved by the municipal government.<sup>12</sup> Thus obtained collective property rights allow the exclusion of others—as stated in an applicable Moscow city bylaw, joint ownership enables the tenants to "... protect their rights to land and amenities and do not allow use of those by unauthorized persons." Moscow government considers fences and gates as such protected amenities.<sup>13</sup> Decision to erect a fence requires a simple majority of residents, and a fence design must be approved by emergency services, such as police, ambulance, and firefighters, to ensure their access to the building. Once such approval is secured, there are no further regulatory hurdles. If a newly erected fence obstructs movement and violates access rights of the neighbors, such conflicts could in theory be settled in courts, but in reality often remain unresolved.

The above procedure is not particularly onerous, especially in comparison with otherwise massive red tape typical of the Russian regulatory system. This is an indication that local governments welcome gating as a means to offload onto private communities some of the public services. This attitude was made clear by a recent decision of the Moscow government to subsidize barrier gates restricting non-residents' access to parking areas in a building courtyard. The decision was made in response to Moscow residents' protests against the expansion of pay parking zones well into the bedroom communities and fears that outside motorists, to avoid parking fees, will be illegally parking their cars in the areas surrounding apartment buildings and jointly owned by building residents. The offered subsidy, covering 70 % and more of the full cost, would support as many barrier gates as necessary to fully secure the protected area (Sharygina 2015). In other words, the city outsources to private communities the enforcement of parking rules through physical barriers at the cost of further segmentation of the public space.

As a result of the above processes, Russia's capital city is presently "plagued by fences which dismember the urban fabric and obstruct movement about the city" (Melnikova 2015). Gating becomes increasingly pervasive in the country's second largest city, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere in major urban centers (Zotova 2012). In the next sections we interpret these outcomes in the light of the general analysis of GCs presented earlier in this chapter.

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<sup>12</sup>In newly built housing projects developers handle such formalities and pass collective ownership of the fenced area to would-be apartment owners.

<sup>13</sup>For more details and references to legal documents see Sharygina (2015).

## 4 Exit into Private Communities

Gating in Russian cities, especially the largest ones, is excessive and goes well beyond of what is reasonable and could be observed in better-organized urban environments. Direct costs of this practice include expenditures required to establish and maintain security perimeters around apartment buildings, duplication and missed benefits of the economy of scale in the provision of “club goods,” and various losses due to physical fragmentation of the urban space. As argued below, there are also significant indirect costs due to the adverse impact of private communities on municipal governance.

Given the above costs, it is hard to find normative justifications for the scale and scope of this phenomenon. As explained earlier in the chapter, the Decentralization Theorem-type arguments do not apply to middle-class GCs, where there are no significant variations of means and needs across the urban space dissected by gating, and where largely identical groups of population residing in apartment buildings next to each other put fences around their properties.

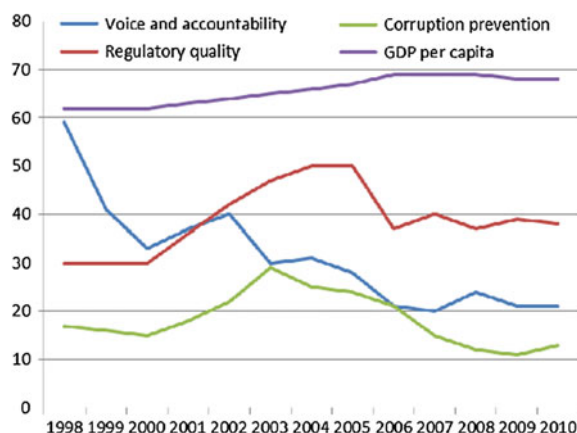
Apparently, private communities in Russia arise, as it is often the case elsewhere in the world, and especially in developing countries, in response to local governance failures, perceived insecurity and “fear of the others” that public law-enforcement services cannot allay. “Guarded housing [in Russia] is a sign of the weakness of public administration and its inability to organize the supply of housing neighborhoods for the newly rich and the new middle class” (Lenz 2006). Russian urbanists associate gating with a “culture of fear and distrust,” insecurity of property rights, uncontrollable migration, and other symptoms of poorly managed and disorganized public space (Melnikova 2015), which prompts residents to make up for a lack of the rule of law by physical barriers (Trudolyubov 2015). Russia therefore conforms to the general pattern described earlier in the chapter whereby GCs are substitutes, rather than complements, of institutions and services expected from governments.

In the course of the Russian post-communist history, the quality of its institutions and public sector governance went through some peaks and troughs, but remained low overall and was mostly declining over the last decade (Polishchuk 2013a). This decline overlapped, until a few years ago, with a period of steady economic growth (largely driven by high commodity prices), opening up a widening gap (“scissors”) between income and private consumption, on the one hand, and the quality of institutions and public services, on the other (Fig. 1). Governments’ underperformance was particularly evident for the general public at the local and municipal levels, where government is “closest to the people”—according to a 2012 survey, full trust in the federal government was expressed by 30 % of respondents, in regional governments—21 %, and in local governments—19 %.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Levada Center (2012).

**Fig. 1** “Russian scissors”: income and institutional trends in 1998–2010 (percentage of global ranking). *Source* Polishchuk (2013a)



Higher private consumption cannot compensate for a lack of public goods—if anything, it makes the perception of public goods’ deficit more acute.<sup>15</sup> The imbalance between private and public consumption is usually expected to be corrected by improved democratic accountability of the government as the primary supplier of public goods and services. Such expectation supports the view that economic growth and middle class strengthening tend to improve the quality of institutions and public sector governance, as predicted by the “development hypothesis” (Glaeser et al. 2004) and the closely related modernization theory (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). One explanation of the conjectured causality running from economic development to better institutions is that economically successful middle class has stronger demand for high quality public service and is better able to use democracy to further its needs and goals.

In Russia such a scenario did not materialize, and the Russian society instead “outsourced” public policy-making and institutional reforms to economic and political elites (Polishchuk 2013b). The custom of political apathy and low esteem of democratic institutions has set in early on in the Russian transition, when it was broadly assumed that the Russian society would not endorse radical market reforms, and the latter could be implemented only if government is not constrained by democratic accountability. Hence in the chosen reform strategy democratic procedures were formally observed, but in reality sidestepped and supplanted by political manipulations, spin-doctoring, and ad hoc bargains. As a result, democracy has been deeply discredited in the Russian public opinion, and fragile civic culture yielded to “survival values” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005), which ruled out meaningful political participation in democratic process.

Political consolidation of the Russian state, known as the “vertical power,” which has occurred at the turn of the century, did not affect the habit and custom of political non-involvement of the masses. The Russian political system evolved in

<sup>15</sup>More technically, private and public goods are usually complements, rather than substitutes.

the direction of a hybrid regime, known as “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky and Way 2002), where elections ensure legitimacy of the regime without making it democratically accountable to the society. In an implicit “social contract” that ensued, loyalty was exchanged for stability and acceptable (and even rising for a number of years) living standards (Makarkin and Oppenheimer 2011).

This trend was concurrent with far-reaching political and administrative re-centralization of the Russian state, with concentration of fiscal resources in the federal budget and replacement of direct elections of subnational executives by appointments (and in particular by transferring executive authority at the city level from elected mayors to appointed “city managers”). In such a system local governments are accountable mainly to higher level authorities which control resources and appointments, rather than to city residents.<sup>16</sup> Such a system weakens the incentives of municipal officials to improve the delivery of local public goods and services, which is reflected in a widespread perception of public officials as indifferent to everyday needs of the population (in Moscow such opinion is shared by two-thirds of residents).<sup>17</sup>

As a result of the society’s “outsourcing” of institutions and public policies to politically unaccountable elites, the latter have received a *carte blanche* over public decision-making, which was driven largely by elites’ own preferences and immediate interests. Such preferences in economically polarized societies rarely favor “inclusive institutions” which deliver public goods for the society at large (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013). In fact, according to the previous section, elites pioneered GCs in Russia as exclusive arrangements, which afforded comfortable and secure lifestyle against the backdrop of poorly organized and maintained public urban space.

The middle class which eschewed “voice” as a response to a lack of public goods and services had no choice but to follow suit. Closing the “scissors” between private consumption and public services through democratic process requires civic culture, which was idled by decades of “survival values” and paternalistic attitudes to government. Civic culture is accumulating by historical experience of democratic self-rule (Putnam 1993; Persson and Tabellini 2009), which the Russian society quite obviously had little to none. As a result, both ingredients of the civic culture’s dyad—confidence in using democratic procedures as means to tackle social problems, and the sense of personal responsibility for public affairs—are in short supply in today’s Russia.<sup>18</sup>

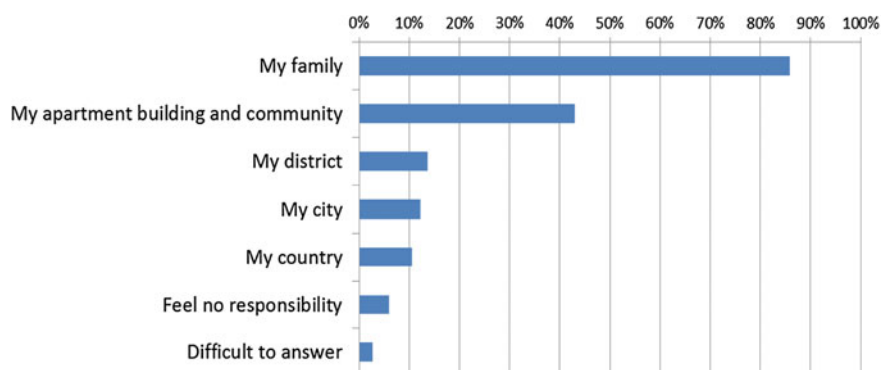
In such a society “... private dominates over public every step of the way” (Trenin et al. 2013), which can be seen in the low radius of civic competence and

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<sup>16</sup>This can be seen, for example, by a lack of correlation between social and economic situation in Russian regions and reappointments of regional governors for new terms (Reuter and Robertson 2012).

<sup>17</sup>Public Opinion Foundation (2013).

<sup>18</sup>While the average stock of civic culture in Russia is low nation-wide, it exhibits significant variations across the country (Menyashev and Polishchuk 2015), which are correlated with the quality of municipal governance—more on this in the next section of the chapter.



**Fig. 2** Radius of civic competence in Russia (response to the question: “Do you feel responsible for what is happening around you?”, %). *Source* Public Opinion Foundation (2014)

responsibility revealed by a recent public opinion survey (Fig. 2). It is noteworthy that over 40 % of respondents feel responsible for what is happening in their apartment building and immediate community, but less than one in seven feel the responsibility for their municipality and city. Naturally, such attitudes provide fertile social ground for private communities.

This and other surveys as well as anecdotal evidence (reviewed in Menyashev and Polishchuk 2015) point out to a significant capacity for self-organization and collective action in the Russian society, with two important caveats—first, such capacity is mostly apolitical and prompts initiatives directly tackling problems on the ground, instead of bringing such problems to government’s attention and demanding a response, and second, collective actions are usually limited in scope and confined to like-minded individuals, neighbors, friends and colleagues, etc. In other words, social capital in Russia exists mainly in the bonding “do-it-yourself” form. Examples of collective action driven by such social capital include community efforts to repair crumbling infrastructure (roads, bridges, daycares etc.), grassroots provision of disaster relief, mutual help, informal business networks, etc.

Improvement of common areas around apartment buildings, which often includes putting up gates and fences, are prominent on this list. Such community initiatives are recognized by Russian law as “territorial community self-governance (TCSG)” (*territorial’noe obshchestvennoe samoupravlenie*), which can be limited to an apartment building, a group of buildings and houses, a residential community (*mikroraion*) or a village. This affords an official status to private communities, which could establish themselves as legal entities with bank accounts, internal governance etc., and which can enter into contractual relations with local governments and other parties.

Case studies presented in Shagalov (2015b) show that residents of traditional neighborhoods in Russian cities, built decades before the advent of gating, take advantage of the TCSG format to retrofit their newly privatized communities with gates and fences as a protection against otherwise rampant vandalism, damage to

buildings and parked cars, intrusion of undesirable outsiders such as alcoholics and drug addicts, etc. Those interviewed in the above studies invariably mention the failure of authorities to ensure safety and security, as well as to supply adequate public facilities, such as parking, playgrounds and well-kept recreational areas, among main reasons for isolating their communities as TCSGs.

While such studies confirm the general pattern of reliance on gating in response to governance failures to supply public services, which is a *demand-side* effect, they also shed light on the *supply-side* forces rooted in social attitudes. As noted in the introductory section of this chapter, retrofitted private communities, unlike those supplied by developers, require a collective action of residents, and hence reveal a stock of social capital of sufficient quantity and quality. Econometric analysis presented in Shagalov (2015a), which is based on a survey conducted in the city of Kirov in Central Russia, confirms that such social capital indeed makes feasible apolitical collective action (supported and even partially bankrolled by local governments), while ruling out a civic response—in other words, showing preference to collective “exit” over collective “voice” (Table 1).

According to the table, emergence of TCSGs is more likely when residents know and help each other, often communicate among themselves, and when there is sufficient trust in the community—all these are standard bearings of traditional social capital. In addition, residents should feel responsibility for an apartment building and surrounding area (which, as shown earlier, is not uncommon in Russia), but at the same time have another common attitude, i.e. the sense of impotence and helplessness in affecting the situation in the city at large. Yet another

**Table 1** Factors of private communities emergence

Dependent binary variable: involvement of an apartment building in a TCSG (1—yes, 0—no)	
Degree of acquaintance of the respondent with neighbors and frequency of communication with them	0.29*** (0.05)
Trust among residents	0.27*** (0.06)
Mutual help	0.24*** (0.06)
Income level	0.21*** (0.05)
Civic incompetence (“I cannot influence the situation in my city”)	0.44*** (0.12)
Local responsibility (“I feel responsibility for my building and surrounding area”)	0.17** (0.05)
I seek collaboration with local authorities in solving community problems	0.34** (0.11)
Constant	−3.998 (0.34)
R square	0.125

Binary logistic regression, standard errors in parentheses. \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$   
Source Shagalov (2015b)



contributing social trait is the paternalistic habit of seeking direct government help with a local problem of the given community by entering into separate agreements, as per the TCGS legislation. As a result, communication between residents and local governments is conducted on the case-by-case basis and is fragmented to specific problems with narrow and clearly identified territorial boundaries.

The above discussion shows that private communities in Russia, apart from being a market response to a “scissors” between households’ income and local public services, are also a social response to the same problem. The acute need in safety, security and key amenities is powerful enough to overcome the well-known obstacles to collective action, such as free-riding, and to come up with private community-level solutions.<sup>19</sup> The “voice” option requires a collective action of much larger scale and different nature, and is almost never entertained, reflecting a shortage of civic culture in the society. In the next section we discuss the consequences of such a coping strategy for the quality of governance and ultimately the quality of life in Russian cities.

## 5 Implications for Municipal Governance

The above discussion indicates that GCs in Russia clearly substitute for unavailable government-supplied public services, which implies causality, much discussed in the literature, from public sector governance to GCs. In this section we use recent developments in political economy to point out to another causality that runs in reverse—from gating to governance. It appears that GCs in Russia are not just patches fixing governance failures, but likely further undermine the quality of governance, leading to a vicious circle. At least three effects are at work driving such reverse causality, and all of them have to do with the democratic deficit in Russia.

First, the society normally communicates its needs and preferences over public goods to policy-makers through democratic processes. Since democracy in Russia has been disabled for most of the post-communist period, and public policies and institutions were outsourced by the society to the elites, it was elites’ *direct* preferences over local public goods provision that mattered. As noted above, Russian elites have embraced GCs as a more “cost-efficient” way to ensure comfortable and

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<sup>19</sup>It is noteworthy that the capacity to maintain and collectively operate private communities once they have been established is uneven across the Russian urban population. As shown in (Borisova et al. 2014), Russian condominiums are well-run when residents have sufficient “technical civic competence,” i.e. take part in collective decision-making, monitor and control executive bodies of condominiums and the performance of management companies. Such skills are in relatively short supply in today’s Russia and cannot be substituted by “parochial” social capital based on day-to-day communication and occasional mutual help. Without technical civic competence common property in Russian condominiums often falls into disrepair, and apartment buildings are poorly maintained.

secure lifestyle than universal open access delivery of public goods and services of comparable quality and quantity.<sup>20</sup> Therefore GCs have further divorced elites' policy preferences from those of the rest of society, making elites indifferent to the conditions outside of their private communities. Availability of elites' own club goods diverts public resources controlled by the elites away from social needs (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013; Polishchuk 2013a), and the supply of municipal public services suffers as the result.

Second, communication, if any, of Russian private communities' residents with local governments is restricted to matters specific to a community, such as cost-sharing, outsourcing of government's responsibilities, grants and permits, etc. As shown earlier in this chapter, the Russian law and practice provide numerous opportunities for such narrowly focused communication. Overall effectiveness of the local government (cost-efficiency, public service delivery, etc.) is not on the agenda of this interaction between government and society, when citizens are preoccupied with group-specific, rather than social, welfare—as argued earlier in the chapter, loss of interest in public affairs and weakened sense of citizenship are common features of GCs.

Nannicini et al. (2013) dub such political attitudes “uncivic” and show, theoretically and empirically, that a lack of “civicness” affords opportunistic bureaucrats greater freedom to appropriate public funds and enrich themselves at the society's expense. Intuitively, when voters only care about individual or group welfare, the government can play a divide-and-rule strategy, ensuring the necessary political support through targeted grants and subsidies. Ironically, selected beneficiaries of such patronage enjoy only modest benefits, because if their expectations and demands were unrealistically high, those left outside the “winning coalition” would bid down the price of political support.

Nannicini et al. (2013) conclude that provision of public goods in such socio-political configuration suffers, being replaced by clientilistic benefits. This is a yet another indication that Russian GCs—a response to a lack of local public goods provision—likely make matters worse.

Finally, Menyashev and Polishchuk (2015) argue that the capacity of a society to compensate at the grassroots for a lack of government's performance further weakens the incentives of the ruling bureaucracy to act in the society's interests—in short, quick fixes exacerbate the root causes of the problem. The intuition behind this conjecture is as follows: grassroots accommodation of underperforming government is a means of “damage control,” and as such it reduces the social costs of government pathologies, including diversion of public funds and other forms of

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<sup>20</sup>Public goods are supplied at the socially efficient level when total social benefits, enjoyed by all members of the society, offset (at the margin) the cost of public good provision. Full-fledged democracy is essential for achieving such outcome, where the interests of society at large are counted for and represented in public decision-making. Otherwise the smaller is a coalition that controls public decision-making, the less of public goods is delivered, and, at the limit, when only elites' immediate interests are factored in, public good provision is replaced by GC-like club goods.

**Table 2** Payoff to “horizontal” social capital in Russian cities

	(1) Municipal government performance (Survey question: “Do local authorities understand and take into account the interests of people such as you?”)	(2) Socio-economic outcomes (Survey question: “Are you overall satisfied with the conditions in your town?”)
“Horizontal” social capital	−0.095*** (0.005)	−0.088*** (0.015)
Civic culture	0.124*** (0.004)	0.114*** (0.014)
Controls	YES	YES
Regional fixed effects	YES	YES
Observations	1822	1822
R-squared	0.296	0.280

Standard errors in parentheses. \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Source Menyashev and Polishchuk (2015)

expropriation. As a result, the society with the same “pain threshold” tolerates greater abuse of power than it would have been without such accommodation. This prediction was tested on the 2007 survey data covering more than 1800 Russian cities and towns, and it is shown that apolitical “horizontal” social capital that proxies such capacity indeed significantly reduces the quality of local governance (Table 2, Column 1), whereas civic culture has a predicted positive impact.

Given possible damage caused by gating to the quality of municipal governance, one could wonder if residents of middle-class private communities are better-off than they would have been without this institution. To answer this question, one should compare two economic and political equilibria, in one of which private communities are present, and in the other—absent. On the one hand, for a given (presumably low) quality of governance private communities confer net benefits to their members—the latter explicitly reveal their preference for this form of housing by either buying into such communities or collectively setting them up. This is evidence of direct positive effect of gating for the quality of life. On the other hand, the adverse impact of gating on governance constitutes an indirect negative effect, and the overall impact of these two counteracting forces is a priori unclear. Econometric analysis shows that for the above sample of Russian cities the balance of direct and indirect effects of grassroots accommodation of local governance failures is *negative* (Table 2, Column 2)—direct benefits of such solutions are less than the damage they cause by giving bureaucracy the confidence that residents make do on their own and pick up where governments left off.

More in-depth theoretical analysis presented in Menyashev and Polishchuk (2015) shows that the net impact of private grassroots solutions depends on the composition of social capital and in particular on the proportion between civic culture and “horizontal” social capital. Payoff to the latter can be positive for very low levels of civic culture, when politically defenseless society “has nothing to

lose.” However the payoff turns negative in the intermediate range of civic culture, when the society has some capacity to discipline the bureaucracy by democratic means, but such capacity is suppressed (“crowded out”) by “horizontal” social capital. This conclusion also finds confirmation in data.

The above theories and empirical analyses do not pertain to gating *per se*, and describe consequences for governance of a more general pattern, of which gated communities are a part. Additional corroborating evidence that such conclusions are valid for GCs proper can be found in the fact that municipal governments in Russia, as shown above, gladly support this model by various means—from enabling bylaws and regulations to cost-sharing. These attitudes reveal clear preference of municipal authorities for GCs, which is consistent with the logic presented in this section.

## 6 Concluding Comments

The common view of private communities as a market response that fills niches left by conventional government provision of local public goods and services conceals another important aspect of gating, highlighted by the Russian case, i.e. that widespread private communities could be a symptom of social, cultural and political anomalies.

It is certainly true that decentralization of public good provision does not have to stop at the municipal level, and could, when appropriate, be extended down to residential neighborhoods. However, the comparative advantages of club goods and self-sorting generate net efficiency gains for the society inasmuch as private communities are established in an otherwise efficient institutional environment with an accountable and adequately funded local governments and legal system protecting the rights of stakeholders inside and outside of GCs. Private communities could indeed be institutional improvements generated by an evolutionary process, but only to the extent that the necessary complementary institutions are in place and function properly. Otherwise market signals to which GCs respond could be distorted and, in agreement with the “second best principle” (Lipsey and Lancaster 1956), such innovations leave the larger society (and possibly even the private communities themselves) worse off.

The two-tier system of GCs in Russia—for elites and the middle class—reflects deep socio-economic inequality maintained by “exclusive” institutions for the elites, including physical barriers and “in-house” provision of what should be public amenities. That makes democratically unaccountable elites oblivious to the lack of such amenities for the general public, and the latter is left to deal with such problem on its own. Norms, values and attitudes prevalent in the society preclude it from exercising the political rights to resolve the accountability problem which is the root cause of insufficient quantity and quality of local public goods, and instead push the society to replicating the elite’s solution on a larger scale. Such reaction of the disenfranchised society makes the prospect of improvement of government

provision of local public goods even more remote, and possibly leaves the society worse-off.

The Russian case demonstrates the importance of discussing GCs in a broader cultural and political context, where true comparative advantages of private communities could be properly separated from using gating as means to reinforce socio-economic divides and as an inferior adjustment to governance failures that impede, rather than facilitate, urban development.

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