

ETHICS OF SPACE AND THE TREATMENT OF MOST DISADVANTAGED AREAS

**Ioan IANOȘ¹, Jean Baptiste HUMEAU², Cristian TĂLÂNGĂ³, Cristian BRAGHINĂ⁴,
Cătălina ANCUȚA⁵ & Liviu BOGDAN⁶**

¹University of Bucharest - The Interdisciplinary Centre for Advanced Researches on Territorial Dynamics, 35, Agnita Street, sector 6, Romania ianos50@yahoo.com

²University of Angers, Angers, 8, Chateaubriant, France, jean-baptiste.humeau@wanadoo.fr

³University of Bucharest – The Interdisciplinary Centre for Advanced Researches on Territorial Dynamics, Bucharest, 2, Frumusani street, Bl.37, ap.24, sector 4, Romania, cristian2851@yahoo.com

⁴University of Bucharest – The Interdisciplinary Centre for Advanced Researches on Territorial Dynamics, Bucharest, 52, Nitu Vasile street, Bl.7, ap.32, sector 4, Romania, cristibraghina@yahoo.com

⁵West University of Timisoara, Timisoara 4, B-dul V. Parvan, Romania, cancutafr@yahoo.com

⁶Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 150, Stirbei Voda street, Bl.26C, ap.2, sector 1, Romania, liuibogdanvlad@biblioteca.ase.ro

Abstract. The differentiated development of space is the result of historical development of communities, which have participated to this differentiation through their creative ability. The insertion in space was distorted over time by attitudes of different levels policy makers, which introduced subjective keys in the development process. Although nature has provided with a wide range of resources, decisions made in different historical periods and the territorial development policies, more recently, have widened the regional disparities, creating real islands of poverty. In this paper, the space ethics is defined outlining its theoretical and applied nuances and there are presented ways of boosting development in the most disadvantaged areas. All the ideas expressed are based on widespread experience of research in the field. In an indirect manner, the work challenges the existing ethical deficiency in territorial technical analysis and development. In this respect much is devoted to items that play an essential role in defining the concept of space ethics. This concept can be equated to the respect of all actors involved in territorial planning (decision makers, specialists, entrepreneurs, population) compared with its perennial values. The space ethics could be conceived as a set of rules and moral norms, with a cumulative spiral nature, which can be the basis of an adequate behaviour towards the most disadvantaged areas. This set of rules and moral values has a certain dynamic, which accounts for the contribution of education, for how the experience and best practices are transmitted in territory and over time, for how identity is preserved in places and for the altruism in accessing various types of values. The treatment of deeply disadvantaged areas requires transparency in use of resources and participation in ownership benefits. Over certain periods of time these areas can benefit of the typical elements of positive discrimination, given the effective treatment of chronic underdevelopment.

Key words: space, natural values and human values, transparency in territorial treatment, territorial positive discrimination

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary development, the vision of space has fundamentally changed, transforming it into a real container in which the society was placing various objects, in a central variable in the system of territorial relationships (Ianos & Heller, 2006). The space has become a fundamental dimension of life,

taking different shapes (Amedeo et al., 2009). The voluntary interventions, without regard to its perennial structures and values led to disproportions of the nature-society relationship (Mac, 2008). These imbalances partly introduced by the unequal distribution of resources but also by the historical differentiated development, are likely to become a source of natural or social events with a disastrous

nature. The cumulative effect of these events occurring at micro-scale dimensions can take regional or global catastrophic dimensions.

In that context, in the transition economies, "the ethics of space deficit" is visible in the physical reflection of the huge pressure exerted on urban spaces (public spaces aggression, threat of historical values of cities, modifications of built sites, etc.) and on suburban ones (the tendency of population to improve their standard of living, leaving the crowded city and the socialist multi-family constructions). The incoherence of current legislation on regulation of space interventions and the different perception of economic democracy and the existence explains the many deviations from a decent ethics with regards to regions (wild deforestation, improper change of land use, irrational location of business, urban sprawl chaos, etc.).

Both for developed economies and for the one in transition, one of the fundamental problems is the uneven spatial development. For many analysts in the field, development itself can be conceived only as a chain of disturbances (Hirschman, 1958). The basic criticism is that these imbalances do not have the same projected space, meaning discussing the same areas, rich and poor. In such cases, space ethics is an abstract notion, without direct effects on social and economic equality. The experience of former socialist countries in terms of territorial development has shown that although in different historical periods it has been tried the balanced development, the result was the opposite: widened gap between the same regions.

For Romania, the historical disparities between Bucharest and west of the country, on one hand and its eastern side and on the other, have widened. Thus, if GDP per capita in 1994 exceeded in Bucharest and Western Region by 1.53 times, 1.23 times respectively the values recorded in North-East, in 2005 they were higher by 3.11 and 1.53 times. The basic question is: are there only the uneven development principles responsible for these gaps or elements of space ethics, of the decision-makers? Has the "Central power" done enough to prevent the growth of these gaps and the introduction of spatial inequalities in development?

Based on the obvious answers, our approach relies on the fact that if not complied with from top to bottom, the ethics of space could be observed from the bottom up. In this regard, we intend to analyze how the ethics of space as a concept could be applied to the least developed regional areas. These were named deeply disadvantaged areas, respectively areas which suffer from many "diseases", some of them chronic: poverty, isolation, ageing, low cultural level, limited access to minimal social services etc.

In such circumstances, their emergency treatment, we believe it should be based primarily on moral principles (Olaru, 2009) and then political, social and economic ones. We assume that ethics should prevail in taking all decisions on reconfiguration of space, in implementing these decisions and the equitable distribution of benefits.

The state of knowledge in the field shows different kind of visions on the ethics of space. Discussing about the ethics in the Postmodernist Era, Bauman sees it in terms of morality (1993). Connecting with this vision, but applied to a myriad "flexible spaces", Ray analyses the importance of some ethics issues in the rural endogenous development. Recently, some scientists approaching the cosmic space, consider that the ethics in the field asks a real philosophic and humanistic engagement (Arnould, 2005). The majority of the analysis in the field are focused on the ethics of borders (Williams, 2010), underlying the significance of this vision in discussions on the international politics (war, identity, intervention). But the most important for the progress of researches on ethics of the space are the papers written by Lichfield about the territorial planning. A deep analysis on this issue is produced by Moroni (2006) in the chapter "The Ethics behind Evaluation: Lichfield's Approach and Utilitarianism", belonging to a book edited by E.R. Alexander.

The treatment of deeply disadvantaged areas implies aside of the fundamental restructuring of the economic systems, of the social one and of the infrastructure at local and above local level, the compliance with moral rules that emerge from the affective human-space relations through, fair social assistance of all categories, from the rural-urban and rural-rural solidarity. Dominated by transparency these new types of relationships can lead to the treatment of these problem areas, at a county level, regional level or national level.

2. DEFINING THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

There are two fundamental concepts in this study: the deeply disadvantaged area and the ethics of space. These concepts have distinct „functions" in the development of the study, respectively the disadvantaged area is regarded as a patient and the concept of space ethics is a set of general rules of moral and professional nature. In accordance with these rules, the decision makers, the entrepreneurs and the population acts in order to diminish the „sufferings" of this space that had the misfortune of being undercapitalized, mistreated or neglected totally.

The deeply disadvantaged area is a space characterized by underdevelopment due to a combination of factors that contributed to its present state. In territorial development, individualizing such areas is essential, since they are usually judged at more extensive levels and are lost in the average values of development indicators. Therefore, defining deeply disadvantaged area opens the road to "deciphering the black box" in territorial analysis and its use as an operational concept may be the key towards more effective policy in this domain.

The evaluation of deeply disadvantaged areas takes into account the spatial and time scale. The spatial scale allows their accurate definition and the multi-scale analysis shows, on one hand the micro-spaces with the biggest problems and on the other hand the effect of diffusion of development processes from centres and growth poles. The time shows the dynamic relativity of underdevelopment and that most deeply disadvantaged areas are created and worsened by measures taken by the society. There are specific ways of emergence of profoundly disadvantaged areas: some are the expression of the deepening over time of the historical underdevelopment, others have appeared suddenly, through fundamental restructuring processes which were not followed by additional growth processes.

The main criteria for identifying deeply disadvantaged areas in relation to national and regional level are: *the spacial affixation of these areas*; the existence of at least 5 *basic elementary units* (communes and cities), with direct neighbourhood which allows their territorial aggregation; the average of the global indicator to be by 25% below the overall indicator of the disadvantaged area where it is situated, or by at least 75% below the level of the development region; *the functional homogeneity* of the disadvantaged area; *the value* of at least one of the basic indicators to be *at the minimum level in the country or macro-regional minimum*; the existence of *striking breaks* in the levels of territorial development; *the negative territorial impact* on all the neighbouring areas (Ianos, 2000).

With regards to the concept of space ethics, we must outline the evolution of the human communities' respect towards space and its resources. At the natural levels, on the long term, the space has added human values, through the processes of adaptation to the environment of some communities, more and more numerous and creative (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). If in the traditional communities, the perception that the human life is restricted by uncontrollable forces was dominant (Hagen, 1962), in the modern societies, the changes were determined more and more by individual motivation. This was expressed through three needs:

the need for professional accomplishment, for power and for integration into the community (McClelland, 1961). The connections between these needs and the environment are obvious, aside from social and psychological nuances. These individual motivations partially integrated into the collective aspirations cannot be satisfied without modeling the space they live in and from which they obtain the means for their existence (Moles & Rohmer, 1972). Taking into account such motivations and actions, today's societies have encouraged the mobility, favoured both by technological advances and by the new features of individuals, largely characterized by rationality, scientific thinking, urban, abstract knowledge, etc. (Inkeles & Smith, 1974).

These views that are fundamentally related to the ability of each person to take action and integrate into the surroundings were followed by more specific questions related to the development. It was seen, throughout history that societies which have correctly defined moral rules and have strictly observed them, have achieved economic and social performance and highly developed culture. From this point of view, the space ethics should be seen as a set of rules and behaviours that make transparent the arguments which motivate why, where and how to intervene in order to change existing spatial configurations or to solve distortions that occur in the process of territorial development. The space ethics can be applied at any scale, taking into account the cumulative effects of its (non)compliance from micro to macro scale and vice versa.

3. THE THEORETICAL AND APPLICATIVE SIDES OF THE SPACE ETHICS

In preparing and implementing territorial development strategies and policies, in addition to the objective knowledge of reality and the recognition of spatial values, it is necessary an attitude that allows establishing a relationship of affection between all socio-economic and political actors on one hand and space, on the other. Only after a diagnosis involving a perfect coupling of the researcher to the analyzed territory and of the decision-maker within the space temporarily managed it can be discussed a certain responsibility towards the actions taken and the way territorial reality is understood and respected. If policy makers are those who establish the main objectives of territorial development at the large and medium scale, the inhabitants of that area find themselves in a constant interaction with it. Thus, the population becomes the leading actor in modifying the spatial configurations, through activities at a small

scale, but also through the part it can play in the context of a participative democracy in developing the space they manage directly or indirectly. The affective relationship between the sum of actors and the space in which they act is created in a context of human co-existence, which has historically seen processes of implementation of policies with a territorial resonance.

In this context there is a harmonization of human values with the values of space. The human values consist of the sum of all individual values and of shared ones, and the values of space are the values of the place and also the ones of its site of insertion (Fig. 1). The ethics of space, as a central variable in the development of human society, contributes to optimizing the relationship between society and the overall resources of an area.

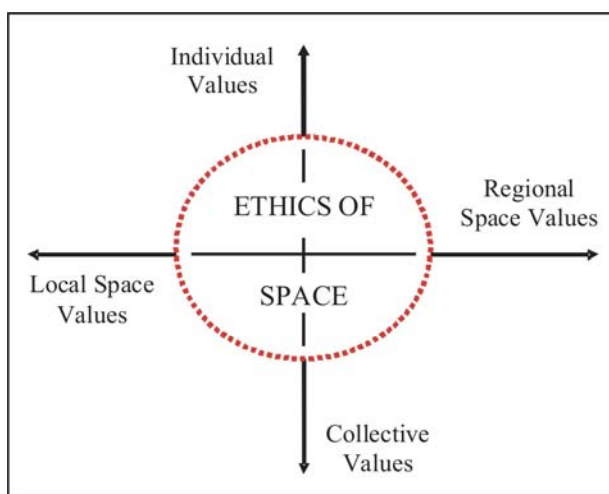


Figure 1. Ethics of Space "Location" (Cross-ways of the systems of values)

Analytically, we can say that the ethics of space means respecting natural and human values of space, assimilation and strict application of professional knowledge, careful interventions when it comes to affecting the stable structures of space, objectivity in analysis and evaluation of spatial inequality and complete morality in defining and implementing policies (Fig.2.).

Among the major values of the space are its resources from the mineral ones, of the soil, the natural resources, manpower and resources of location. Except for human resources, all others have a differential regeneration capacity, which involves the protection and/or preservation of some (hardly renewable or non-renewable), in order not to endanger the existence of future generations. Hence the clearly direct relationship between the concepts of sustainable development and the ethics of space the former being more comprehensive but sufficiently impregnated with morality (Janos et al, 2009).

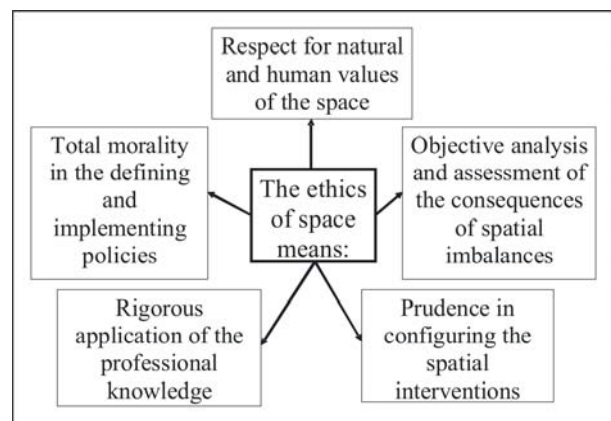


Figure 2. What does the ethics of space mean?

Human resources are viewed from their quality's point of view and in the process of preparation and evaluation of these, elements of ethics aim at ensuring equal opportunities of training, in order to increase the capacity to generate knowledge and best practices to model the behaviour of individuals and groups so that their economic, social and cultural environments to become powerful and attractive. In some deeply disadvantaged areas, the population remains the only resource capable of leading to economic revitalization, and in this context investments in education, health, in stimulating private initiative can become highly productive on the long term.

The relationship between the person/community and space takes a rational layout, the first acting on the basis of a higher and higher training allowing through simulation the projection of space development. The interest of both the population and of the specialists is to have the knowledge and professional experience, which can eliminate or reduce arbitrary intervention on space. In addition, policy makers besides the doctrinal orientation should have managerial training, to ensure their ability of objectively managing the process of territorial development. In other words, learning and strictly applying the professional knowledge can limit the amateurism, the preferential direction of funds in relation to other criterion, the excessive polarization of local/regional communities.

The space ethics implies shaping attitudes towards excessive voluntarism in terms of territorial development. In appearance, the space allows anything, in reality, the behaviour of all actors must be cautious towards the interventions that bring modifications to the basic structures of the space. Acting cautiously, especially in the case of deeply disadvantaged areas must dominate the local policies but also the individual and collective actions. It is true that the low level of development often implies chaotic measures, especially under critical circumstances

related to the daily existence of these communities. The favourable outcome for the moment is catastrophic in the long term. Such situations have been characterized by the lack of resources to purchase fuel and cutting trees on slopes near households.

The consequence was the triggering of landslides, erosion, regression and seriously affecting the whole community and of the households. For local decision makers, especially those of higher structures, the information related to the mechanisms of the processes to increase regional inequality is very useful if it is obtained from an analysis and objective evaluation. Starting from such quality of information can develop realistic policies for the treatment of these imbalances and of underdevelopment. Defining and implementing such policies have a single purpose: reducing regional disparities on a fair basis in which the morality and non-discriminatory treatment represent the guarantee of objectively distributing the resources and benefits.

In theory, the space ethics has a cumulative spiral trend as a result of ongoing awareness of social, individual and collective responsibility towards the resources of space, to optimize the net of increasingly complicated relationships between its structures. Strengthening behaviour in the spirit of spatial ethics is accomplished through education, through full transparency in transmitting the values and the best practices from one generation to another and from one community to another, through awareness of regional identity through the cultivation of altruism in open access to values. As shown in the above it is all about strengthening the ethics of space for the sustainable development of human society in general.

Compulsory education, but also the one offered during one's lifetime, through an organized system or media, emphasizes an important element of civic training for each individual: the knowledge of and compliance with ethical standards, which is one of the main components of the construction process by implementing the ethics of space. Professional training is based strictly on acquiring specialized knowledge, but their implementation cannot be effective if they are not accompanied by others, complementary ones, related to environmental attitudes, especially in the case of professionals who contribute to the restructuring of space through development process. In this respect, it can be said that a territorial manager is not complete unless equipped with minimum knowledge of respect for the space that he manages.

Any policy maker, involved in territorial management, should be aware that inherited structures are the result of a succession of continuity and discontinuity in the space dynamics that the inherited values are historically validated and,

therefore, any intervention must be done with caution.

Sets of regulations and written and unwritten rules are passed from generation to generation, some of them falling into the category of what amounts to common sense in that space's values. Many of unwritten forms of rules of behaviour towards space are represented by the best practices through which the communities have found the appropriate solutions for different types of problems. How hard the places' identity is gained and how easily it can be lost by unobserving the values and the uniformity of the way of life.

The ethics of space emerges from a respect towards the perennial values of places, towards the values deeply impregnated in the social history (Manea, 2003), the common psychology and the physical configuration of space at different scales. Activities aiming the development must contribute to recovery through protection and conservation of perennial values, if not by continually refining them. Preserving and enhancing its identity in a world heavily affected by globalization are important advantages of community resistance and of identifying appropriate niches of effective inputs in these streams with global character. By cultivating altruism in access to site values, human communities are open to the transmission of experiences and best practices, facilitating communication in territorial development.

4. ELEMENTS OF ETHICS APPLIED TO THE TREATMENT OF DEEPLY DISADVANTAGED AREAS

The originality of this paper consists of the idea that we cannot discuss a correct treatment of deeply disadvantaged territorial areas without taking into account elements of space ethics. Both notions under different shapes are being used relatively recently in the specialised literature trying to show that the contemporary post-modernism cannot overlook in the development process a certain affinity of the population, the decision makers and of territorial specialists by imposing certain rules regarding the behaviour towards the relation with the space in all its dimensions. It is the case of obeying a set of professional rules, but also moral ones which lead towards careful consideration before interventions. The deeply disadvantaged areas are in general spaces of small dimensions having surfaces between tens of square kilometres, rarely hundreds.

At the level of Romania there have been identified about 50 of these areas, situated in all the development regions. These are individualized through very distinct structure and spaces of insertion. If the diagnosis is very clear: underdevelopment, the

treatment can be extremely different, taking into account the features of the respective spaces and the relationships with the superior territorial entities. The elements of ethics in the treatment of these types of areas targets very different segments, as we most often discuss a chronic underdevelopment. Obviously the whole country is affected by underdevelopment, if we only consider the level of development of Bucharest (GDP per inhabitant) is close to the European average, but looking without concern at the deepening of the social territorial segregation process which shows that the ethic rules are severely broken.

Most of these deeply disadvantaged areas are located in the east and the south of the country and the geographical placement can be only partially explained by their historical evolution. What is it being done now for narrowing these areas or in order to be integrated in more developed areas? After 20 years from abandoning the centralized development are there any real progresses for diminishing the underdevelopment? From an ethical point of view, were the principles commonly declared taken into account? Without trying to answer these questions it is certain that there is a big gap between the declared intention and action and even a wider gap between the former and the effects. If space ethics should be respected, then there would not be any tendency to increase these differences, and on the contrary, such a situation would have a short life.

Among the indicators used when determining these areas there are economic indicators (turnover per capita, number of employees reported to employment, employment in agriculture), demographic indicators (net migration, infant mortality, the population share over 65 years), infrastructure indicators (share of households connected to water supply system, the share of households equipped with bathrooms, number of pharmacies per 10,000 inhabitants), indicators expressing the standard family life (high school population share of population over 20 years, the number of doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, usable living area per person, literacy rates).

Given the values achieved by these indicators, it would be ethical from the decision makers at higher levels, to give a typical statute to positive discrimination of such spaces. The population of deeply disadvantaged areas does not have equal chances with the population of other rural areas, without even comparing it to the population of some urban centres, some of them small. It seems that one of the major causes of this situation is determined by the low level of resources available to local communities. In addition, principles of economic efficiency at a larger scale seem to be extremely harmful to these levels. For example, it is not moral to consider the same parameters of operation for a

school in the countryside with one situated in the urban and especially those of such spaces, characterized by isolation, long distances between villages, and population with minimum education. In such cases, the process of dissolution and amalgamation of schools, increase the individual costs of schooling, and under the conditions of underdevelopment, the school dropout rate and illiteracy increase. In addition, linking teacher salaries to local budgets, their sizing according to the number of pupils have direct and indirect effects on the quality of education.

As a conclusion, the chances for a good education and of further professional accomplishment of a child genetically gifted but coming from such an area are minimal. Thus judging each of the criteria measured through the indicators mentioned above we will notice that there could appear progresses in dealing with the complex problems of these areas if the ethic principles at different levels would be given priority. We obviously support the differentiated territorial development, but without condemning the same areas to chronic underdevelopment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the present study we have aimed to pass beyond the technical aspects strictly related to the treatment of underdeveloped areas, outlining that when the solution of some acute problems is discussed, elements of ethics may have same importance. Given that the profoundly disadvantaged areas, through their human and economic load act the same way alive organisms do, that the quality of human resources is related to the standard of living of the population, the ethics of the development process represents the same as bioethics in general. The difference is that we are discussing populations of human beings that live and work in a certain space they also identify themselves with.

The attitude of the different levels decision makers must comply with the scientific management norms, the specialists with the profession, economical and social actors, the rules of the market and the population has to be educated in the spirit of participative democracy. The rapidity with which the area will shift from one level of development to another depends on their behaviour. The lack of compliance with the norms through which the amplifying elements of development are stimulated and directing resources towards objectives of little interest harm the community's interest and deepen the processes of territorial segregation, of condemning the community to poverty. As a result, the ethics of space is a part of a generic concept that could be

named the law of the space, having the property of being used as an integrator concept of development.

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