



Working together
www.rcis.ro

Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială

ISSN: 1583-3410 (print), ISSN: 1584-5397 (electronic)

Selected by coverage in Social Sciences Citation Index, ISI databases

THE SHIFTING REALITY OF REPULSIVE URBAN AREAS BETWEEN PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND CRIME. CASE STUDY: BUCHAREST MUNICIPALITY

*Mariana NAE, Bogdan SUDITU, Silviu NEGUȚ,
Liliana DUMITRACHE, Aurel GHEORGHIȚĂȘ*

Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială, 2014, vol. 44, pp. 86-102

The online version of this article can be found at:
www.rcis.ro, www.doaj.org and www.scopus.com

Published by:

Expert Projects Publishing House



On behalf of:

„Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University,

Department of Sociology and Social Work

and

Holt Romania Foundation

REVISTA DE CERCETARE SI INTERVENTIE SOCIALA

is indexed by ISI Thomson Reuters - Social Sciences Citation Index

(Sociology and Social Work Domains)



The Shifting Reality of Repulsive Urban Areas between Public Perception and Crime. Case Study: Bucharest Municipality

Mariana NAE¹, Bogdan SUDITU², Silviu NEGUT³,
Liliana DUMITRACHE⁴, Aurel GHEORGHILAS⁵

Abstract

Urban spaces cannot be dissociated from the constructions of the social or imaginary space. The resulting representations articulate on repulsiveness and attractiveness attributes. Based on a humanistic geographical approach, the aim of this article is to identify those representations, playing on the relationship between repulsive urban spaces and the social deviance, as an attribute of the social space. The repulsive urban spaces are embedded themselves on the collective imaginary of a perceived offence as well as on the presence of incivilities. The study used the data obtained from face to face questionnaire survey on 1,176 persons. The results of the applied multiple regression analysis showed that the urban spaces' unsafeness is not closely dependent on the urban incivilities' impact or the sanitation or cleaning of the public spaces. Overall, the poor quality of life within the city, the negative image of the neighbourhoods/derelict built urban environment were the most predictable variables for estimating the urban unsafeness.

Keywords: repulsive urban areas: real and imaginary space; selective residential mobilities; crime levels: incivilities: address effect; Bucharest.

¹ University of Bucharest, Department of Human and Economic Geography, ROMANIA. E-mail: mirellanae@yahoo.com

² University of Bucharest, Department of Human and Economic Geography, ROMANIA. E-mail: b_suditu@yahoo.fr

³ Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Department of Tourism and Geography, ROMANIA. E-mail: silviu.negut@gmail.com

⁴ University of Bucharest, Department of Human and Economic Geography, ROMANIA. E-mail: dosaredumitrache@yahoo.com

⁵ University of Bucharest, Department of Human and Economic Geography, ROMANIA. E-mail: aghgeo@yahoo.com

Introduction

The notion of space study within the social sciences, despite the great number of forms that it embraces, despite the way it is interpreted and understood (real space vs. imaginary space, relative space, absolute space, metaphorical space, public space, private space), has generated several debates in the last decades. The triad social world, subjective world and physical world appears frequently in social sciences. As a science of space, the human geography could be identified with the space. “Human geography investigates social relations and their spatiality and spaces (in the sense of territories, landscapes, regions, cities, places and so on)” (Zierhofer, 2005: 32). The diversity of the approaches on the knowledge of space notion must be implicitly correlated with the nature of activities as “a better approach will be one that attends to the way in which spatial notions are imbricated in the practices in which geographers engage” (Curry, 1996: 4).

Subjective and objective in the perception and classification of urban space

The aim of the article is to offer a humanistic geographical approach on urban spaces, playing on the relationship between repulsive urban spaces and the social deviance, as an attribute of the social space. Beyond the polemics stirred by the dichotomy space-place, space cannot be separated from society. “Space is more abstract than place” (Tuan, 1977: 6). People are geographical actors; they inhabit their life space with relations, interrelations, feelings, emotions, collective memory (Tuan’s notion of *topophilia* or *topophobia*). Inspired by the bases of existentialist philosophy and phenomenology, the humanistic geographers reject the idea of reducing the space and place to geometrical, mathematical concepts of points and surfaces (Neguț, 2011). “Phenomenology is the study of meanings and studies human appraisals” (Johnston, 1991: 173). Experiencing, living and creating our own worlds have thus a major part; *the humanistic methods are based on the understanding of the complicated interferences of human experience*, with “being in the world”, in the attempt to reach beyond the abstract theories, covering the “true essence” of human relationships through daily life events (Holloway L. & Hubbard P., 2009: 71).

Spaces are perceived differently. The reality is a construct of experience. Usually, spaces known through daily experiences become familiar and are seen as being safe, they become places, while unknown spaces may become mythical, they become the foundation of mythical spaces, “a fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known” (Tuan, 1977: 86). People living in a neighbourhood know the area well enough thanks to their daily experiences, but it’s very likely they don’t know the next neighbourhood and implicitly the neighbouring social group. Both social groups may build this knowledge in an unclear

way (“hazy knowledge”, according to Tuan, 1977) and based on myths. The neighbourhood notion is also associated with the residents’ community that evolves and develops within a social context. This social context is shaped by the human interactions, but also by the individual perceptions of the social world. Specific studies on crime levels and social justice underlined the role of the collective efficacy in reducing crime levels and violence in urban spaces (Samson, 2004; Warner, 2007; Swatt *et al.*, 2013). On the contrary, other studies revealed the importance of incivilities on violence and crime fear, proving, based on some equation models, that the perception of incivilities has a direct and positive role on the feeling of fear towards crime (Gibson *et al.*, 2002).

Another objective of the study is to explain, not exhaustively, the complexity of human relationships with space, and also the intrinsic and extrinsic connection between the social space and social deviance. The geographical elements, as geographical products, can be differently represented both at individual level as well as the personal and collective level, but also from the experience perspective. They are represented as *internal or external realities* of the respective social group. The representations can be identified as *mnemonic codes*. These codes may be used with a double function: on one hand - to decode the built, social geographical environment and on the other hand - to communicate with the others. The *social deviance* notion has many meanings and it broadly implies activities or actions connected to alcoholism, prostitution, delinquency, suicide or drug abuse. The social theories tried to explain and to interpret the deviant behaviour either through responses or pathological reactions to a certain social or physical environment, or through certain physical/social attributes triggered by certain behaviours, or by considering that certain environments or entourage can attract different people.

The complex relationships of social groups and their interaction to the environment have been interpreted from the perspective of high living densities that may cause constraints and limits to human behaviour, supporting the presence of a *appropriation of the space*, according to which people, similar to animals, need a territory as source of protection, safety and intimacy (inspired by the science of ethology). Based on the assertions from the Marxist theories of alienation, the feelings of marginalization, poverty, permanent discontent towards the personal experiences and the economical, social and political system may be related to deviant behaviours. The common attributes of life and social groups (ethnicity, profession, friendships, life style) in urban spaces may also contribute to strengthening or weakening the social cohesion, the compositional theory explaining in fact the deviant behaviour as an effect of the local populations’ structure having certain habits, political and cultural attitudes considered as unconventional ones (Knox, 2006). Please note that the issue of social repulsiveness/attractiveness differentiations in Romanian urban space was analysed starting with the first thematical studies on migrations and urban quality of life (Miftode, 1980; Nae,

2009). In order to reduce the effect of poverty and implicitly to prevent delinquency, social political strategies and community rehabilitation programmes for children with disabilities or assistance programmes are therefore important. The presence of urban spaces with certain characteristics of built urban environment (abandoned houses, brown fields, bridges etc.) may negatively affect the human behaviour; it is explained through the deterministic theory induced by the architectural design (Newman, 1972; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1978). The manifestation of certain vandalism actions, crimes, thefts and burglaries from poor houses is connected to the attenuation of the community spirit as understood by Urry (1995:10) as “human association founded on personal ties and sense of belonging and warmth”, through the slackening of social control, the inability of defending and protecting themselves or through the indifference towards their peers.

The “address effect” and the social meanings in the public perception of urban toponymy

The neighbourhood quality may be defined by analysing its physical elements (such as predominant type of houses, their architectural quality, constructions’ quality, existence of parks, green spaces, playgrounds for children, accessibility, existence of parking spaces, access to urban infrastructure etc.) and the social ones (social composition, ethnical composition). We are frequently tempted to associate a quality to a place before having known it or having defined, assessed and quantified its characteristics. Moreover, when defining the neighbourhood type, the city dwellers - users of urban space and/or potential migrants - will allocate a higher attention to physical elements or, on the contrary, to social elements. When identifying the repulsive urban areas, alongside the previously mentioned quantifiable elements, the neighbourhood *reputation* or the *imaginary urban toponymy* play an important part. The urban toponymy is loaded with social meanings, thus feeding the collective imaginary and sometimes it stands for identity. Every city dweller has a social-spatial representation of urban territory, made through direct experiences or through information accumulated from different environments. The *address effect* is immediate, the street or the neighbourhood name being associated with an appreciation of the interlocutor’s social-residential status. But the urban social toponymy and the address effect function in different directions, both appreciation and depreciation of the respective social space (Bidou-Zachariassen, 1997).

The devaluing social significances have a major contribution to the shaping of the repulsive urban areas in public perception. When a neighbourhood having such an image attached is urban renewed, its social rehabilitation is not as quickly finalized and even if its population evolves, it needs a longer period of time until these significances fade away. The urban practice confirms that the rehabilitation of certain neighbourhoods doesn’t realistically and immediately modify their

position within the hierarchy of attached values to different neighbourhoods in the city. The most concrete example is provided by the uttering of Rahova neighbourhood's name that is seen by the majority of those interviewed as a neighbourhood with poor social and architectural qualities. This association is encouraged by the spatial proximity and the weak differentiation in their mental maps from the Ferentari neighbourhood. Rahova, which is mostly overlapping the residential ensemble built on the place of the old neighbourhood with bad reputation, is an area characterized by a habitat with housing features and services at least similar to those in areas much better rated.

In Bucharest, the social meanings associated to urban areas (including housing types, different forms of housing and neighbourhoods) result from a process of historical evolution. The social value associated to the habitat mainly derives from its location, but also from its type and quality. This social value is highly influenced by the social status of the residents and of those living nearby. The association to a certain type of habitat is not random or unconditioned because its value and significance may change in time: the appreciation/depreciation processes constantly affect the city's neighbourhoods or the habitat types. The value of a habitat results from a complex combination of many elements more or less homogeneous.

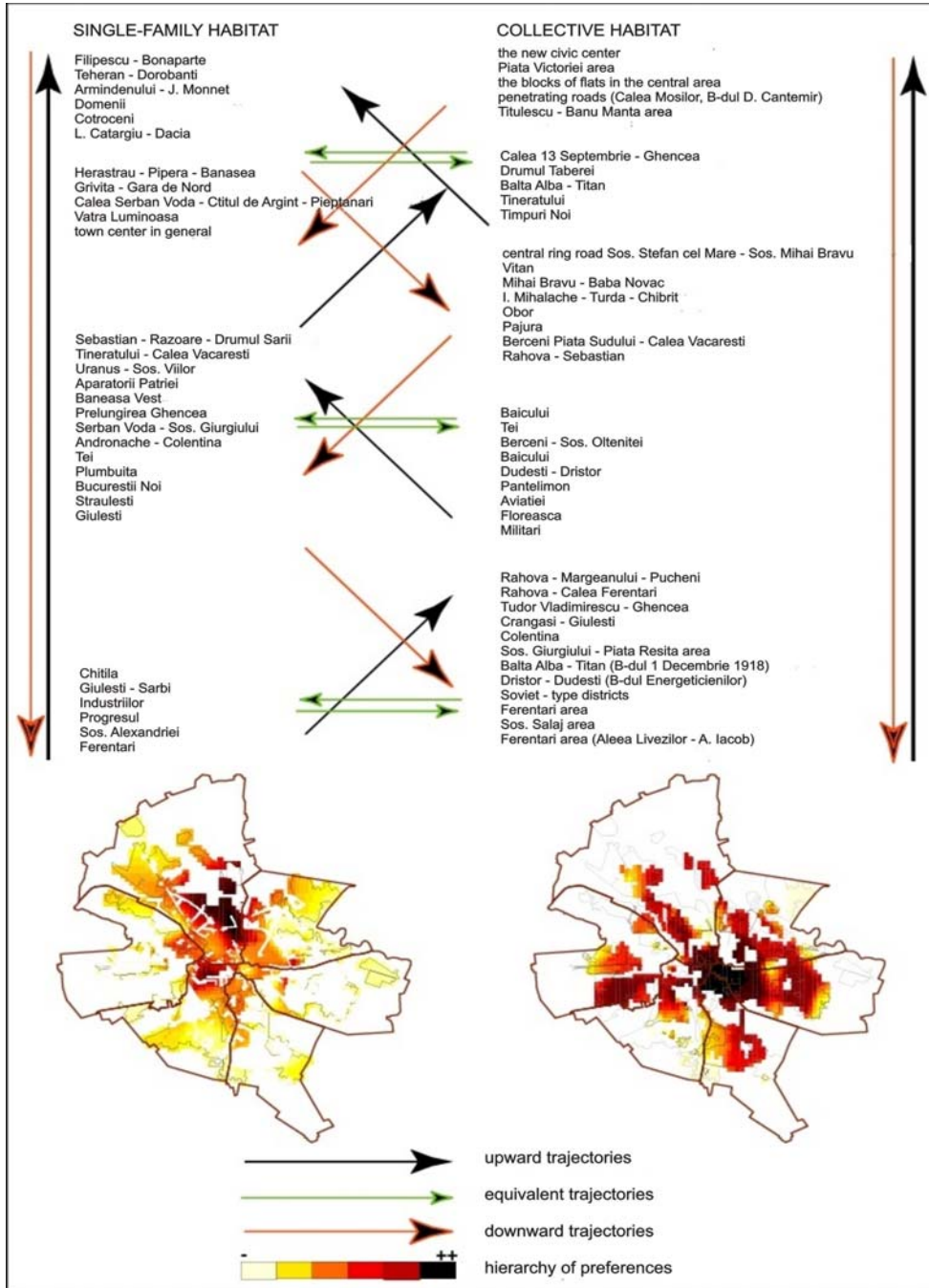
The social value qualification of an urban area is based on two elements: the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that particular habitat actually provides to its inhabitants and the social image transparency of the habitat or that particular location. The dissatisfaction towards the habitat is frequently due to the diminishing of its social value, the presence of a poor population or a socially marginalized population (in this instance gypsies play a major part) more than to its own functional shortcomings or to those shortcomings considered unacceptable when they mean a loss of the social status: lack or degradation of sanitary installation, disconnection of the heating system, water infiltrations, damaged mail boxes are indicators of the social status degradation to which inhabitants are very sensitive and which causes reactions that are frequently disproportionate compared to the common inconveniences represented by them. The social value of a space is seldom homogeneous. It is composed of numerous elements (the quality of housing, of common spaces, of constructions, of exterior spaces, urban location, services' density, population characteristics etc.). Their importance as well as their value is variable and the ensemble's significance results from a complex interaction that most frequently leads to an identity mosaic rather than the construction of a unitary significance. All societies function by creating differentiation and hierarchy systems within them and by articulating themselves around them. The differentiation distance, be it symbolic or material is indispensable for changes and communication. It is an error of certain utopian political projects that considered it was possible to eliminate this founding principle and of those societies that tried to eliminate the differences because these distances were

soon recomposed in perverted forms once the communist system was replaced. In case of Bucharest municipality, the hierarchy of urban habitats' social value functions on two levels, clearly differentiating the individual housing from the collective one. The hierarchies are based on perception elements such as centrality, social transparency and visibility, but also on concrete elements providing comfort and full access to urban services such as: accessibility, housing type, surface, rooms' number per housing, existence of yards, of playgrounds, urban infrastructure quality, the quality of commercial spaces etc. The social value hierarchy associated to habitat overlaps the hierarchy of residential preferences and it is transferred into practice via two different scales (individual and collective housing) that have no inferior common starting points (Suditu, 2006).

A selective residential mobility - indicator of the repulsive character for certain urban territories

The geographers' researches on residential mobility essentially look at the circulation flows between different places, these population displacements being the indicators of the existing interactions between places. The analysis of the migration balances and the net migrations is the one that most obviously translates the repulsive or attractive aspect of places and not the flows in themselves. Thus we will consider that an attractive place is the one that draws a number of immigrants that is higher than the number of those who are leaving and a repulsive place is the one where the current of emigrants is higher than the one of immigrants. Geography is interested in the properties of places. A more or less repulsive character of different spaces or parts of spaces, identified through the net migration and its fluctuation in time (it may go from a positive value to a negative one and vice versa) can be therefore used in order to characterise places. It is assumed that places' different characteristics (social-economical characteristics, geographical position) may be the ones that could explain the attraction power over migrants or on the contrary their repulsive character. One of the goals of studying migrations is in fact to show the causes and the spatial effects of economical and social changes: a population flow between two areas may be an answer to a change in the economical and social structures of these areas, but through a retroactive process, it may in turn be a factor of this change (Baccaini, 2000).

The migratory behaviour will be adjusted according to the existence of a certain degree of dissatisfaction towards a place and the opportunities provided by other places, with certain factors stimulating the family to move (repulsion) and others making them to choose a certain location in favour of another (attraction). A relation of forces is set up between these two series of factors that will regulate the mobility (Ahmad, 1992).



Bucharest habitats

Source: Suditu, 2006

The characteristics of the origin and destination places can be interpreted as being positive or negative, encouraging or discouraging mobility, or being neutral. The influence of different factors depends from person to person, what is attractive for some being likely to be repulsive for others. The influence of departing and arrival places is not symmetrical because if the first is well known, the latter's characteristics are suspected or subjectively allocated. In the migration process, the influence of intermediary obstacles is not frequently correctly appreciated, regardless of their form: distance, the transportation means, legal or physical restrictions. The micro-social analysis is so much more justified at this level because, even if each individual has its own perception of places and possible obstacles, there is a similarity between the reactions of the individuals within the same group at the same variables.

The repulsive factor "I didn't like the area" of domicile change of Bucharest inhabitants was identified by Suditu (2006) as the major moving factor in 4.63% of the survey participants, being also frequently mentioned as secondary (7.43%) or tertiary (11.80%) factor. Most of the times, the dissatisfaction towards the quality of the house is passed to the entire area, just as it is the case with the neighbouring representatives from different social-professional and cultural categories. The degradation of habitat and of urban residential areas, associated with the presence of marginal social and ethnic groups are recognised as elements that contribute to the depreciation of housing satisfaction. Many of the interviewed persons confirmed the fact that the choice regarding the previous house and its area was a temporary compromise - due to financial constraints - which was later on improved by choosing the present house and its location. It is interesting the fact that this reason appears very rarely within the motivations of original inhabitants from the exterior individual housing areas (Giulești, Bucureștii Noi, Andronache, Giurgiului or Apărătorii Patriei) which don't perceive them as repulsive even if objectively these areas have a low level of comfort.

Social Geography and Social Deviance

The urban centers tend to become unsafe due to the increase in crime levels regarding private property, juvenile delinquency, drugs traffic and organised crime or due to the worsening of certain social phenomena such as unemployment, the dissolution of authority, social disorganization. "The city is associated mainly with danger rather than with safety" (Ellen, 1997). While in some form space is always given to society, social activities take place in space and thereby shape it (Zierhofer, 2005). Social deviance, in all its forms, is a major multidisciplinary research theme, the first scientific works coming from sociology and psychology. Giddens (2001: 189) defines deviance as "nonconformity towards a given set of norms accepted by a significant number of people within a community or a society". The complexity of social deviance needs a special attention from the

researcher as “deviance is everywhere and it leaves traces everywhere” (Downes & Rock, 1982: 41). Geographers have been interested in social and criminal deviance’s different forms (Ley, 1974; 1983; Giggs, 1979; Herbert, 1982; 1987).

Geographers associated the crime levels ratios with other indicators of social-demographical environment and they used different hypotheses such as the one of “poor environment” as in Ley’s studies (1974) regarding, for example, gangs’ distributions and the presence of graffiti in Philadelphia city. Initially their role was to mark the urban territory, the author reaching the conclusion that it wasn’t about a “tabloid attitude”, but mostly a manifest related to the behaviour. The “social” architecture of these troubled neighbourhoods is emphasized by the large presence of incivilities (signs of vandalism, graffiti, abandoned or broken into cars that may represent as many indicators of decline and of that particular neighbourhood). The incivility notion, apart from its conceptual ambiguity, is considered a social dimension of delinquency. Roché (1993: 34) defines incivilities as “an ensemble of highly varied social damages that don’t physically hurt people, but they overthrow the elementary rules of social life (spits, graffiti on the city’s walls, degradation of public goods, gathering of potentially threatening individuals, noises inside the houses, the insults in our daily lives, lack of respect towards elderly)”. The main difficulty is that this notion includes also embarrassing behaviours, some of them not being legally punished, and others being real offences. Incivilities are perceived as an affront to public order, the effects of the committed acts being truly relevant.

Crime and social media

Crime, in all its forms, has represented a subject for mass media as it is an attractive theme and it can bring benefits (raising the rating shares, accessing articles on-line, potential increase in the number of newspapers’ sales etc.). The mass-media representations towards negative deviance are built around negative phrases, where feelings of fear/constraint/anxiety define the social imaginary of crime (“ill-famed neighbourhoods of big cities in the country”). These representations may lead to a potential increase of anti-social activities or to some phenomena’ exaggeration, but also to changing perception. Another level of representation articulates around images. Therefore, visualizing these activities through maps play an important part (“crime map”, “shady/mobster clans’ map” etc.). It is practically possible to speak about “consumers” of these types of subjects that come from a social reality. Furthermore, researchers have studied the relationships between mass media and crime, where crime plays the role of entertainment and information. Crime news construction is very complex: it has a powerful information role, but it also has a role in creating some models of deviance (Pritchard and Hughes, 1997; Freedman, 2002). “Crime as entertainment/information has significant audience appeal”, it is closely connected to the

popular culture (Dowler *et al*, 2006) and it has a powerful role of *infotainment* and catalysing model (Surette, 2007, 2013).

Qualitative and quantitative studies on social phenomena manifestation have been conducted under aegis of different institutions, in many cases trying crime mapping and making maps to demarcate certain areas/neighbourhoods of the city. The neighbourhood notion has multiple connotations, it is frequently used given its notoriety and attractiveness, but it doesn't correspond to a relevant statistical unity that covers more series of (meta)data. The neighbourhood notion has a powerful cognitive role, can be mentally identified by the majority of inhabitants according to a reading grid defined by Lynch (1960): ways, limits, neighbourhoods, nodes or landmarks and it helps even more to shaping and identifying the social imaginary. For example, a study conducted in 2011 by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration showed, among other things, the areas where crime levels are perceived as being very high in Bucharest (Colentina, Pantelimon, Rahova-Ferentari). According to the study, 79% of population considers Rahova-Ferentari as the most ill-famed neighbourhood in Bucharest, followed by Pantelimon neighbourhood. The perceived rate of street crime, according to the same study (robberies, pick pocket thefts), remained constant and the burglary rate tends to be inversely proportional to the population weight in the neighbourhoods, but from the perception point of view the population registers a highly inertia level despite the reduction of crime numbers, according to the official data supplied by the police.

The statistics of the Bucharest Police argue against the general perception indicating that in the 5th ward - the one including those neighbourhoods known as the most ill-famed ones in Bucharest, Rahova and Ferentari among them - the most numerous street offences occur; in fact, this ward is the penultimate in the classification of administrative zones in Bucharest by the number of offences. In the last three years in Bucharest, the crime levels fall in the same parameters. In 2009 and 2010 there were approximately 98,000 offences, while in 2011 compared to the previous ones, the offences' number dropped by approximately 5%, reaching 93,400 cases in Bucharest during the entire year (Bucharest Municipality Police, 2012). Most street offences, 4,380, happened in 2011 within the 3rd ward. The second place in the street offences classification belongs to the 1st ward where 3,002 antisocial cases were reported. Last year, within the 2nd ward 2,992 street offences occurred, and within the 6th ward 2,861 cases of criminal contraventions were recorded in the street. The 5th and 4th wards are the opposite by the number of street offences, seeming the safest administrative zones in Bucharest. In 2011, 2,329 antisocial street cases were reported in the 5th ward, while in the 4th ward 2,125 offences were reported. Out of the total number of offences reported in 2011, most of them - 63% - are offences against the patrimony. Thefts from cars represent 19.7%, shoplifts represent 9.3% out of the total offences, pick pocket thefts represent 5.4% of reported cases and the rest is covered by other types of

theft. In 2011, 16% of cases were offences against people. Out of the total criminal acts reported last year, 41% were accusations of beating and other types of violence, 25.6% of social offences were unintentional injuries, while threats represent 21.3% of cases. According to the Bucharest Municipality Police, serious offenses are very few, less than 1% of the total on each segment. Thus in Bucharest during 2011 there have been reported approximately 750 rapes, more than 185 cases of murder and approximately 750 murder attempts.

In order to better control the criminality phenomenon, the central authorities and the Bucharest Municipality Police implemented a system that can supply metadata that help monitoring criminal acts. According to the police press releases, starting with 2012 the National System for Incidents Reporting is in place and is used by all structures of the operative police. The real time analysis of the activity reports of patrolling agents, together with the number of reports from citizens, will facilitate a faster recognition of some hot spots in urban areas. Thus the analysts within the operative structures will be able to draw the crime map based on some indicators (offence type, occurrence time intervals and the goods targeted in each area). Nevertheless, the study of crimes and unsafe areas is much more complex.

Research design

Based on a previous study (Nae, 2009), we would like to identify some representations of the relationships between the impact of incivilities and urban spaces. The primary data collected come from the questionnaire survey (face to face) conducted in May 2013 in Bucharest on a sample of 1,176 persons. The secondary sources came from the press releases of the 6 Ward City Halls and the reports of Bucharest Municipality Police. The data were processed and analysed with the statistical programme SPSS v. 17. The participants answered to questions related to urban spaces' safety, neighbourhood's safety and image, antisocial acts and physical and social incivilities, but also related to the personal life quality and the quality of life within the city. The questions regarding the urban safety assessed the degree to which people feel (un)safe in their neighbourhood and in public, open and private spaces. We intend to identify if there is a relationship between the perceived crime levels, unsafeness of urban spaces (public, open or private) and the presence of incivilities. We would also like to investigate those predictive variables that explain the perception of urban unsafeness. When constructing the items, we considered the respondents' evaluation of the incivilities' gravity in urban spaces (serious = 1, non-serious = 0) and the evaluation of the urban spaces' (un)safeness (yes = 0, no = 1).

From the very beginning the public space notion rests on its conceptual ambiguity, stemming both from urban planning and political philosophy or sociology.

Yi Fu Tuan (1984:ix) analyses the role of the territory in the human behaviour and in creating places identities, briefly the interrelations between people and the environment: "I have explored the nature of human attachment to place, the component of fear in attitudes to nature and landscape, and the development of subjective world views and the self-consciousness in progressively segmented spaces". Public spaces are open, becoming vulnerable at the same time. Starting from these assertions and based on speculations of human geography, the term "crimes" must be understood from the perspective of two directions: real, *experienced crimes*, lived by each person and *perceived crimes* or crimes imagined by somebody, starting from the creation and forming of some images and symbolic representations towards an area or a neighbourhood, based on information collected from different sources.

It's about a pejorative connotation of what symbolic geographies mean that can reconfigure almost entirely the geographical space, creating new territories. "The symbolic geographies mentally identify the surrounding space, labelling it and thus classifying it and placing it on a certain place within a hierarchy of values... Other times, a concrete space, identifiable on a political or geographical map is invested with a particular meaning which is not the result of an empirical analysis of reality, but of some images and subjective cliché generalization" (Mitu, 2006: 23). We consider that there is a relationship between the experienced and perceived crime levels as a result of both the presence of elements such as social disorganization and antisocial acts (incivilities) and the existence of attributes that compose the mental values of perceived spaces (positive, negative or neutral). The cliché and negative images may contribute to the enhancement of urban topophobia feeling. The regression model applied in the previous study (Nae, 2009) confirms the certain variables' positive relationship (especially insults and verbal aggression) regarding incivility and the victimization relationship. The basic regression model included control variables (negative social relationships, residential attachment to the neighbourhood, feelings of insecurity, neighbourhood's image, incivilities' impact, presence of tags and graffiti etc.). The inclination of the regression line was positive which implied a direct relationship between the two elements, in other words the independent variable's increase led to an increase of the dependent variable. The increase by 1% of verbal aggressions and insults led to a 15% increase of fear towards victimization (explained in this case as the situation of being a victim of robbery, house breaking, and aggression during the past year).

In this case, it was considered that the appreciation and the perception of urban spaces' unsafeness depend on numerous social, economical or psychological factors and the impact of urban incivilities is not that big when appreciating some space as being unsafe or it may represent the source of a potential social risk. A multivariate analysis was used; the appreciation of urban spaces' unsafeness was used as an independent variable as well as 10 significant predictive variables at

bivariate level. Thus, the following variables were entered into a multiple regression analysis (*Table 1*): presence of informal commerce, negative image of a neighbourhood/built environment, poor quality of life, begging phenomena without violence, trivial inscriptions on the walls, scandals and riots, urban vandalism acts, loudly listened music, verbal insults, cleaning and sanitation of public spaces.

Table 1. *Model Summary*

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Model				
1	.400 ^a	.160	.142	1.513

^a *Predictors: (Constant), Informal types commerce, Bad quality of life in the city; Negative city image/built environment; Physical assaults (Fear); Cars degradation; Scandals, riots; Drawings, graffiti, tags; Insults; Housings property; Urban vandalism acts; Syringe's presence and drogue consumption; Begging phenomena without violence; Reunion of the teenagers groups; Trivial inscriptions on the walls; Music loudly listened; Verbal insults; Evaluation of the quality of life within the city.*

^b *Dependent Variable: Unsafeness of urban spaces*

According to the model from *Table 1*, the entire model explaining the unsafeness of urban spaces was significant at an R-value of 0.401 and an ability to explain almost 1-3 variables in the scores variation. Generally, 3 out of 16 independent variables remain significant in multivariate model (*Table 2*).

The urban spaces unsafeness is not significantly important compared to the impact of urban incivilities (loudly listened music, trivial inscriptions on the walls, urban vandalism acts) or the cleaning and sanitation of public spaces. Overall, the poor quality of life within the city, the negative image of neighbourhoods/deplorable built environment was the most predictive variables for urban unsafeness evaluation. The results of the regression model also show that there is a negative relationship between the fear of physical assaults and robberies and the urban spaces unsafeness. The explanation for the urban space unsafeness is more likely connected to the social and economical conditions, of the life quality in general, rather than the urban incivilities such as begging (even if it is disturbed and controlled especially in the urban transport - subway). The begging phenomenon with or without violence became so common and ordinary in the city's social life that it doesn't appear as a potential factor in determining the urban spaces unsafeness.

Table 2. Ordinary least square regression on unsafeness of urban spaces (n=1176)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model 1	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.534	.365		4.204	.000
Physical assaults	-.911	.130	-.195	-6.996	.000
Evaluation of the quality of life within the city	.120	.064	.066	1.863	.063
Bad quality of life of the city	.431	.118	.127	3.666	.000
Negative city's image/neighbourhood	.211	.052	.119	4.059	.000
Scandals, riots	.016	.104	.005	.154	.877
Music loudly listened	-.311	.104	-.094	-2.996	.003
Cleanliness of public spaces	.184	.103	.053	1.793	.073
Syringe's presence and drogue consumption	.004	.009	.013	.408	.683
Cars degradation	-.012	.018	-.021	-.666	.505
Urban vandalism acts	-.183	.104	-.055	-1.754	.080
Trivial inscriptions on the walls	-.152	.109	-.045	-1.391	.165
Informal types commerce	-.149	.108	-.044	-1.378	.168
Begging phenomena without violence	-.188	.113	-.054	-1.656	.098
Drawings, graffiti, tags	-.022	.105	-.006	-.205	.837
Reunion of the teenagers groups	-.148	.101	-.045	-1.461	.144
Insults	.002	.103	.001	.018	.986

^a Dependent variable: unsafeness of urban spaces

At the same time, despite the increase of vandalism acts and of verbal aggressions within the public space, these don't represent significant predictors for urban spaces unsafeness. Social deviance is usually associated with certain marginalized persons/social groups that identify with a certain deviant behaviour. These social groups form and produce a particular social space. Nevertheless these are not sufficient arguments for explaining the urban spaces unsafeness.

Conclusions

The construction of repulsive urban spaces depends on objective and subjective factors of a latent nature. Geographical elements, as geographical products, can be differently represented both at individual, personal level and at the collective level, from and through the experience perspective. They are represented as *internal or exterior external realities* of the respective social group. The devaluing social significance plays a major role in shaping the repulsive urban areas in the public perception (Neacșu & Negut, 2012). The cliché and negative images may contribute to the enhancement of urban topophobia feeling. The “address effect” and the social meanings of urban place names are very important elements for qualifying the urban spaces by the city's inhabitants. The study points out that the differences between the urban reality and the public perception are very frequent

and that the renovation of a neighbourhood or urban area considered repulsive or the change of its social-demographical structure is not always and not in the same rhythm followed by rehabilitation in the collective imaginary.

The perceived crime levels may be related to the people quality of life in general and to the neighbourhood image in particular. Despite the fact that incivilities may contribute to creating negative stereotypes or that they have a catalyzing role in the deviant behaviour, they are less important in building repulsive urban spaces. Understanding the perceptions on crime levels and the incivilities' impact on the community (despite the fact that they are less known and acknowledged) could lead to the strengthening the social cohesion and it could have practical implications on improving the life conditions and the vulnerable communities' quality of life. The present study doesn't target an exhaustive approach of the issue of perception and reality in urban repulsive areas. The additional limits come from the fact that the survey's methodology didn't capture details on the dynamics of inter-groups perception. Even though important predictors of the perception on incivilities and crime fear were included in the model, other predictors such as social integration were not included in this study. Further qualitative researches must be applied in order to better identify the representations and the meanings of repulsive urban spaces from the incivilities' impact perspective. A subsequent investigation on the relationships between family, community and crime levels is recommendable. Communities and social cohesion, considered as protection factors against antisocial acts, have an important role in preventing crime (Swatt, 2013).

References

- Ahmad A. (1992). Choice of Location and Mobility Behaviour of Migrant Households in a Third World City. *Urban Studies*, 29(7), 1147-1157.
- Bacăđi B. (2000). Projet de mobilité et cadre de vie. In Mattei, M.-F., Pumain, D. (coord.), *Données Urbaines*, Paris: Edit.C.N.R.S., 3, pp. 91-111.
- Bidou-Zachariassen C. (1997). La prise en compte de l'effet de territoire dans l'analyse des quartiers urbains. *Revue française de sociologie*, XXXXIII, 97- 117.
- Bulai, A., & Mihăilescu V. (2011). *Cartografierea socială a Bucureștiului*, program de cercetare, SNSPA. București. http://www.csb2035.ro/pdf/facts/cartografiere_socio.pdf
- Curry, M. R. (1996). On Space and Spatial Practice. In Earl C., Mathewson K., Kenzer M. (coord.) *Concepts in Human Geography*. Savage: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, pp. 3-32.
- Dowler, K., Fleming, T., & Muzatti, S.L. (2006). Constructing Crime: Media, Crime, and Popular Culture. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 48 (6), 837-865.
- Downes, D., & Rock, P. (1982). *Understanding Deviance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ellin, N. (1997). *Postmodern Urbanism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Freedman, J. (2002). *Media Violence and Its Effect on Aggression*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gibson, C. L., Zhao, J., Lovrich, N.P., & Gaffney, M. J. (2002). Social integration, individual perceptions of collective efficacy, and fear of crime in three cities. *Justice Quarterly*, 19, 537–564.
- Giddens, A. (2001). *Sociologie*. București: All Central European University Press, Second edition.
- Giggs J.A. (1979). Human Health Problems in urban areas. In Herbert, D.T., Smith, D.M. (coord) *Social Problems and the the City: Geographical Perspectives*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Herbert, D.T (1987). Social Deviance in the City. In Pacione M. (coord), *Social Geography, Progress and Prospect*, London: Croom Helm.
- Herbert, D.T. (1982). *The Geography of Urban Crime*. London: Longman.
- Holloway, L. & Hubbard P. (2009). *People and Place: the extraordinary geographies of everyday life*, London: Routledge.
- Horton F.E., & Reynolds D.R. (1971). Effects of Urban Spatial Structure on Individual Behaviour, *Economic Geography*, 47, 36-48.
- Johnston, R.J. (1991). *Geography and geographers, Anglo-American Human Geography since 1945*, London: Arnold.
- Knox, P., & Pinch, S. (2006). *Urban Social Geography. An Introduction*, 5th Edition, Edinburgh: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Ley, D. (1983). *A social geography of the city*, New York: Harper and Row.
- Ley, D., (1974). The Black Inner City as Frontier Outpost: images and behavior of a Philadelphia neighborhood. *Monograph*, no.7, Association of American Geographers, Washington.
- Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Miftode, V. (1980). *Migrațiile și dezvoltarea urbană*, Iași: Junimea.
- Mitu, S. (2006), *Transilvania mea. Istorii, mentalități, identități*, Iași: Polirom.
- Nae, M. (2009). *București – dezvoltare urbană și calitatea vieții*. București: Editura Universitară.
- Neacsu, M. C., & Neagu, S., (2012). City Image - Operational Instrument in Urban Space Management - A Romanian Sample. In Burian, J. (coord.), *Advances in Spatial Planning New Economy*, 11, pp. 106–113.
- Neagu S., (2011). *Geografia umană*, București: Editura Academiei.
- Pritchard, D., & Hughes, K. (1997). Patterns of deviance in crime news. *Journal of Communication*, 47(3), 49-67.
- Roché, S. (1993). *Le sentiment d'insécurité et l'étude d'incivilités dans le cadre de vie français*, Paris: La Documentation Française.
- Suditu, B. (2006). *Mobilitatea rezidențială a populației Municipiului București / Logements, habitants et mobilités résidentielles à Bucarest. Enjeux pour le XXI-ème siècle*, (mss.), Universitatea din București/ Université d'Angers.
- Surette, R. (2007). *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice: Images and Realities*, 3rd ed. Belmont: CA, Thomson-Wadsworth.
- Surette, R. (2013). Cause or Catalyst: The Interaction of Real World and Media Crime Models. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(3), 392–409.

- Swatt, M., Varano, S., Uchida, C., & Solomon, S. (2013). Fear of crime, incivilities, and collective efficacy in four Miami neighborhoods. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 41(1), 1-11.
- Tuan, Y.F. (1977). *Space and place*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tuan, Y.F. (1984). *Dominance and affection*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Urry, J. (1995). *Consuming places*, London: Routledge.
- Warner, B.D. (2007). Directly intervene or call the authorities? A study of forms of neighborhood social control within a social disorganization framework. *Criminology*, 45, 99–129.
- Zierhofer, W. (2005). State, power and space. *Social Geography*, 1, 29-36.