Ghettos in Slovakia

The Environmental and Social Exclusion of Roma

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Abstract: More than half of the Roma population in Slovakia lives in spaces that are segregated or separated from dominant non-Roma communities. The socio-spatial marginalization of Roma is both generated and reinforced through open and discrete social processes and measures largely orchestrated by local governments, enabled by an ineffective state and reinforced by the general socio-economic policy framework. This article builds on extensive field research on predominantly Roma-occupied spaces (i.e., 'settlements') in Slovakia and focuses on the nature and function of Roma segregation and separation in Slovakia from an ecological socio-political, and economic standpoint. Based on Loïc Wacquant's work on ethno-racial segregation and the concept of environmental justice, we discuss social and environmental discrimination as one of the constituent elements in understanding Roma socio-spatial marginalization and its functions, and employ the neologism, 'hyper-osada' as a tool to conceptually and analytically investigate the new impetus and recent trajectory of Roma segregation and separation.

0. Introduction

Roma are considered the most distinctive ethnic group in Central and Eastern Europe. Many people categorically defined as Roma face racial discrimination, exclusion from the labor market, and segregation in schools (Guy 1975; 2001; Barany 1994; 2000; United Nations Development Programme 2002; Schiffel 2005; Varmeersch 2010). Roma are what Loïc Wacquant would call a 'subordinated social category' confined by a predominant group power, in this case, non-Roma (Wacquant 2011). In this article, we draw on our current research on Roma housing and settlements in Slovakia that shows how Roma are increasingly secluded even as new efforts are made to improve social housing and strengthen inclusion. This process of seclusion or 'encapsulation' is further exacerbated through the deprivation of basic environmental necessities such as water and waste management and the imposition of environmentally degraded conditions. We adopt Wacquant's conceptualization of the ghetto and hyper-ghetto, and assert an environmental justice frame to enrich understanding of the socio-political and environmental particularities of the spatial confinement of Roma.

The subordinate social categorization of Roma, who are in fact themselves quite diverse, fuels

the fires of racism and nationalism which are subsequently used by the state as a way to justify its lack of interest in taking responsibility for social inequality in general which affects both Roma and non-Roma (Kovats 2003). Likewise, given the diversity of Roma, it is extremely difficult to organize as a cohesive political force along ethnic lines and the civic entities to promote Roma recognition and participation in political life that do exist are also limited in their capacities given their reliance on external funding and the imposed constraints that come with such support. In this article, we focus on these dynamics from the perspective of: (1) the political and economic forces, particularly those associated with a declining labor market and the preservation of a 'reserve labor force,' orchestrated by public authorities increasingly promoting a discourse of 'personal responsibility,' the retraction of social welfare, and an ideological frame characterized by competition and limited resources; and (2) the mechanisms of social control, namely stigmatization and socio-spatial isolation, that both construe and entrench the subordinate social categorization of Roma in such a way that their diversity becomes increasingly invisible (especially externally) as their capacities and opportunities are mutually diminished.

In the first part of the article we discuss theoretical approaches to understanding socio-spatial marginalization (specifically, ghettoization), particularly in light of Wacquant's conceptualization of this process. This process characterized by stigmatization and entrenchment is then linked to the problem of environmental justice. A discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of environmental discrimination is provided to lay the foundation for this latter analysis. In our final analysis, we depict how Roma and their isolated environmental living conditions thus come together as marginalized socio-ecological realms –degraded and deprived people in degraded and deprived environments.

1. Ghettoization and the Slovakian 'Osada'

Ghettos are traditionally understood as an urban phenomenon where they pose a wide potential for the description and analysis of segregation, exploitation and social decay. It is a concept that is traditionally explored and deployed in Western European and American sociology, referring to spaces inhabited by immigrants and/or ethnic minorities. As we discuss in this article, the very word 'ghetto' is not frequently used in the literature to describe Roma settlements in Eastern Europe. We claim, however, that in spite of the different terminology, we see here similar processes of ghettoization resulting in ethno-racial spatial segregation. In addition, we do not use the word ghetto as a descriptive term, but as an analytical concept, which provides an important framework for analyzing and understanding the origin and presence of increasingly segregated Roma settlements and further allows us to consider

trends in the Roma condition.

Tendencies to geographically and socially divide space inhabited by different social, religious or ethnic groups are anything but new. The historical evolution of the concept of ghetto dates back to the enclosure of Jews back in 16th century Venice, where the origin of the word ghetto is located. From medieval times, the Prague ghetto was shut off from the outside world by fortified walls with gates. These were neither the first nor the last attempts to segregate 'subordinate social categories'. Similar trends of enclosure and 'forced institutional parallelism'[1] are well orchestrated by modern societies. In the 1940s, a concrete wall was built in Detroit, Michigan to separate black and white neighborhoods.[2] The space, where the confined minority was allowed or forced to live, was of questionable living standards. As Davis (2004, 5) points out,

'The urban poor (...) are everywhere forced to settle on hazardous and otherwise unbuildable terrains – over steep hill slopes, riverbanks and floodplains. Likewise they squat in the deadly shadows of refineries, chemical factories, toxic dumps, or in the margins of railroads and highways."

One of the early interests in the city and its class and ethnic segregation grew in the Chicago School of Sociology. Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Louis Wirth proposed understanding cities as similar to environments, like those found in nature. Park and Burgess (1921) claimed that cities are basically governed by the same forces of Darwinian evolution that happen in ecosystems and experience a natural evolution through developmental stages. These internal 'eco-systems' can be slums as well as wealthy residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, or industrial zones. At the same time, according to this theory, belonging to an eco-system determines behavioral choices characterized by competition with the aim of acquiring more resources. The most important resource is land and its division leads to the partition of the space into ecological niches (Park 1952). Gradually, there is a concentration of people with similar social characteristics into individual niches. Park and Burgess (1921) further describe how increases in social status lead to resettlement, which they see as similar to succession in biology. More recent investigations of this phenomenon, however, reveal a more insightful and rigorous explanatory framework drawing attention to issues of social dominance.

Contrary to this early Darwinian approach and other research in this vein (studying settlements and spatial division in rather mechanistic or deterministic ways), we see a gradual shift in the understanding of this phenomenon. There is increasingly more focus on

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[1] Wacquant uses this concept to refer to a 'duplicate city' organized within ghetto walls independent and separate from the mechanisms of social life organized outside by a dominant power group.
[2] The remains of this so-called 8-mile wall are visible even today, although neighborhoods on both sides of the wall are now uniformly African-American. The 'whites' moved to the suburbs.

understanding the social processes that form different zones. Segregated settlements of the poor and/or ethnic minorities are more and more understood as outcomes of complicated economic and social forces leading to exclusion and control (Clark 1965; Wilson 1987; Mingione 1996). Instead of some "natural" law governing the processes of segregation, segregation is a structural problem and an outcome of inequalities. Wacquant further claims that this process is generally orchestrated by the state as a 'spatial solution' to a social problem (Wacquant 2010). Other authors do not hesitate to go even further. Massey and Denton suggest that the emergence of the black ghetto [in the United States] did not happen as a chance by-product of other socio-economic processes, "Rather, white Americans made a series of deliberate decisions to deny blacks access to urban housing markets and to reinforce their spatial segregation" (Massey/Denton 1993, 19).

Wacquant, building on extensive fieldwork in American ghettoes, came to the conclusion that the forced concentration of ethnic minorities into specifically designated areas have four main constituent elements: stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement (2004). Ghettoization is a process whereby certain members forming an increasingly homogenous ethnic group, for example, are required to live in designated areas with emerging independent or unique internal institutional arrangements with fewer and fewer possibilities of escape from that designed territory and social affiliation (Wacquant 2010). In his understanding, ghettos serve as a, "device that employs space to reconcile two antinomic purposes: to maximize the material profits extracted out of a group deemed defiled and defiling; and to minimize intimate contact with its members so as to avert the threat of symbolic corrosion and contagion they carry" (2004, 2). From Wacquant's perspective, ghettoization is a "special form of collective violence concretized in urban space," or a crossroad of interfering social and economic reasons, which are not naturally growing from the bottom up, but more as a top down approach, where more powerful and influential social groups exploit those who they categorize as subordinate.

Wacquant maps socio-spatial seclusion in different parts of the world and over different periods of time (e.g., France, South Africa, Japan, and Brazil) embedding his analysis in unique political, historical and geographical circumstances in the context of an overarching analytical schema involving rural (labor to land) and urban (constraint to choice) continuums (Wacquant 2010). He is clear to point out that while all ghettos are segregated, not all segregated spaces constitute a ghetto (Wacquant 2012, 15).

The equation of maximum profit with minimum contact is recently going through structural changes due to shifts in the labor market. Wacquant (2002, xxx) points out that on the side of labor extraction, there is a "shift from an urban industrial economy to a suburban service

economy and the accompanying dualization of the occupational structure." In practice this means that large segments of the workforce in segregated spaces are simply perceived as being no longer needed by the outside 'superior' world. Hence, ghettoization results from a decline in the economic function of an isolated social segment of society. It goes hand in hand with neoliberal globalization, de-industrialization, spatial mismatch of jobs and labor, new industries and services requiring higher education and a general decrease of the job numbers in the developed countries. Wacquant thus distinguishes between an 'ethnic cluster' and a 'ghetto' in which the latter ceases to have an economic function in the larger external society, and the stigmatized group is dissimilated rather than assimilated.

Wacquant, in reaction to these changes later developed the concept of *hyper-ghetto*. A hyper-ghetto is

"a novel, decentred territorial and organizational configuration characterized by conjugated segregation on the basis of race and class in the context of the double retrenchment of the labour market and the welfare state from the urban core, necessitating and eliciting the corresponding deployment of an intrusive and omnipresent police and penal apparatus." (Wacquant 2008, 3)

Wacquant differentiates the hyper-ghetto mostly by its "closed opportunity structure" (Wacquant 2008, 95). It is an impermeable social capsule "destituting" its stigmatized inhabitants to develop independent forms of social reproduction with scarce help from the outside and no hope of escape. Although we cannot mechanically apply Wacquant and his conclusions from studying ghettoes in the United States to analyzing Roma marginalization, we find here many commonalities and inspirations. We are particularly interested in engaging Wacquant's analytical diagram on socio-spatial seclusion in which function and structure reveal the nature of the seclusion.

In engaging the transferability of Wacquant's framework to the case of Roma in Slovakia, several contextual elements are revisited. While Wacquant himself raises questions and concerns about the trajectory of encapsulation of Roma in Europe and the role of the penal system (Wacquant 2011), an analysis of the role of the penal system warrants serious consideration in the case of the Roma, but is beyond the scope of this article. Additionally, segregated Roma settlements, with several exceptions, do not form urban ghettoes, as we may know them in the United States, for example. The prevailing structure of Roma settlements is a concentration of dwellings on the outskirts of towns or villages. Furthermore, the term 'ghetto' loses it resonance in the Slovakian context as we find the conceptualization of Roma socio-spatial seclusion in the form of what is termed in Slovakian as an 'osada'.[3] The word,

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[3] The term 'ghetto' is not generally used in any academic, state, or popular discourse to describe or define Roma settlements. Rather, popular discourse in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, indicates that the word ghetto can evoke imagery of the socio-spatial confinement of Jews related to the Holocaust which had

'osada' carries a stigmatization with it in which it refers only to poor, ethno-racially homogenous Roma occupied areas with makeshift dwellings or shanties and blocks of often dilapidated flats. As our research shows, an osada has none-the-less many of the characteristics of a ghetto on its way perhaps to becoming a hyper-ghetto. While an osada carries a stigma and frequently coincides with the constraint and spatial confinement of Wacquant's ghetto, more is needed in terms of exploring the emergence of parallel institutions (i.e., 'institutional encasement').

Government and governance are critical factors in segregation tendencies and trajectories. Arnold R. Hirsch (1983), based on his research of segregated communities in Chicago, coined the term, 'second ghetto'. The second ghetto thesis emphasizes the role of government policy and decision making (esp. regarding the location of public housing and urban renewal) in triggering racial transitions of formerly white neighborhoods and, subsequently, in concentrating and containing African Americans in newer 'second' ghettos (Mohl 2003). Hirsch was among the first to draw attention to the critical role of public policies and programmes in shaping segregation, especially when it came to the location of public housing. Contrary to official objectives, governmental policies and programs are always implemented in local circumstances and local conditions where government and governance reflect dominant interests. Desegregation investment and policies can thus end up increasing segregation rather than alleviating or abolishing it. Taeuber and Taeuber (1965) noted in their research on Chicago that by pushing blacks into concentrated public housing corridors, city officials simultaneously preserved remaining white working-class neighborhoods. As a result, by the 1960s, Chicago was the most highly segregated big city in the nation (Taeuber/Taeuber 1965).

While Wacquant clearly implicates the state as the main actor, we find that local governments[4] and governance are agents of dominant social interests in the promotion and implementation of segregation. This is the case especially in the context of decentralization. Practically all countries in Central and Eastern Europe (and Slovakia is among the frontrunners in this respect) embarked on a process of power decentralization after the 1990s. While this process was reportedly guided by progressive intentions to enhance people's participation in decision-making, thereby making the system more democratic and accountable, it may have had the effect of aggravating local tensions through imbalances in power, access and distribution of resources, and capacity. Under such conditions, public policies and investment programs (e.g, infrastructure project or social housing) become tools for furthering

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its own infamous historical functions and structure under the perpetration of the Nazis during World War II.
[4] Local governments are directly elected in Slovakia. People vote for their mayor and members of the municipal governing committee (Miestne zastupitelstvo).

segregation rather than integration.

Environment and environmental resources are also very important factors in these trends. In addition to social controls manifested in the stigmatization and constraint of the physical bodies of Roma, environmental controls add still another dimension to the problem. In this article, we shed light on the nature and function of Roma segregation with respect to environmental mechanisms of social control, in the form of environmental discrimination, that asserts and maintains the subordination of Roma. Finally, we depict the relationships between the development and access to environmental infrastructure (e.g., waste management, water) to segregation/desegregation in the context of the osada.

2. Environmental Discrimination and Environmental Justice

Environmental discrimination has largely been associated with disproportionate exposure to environmental pollution across race and class lines based on research in the United States (United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 1987). For our purposes, we engage the definition of environmental discrimination by Gelobter who writes that,

"Environmental discrimination is actions and practices, arising from both individual ideologies and social structures, that preserve and reinforce domination of subordinate groups with respect to the environment." (1993, 842)

Access to natural resources and exposure to environmental risks are not equally distributed; and class and/or ethnic affiliation play an important role (Bullard 1990; Bryant/Mohai 1998; Bullard/Johnson 2000; Pellow 2002; Walker et al. 2003; Schlosberg 2004). Categorically subordinated socio-economic groups are more likely to bear the environmental costs of development and less likely to have access to environmental benefits such as clean air and water. Environmental discrimination against a particular socio-ethnic group along these lines is further delineated and generally referred to as 'environmental racism'.

People and the place they occupy come together in a mutually defined socio-spatial category in which the land and the people lack dominant social value and are considered 'polluted', 'ecologically inferior', and 'hazardous'. The cost of the land and its economic, cultural, or ecological value can effectively determine the status and location of Roma settlements. Likewise, land occupied by Roma can be deprived of costly municipal environmental necessities and emerge further as a dumping ground for environmental hazards. Land with low commercial value, for example, that is segregated from centre village/town life by a natural barrier (e.g., by stream of forest) or an artificial barrier (e.g., railway or industrial zones) may be the one allocated for Roma resettlement. Such areas can involve a disproportionate concentration of environmentally problematic circumstances, such as

regular flooding, pollution contamination (e.g., abandoned industrial zones, landfills) and/or have no access to potable water or other public municipal works, such as waste management.

Environmental justice is generally defined as the fair treatment and recognition of all stakeholders in the processes related to distribution of environmental benefits and risks, while the distribution itself is done in a way that no social or ethnic group bears an unequal share of environmental risk or is blocked from accessing environmental benefits [UCCCRJ 1991; EPA 1996; CEU 2004]. However, environmental movements in the US are inclined to counter this conceptualization of environmental justice by asserting that it is not just about environmental equity (i.e., fair distribution), it is about averting environmental risks entirely. For example, EJnet.org asserts that, "The environmental justice movement isn't seeking to simply redistribute environmental harms, but to abolish them" (2014).

This analytical framework for placing Roma segregation in the context of socio-spatial exclusionary processes and manifestations and environmental discrimination provides the basis for a serious inquiry into the structure and function, and hence trajectory, of Roma segregation. It also raises questions about an international discourse for Roma inclusion against a backdrop of increasing ghettoization. Our research indicates not only the beginnings of a '(re)activation' of socio-spatial enclosure of Roma in Eastern Europe, but also its ecological complicity, environmental discrimination and racism.

3. Methodology

This article is based on a series of research efforts over time to explore and understand Roma marginalization in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly from an environmental perspective. In this effort, the concept of environmental justice especially gained resonance. More recently, an initiative to study Roma inclusion in Slovakia, particularly in the context of socio-spatial and ecological integration (e.g., social housing development, access to water and waste management, exposure to flood risk conditions, etc.) was launched. Combined research tools including semi-structured interviews, field observations (e.g., Rapid Rural Appraisal) and surveys, and document analysis especially with regard to the Slovakian and European Union policy framework were employed. This combined qualitative and quantitative approach allowed for the possibility to gain detailed and rich data while at the same time formulate and test more generalizable hypotheses regarding Roma.

It is important to note here that data on specific groups in general are often unreliable because classificatory systems are a social process that reflects cultural differences, especially across the classified and the classifier (Ladanyi/Szelenyi 2001). There are 107,210 people declaring

Roma nationality in Slovakia according to the 2010 census, but these data are generally considered unreliable due to the implications associated with Roma stigmatization. In the case of some of the quantitative data on Roma populations used for this study, it is therefore important to note briefly the methodological basis. The Atlas of Roma communities was generated from data collected in 2004 and 2013 and it was based on physical visits by researchers in all Slovak settlements, where together with local municipalities, Roma leaders and other stakeholders, they did quantified estimations of the people, and an inventory of infrastructure, resources and social indicators.

Our qualitative field research of the environmental conditions in Roma settlements first started back in 2004 when criteria frameworks for assessing environmental (in)justice were developed and tested (now published in Filcak 2012 and Steger et al. 2008). Field visits to a total of 45 Roma occupied settlements were conducted over a period involving two research phases: 2004-2007 and 2010-2014. In the first phase, we randomly sampled 30 settlements. In the second phase, we selected purposively 15 settlements based on their potential to shed light on particular issues of interest including: differentiated access to natural resources (e.g., water), exposure to risks, and previous project efforts.

In the course of the research, we interviewed 131 persons. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with town mayors and/or other high level representatives of the various municipalities were conducted. Additional interviews of varying length and structure with social workers, Roma activists and people from both Roma and non-Roma communities were also conducted. In addition to field site visits, in some cases, municipal planning meetings and other public events were attended.

Interviews and field site visits were largely structured by a methodological approach known as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). This methodology emerged in the late 1970s as a reaction to the disillusionment of social scientists with structured questionnaires and surveys that were considered inadequate and often misleading. According to Dunn (1994), RRA builds on a combination of techniques such as semi-structured interviewing, active listening and the formulation of objectives and protocols. The methodology is adapted to particular resources and field situations, while the key feature is an emphasis on variation versus averages. The number of people interviewed is often determined by the amount of learning and time available, and data are triangulated in the process by collecting it from multiple sources.

In order to assess each site in a consistent and systematic way, a simple checklist was developed for assessment of waste management practice, access to water, exposure to floods and mapping other potential environmental factors.

In addition to conducting a document analysis of the policy framework most associated with Roma inclusion efforts, we analyzed secondary data sources on Roma in light of our framework. In particular, we used the results generated from the 2004 and 2014 in-depth Atlas typology which recognizes three main types of settlements:

1. *Integrated* - Concentrated in central parts of town, taking the form of a Roma street, or several blocks of apartments;

2. *Separated* - Settlements on the outskirts of a town/village, but within the boundaries; and

3. *Segregated* - Settlements spatially segregated from the town/village by distance, by a natural barrier (e.g., stream or forest), or by other barriers (e.g., behind the railway or road) (ATLAS 2004).

In our analysis, we identify themes, relationships, and trends (based on Atlas) while loosely engaging Wacquant's four original constituent elements of a ghetto (stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement), and adding a fifth element, environmental exclusion.

4. Ghettoization and Environmental Exclusion

While the history of Roma settlements dates back many decades, or even centuries, there are substantial changes in the current dynamics of their marginalization. The political and economic transformation of the past 20 years in Slovakia brought in new forms and mechanisms of exclusion. Significant in this transformation has been the changing role of Roma in the local economy and the increasing pressure on categorically marginalized ethno-racial groups coinciding with the emerging politics in Slovakia and the economic crisis. As the political discourse on individual responsibility regarding employment has grown, the demand for unskilled labor declined with de-industrialization, and changes occurred in agriculture along with other radical impacts associated with the post-1990 economic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, and the social isolation and socio-spatial marginalization of Roma has increased. In these next sections, we apply Wacquant's framework on ghettoization (i.e., stigmatization, constraint, spatial confinement, etc.) and ultimately consider each criteria in light of our data.

4.1 The Stigmatization of Roma

Stigma and stigmatization are strongly visible in the way some non-Roma approach and understand those categorized as Roma. Socially categorized Roma can be the subject of

extreme disapproval and discontent. The perception of some of the dominant majority towards those categorized as Roma is close to what Goffman (1963) described as 'Tribal stigmas', or traits, imagined or real, of an ethnic group, particular nationality, or religious orientation that serves to assert a deviation from the prevailing norm. In this section we describe how certain non-Roma subordinate the contours of the social category of Roma, and simultaneously argue along with Wacquant that the designation of Roma as a deviant group ultimately serves a particular function (i.e., that some people want Roma to be a certain way for particular reasons). Mayall points out, the Roma "are and have been whoever people have wanted them to be" (Mayall 2004, 276).

Some interviews with non-Roma in Slovakia reveal severe stigmatization of the Roma along four main categories: spatial, socio-economic, environmental and deterministic. The stigmatization of Roma has long been characterized by isolation and deviation. Spatially, the Roma area stigmatized by the reference 'osada' in which its defining characteristic is the place where only Roma live combined with the other categories of stigmatization. This socio-spatial designation not only makes the diversity of Roma increasingly invisible to non-Roma, but in the process also fosters Roma self-identification in its image.   In other words, stigmatizing osada also impacts how Roma start to see and define themselves. This process is further entrenched as it leads in practice to 'protective measures' (i.e., spatial confinement) both on the part of non-Roma who want to avoid interaction with Roma and on the part of Roma themselves who want to avoid confrontation with non-Roma.

Roma are further stigmatized along social and economic lines such as, ' 'dishonest,' 'dangerous,' 'lazy,' 'unable to save money and plan for the future,' and 'having tendencies toward petty criminality.' Environmental stigmatization, or the 'colonial discourse of nature' which aligns those socially categorized as Roma with characteristics usually associated with environmental degradation or pollution, includes: 'dirty,' 'children of garbage,' 'denigrated,' 'hazardous,' and 'posing risks.'

The stigmatization of Roma tends to be deterministic. A particularly widespread deterministic approach among interviewed members of non-Roma in this research was to attribute the prevalence of poverty amongst Roma as 'cultural'. For example, Roma were characterized as 'focussing on the present' and having an 'inability to save money and plan for the future' (Personal interview 2011). Roma stigmatization in general is explained with statements like, 'inherited behaviour', 'bad genes', and 'lifestyle'. In other words, poverty amongst the Roma is associated with a set of pre-determined characteristics, passed down through generations even, existing independently of economic and other structural factors, similar to Oscar Lewis's notion of a 'culture of poverty' (1959). Asserting the notion of a 'culture of poverty' thus both

creates and justifies the position of a group on a social scale as something inherently 'natural' or 'inevitable'. This particular construction serves the function of deterring the commonality of such struggles across segments of the population in general, and obfuscating the responsibility of the state for addressing social inequalities. Further, structural problems (i.e., unemployment) construed as 'inherent traits' have a tendency here to get mixed up with other traits that are either responses to say, unemployment (e.g., work migration) and/or are considered pathological such as drug and alcohol abuse (Abu Ghosh 2008).

Stigmatization, however, is only one aspect of how Roma are socially subordinated. In this next section, we consider how Roma are further subordinated through constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement.

4.2 The Structure of Roma Socio-Spatial Marginalization: Constraint, Spatial Confinement and Institutional Encasement

As stigmatization is further socially and politically embedded and the explicit economic significance of the Roma dwindles from the perspective of some non-Roma, the intensity of their isolation can increase, further removing any remnants of ties to social and economic life on the 'outside' (Wacquant 2011). Constraint and spatial confinement, to use Wacquant's words, are especially apparent in the physical barriers erected between Roma and non-Roma living spaces including the construction of walls, and the entrenchment of designated areas characterized by environmental exclusion.

In the summer of 2013, a new concrete wall was erected in the Slovak city of Košice separating Roma and non-Roma. It is the 14th reported wall of its kind built by the local authorities over the past decade. Similar walls have been erected in Lomnička, Michalovce, Ostrovany, Šečovce, and Trebišov. Walls of concrete about two meters high and varying in length are physical barriers justified by various stigmatizing claims including the 'promotion of security', 'creation of a noise barrier', 'hygienic reasons', or the 'minimization of vandalism and theft'. These 14 walls are in reality only the most visible signs of socio-spatial isolation. The development of Roma settlements is relegated to the periphery of towns and town life segregated by more 'discrete' barriers including distance, empty fields, roads, rivers, and even police stations. Further, Roma confinement is found in the location of Roma settlements away from the centres of towns and villages.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of Roma living in Slovakia and as mentioned earlier, the social categorization of Roma is a complex social process. However, for the purposes of our research, we engage estimates that indicate that around half Roma of Slovakia live integrated within the communities, while the second half live in areas that are on a different scale

separated and/or segregated from non-Roma dwellings (ATLAS 2004; ATLAS 2014). While there are Roma who are more spatially integrated among the majority population, there are also separate 'enclaves' or concentrations of Roma. The in-depth ATLAS survey carried out in the 2013 identified 803 spatially confined Roma settlements in 1070 villages and towns. Out of them, 233 settlements are segregated, providing living space for 74,000 people. The average distance from the segregated settlement to the village/town where they administratively belong is 900 meters. The biggest distance found was 7 km (ATLAS 2014). As many as 95,000 Roma live in 324 settlements on the outskirts of villages and cities. Approximately 46,000 Roma live in 245 separated streets or blocks of houses inside settlements (ATLAS 2014).

The data indicates a trend between 2004 and 2014 in which an increasing number of Roma people are living in segregated and separated settlements (see Figure 1). Figure 1 indicates that, while the actual number of the separated and segregated settlements slightly decreased, there is an increase in the number of its inhabitants according to a longitudinal-type survey using the same methodology in 2004 and 2014 (ATLAS 2004, 2014).[5] Although, it is tricky to compare 2004 and 2014 figures, they indicate the concentration of Roma in particular areas and raise the question of why more and more Roma are living in separated and segregated areas?

Figure 1. Trend in the number of Roma settlements (numbers above the columns) and number of people living in integrated, separated and segregated settlements between 2004 and 2014.

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[5] Although, we have to take these absolute figures with reserve, as the categorisation of the settlements depends on the individuals doing the field research (and it is sometimes difficult to decide) and the numbers collected are estimations.
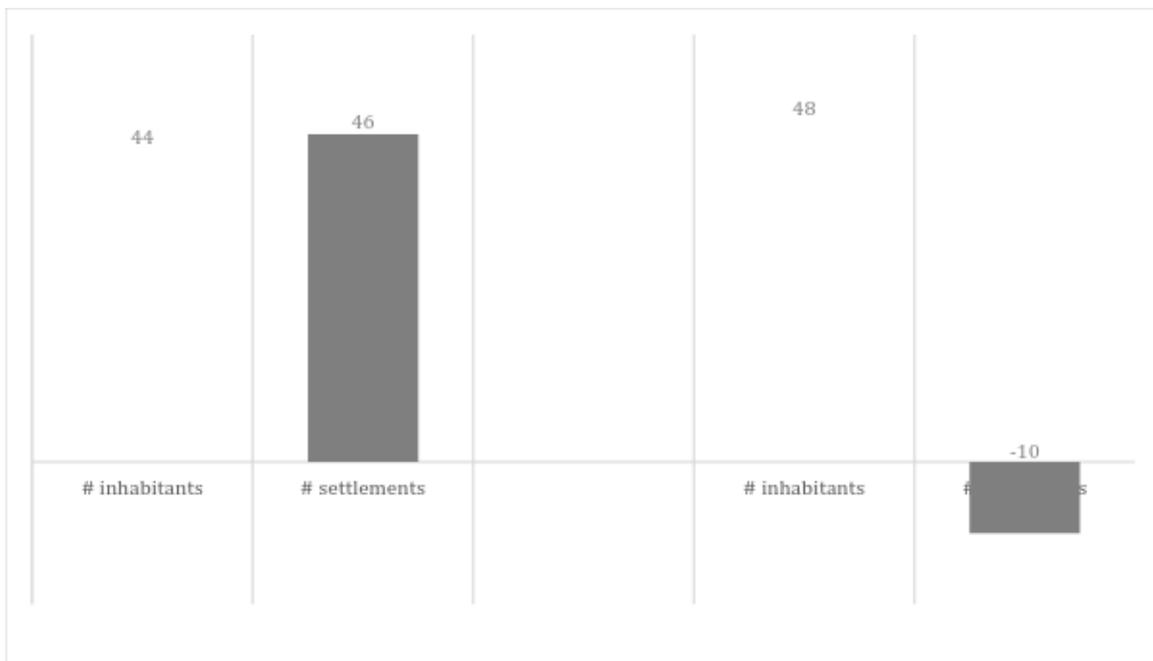
Source: Based on data from comprehensive surveys of the Roma population (ATLAS 2004; 2014).

The trend toward Roma spatial confinement has several plausible explanations. Spatial confinement in denigrated and deprived spaces are related to measures of constraint such as a lack of viable employment opportunities that further perpetuate the dominant group representation of the Roma as 'inferior.' Only 'dangerous' people or criminals live behind walls, which further constrains opportunities for those designated as such.

The walls themselves create the dichotomy of security versus insecurity out of which institutional encasement develops, resulting in the consolidation of an ethnically homogeneous population and the scaffolding for the construction of its specific 'style of life' and social strategies. Institutional encasement has been seen by certain non-Roma members as desirable, whereby the Roma "can elect their own leaders and live on their own as they like" (Personal Interview 2013) without infringing on the majority population.

The enclosure of Roma through constraint and spatial confinement (and emerging institutional encasement) is further congealed by environmental discrimination in which environmental justice is lacking (Steger et al. 2007; Steger/Filčák 2008; Harper et al. 2009). Filčák further argues that these spaces are, 'beyond the pale', —places where environmental hazards are further concentrated compared to the spaces occupied by dominant power groups (Filčák 2012).

4.3 Environmental Exclusion

Environmental exclusion coincides with Roma stigmatization, constraint, spatial confinement and institutional encasement. The ghettoization of Roma life can entail a disproportionate deprivation of basic environmental necessities such as water and waste management as well as a tendency to locate Roma settlements in environmentally deprived or hazardous areas. With increasing isolation of Roma thus comes further challenges to everyday life including meeting everyday needs, as Roma are relegated to environmentally denigrated places where basic environmental necessities tend to be most scarce or are simply denied. Our case study research especially indicates disproportionate access to water and waste management. Particularly relevant here are the notions of constraint and institutional encasement from an environmental standpoint.

There are significant differences in the access to water among Roma versus non-Roma people living in the same geographic area. Constraint thus takes on the form of differential access to water. United Nations Development Programme surveys illustrate trends in public access to water among Roma. While 76% of proxy non-Roma have access to public water in their homes, only 51.9% of Roma have the same access UNDP, 2011). Furthermore, access to the public water supply increased only slightly for Roma from 2006 to 2011. While in 2006, 3.9% Roma were forced to use water from streams and rivers, by 2011, 5.7% were getting their water from these sources (UNDP 2006 and 2011). The comparatively higher number of Roma households depending on private and alternative water sources (triangulated through qualitative research) indicate differential access to public water infrastructure amongst Roma and non-Roma raising questions about discrimination in public waterwork investment. The average distance to water supplies among people in different types of Roma settlements.

But, even in cases where public water is available, we saw Roma carrying water into the settlements due to an inability to pay for commercial water supplies. As many as 47,8% of the people in separated Roma settlements must access water more than 50 meters away (UNDP 2011). A disproportionate lack of access to water also has a stigmatizing function in which Roma are categorized as 'dirty' and 'undeserving'. Further this deprived state is subsequently justified economically whereby investment into infrastructure in Roma settlements is seen as a waste of money. Thus the spatial confinement of Roma in the consolidation of environmentally deprived areas requires a 'duplicative set of institutions' to meet basic environmental needs, such as water and waste management, and to endure environmental hazards. Environmental quality and the location of ethno-racially divided Roma are thus mutually determined along with the need for parallel institutions that serve to meet

environmental needs such as the acquisition of water (and facilitate the endurance of environmental hazards).

But, even in cases where public water is available, we saw Roma carrying water into the settlements due to an inability to pay for commercial water supplies. Work, which is usually carried out by women and children. As an interviewed couple in a segregated Roma settlement put it: "the biggest motivation to build our own house is that we will have there our own well and we will not need to walk for water several times a day, we cannot even imagine that" (Personal Interview 2013).

Waste collection practices in designated Roma communities culminate in a mutually reinforcing cycle of stigmatization and institutional parallelism through environmental exclusion. There is a disproportionately ad hoc or non-existent approach to waste collection when it comes to the osada, leading to pervasive problems with waste in designated Roma settlements. The problem is twofold: constraint as either a 'labor reserve force' or inadequate employment and general social welfare opportunities justified by a 'culture of poverty' challenges osada waste collection while municipalities, despite their compulsory responsibility for waste collection and management systems, assert budgetary constraints in the provision of waste collection services. The outcome is insufficient waste collection (as seen as the Figure 4), resulting in 'institutional parallelism' characterized by trash burning or illegal dumping.

Figure 2. Waste collection in the areas inhabited by Roma versus the 'general population.'
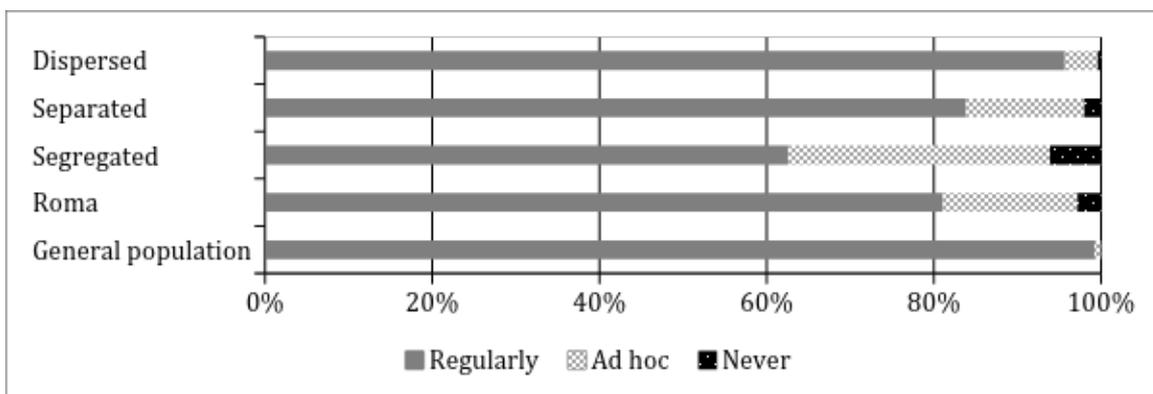
Source: Adapted from UNDP 2011.

Roma settlements in Slovakia are, furthermore, vulnerable to being located on regularly flooded land (e.g., the housing project in Nálepkovo), close to landfills, or in areas contaminated by industrial pollution. Case study research conducted on environmental

inequalities associated with the exposure to environmental risks in relationship to floods and industrial hazards indicates that exposure to floods is more likely in what have been referred to as 'Roma shantytowns' (Filcak 2012). Out of a study involving 30 osadas, only seven cases could be characterized as equal when it comes to access to natural resources and exposure to environmental threats across designated Roma and non-Roma populations (Filčák 2012a).

Research thus indicates that Roma ghettoization is manifested socially, politically, spatially, and through environmental exclusion. Further exploration is warranted, however, on whether these conditions constitute the emergence of something like Wacquant's hyperghetto whereby socially categorized Roma are forced to live in what might characterized as emergent hyper-osadas that: 1) preclude their escape, 2) further intensify their stigmatization and isolation, and 3) reflect a tip in the scales in which the dominant power group that put them there perceives more benefits from their confinement than their participation in society as a whole.

5. Emergence of the Slovakian Hyper-Osada?

Two elementary functions of the ghetto were "to maximize the material profits extracted out of a group deemed defiled and defiling; and to minimize intimate contact with its members so as to avert the threat of symbolic corrosion and contagion they carry" (Wacquant, 2004, 2). In the case of the Roma in Slovakia, we observe a rise in general unemployment coinciding with the exclusion of Roma from the labor market and an increase in their socio-spatial consolidation.

The unskilled (and cheap) labor provided by Roma was historically indispensable in the development of agriculture, forestry and, later on in the 20th century, industry. From the beginning, economic benefits were extracted from the Roma while asserting their segregation and separation from non-Roma (Jurová 2002a; Filčák 2012). With the start of the economic transformation in 1990s, however, we see a growing tendency toward further exclusion of Roma from the labor market and a reformulation of social welfare policy. With technological changes (e.g., the mechanisation of agriculture and forestry) and the advent of neoliberal globalisation (resulting in de-industrialization of entire regions), the demand for low or unskilled labour has declined, especially in the rural areas of Slovakia where most of the Roma osadas are located.

To be clustered around disadvantageous economic situations is a very vulnerable position especially in times of economic crises or rapid changes. This was the case of the 1989 transformation and the breaking of the economic system that dominated the villages for some

40 years. Roma, who traditionally worked as seasonal workers on cooperative farms, miners, or lumberjacks, are not needed anymore in the labor force. This trend of the past decades was accelerated recently by the emergence of the post —2008 crisis, where we see further pressure on downsizing and restructuring of the economy. Because Roma are seen as decreasingly serving any important economic role in the local economy or actually no longer needed to support the local economy orchestrated by non-Roma, there is no reason—from the majority perspective—to support their integration into village life. On the contrary, Roma communities are mutually constructed and perceived as an obstacle to the development of economic activities (e.g., the tourist industry), security, or the generally well-being of the village.

To be unemployed under the former regime was to be in violation of the law penalized potentially by jail sentences. While it is difficult to compare data sets on Roma employment and unemployment, it is clear that employment amongst the Roma has significantly declined over the last several decades with the regime change. Historically, "until 1967 the [former] regime reached 75.9% employment of the Roma male population" (Šebesta 2005:18). By 2006, the percentage of employed male Roma dropped significantly and unemployment among Roma men of working age reached 72%. Only 10.5% of working age Roma (15-59 years) are employed (UNDP, 2006).

While unemployment had risen significantly amongst the Roma, rising unemployment during transition was a general phenomena across the country for non-Roma alike. After 1990 with transition, the general unemployment rate in Slovakia (formerly part of Czechoslovakia until 1993) skyrocketed from 1.6% to 18.6 in 2001 (Hanzelova, 2014). Near the end of 1993, there were 42 unemployed for every job vacancy in Slovakia, compared to, for example, the Czech Republic which had three unemployed for every vacancy (Commander/Coricelli 1995, 131). According to Commander and Coricelli, the Slovak Ministry of Labor reported that the unemployment rate for 'Gypsies' was 42.9 at the end of 1991, while unemployment overall in Slovakia at that time was 11.8 (1995, 133). In fact, these authors attribute part of the differential employment rates between Slovakia and the Czech Republic to the larger Roma population in Slovakia. Additionally, other data from the UNDP reveals that those living in integrated settlements were more likely to be employed than those living in segregated areas: 13% employment among people in integrated settlements and only 6% employment in segregated areas (UNDP 2006). Other research indicates also that within certain segregated Roma settlements in especially poor areas of Slovakia, the unemployment rate can be 100%, with mobility being around zero (World Bank et al. 2002:13).

Changes in the local economy coincide with the practical exclusion of Roma from the local labor market. In spite of verbal proclamations, widespread among the majority non-Roma, that the state should push Roma back to work, non-Roma inhabitants and especially mayors interviewed in this study actually do not see Roma as their potential co-workers or collaborators, but rather as people doing work, which is somewhere 'out' of the present labor market (Personal Interview 2012). In many places, the only possibilities for Roma to make a living lay in the shadow economy. For instance, they are sometimes hired by non-Roma to perform small construction works, but this work is heavily dependent on cycles in the economy and the general well-being of those who hire them.

Slovakia accession to the European Union in 2004 set the stage for the provision of local

municipal-related services including access to water and waste management and social housing. Pressure to increase expenditures on environmental infrastructure in osadas is presently driven by the legislative obligations affiliated with membership in the European Union (i.e., Economic and Social Cohesion Policy, Water Framework Directive, Waste management legislation), and policies dealing with human rights and social inclusion (i.e., Decade of Roma Inclusion, National Roma Integration Strategy up to 2020). Yet these investments are often interpreted by non-Roma as measures to enhance the Roma position on their account reflecting a competitive ideology perpetrated in the general discourse.

While some potentially promising political mechanisms have been put into place to improve housing and infrastructural issues, isolation and particularly environmental discrimination amongst the Roma warrant more detailed reflection. In the past, Roma settlements were often excluded from public investment schemes. There is, however, a new trend in recent years, but the results are mixed. As part of the approximation process to the European Union (EU) and propelled by access to EU Cohesion and Structural funds, Slovakia started several investment schemes aimed at Roma integration. The most important schemes are *The Program of Support of Construction of Municipal Lower Standard Rental Apartments Designated for Citizens in Material Need* and the *Regional Operational Programme and Operational Programme Environment* supporting water, sewage and waste management infrastructure. In the case of the latter, several cases showed that only sewage treatment infrastructure was built. In one case, we saw two separated waste water treatment plants in the same village - one designated for Roma and one for non-Roma based on field research results, environmental infrastructure (e.g., access to water, waste management) advocated as a means for Roma integration, in reality often support the process of segregation.

The outcome and crossroads of these processes constitute the conditions for the emergence of hyper-osadas, which could be characterised by: 1) increasing stigmatization and exclusion; 2) the concentration of Roma in osadas; 2) diminishing social welfare and differential access to environmental benefits and possibilities for the extraction of material profits coinciding with increasing pressure and repression from the state and its institutions.

Our research and analysis shows that the trend in Roma socio-political, economic, and ecological segregation and separation in Slovakia is a breeding ground for the emergence of what we might call the hyper-osada —a space reflecting ongoing socio-economic changes at global, nation-state and local levels implemented by socio-political and environmental stigmatization, socio-spatial marginalization, and economic confinement and constraint of the Roma perpetrated especially by the state and local governments. A space where diminishing material profits and employment opportunities are strongly associated with increasing

stigmatization and exclusion in the framework of increasing pressure and repression from the state and its institutions. The osada remains a space characterized by ethnic homogeneity, almost exclusively occupied by Roma with limited and exceptional mobility out of that space. When mobility is possible, it is more likely to be abroad than to the main town or village where discrimination is perceived to be less threatening.

6. Conclusion

Building on the works of Loïc Wacquant's and ethno-racial segregation, we found the term 'ghetto' and 'ghettoization' to be a very useful and robust analytical framework for investigating the impetus and trajectory of Roma separation and segregation in Slovakia. Although, there are many differences between the concept of 'ghetto' as an urban and West European or American phenomenon and the Slovakian term 'osada', this framework helps to reveal the basic constituent elements of separation and segregation manifested in the construction of osadas. By deploying environmental justice as part of the analyses, we explored the role of the environment and access to resources in the location of certain Roma segregated areas and discussed the origins and the outcomes of segregation from an environmental perspective.

Roma socio-spatial and environmental exclusion (including exposure to risks and differential access to natural resources) is further understood in the context of wider political and economic forces such as the transition politics in Slovakia, economic crisis, and unemployment.[6] We agree with Wacquant and assert that the conditions of marginality including stigmatization and socio-spatial isolation cannot be understood sufficiently without due consideration for their functions. Our research revealed that the function of Roma separation and segregation and environmental exclusion emerge in a context whereby the Slovakian government transitions from both a political and an economic standpoint. Transition from the former socialist regime, deindustrialization, joining the European Union, and the more recent advent of the financial crisis all helped to create the context for introducing what have become known as a neoliberal set of institutions characterized overall

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[6] While it was not generally within the scope of our research, additional aspect is education. Roma education in Slovakia has deteriorated. School and local authorities and non-Roma parents resist Roma integration into public schools. Roma tend to be wrongfully assigned in special schools for those with disabilities. (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006).

by trends toward privatization and deregulation, and a general 'roll back of the state,' particularly in terms of social support.

The identified trends raise serious questions about how to overcome the subjectivities imposed on Roma through stigmatization, socio-spatial denigration and isolation, and environmental discrimination. Within the designated Roma population, there is a strong sense of diversity which challenges the emergence of a cohesive political force on ethnic grounds. And, again, civic enterprises organized to raise the participation of Roma in political life and increase their recognition are constrained by representational conundrums, top-down funding and agenda setting outside of their influence. There are multiple governmental strategies and policies attempting to improve the situation regarding separated and segregated Roma settlements which are integrally tied to environmental infrastructure and risks, housing, education and work, but falter sometimes in their implementation due the perceived benefits of exclusion and isolation derived by members of the dominant non-Roma population. In this article, we have sought to draw attention to some of the most critical elements that function to foreclose opportunities for social, economic, and environmental justice. And, the empirical results indicate the emergence of hyper-osadas in Slovakia. And, as we have argued here, the emergence of the hyper-osada is the outcome of institutional smoke and mirrors used to cover up the need for social and environmental justice and economic well-being overall.

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