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Summary of the PhD Thesis

**TERRITORY AND VIOLENCE IN
ROMANIA.
BETWEEN STEREOTYPE AND
REALITY**

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Abstract

People live in violence all their lives, from the first scream at birth. Over time, violence has been industrialised and domesticated. Our culture has not become totally accustomed to the presence of violence, but it has embraced it enough to become a part of our daily lives.

Although it is part of the nature of things and the meaning of violence seems accessible to the public, violence is a slippery concept - non-linear, productive, destructive and reproductive. Widespread, diffuse violence can give rise to mass social disorganisation, with the population becoming trapped in the chaos generated by the seizure of the normal mechanisms of everyday life. Violence is self-generative: its manifestation also contains the seeds of new forms of violence.

It is well known that abusers have generally been abused themselves: a husband who is abusive towards his family was most probably also a victim of violence as a child, and sexual abusers have themselves been victims of abuse (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004). Societies themselves are born through revolutions and die through violent events (other revolutions, of various kinds).

Defined as: "physical, biological or spiritual pressure, directly or indirectly exerted by one person on another, which, when it exceeds a certain threshold, reduces or cancels a person's potential for performance, both at individual and group level in the society in which the aggression takes place" (Rupesinghe and Rubio, 1994), violence is directly related to the quality of life of the group, the community and society in general. It is not surprising, therefore, that every state entity throughout history has sought to eradicate or at least control violence, especially crime, from the territory it administers, sometimes applying measures as violent as crime itself, as well as gentler methods based on ethics and morality, improved over long periods of time, represented by what might be called social moral conduct.

Crime, in whatever form it manifests itself in society, has embraced spheres of society that in the past seemed intangible. One result of the actions of crime in society is the manifestation of violence as a direct effect of these actions, with some researchers describing the two phenomena as interdependent in manifestation.

The phenomenon of crime: "includes those deviations and violations of legal, criminal and social norms which aim at disrupting public safety and threaten public order, the safety and health of individuals, the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens defended and recognised by all societies". This is why crime constitutes a significant danger to the

structures of society and the cohesion of social groups, disrupting and threatening the order of social values within any nation. Crime also causes feelings of fear and insecurity among the population, generating a series of social vulnerabilities (Spînu, 2002).

The French philosopher Yves Michaud defines violence as follows: "Violence occurs when, in a situation of interaction, one or more actors act in a direct or indirect, unitary or distributed manner, harming others to varying degrees, either in their physical wholeness, their moral wholeness, their possessions, or their symbolic or cultural participation" (Michaud, 1986).

Another definition is provided by the World Health Organization where violence is understood as: "the intentional use of physical force or power, against another person or against a group or community and results in bodily or mental harm or death". Although the organisation recognises that the inclusion of 'use of force' in the definition offered extends the conventional understanding of the word to include less conventional acts of violence (World Health Organization, 2002).

Pacification and reform of geographic space was a top priority of countries during the 19th century. Slowly, the culture of the street began to decline in favour of the culture of individual housings (private space), which gave individuals more privacy, leading to a tempering of aggressive actions. The process of pacification of space should not be seen as a total abandonment of the public (open) environment in favour of private and enclosed spaces. Public spaces have been more frequently patrolled by state law enforcements and transformed over time by changes in social life, associated specifically with the process of urbanisation, industrialisation and increased population mobility. Everyday violence has been pushed to the margins of public life, or rather hidden behind private space (Wood, 2007).

Violence can generally be divided into three broad categories known as dimensions of violence: direct, structural and cultural violence.

Direct violence (physical, sexual, psychological and social) is the most accessible and observable form of violence present in society. Direct violence also includes an important subdivision to be mentioned, namely political violence.

The term 'political violence' refers to direct and intentional violence administered in the name of a political ideology, movement or state and used in the physical repression of dissent by the military or police, and conversely by the population fighting against an oppressive regime (Bourgois, 2001).

Structural violence is a form of violence present in the social, political and economic systems of a society, generally reflected in society through gender, age and other social inequalities (Bourgois, 2001).

The name was first used in academic groups by the professor and founder of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Johan Galtung, in 1969, precisely to highlight the social democratic commitment to universal human rights and to reject the anti-communist hysteria propagated by the US and ideological capitalism exported to developing countries. During the Cold War, capitalism was presented as the only viable model of governance, a situation that often led to the political repression of popular dissent throughout the non-industrialized and American-influenced world (Bourgois, 2001).

Structural violence is a less publicly accessible form of violence and refers mainly to the politico-economic organisational structures of society, characterised by the existence of various coercive strategies, which end up causing both physical and emotional suffering. An example of structural violence is the high mortality in some societies caused by endemic poverty and inhuman working conditions.

Structural violence has deep roots worldwide in organisational political structures, such as unequal international trade treaties, or the exploitation of local markets and their monopolisation by large economic conglomerates, including through disadvantageous marketing arrangements (Galtung, 1969).

Structural violence maintained in a society can lead to the amplification of cultural violence and eventually to the generalisation of direct violence. Collective violence, which is often a consequence of the presence of structural violence, sometimes also becomes a solution to abolish structural violence, most often by eliminating the political elements that have favoured its development. Often, the transition to a more peaceful and less unequal society has occurred through a series of acts of revolt, which have been the concretisation of the total opposition of individuals to the system and to the old social order (Galtung, 1969).

Structural violence is seen by some researchers as a justification for the presence of anti-colonial, anti-globalist and nowadays violent resistance movements by radical religious groups (Camara, 1971).

Recently, the concept has been used by medical anthropologists to portray extreme economic inequalities and to sound the alarm about disease and suffering within less economically developed nations (Farmer, 2000).

Cultural violence addresses aspects of violence that are related to a range of cultural features that make the presence of violence in society 'normal', a subtle form of legitimising

violence through cultural practices and interpretations within a society, while providing legitimacy to both direct and structural violence.

Cultural violence is society's consent to a range of violent acts, acts such as physical and sexual assaults against women, personal violence or maintaining control in society through acts of various forms of coercion (Bourgois, 2001).

The emergence of heightened cultural violence may be a reflection of society's violent past. The emergence of a dominant category within a society suggests an invasion and conquest of one group by another group in a historical past, with the dominant group imposing itself on the other through a series of social constraints. Segregation along ethnic, financial or confessional lines have been present in all societies of the world, often referred to by historians as states of feudalism, societal stratifications in which one social group sought to secure privileges through coercive measures.

All these concepts of violence also require a geographical approach, and a geographical approach always has space at its core.

The thesis **TERRITORY AND VIOLENCE IN ROMANIA. BETWEEN STEREOTYPE AND REALITY** is structured in 6 chapters: Introduction, Methodology, Territory and Violence in Social Science Epistemology, Quantitative Analysis of Violence in Contemporary Society, Territory and Violence in Romania; Case Study: Spatial structures generated by the homicide phenomenon in Romania between 2011-2020 and Discussion and final conclusions.

The first chapter introduces the conceptualization of the phenomenon of violence and the link between violence and geographical space, in relation to perceptions of territory and the forms of its manifestation in society. Also, in the first chapter the aim and objectives of this thesis are presented.

The second chapter presents the methodology used in carrying out the analyses in this work and the sources of the data used. The database is the result of a collection activity spread over 3 years. In order to remove some of the risks related to the interpretation of statistical information, the main limitations of their use are also presented in this chapter. The case study methodology in this paper has been dealt with separately in Chapter 5.

The third chapter presents the current state of research in the field and how researchers in different related fields have approached the issue of violence.

Chapter IV consists of a study on two geographical scales of analysis, i.e. violence at the scale of the whole planet and violence at the scale of the national space of Romania. The

methods applied to the two geographical scales were adjusted according to the availability of data for each scale of study.

Chapter V was constructed on the basis of the analyses applied to a variable describing the subject of violence from a more sensitive perspective for society, namely homicides in contemporary Romania. The analysis of this phenomenon from a spatial perspective, especially since it is also carried out at a very fine scale, namely that of elementary territorial-administrative units (rural and urban communes), represents a theme of absolute novelty in Romanian geographical research.

In the last chapter, the sixth, a series of conclusions are presented on the topics addressed and possible new directions for further research on the topic of violence from a geographical perspective.

Violence is a difficult research topic to treat and quantify from an objective perspective, as the human sciences usually approach it through qualitative methodologies, accompanied to a very small extent by quantitative dimensions. Geography is the field that has been late to enter the realm of tackling violence. Unlike other sciences with quantitative approaches, geography can provide a different answer to the issue of violence by taking into account geographical space. This paper aims to present for the first time the response of geography to the problem of violence in Romania, through the application of concepts and methodologies specific to geography.

Given the rarity - in fact the quasi-absence of research focused on spatial approaches to violence on the Romanian territory - this PhD thesis does not aim at an exhaustive approach to the phenomenon, wishing to play only a pioneering role and to open the paths of this field of research to all branches of Romanian human geography. In this context, we have tried to ensure that all our analyses always have the spatial dimension of violence at their centre. From this follows an important objective of the study, namely the identification of problematic geographical spaces and the identification of the causes that generate violence and individualize them.

In order to achieve the main goal, we defined several functional objectives:

- To develop a methodology for the geographical analysis of violence (spatialisation of violence; territorialisation of violence, multi-scalarity of violence, relevant geographical scales of analysis of different forms of violence);
- Development of the concept of territorial stigma as opposed to territorial brand;

- Building a model for analysing the emergence of territorial stigma at the local scale in order to assist policy-making focused on housing quality and urban spatial management;
- Identification of territorial typologies of violence.

In carrying out this research, a general hypothesis has been taken into account, namely that geography is now becoming increasingly capable of contributing to the understanding and possibly the management of a whole range of social problems, including violence. Can geography capture the missing link between acts of violence in society by interpreting events spatially, regardless of the space used in the analysis?

The hypotheses on which this paper has been built, have been derived from the aims, objectives and main issues of the paper. From these points of view, hypotheses related to the space of violence have been launched, as well as hypotheses related to social, cultural and behavioural geography.

- In addition to the cultural dimension, violence also has a spatial/geographical dimension;
- Acts of violence are legitimate or illegitimate depending on the space/territory in which they take place, which means that their understanding, explanation and management are relative to the cultural specificity of the social groups under analysis;
- In collective thinking, spaces perceived as real are only the support on which a series of imaginary spaces related to the phenomenon of violence are overlapped;
- Territorialised violence can be deciphered by analysing the feedback loop between culture and space;
- The socio-economic framework plays a significant role in the spatio-temporal oscillations of the intensity of violent phenomena.