

SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM GHETTOIZED DISTRICTS AS THE ENVIRONMENTAL (IN)JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of the following article is to emphasize the social and mental conditions of functioning of the youth from ghettoized districts in the context of environmental justice concept. There will be presented the research results from quantitative and qualitative research projects based on the exploration of socio-emotional functioning of Polish youth (13 years of research project) and also the results from the visual sociology project developed since 2015, based on the visits in European countries like, mainly, Italy, Spain, Greece, United Kingdom and also USA. The concept of environmental justice is the opportunity to develop the social awareness of the youth's social needs, especially youth from the poorest and ghettoized districts which is functioning permanently at risk of social exclusion.

Key words: Polish youth. Young adults. Prosocial activities. Marginalization. Social exclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The founder of the environmental justice movement - Robert D. Bullard - stressed 28 years ago that environmental justice is much more than strictly ecological point of view. In the title of his article he made a precise statement - "it's more than waste facility siting" (Bullard 1996, pp. 493-499). It can be explained in strictly sociological way (falsification structure) - if selected individual which is on the beginning of socio-personal development is functioning in the environment (risky or ghettoized or both) characterized by the lack of existential opportunities we can call it the environmental injustice. Thus - in the opposition - all of the egalitarian activities in the field of public policy and social policy are connected and "derived" from the environmental justice concept. In above mentioned terms it should be highlighted that - and that's the crucial point - the social environment determines the range of socio-personal development.

After the S.J. Olschanky's research results it should be noted that the genetic replication determines only 25 % of the opportunities

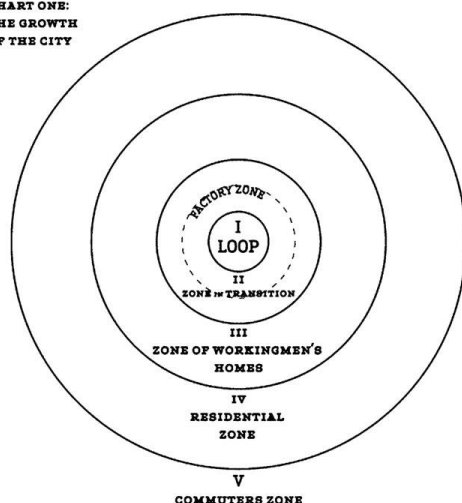
for social progress of individual and the other variables, mostly socio-environmental influences on 75 % (Olshansky, Kirkland and Martin 2016). World Development Report research contains also very important results - risky, stressful, ghettoized environment and interaction full of strain influences on reduction of the neuronal connections in the brain (Ochocki 2016, pp. 65-71). So, the environmental variables should be analyzed in the broader perspective - family structure and family relations, neighborhood, estate and district, part of the city and finally the city as a whole. The range of social problems in the environment of individual determines the risk of individual problems.

1 Theoretical base

It is well known that „social scientists generally extend their analysis beyond speculation and description to explaining social phenomena and change. Understanding historical land use, population density, residential housing patterns, neighborhood formation, and neighborhood, city, state, or region is im-

portant in explaining environmental disparities" (Bullard 1996, pp. 493-499). We can see in the environmental justice concept visible links to the classic works of Chicago school of sociology. Is it possible to explain environmental justice as the far but obvious consequence of R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess analysis in the work „The City“?

Picture 1: Concentric zone model
CHART ONE:
THE GROWTH
OF THE CITY



Source: Park and Burgess (1925)

In the concentric model we can see central zones (today we can call this phenomena financial zones), transition zones, residential zones close to industrial zones, residential zones away from industrial zones, periferies and commuters zones. House locations in residential zones close to industrial zones and also in selected cases periferies and commuters zones are affected by the problem of – in wide perspective – social exclusion which is defined by the lack of participation in the most important aspects of social life (for example education, communication, culture, mobility and so on) (see for example Golinowska, Broda Wysocki 2005, p. 36; Frieske 2005, pp. 55-62). Undeveloped public transport, spatial barriers in urban space like factories, viaducts, expressways, railroad tracks and railway sidings in connection with house locations leads to ghettoization of urban space. Thus, the habitation in above mentioned zones can be analyzed in terms of environmental injustice. The catalog of consequences of living in these urban zones can

begin with diseases related to polluted air, subordinate consciousness resulting from socio-spatial segregation, lack of access to cultural goods, through the related wide limitation of opportunities for socio-personal development, ending with the ghettoization of consciousness which is directly proportional to the ghettoization of urban space. So, in the theoretical context, concept of environmental justice is the logical successor of the Chicago school of sociology.

Of course there is a racial questions in the background of environmental justice theory and movement but even if R. Bullard created the environmental racism theory it doesn't mean that environmental justice principles do not apply to poor white communities. Contrary – „all communities are not created equal. Some communities are more equal than others“ (Bullard 1996, pp. 493-499). Obviously the solution is not the heteronomous (imposed) equality (well known from the USSR experience) but the egalitarianism. Thus, environmental justice is based on environmental protection but today „the dominant environmental protection paradigm reinforces instead of challenges the stratification of people (race, ethnicity, status, power, etc.), place (central cities, suburbs, rural areas, unincorporated areas, Native American reservations, etc.), and work (i.e., office workers are afforded greater protection than farm workers). The dominant paradigm exists to manage, regulate, and distribute risks. As a result, the current system has (1) institutionalized unequal enforcement, (2) traded human health for profit, (3) placed the burden of proof on the "victims" and not the polluting industry, (4) legitimated human exposure to harmful chemicals, pesticides, and hazardous substances, (5) promoted "risky" technologies such as incinerators, (6) exploited the vulnerability of economically and politically disenfranchised communities, (7) subsidized ecological destruction, (8) created an industry around risk assessment, (9) delayed cleanups, and (10) failed to develop pollution prevention as the overarching and dominant strategy“ (Bullard 2001, pp. 151-171). According to

that (as the opposition) environmental justice is the concept and social movement focused on „*the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no population bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or from the execution of federal, state, and local laws; regulations; and policies*“ (US EPA 2023).

The developing of the concept of environmental justice requires wide social awareness and „rich“ sources of social capital. The social need of its developing is strictly connected with the range of social inequalities. Analysis of data distributions presenting both individual losses of economic systems as well as the overall world socioeconomic system indicates that the costs of the pandemic crisis have been transferred to developing countries, while developed countries avoided advanced decline of quality of life. Deepening social inequalities due to the SARS CoV-2 pandemic is associated with, among others, the loss of 162 million jobs in low-income and lower-middle incomes countries, with only 43 million eliminated in wealthy countries. During the pandemic, the number of people suffering from chronic shortages food increased from 149 million to 270 million (UN data, see Achcar 2020, pp. 10-12). 550 million people "happen" to go hungry (if current trends will continue, 40 % of food will be wasted by 2050, see Frischmann, Mehra 2021, pp. 64-71). Focusing on the principle of the common good would already make possible the more effective solutions to the problem of social inequalities. As L. Dowbor states division of the 85 billions (in U. S. dollars) global product (GDP) into the total population would bring a monthly income of 3.5 thousand of dollars for a four-seater family and the division of food produced on a daily basis is 1.5 kilograms food per person (Dowbor 2020, p. 14).

2 Research methods

As part of the author's research process, the logic of the so-called mixed methods was used (Gowensmith 2020, pp. 268-270), in order to overcome the limitations of quantitative and qualitative orientation. In this scope were realized:

- quantitative and qualitative research project based on the exploration of socio-emotional functioning of the Polish youth (13 years of research project) - 340 respondents in quantitative and 225 in qualitative component of research,
- visual sociology project developed since 2015, based on the visits in European countries like, mainly, Italy, Spain, Greece, United Kingdom and also USA - more than 3000 photos from ghettoized districts.

Research process had partly the exploratory and partly verifying character in the context of possibilities to develop socio-personal progress in the ghettoized local communities and the range and specificity of socio-spatial segregation in the ghettoized districts.

3 Research results

Following table contains the most important correlations ($\alpha=0,05$) between the interactions in the field of peer group and selected aspects of socio-emotional functioning of the youth.

Picture 2: Correlations

PEER GROUP INFLUENCE – CORRELATIONS				
X	Y	rPearson	r ²	P
Relations with peers	Interests, passions, hobbies	-0,015	0,00	>0,05
Relations with peers	Strenghts	0,29	0,08	>0,05
Relations with peers	Emotional problems	0,11	0,012	>0,05
Relations with peers	Following the rules	-0,07	0,004	>0,05
Relations with peers	Activity	0,28	0,08	0,01
Relations with peers	Creativity	0,36	0,13	<0,01
Relations with peers	Helpfulness to the others	0,36	0,13	<0,01
Relations with peers	Learning, goals, aspirations	0,25	0,062	0,03
Relations with peers	Self esteem, reflexivity	0,26	0,067	0,03

Source: author's research

The above data contains a visible and significant structure of relationships between variables. Even in ghettoized districts functional relations with peers influences on creatvity and activity, helpfulness to the others, learning, goals, aspirations and self esteem. So, the potential of socio-personal development exists even in districts stigmatized by socio-spatial segregation.

It's crucial conclusions for every one institution which is interested in youth development.

In this context we can highlight two statements from qualitative research which are explaining the nature of environmental injustice and solutions of this problem:

- „District that is the background of my entire life (...) it was the worst estate in Warsaw, this was due to the large number of people addicted to heroin (...) and pathological center (...) a source of drug addiction“ (one of the public rappers from Warsaw);
- „There were always some district rivalries. And we walked towards the city, and there we always met someone. And there were always some problems with it and... well, I generally had problems because of it. In my case, sport definitely helped a lot. Absolutely, and I started training very late“ (Polish star of MMA, journalist, TV presenter).

Following photos from the visual sociology project presents the spatial barriers which are one of the most common indicators of environmental injustice.

Picture 3: La Mina district in Barcelona



Source: author's research

Picture 4: Scampia district in Naples



Source: author's research

Picture 5: Tor Bella Monaca district in Rome



Source: author's research

Picture 6: Newark (The State of New Jersey)

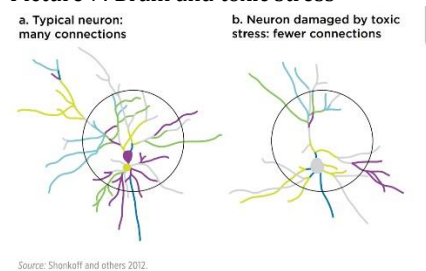


Source: author's research

4 Discussion

Young people which are functioning in ghettoized districts are influenced by strain, risky behaviors in their neighborhood and strain is externalized in asocial or antisocial behaviors. Following diagram presents the structure of neuronal connections in brain without strain factors and brain influenced by toxic stress.

Picture 7: Brain and toxic stress



We can see that the brain influenced by toxic stress has less neuronal connections. In the case of youth it's a real challenge for rebuild the potential of development.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of environmental justice is surely useful for emphasizing all of the forms of... injustice in the context of environment. In case of the youth functioning this concept should be one of the main part of public policy and urbanization strategies. Let's realize that counteracting environmental injustice at an early stage can contribute to equal development opportunities for young people. The above awareness is the difference between the most developed countries in the world and developing countries with a lesser level of social capital.

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