

BOOK REVIEWS

Geografie normativă (Normative Geography), IOAN MAC, Presa Universitara Clujeana, Cluj-Napoca (2008). 413 pp. ISBN 978-973-610-791-7

The book „Normative Geography” focuses around the idea that the vocation of Geography is to fit the contemporary society’s needs. This research field transcends the empirical observations and projects an ever-changing world, with new requirements, new dimensions, but also with frequent incertitude and continuous search. New norms and regulations have to be discovered and then applied in order to guide contemporary Geography and people’s and society’s concrete actions.

Structured in 12 chapters, the book defines the concept of normative Geography and directs the attention to the social utility of Geography. Chapter 3 is focused on Imagistic Geography, underlining that maps remain the basic imagistic constructions. This implies all the necessary procedures for describing the reality. With the help from methods, procedures and techniques used for analyzing reality, knowledge could also assume the task to project it under various configurations, fitting in this way the society’s practical and future needs

In a very complex approach, the author remarks some issues of territorial analysis and development. The fundamental dimensions of a territorial analysis should be historical, social, cultural, spatial, regional and geostructural. Other topics are included, as places as territorial systems, region and types of regions, territorial relations. A special attention is given to the economic and spatial reseizing in the new geopolitical context. The most important vectors of a territorial projection are economic, geopolitic, organisational and social. As a consequence, aspects as territorial capitalisation, juridical, cadastral, planning or territorial arrangement

issues were approached.

One of the most original chapter is the 11-th one - Geolegity and Geojurisdiction. Following the author’s logics, the laws are considered as mental essentialisations of the behavior of geographic facts. Laws express the general, essential, necessary, relatively stable and repetitive rapports existing intra- or inter-objects or between different temporal stages of a certain object. The natural and specific human nature benefits from an individualised legislation. The normative geography represents more that its direct cognitive function; it contributes to the solid phrasing of principles and laws, and more than that, it interprets and orients the applicability of these principles. The following aspects are underlined: the fundamental ecological laws, the dialectic development laws, the Geography’s general and specific laws, the main geographic principles.

In order to face human interventions in nature, with negative effects in most of the cases, the nature preserving legislation be came a vital necessity. The protectionist legislation is now extremely important and large, stipulating the elements and areas to be protected at different levels (local, regional, international).

The geographical dynamics is in fact Geography itself, because in the same world or reality, we discover new facets or images, new states or situations. The need for prediction stirs interrogations about change in general. In order to understand change, monitoring systems and techniques were developed.

The geographic management and its functions are also presented: planning, organising (institutional and operative), command (through which the objective is turned into action), coordination (through adjustments, connections and common efforts), and control (the action is supervised and directed according to the established conditions and orders).

Certainly, this book represents a novelty in the landscape of geographical literature, but the main ideas, are frequently hidden in the behind of well-known geographical concepts and constructions. At the same time, it is difficult for the reader to follow these ideas among many redundant ones. Despite of these remarks, the book is an attractive one, and orients the reader to more reflection on the „normative geography”.

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Rolul activităților industriale în dezvoltarea așezărilor din spațiul metropolitan al Bucureștilor (The role of industrial activities in the development of the settlements in the metropolitan area of Bucharest), ANDREEA-LORETA CEPOIU, University Publishing House, Bucharest (2009). 290 pp. ISBN 978-973-749-562-4.

The paper, structured in eleven chapters, is focused on analyzing the impact of industrial activities on the metropolitan area of Bucharest.

The author presents first an overview of the concepts of metropolisation and metro-politan area, which then are applied to the study area. Its delineation is based on the idea of flow space, the metropolitan area representing the intersection of several categories of flows, with a tendency of amplification and diversification with the development of the capital during the twentieth century.

The first part of the paper is devoted to the diagnosis of the metropolitan area within which the author stops on several crucial elements absolutely necessary for the proper assessment of the levels of development, but also for the estimation of the potential of this area.

The impact of industrial activities on the settlements in metropolitan area is analyzed in terms of its effects on the physiognomy and morphology of settlements, having also in view the industrial production system. The author believes that mono - specialisation or ordinary industrial specialisation that characterises much of the components of the Bucharest metropolitan area translates into a barrier to the diverse increase of competitiveness and functionality of an area to maximum parameters, giving a solution to this dysfunction by stimulating the internal environment of the industrial units but also by providing facilities.

At the end of the paper, the author highlights the role of industry activities in shaping the metropolitan area of Bucharest. In this regard the discussion is about the restructuring directions, the orientation of industrial investment as a tool to optimize the relationship between the metropolis and the adjacent area and as a source of progress and diffusion of information technology. It is also emphasised the need for the development, in this area, of a knowledge, skilled labor and entrepreneurial culture based industry. The major problem, in the view of the author, is the lack of a coherent vision of the future development of the metropolitan area of Bucharest.

The present study, aiming at least to discuss elements in the specialised Romanian literature, has a diverse range of audience, from specialists focused on fundamental research in territorial development to decision makers located on different administrative levels.

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Metode și tehnici de evaluare a calității mediului în aria metropolitană a municipiului București (Methods and techniques for assessing environmental quality in the metropolitan area of Bucharest), IOAN-CRISTIAN IOJĂ, University Publishing House, Bucharest (2008). 232 pp.
ISBN 978-973-737-485-1.

The metropolitan area of Bucharest, delineated based on the capital development projects and existing or potential functional relationships, faces a difficult transition to an ideal metropolis on short and medium term. The author identifies first the complications caused by the current development conditions that involve increased amounts of waste compared to the low rate of recovery, the still insignificant integration of environmental issues in planning strategies, the poor concern for consumer pressure reduction and territorial transfer of dysfunctions.

The quality of the environment in the metropolitan area of Bucharest is influenced by several favorable and restrictive factors. If lithology, the significant debris flows during the periods of maximum flow, seismic risks, certain climatic and hydrological parameters are restrictive elements in various arrangements for improving environmental quality, the presence of rock construction or oil deposits, topography, soils and vegetation contribute favourably to environmental conservation.

The sources of environmental degradation are diverse and originate mainly in the industrial activities conducted in Bucharest and the agricultural activities that characterise the settlements within the metropolitan area demarcated. To these mobile sources are added: the means of transport, together with the household ones, if we consider that residential areas are large producers of waste.

The author examines in detail the methods, means and techniques for assessing the quality of the environment and calculates a large number of sectoral and quality indicators. These indicators are accompanied by survey research, statistical surveys, econometric methods and satellite images and aerial photogramms analysis. Analysis of environmental quality models take into account social, economic, political or environmental information, and two types of scenarios are identified: a) the pessimistic scenario corresponds to a continuing and increasingly intense pollution and, finally, difficulties in the functioning of the metropolitan area of Bucharest; b) the optimistic scenario considers environmental issues at the operational actions and measures level.

The role of development projects in the environmental quality state at the level of Bucharest's metropolitan area is especially evident in the case of the green-yellow belt of the capital, of expansion and modernisation of water and sewerage networks works water and of transport infrastructure development.

The original study, a reference guideline for specialists from various fields and other interested people, underlines the need to improve the access to quality water re-sources, given that industry and irrigated agricultural land are moving towards this direction, but also to address a number of phenomena such as pressure on space and re-sources, clarifying the legal status of land or maintaining green areas in the localities.

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Orașele monoindustriale din România între industrializare forțată și declin economic

(The mono-industrial cities in Romania. Between forced industrialization and economic decline), Bianca DUMITRESCU, University Publisher House, Bucharest (2008). 301 pp. ISBN 978-973-749-388-0

Bianca Dumitrescu manages, through the work "The mono-industrial cities in Romania. Between forced industrialization and economic decline", to summarize a number of issues approached until present only in specific points and by time perspective.

Structured in seven chapters, the paper published after the work on the doctoral thesis entitled "Geographical study of the mono-industrial cities in Romania," draws the attention of a large number of researchers and interested people from different fields on the situation of industrial cities, in general. Following the logic already dedicated from the specialised Romanian literature, the first chapter informs the reader about the key concepts and indicators used in the study. Also, we noticed that the first chapter presents a rich source of statistical data, processed and interpreted in detail, often with a slight tinge of monotony. The detailed explanations in the text are exemplified in suggestive maps and graphs, easing the reader's reception of information. The presentation of mono-industrial cities at national level is made in Chapters II - V beyond the field of economic geography and demonstrating the interdisciplinary of the study.

The author sheds light on the physical and socio-economic conditions, the evolution of mono-industrial cities, presents in detail their demographic situation and economic base and also the environmental effects. Case studies, different as we expected, are chosen from outside the country and are the main industrial areas of Europe: Manchester, Ruhr Lorena, Silesia. Finally, the last chapter is

dedicated to the considerations related to the development perspective and proposals for revitalizing these cities.

Merging the geographical concepts and theories interpretations with the concrete situation in the Romanian space maintains as a dominant throughout the work. The numerous examples and quotations from the Romanian and foreign literature show a good documentary on the subject, as it can be seen from the rich reference list.

The work has significant value in the specialised literature, as a reference study for interested persons from different fields.

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Relațiile urban-rural în Moldova în perioada contemporană

(The urban-rural relations in Moldova in the contemporary period), Marinela ISTRATE, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House, Iasi (2008). 351 pp. ISBN 978-973-703-283-6.

"The urban-rural relations in Moldova in the contemporary period" is a work that stands out in the specialised geographical literature through originality and the modern way by which explores this interaction. In seven chapters, covering over 300 pages, the author presents fundamental theoretical issues, a history of geographical research and an analysis on the settlements in Moldova from socio-economic perspective.

In order to delimit areas of urban influence the author applies theoretical models that highlight the role of distances and the restrictiveness of physical geographical conditions in shaping the network of urban settlements in Moldova. The researches

conducted show clear difference in the development of settlements located in the west of the province, the latter being more developed and with a higher degree of urbanization compared to those in the eastern part, less developed and more rural. The exception is the city of Iasi, the capital of the province, which has shown a type of urban development focused on mono-centrism.

Next, the demographic relations between cities and rural settlements in Moldova are treated in detail, the emphasis being on territorial mobility of population. Therein were analysed both the permanent migration and the temporary one, especially commuting. On the other hand the socio-professional mobility was analyzed with particular emphasis on job and instructional mobility, social status and changes in social and class structure. Other types of relations analysed were the economic ones, including the professional structure of urban and rural population, urban agro-food consumption, rural agriculture, industrial polarisation, commercial polarisation and the power of attraction exerted by financial institutions and services, banking or other. The administrative, educational, cultural and health relations between cities and rural areas were also detailed within the presentation of the relationships types in terms of the dependence of rural settlements on cities.

An important chapter is dedicated to the delineation of zones of influence of the cities in Moldova and their detailed analysis, from their size and shape to the detailed study of the demographic component. Also in this chapter, a hierarchy of polarising centers of Moldova is made, proposing 6 categories of centers starting with rank I, with the highest power to the rank VI, where the degree of polarization is zero. Also very useful is the classification of rural settlements in Moldova by the dependency on a particular urban center.

The last chapter of the book, titled "The

perception of urban space and awareness of belonging to a city", presents certain aspects of urban image and the sense of belonging to a city, based on a thorough field investigation. This investigation was based on a significant number of surveys applied on population samples.

The book as a whole proves to be very useful to those who are interested in studying everyday phenomena and relationships between rural settlements and polarising centers from a given geographical entity, in this case, the historical province of Moldova. At the same time it is addressed also to those wishing to undertake similar studies on areas of urban influence, considered as support area for polarising centers from different territorial levels.

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Studiul geografic al disparităților teritoriale din Banatul românesc
(Geographical study of the territorial disparities in Romanian Banat), Cătălina Ancuța, Mirton Publishing House, Timisoara (2008). 280 pp, with CD, ISBN 978-973-52-0409-9.

A particularly interesting scientific topic in an area at least as interesting, considering the geographical particularities of Banat province. This is the first general impression reading the title. An old proverb tells us, however, of not judging a book by its cover, or title. It will not be the case for this, as in this review we try to focus on substance rather than form.

In our opinion, Mrs. Ancuța manages to clearly use in this study concepts such as: space, territory, disparities, territorial disparities, welfare geography. The strong hold of these concepts is reflected in the high quality of the final product, which is the

work as a whole. Well anchored in academic concepts, the book manages to fall from the sacred pedestal of theory, descending in the "profane" of practice, tangible, usable. This very successful combination between theoretical / academic and practical brings in the author's opinion a high value which better inserts the geographer and Geography in society.

The "cliché" elements of a review would start with the structure, complexity of the chapters, listing major chapters of the work, but we will try to get more focus on the content. In terms of form, we note the monochromatic charts preventing the clear identification of gaps in development between the territorial-administrative units. The author has attached a CD containing the color maps, but this measure is just a compromise. Obviously the solution to which the author has resorted is related to the financial effort that would have meant editing the book with color images. In the same field of the form, it may be mentioned "Fig. 78. The delineation of favored and disadvantaged areas". In the middle of disadvantaged areas islands of administrative-territorial units with a high development index appear, the author separating them from the rest of the disadvantaged area. As for favored areas were introduced administrative territorial units (ATU), which had a lower level of the respective index to provide compactness to the area. For consistency, we consider that the more developed ATU in the disadvantaged areas would have to be included here.

The paper is written in a clear style, the ideas are easy to follow, well structured and logical. The author proves, through the reference used, a good understanding of how different authors have used the basic concepts in the study of territorial disparities. The work of Ms. Ancuța managed to apply a methodology commonly used after 1997 in Romania and to discover the scientific and practical results of its application. A first performance, in our opinion, is the use of a cleverly developed

methodology (based on 10 indices related to economic status, socio-demographic situation and standard of living aggregated in a development index). The second important achievement is the quantification and individualisation of disparities, in the studied area.

In conclusion, we believe that what Ms. Ancuța's note on page 43 - "for a long time the disparities were described, not measured" - expresses, in simple words, a concentrated idea on the transformation of Geography in the recent decades. Hoping that this work will not pass unnoticed in the literature focused on territorial dynamics, we would recommend to the author its publication in an international language.

ANDREI SCHVAB
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Organizarea spațiului rural în bazinul Putna (Organization of rural space in the Putna basin), ALEXANDRA TĂTARU, Transversal Publishing House, Bucharest (2008). 385 pp. ISBN 978-606-8042-01-5.

The work is conducted on a base of a detailed analysis, structured in 11 chapters which deal with the organisation in time and space of natural and anthropogenic components in Putna basin. The fundamental idea starts from the consideration that an area the more well known, more easily can be identified the dysfunctions faced and the strengths that enable further development.

The study begins by addressing theoretical and methodological considerations, as well as the geographical individuality of the area examined. In the following chapters the main

features of the rural space of Putna basin are highlighted, from the natural features and how they have conditioned the emergence and development of settlements to the structure of the agricultural area. The study continues with the population dynamics and structure, the detailed analysis of the organization of the network of settlements and of the physical and social infrastructure. Special attention is given to some particular space subtypes, such as agriculture, forestry and the spaces with touristic value; their characteristics are outlined in detail.

In the last chapter the author deals with sustainable rural development and environmental protection that represent the main targets of the territory organization and planning in general. The diagnosis of rural space is carried out therein through the SWOT analysis, which allows highlighting the main lines of action that could form the basis for rural development. Within the methodology used, the particular focus on information from historical documents is noted, allowing the reconstruction of rural space development.

We note the tenacity of the author in the research of the material found in historical archives, the objective analysis of statistical data and the correlations made between the various factors which left their mark on the organisation of space.

The assessment of public perception on quality of life was focused on the development and implementation of an appreciable number of questionnaires. The expression style is concise and objective summary demonstrating the author's summarising capacity and the cartographic and photographic illustration is complex, facilitating the viewing and explicit understanding of the ideas set out in the paper.

The study conducted stands out through the practical-applicative value and could form a basis for local authorities in the process of

territorial organising and planning and for a full integration into the European policies of territorial cohesion.

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