



SPAREX – Spatialization and Racialization of Social Exclusion. The ‘Gypsy Ghetto’ in
Romania in a European context (2011-2014)

WP 6 – Public discourse

Analysis of Polish and Slovak national and regional newspapers

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Table of contents

Introduction	3
POLAND	4
Nationwide level	6
Major Topics.....	6
Used language.....	6
Characteristics.....	7
Media genres and columns.....	7
The arguments used.....	8
Authorship	8
Whose interests are represented	8
Narration frame	9
Perspective.....	9
Local level, Poznań.....	10
Ghetto	11
History.....	12
Poverty	12
Discrimination	12
Otherness.....	13
The state	14
Success	14
Associations	14
Projects	14
Shame	15
Language.....	15
Law	15
Slovakia	16
Nationwide level	16
Major Topics.....	17
Used language.....	18
Characteristics.....	18
Media genres and columns.....	18
The arguments used	18
Authorship.....	19
Whose interests are represented	19
Narration frame and perspective	19
Local level, Košice	19
Discourse Analysis – conclusions.....	21
References	28

Introduction

This report aims to research the public discourse on the Roma in Poland and Slovakia. The following analysis is particularly useful in combination with a previous report on the assimilation of the Roma population in Poznań (available at SPAREX website). According to the initial assumptions I analyzed resources at the local and state level, that is, for Poland: national media - *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, two local newspapers - *Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań* and *Głos Wielkopolski* as well as Roma associations websites - *Foundation Behtale Roma* at the local level and the *Association of Roma in Poland* at the national level. Official documents were also helpful during the analysis, especially "Reports on the implementation of the Programme for the Roma community in Poland" in national and local variations.

In the case of Slovakia, *SME* and *PRAVDA* were taken into account as representative national newspapers, on the local level I chose the electronic edition of *SME* - *kosice.korzar.sme.sk* and *Novinky*. The analysis included websites of the *Milan Šimečka Foundation*, *Nadácia Otvorenej Spoločnosti* (Open Society Fundation), *Smile as a gift in Košice*, and government documents, such as the "Strategy for development of marginalized people" and the "Strategy concerning relations with marginalized groups".

In this analysis I focused primarily on a comparative analysis of the discourse surrounding the Roma at the national level, at the same time treating the local level as case studies showing the ratio of the influence of media on social processes. This choice has been made mainly due to the availability of materials that were relevant for me. Given the disparity between the material I gathered on the national and local level it would be, from a methodological point of view, a mistake to treat these two areas and issues equally.

Large number of resources usually pose technical problems, which is why I used the *MAXQDA* program for qualitative analysis. The program is used to compile and encode a large variety of materials. To achieve the goal I allocated the material according to the origin (i.e. the local level is initially separated from the state level), and coded it with the open method of encoding (grounded theory). This method is consistent with the assumptions of critical discourse analysis, according to which the person engaged in it should abandon presuppositions for the development of bottom-up knowledge on the subject. Open coding allowed me to create a list of macro-themes and macro-actors involved in the negotiation of meaning on both of levels of discourse. Even a shallow

overview of the materials allow to put forward the thesis that the nationwide newspapers are operating significantly different from the local ones. I will describe the differences and their causes in the following sections.

The report is divided into three main parts. First, I will deal with the nationwide and local media in Poland, then I shall move on to discuss the situation in Slovakia. Finally, I will move to some conclusions.

POLAND

I analyzed two newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (liberal) and *Rzeczpospolita* (conservative). The way of describing issues concerning Roma in these newspapers is drastically different. It should be noted that none of the newspapers is owned by any political party and is not included in the governance structure of the state, either left or right-wing. *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* are also two of the most influential newspapers in Poland.

Before I proceed to the analysis I would also like to make some preliminary observations. Poland is a relatively homogeneous country and it is important to say, that the Roma minority is very small. The official number of Roma in Poland is estimated at 20,000, representing 0.05 % of the total population. Because of this small percentage the number of the articles addressing matters connected to Roma society is rather low. During my research I found only 323 articles on Roma between the years 2005 and 2012 (*Rzeczpospolita* – 97, *Gazeta Wyborcza* – 226). The research materials go back to 2005 due to the availability of *Rzeczpospolita*'s archives. To avoid divergence between the two newspapers I decided to limit the selection of articles from *Gazeta Wyborcza* to the same period. It is nonetheless important to add that in the period of 2001-2004 *Gazeta Wyborcza* published 47 articles on Roma touching virtually the same subjects which it did in the later years.

My analysis at the level of nationwide newspapers is based on the guidelines of SPAREX discourse analysis. Due to the relatively small number of articles I found, I decided to include all articles describing Roma over the years, disregarding the main topic. Therefore, I further divided the materials according to the nature of the phenomena described, i.e. negative, positive, neutral. I consider those that describe particular cases of discrimination, persecution and conflict situations “negative”, those relating to different

forms of support for the Roma “positive” (including primarily projects that aim to increase the capacity of Roma inclusion) and those associated with folklore, tradition, history or describing conflict situations in which the question of ethnicity or origin does not play a role “neutral”. Before I proceed with the qualitative analysis I would like to present two charts showing the overall number of positive, neutral and negative articles.

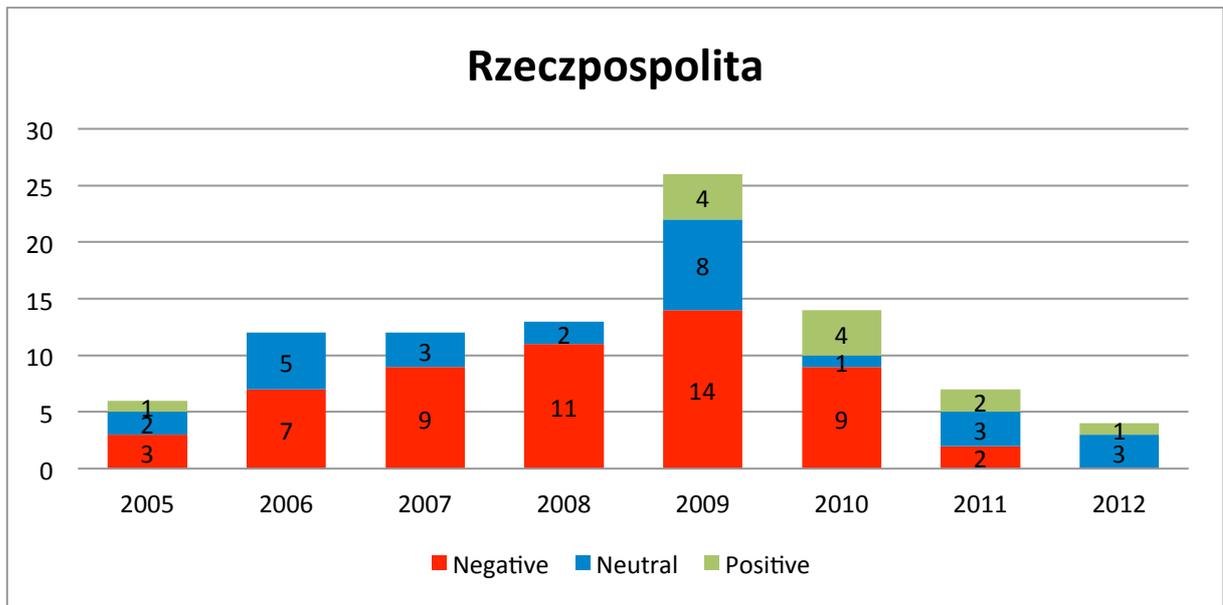


Chart 1.

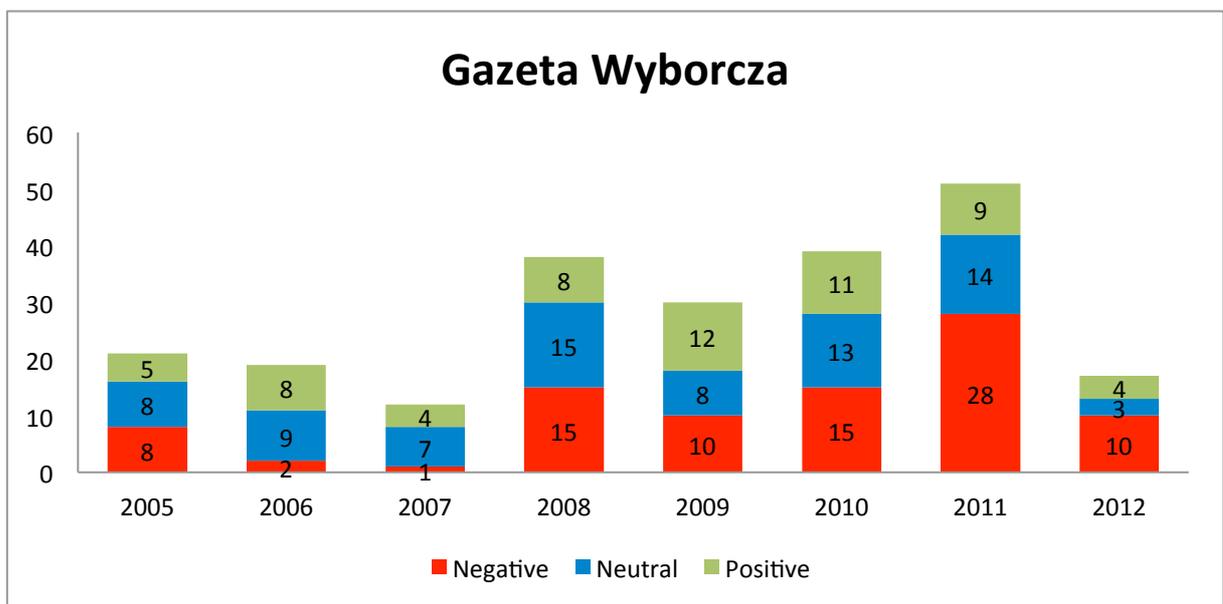


Chart 2.

As seen in the charts above, the way of describing Roma-connected phenomena is completely different in the two newspapers. While Rzeczpospolita focuses on negative

phenomena, Gazeta Wyborcza is more balanced – it also describes predominantly positive or neutral phenomena. The trend in describing Roma related content is also different. While the Gazeta Wyborcza maintained an upward trend until 2012, the number of articles written in Rzeczpospolita do not represent any specific trend. Given the above statements I shall now analyze the gathered material according to the SPAREX guidelines.

Nationwide level

Major Topics

GAZETA WYBORCZA touches mainly local issues that happen in different parts of Poland. They can be divided into three main parts – a description of incidents of discrimination and interethnic conflicts involving the Roma, description of projects aimed at improving the situation of Roma in Polish cities in which they live and recalling the history of the Roma or their folklore/culture.

RZECZPOSPOLITA definitely tries to steer clear of topics related to the situation of the Roma in Poland. Often one can stumble upon issues of discrimination against Roma, but almost exclusively by referring to examples abroad. Frequently we can read about Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and France. Less frequently Rzeczpospolita writes about Roma folklore. As in the case of Gazeta Wyborcza, positive descriptions focus on projects which should improve the quality of life of the Roma in Polish cities.

Used language

GAZETA WYBORCZA uses language that could be called politically correct. It strays from using the word “gypsy”, instead it uses the less popular term “Rom”. On the other hand it speaks pejoratively about the perpetrators of persecution and discrimination against Roma using terms such as “skinheads”, “racists”, “fascists” etc. The word “gypsy” appears, in principle, only when quoting, which happens either in order to show stereotypical attitudes of “typical” Poles or as an autoethnonym. Often one can find usage of words such as “discrimination”, “rioting”, “assault”.

RZECZPOSPOLITA up until 2010 rarely used the politically correct word “Rom”, using only the word “gypsy”, recognized in Poland as a pejorative . The term “Rom” occurs only in situations when the newspaper reported about foreign official events on the borderline of law and policy, such as court statements, representation in the EU, etc. Interestingly,

Rzeczpospolita frequently uses the word “gypsy” in the figurative sense of the word – as a metaphor. “Gypsies” are also used in the texts of Rzeczpospolita as a reference point for situations described in the text – for example, one article informed about the British people fearing an “invasion” of Bulgarians in 2006. This was compared to a similar fear described in the media before the access of the Polish state to the EU – then there was an outbreak of articles reporting about an expected “invasion of the gypsies”.

Characteristics

GAZETA WYBORCZA, although rather leftist, did not protect itself against stereotyping Roma as a nomadic ethnic group with a very oriental culture. It does not portray Roma with negative traits, but treats them as a kind of cultural curiosity, which might just be interesting for their readers because of many differences between them and the Poles. Otherness that has been repeatedly emphasized in articles dealing with the history and traditions of the Roma people – often phrases reminiscent of freedom, colorfulness, attachment to tradition etc. have been used. The way of Roma life has a taste of naturalness, while the actions of the authorities towards the Roma people have always been an outcome of misunderstanding of the “otherness”.

RZECZPOSPOLITA journalists give the impression of having no consciousness about how strong their articles reproduce stereotypes about Roma. The journalists not only use the term “gypsy” as a rhetorical figure (“the smith was guilty, but the gypsy was hanged”, “he has gypsy blood”), but also as a reference point – an example of this is an article dealing with health issues (not connected with any ethnic group – simple article about vaccines), where as a group particularly vulnerable to diseases the Roma were pointed out. Rzeczpospolita frequently pays attention to the amount of money spent on Roma related projects. It also stresses all the negative stereotypes and roles in which Roma were put in (thieves, beggars, almost always associated from poverty and failure). Often they are “used” in the context of criminal activity. Although Rzeczpospolita condemns discrimination against Roma, it also gives the reader the feeling that a big part of the blame for the poor situation of Roma lies in themselves – as such they do not deserve any special treatment.

Media genres and columns

Due to the electronic form of the analyzed material it is difficult to specify a particular form of journalism that is specific for the articles. They are, in the vast majority, media reports on the situation in which the Roma are. Gazeta Wyborcza published a couple of

folklore reports on the travel to the “real gypsy camps”, while Rzeczpospolita published information on the legal situation of Roma in the EU in their quick-info columns.

The arguments used

GAZETA WYBORCZA often invokes the law requiring all citizens be treated equally. This indicates the differences between the official legal standards and reality. At the same time it looks at the Roma through the prism of uniqueness and orientalism, which may be understood as attempts to justify the state of mutual incomprehension in the society. One has to admit, that the overall tone of articles viewed as a whole is rather balanced.

RZECZPOSPOLITA is also focuses on legal issues, but repeatedly points out illegal activities of the Roma on many levels, primarily housing issues (illegal occupation of houses), welfare abuse, theft, beggar activity. It also draws attention to the "cultural backwardness" (the whole article is titled “Gypsies on the margins of civilization”). While some articles indicate that Roma are discriminated against, other are discriminating. We can say that at its core articles of Rzeczpospolita have a dual nature – on the one hand they inform about social inequalities affecting Roma, and on the other it promotes discursive treatment of Roma in a different manner than other EU citizens.

Authorship

In both cases, the authorship does not play a bigger role in the articles taken into account in the analyzed material. In both newspapers articles were written by different authors, and there is no clear authorship tendency specific for topics of the Roma people. Most likely this is due to the small number of Roma in Poland – therefore their social issues are of little interest for the general public.

Whose interests are represented

GAZETA WYBORCZA tries to be a voice representing the needs and problems of Roma in Poland. To achieve this goal it often uses the opinions of official representatives of the Roma people, i.e. those who are involved in Roma associations or Roma assistants serving as cultural mediators. When describing conflicts it frequently quotes Romas involved in specific situations. Often opinions of “ordinary people” are taken into account. Such a juxtaposition creates a narration that shows mutual incomprehension between the majority living in the area and the Roma minority. In this narrative way the Roma are portrayed as victims without any fault. Interestingly, Gazeta Wyborcza has applied this tactic from the beginning of the studied materials.

RZECZPOSPOLITA does not represent the interests of any of the groups mentioned above. Little does it refer to the opinions of associations or private individuals. Frequent references to official documents or political statements are present. It should also be noted that this newspaper does not represent any political option in this way – it is rather an attempt to remain objective. Generally speaking, one could probably say that the editors of Rzeczospolita do not find the subject of Roma people sufficiently valuable for their readers to focus on it in a more active manner.

Narration frame

GAZETA WYBORCZA uses as its main narration frame language referring to social inequality, ethics and a sense of solidarity among all people. It relies on the reader's sense of guilt, which should yearn for a broader common good. It also seems that if we would look for language based topics connected to fear, panic and lack of sense of security, that these emotions are rather implied to the Roma than the majority population .

RZECZPOSPOLITA (in efforts to be objective) creates a language justifying the feeling of fear of Roma. Multiple information about their social separation, their cultural alienation, crime and social maladjustment, pushes them to the margins of society. Sometimes you can get the impression that the articles describing discrimination practices against the Roma in the world almost always point out fault on both sides of the conflict. It is in itself not an error, but in combination with the language used by the newspaper it leaves the impression that the Roma are “a problem” to be solved. Leaving things like this (that is: without a comment) makes the reader blame minorities for their lack of ability to integrate with the rest of society. Rzeczospolita’s multiple networking to financial issues (i.e. how many projects and funds are allocated to help Roma) further enhances the impression of Roma as a “problematic” group.

Perspective

GAZETA WYBORCZA tries to take the position of a moral authority. In most of the articles it presents the Roma as a group of discriminated people and is rather admonishing. They leave a feeling that social inequality should be aligned. The authors are generally involved, but their involvement is not expressed explicitly, but rather stems from the tone of the whole article, quotes and the selection of topics touched in specific articles.

RZECZPOSPOLITA loses credibility because of the language used in their texts. At the same time the authors seem to be completely distant and cut off emotionally from the

subjects addressed. It would be a fraud to say that the attitude of individual authors is authoritarian, committed or persuasive.

Local level, Poznań

Two most influential newspapers in Poznań and Wielkopolska province are Głos Wielkopolski and Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań. The latter is more left-liberal, the first does not have a clear political or ideological stance. In the analysis of local materials I used the open coding method. Let's look at a general list of the codes, and then the list of codes representing respectively Gazeta Wyborcza and Głos Wielkopolski.

	Ghetto	History	Poverty	Discrimination	Otherness	State	Success	Association	Project	Shame	Language	Law
Overall	3	8	10	59	34	12	6	21	14	4	34	36
Gazeta	3	8	8	49	29	12	5	16	11	4	27	23
Głos	0	0	2	10	5	0	1	5	3	0	7	13

Chart 3.

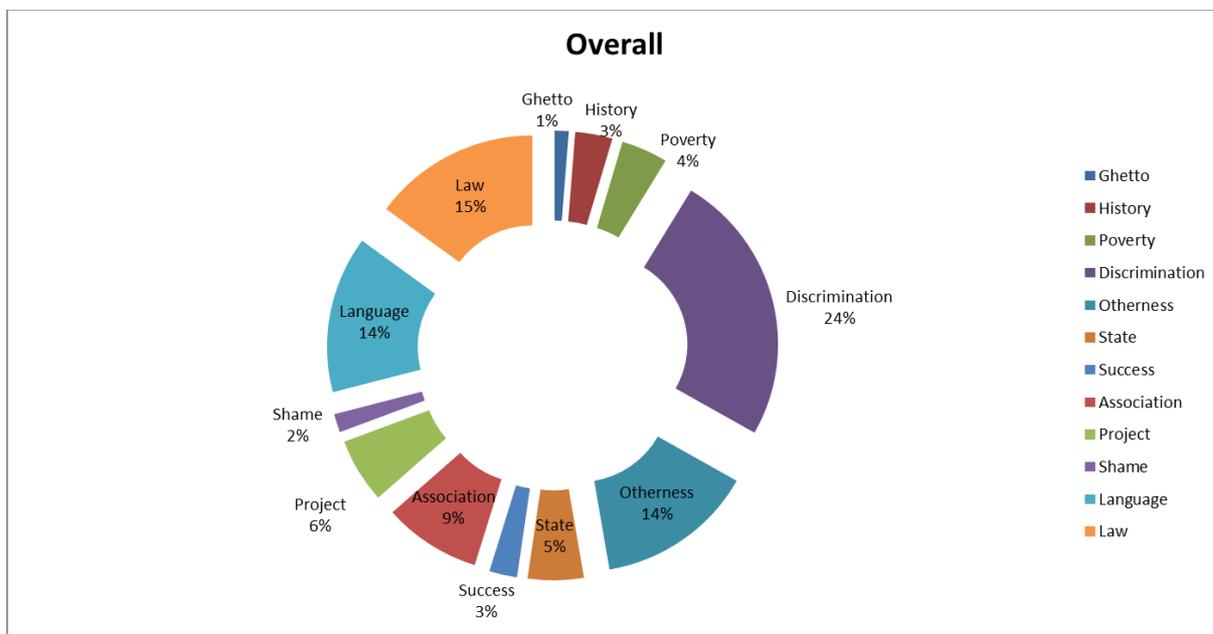


Chart 4.

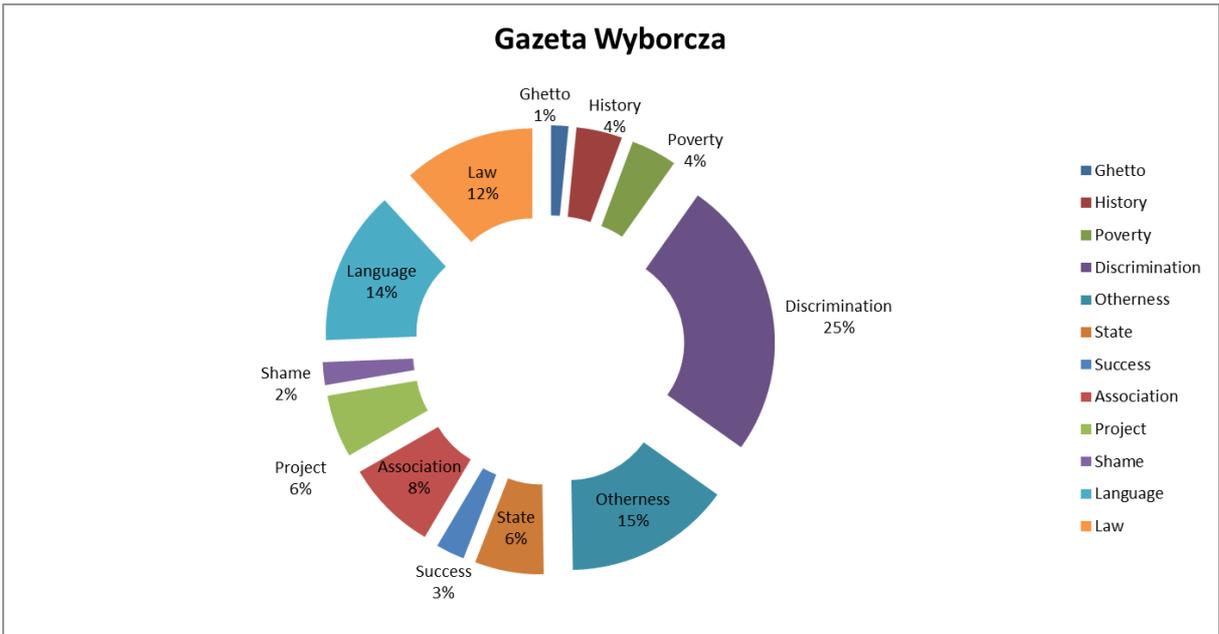


Chart 5.

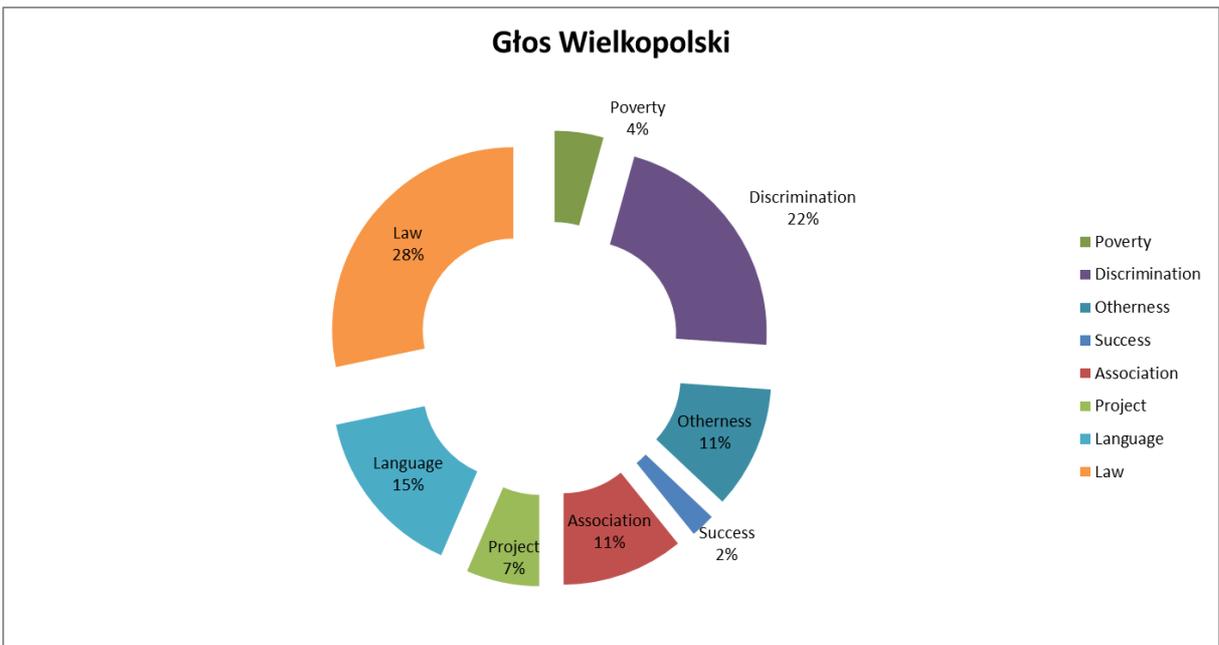


Chart 6.

At first glance some key differences between the two newspapers can be seen. I will now discuss the various codes.

Ghetto

The least frequently occurring code in the entire compilation. Appears only in two articles (one is a quotation) and refers to the situation of the Roma in Poznań, who have not been given entrance to one of the restaurants. The author writes:

As long as Roma were in their ghetto, we did not mind. It starts to be a problem when they enter the public space and behave differently. We still have trouble understanding that public space is for everyone, and not for people of one religion, nationality, sexual orientation. We have to learn to live with this.

As in the case nationwide edition of Gazeta Wyborcza, the local Poznań version has a moral authority tone. Such word choices (such as “ghetto”) do not appear in Głos Wielkopolski. This is probably connected to the fact that in Poznań, both in the official and colloquial discourse, there is no such thing as a Roma ghetto.

History

Again, this is the code that appears only in the Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań. It is very interesting to see in what way the GWP authors understand Roma history. In their articles they constitute all Roma as an ethnic group that “for centuries” was present on the Polish territory and “for ages” is persecuted in the same way. Several times a reference to the history of their persecution by totalitarian regimes occurs, particularly by the Third Reich. The situation of Roma discrimination is compared also to the persecution of Jews during WWII. This procedure aims in my opinion to give the reader a clear point of reference – almost everyone knows the history of Holocaust and how it looked like in Poland, though not everyone is aware of the fact that totalitarian repressions also affected the Roma in a strong manner.

Poverty

This code is used in context of the very poor financial condition of Poznań Roma, especially those who illegally occupy empty buildings or make their living by begging. It seems however that the purpose of using this particular subject in articles is twofold. On the one hand it does draw attention to problems of social inequality and the particular situation of Roma. On the other hand it is a way to express the absolute isolation of the Roma from the rest of society. In one case, GWP gives voice to residents of the street where a Roma child plays the accordion and collects money. The opinion expressed by an “ordinary citizen” gives the impression that neither the people nor the municipal police is able to cope with this situation, referred to as “a problem”.

Discrimination

In both papers the issues of discrimination against Roma focused on three events of the local group Roma.

IVa. Denial of service

The situation in which Roma were not given entry to two restaurants has been the main topic risen by both Głos Wielkopolski and Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań (according to the Association of Roma of Wielkopolska there were more similar situations, including denial of service by local taxi drivers). Both cases represented a flagrant violation of Polish law prohibiting discrimination against people on the grounds of ethnicity. The owners and representatives of the premises of the restaurants argued that their decision is driven by experiences, all of which point towards the Roma as a group that behave in a reprehensible and aggressive way. Collective responsibility has been implemented and all Roma have been deprived of the possibility to enter the premises. Both newspapers have expressed a very critical attitude, attacking the owners for discrimination. All text on this case took the position of moral authority. The denial of service ended up in court, which ruled that a violation of basic personal rights has taken place.

IVb. Segregation of Roma children

Repeatedly invoked in articles. Roma children were sent to special schools or separate classes for Roma children. I will address this issue in detail in the section concerning language.

IVc. Unequal treatment

Several times a wider perspective on discrimination against the Roma in Poland and Europe occurred in the context of the events described in section IVa. Mostly these were connected with the controversial Roma expulsions decision of the President of France. References to a broader perspective of discrimination were also made by representatives of Roma associations, who pointed out effects of discrimination among Roma at all levels of their lives – from education and employers' attitudes to the law and judiciary .

Otherness

Newspapers wrote quite often about the otherness of Roma. On one hand, these differences were administered as a reason for the existence of discrimination against Roma in Poland. Otherness becomes basically bound to misunderstanding, which is the cause of most conflicts in Poland and Poznań. On the other hand “otherness” is expressed in the orientalisation of Roma, portraying them as truly "different". One quote from Głos Wielkopolski shows this issue very well:

A young boy cannot clean the toilet. A 16 -year-old girl will not go to school because her parents are afraid of her being kidnapped. These are just some of the principles of the Roma culture. Often misunderstood and not obtaining any education. These are the reasons why they look for work abroad.

Descriptions of otherness were often meshed with articles about discrimination. In most cases these articles were written in a tone of moral authority, not aiming to highlighting differences, but rather trying to reduce it by awakening sympathy for the Roma culture as misunderstood.

The state

This code applies only to Gazeta Wyborcza Poznań, which sought to place their articles describing problems of Roma in a broader context by contacting with Polish state authorities. The opinions and statements quoted were mainly made by representatives of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, as well as local politicians. Most of them were omitting problems of Roma in Poznań, and focusing more towards various system-wide attempts to solve their problems. This code was also connected with information of financial support from government projects for Roma society.

Success

To highlight the injustice faced by Roma, some articles contained information demystifying the stereotypical image of Roma in Poland (i.e. thief, beggar, illiterate). The aim of these articles was to pinpoint stereotypical thinking and lack of understanding of Roma by the majority. To achieve this goal both newspapers quoted “people of success” like professional musicians or Roma working professionally in specialized establishments.

Associations

During the analysis I paid particular attention to that, whose perspectives are represented in the media. Both newspapers reflected mainly the point of view of Roma associations (especially local). By doing so the voice of all Roma has been translated to particular representatives of the groups that became half-official Roma spokespersons. This is understandable on the one hand, on the other hand it significantly reduces the discourse to the views propounded by a very narrow, even elite group of Roma.

Projects

Relatively much space is devoted to projects aiming to improve Roma situation. In particular, this applies to projects aimed at education – both in the classical understanding

of the term, i.e. schooling, and education that prepares adults to practice. These projects involve local and nationwide policy of integrating Roma and although they have many disadvantages, both newspapers described them as the only means to improve the situation of Roma in Poland, especially in Poznań.

Shame

Although this code appears only four times, it is quite significant. References to a sense of shame among the Roma appear in articles in the form of quotations. They talk about how to hide their ethnicity while walking outside, and about how their children feel excluded from the group of peers. It also makes the Roma feel guilty that their discrimination does not meet with any opposition from the majority of the society. It is a very important factor that gives authenticity to texts written in newspapers, and in the same time grants them a moralistic nature (that is: no author tells the reader what he should think, the victims can speak their own language and say what they feel).

Language

Language is one of the fundamental issues raised by the two newspapers in the context of Roma. The problem of language applies particularly to children. In Poland, children who do not meet the standard intellectual requirements (evaluated by tests) are sent to special schools with lower level of education. The problem with Roma children is not, however, connected with their intellectual skills, but with their difficulties with Polish language, which is obligatory in all tests. Due to the fact that in their homes they communicate in the language of their group and are socially excluded from the rest of society, most of the Roma children have little to no opportunity to learn Polish sufficiently enough to be able to complete the tests according to their intellectual capacity. For both newspapers the issue of language and education of children has become a key issue from which all the problems of Roma exclusion stand from. This phenomenon is also understandable, but at the same time has a negative side – it concentrates all the complicated relationships and social entanglements to one problem – the language.

Law

In this context three cases related to the Roma have been referred to. The first was related to the already described by me denial of service, which consisted of banning entry to Roma to specific venues in Poznań. In this case, the court invoked the law, according to which there has been a violation of personal rights. Evictions of Roma legally occupied dwellings were another case. The third was a high-profile international case of a Roma gang involved

in extortion of loans in the UK, using unwitting Poles from the margins of society. The code “Law” in the case of media discourse is not especially interesting from the perspective of analysis, although multiple highlights underlining the fact that the phishing gang was in fact a Roma gang (although it does not matter to the case) gives Głos Wielkopolski a specific tone, deepening resentment towards Roma.

Slovakia

The analysis takes into account two nationwide newspapers: Pravda and SME online editions. On the local level I will focus on the regional supplement of SME and Novosti. Before analyzing the materials one must take into account the fact that the situation of Roma in the Slovakia, at least ostensibly, is significantly different from that with which we deal in Poland. Most likely the source of the differences is primarily connected to a significant number of Roma living in the country (various sources give the number from 100 000 to 600 000). Therefore, the issue of the Roma in the media has been heavily politicized. It would be difficult to speak of a (similar as the Polish) division of the articles to positive, negative and neutral. The disparities are so significant that it loses its meaning. Both newspapers also move the same topics in a similar manner. In total, the study included 1213 articles in the years 2005-2012.

Nationwide level

First I would like to take a look at two charts showing an overview of all articles and codes connected to them.

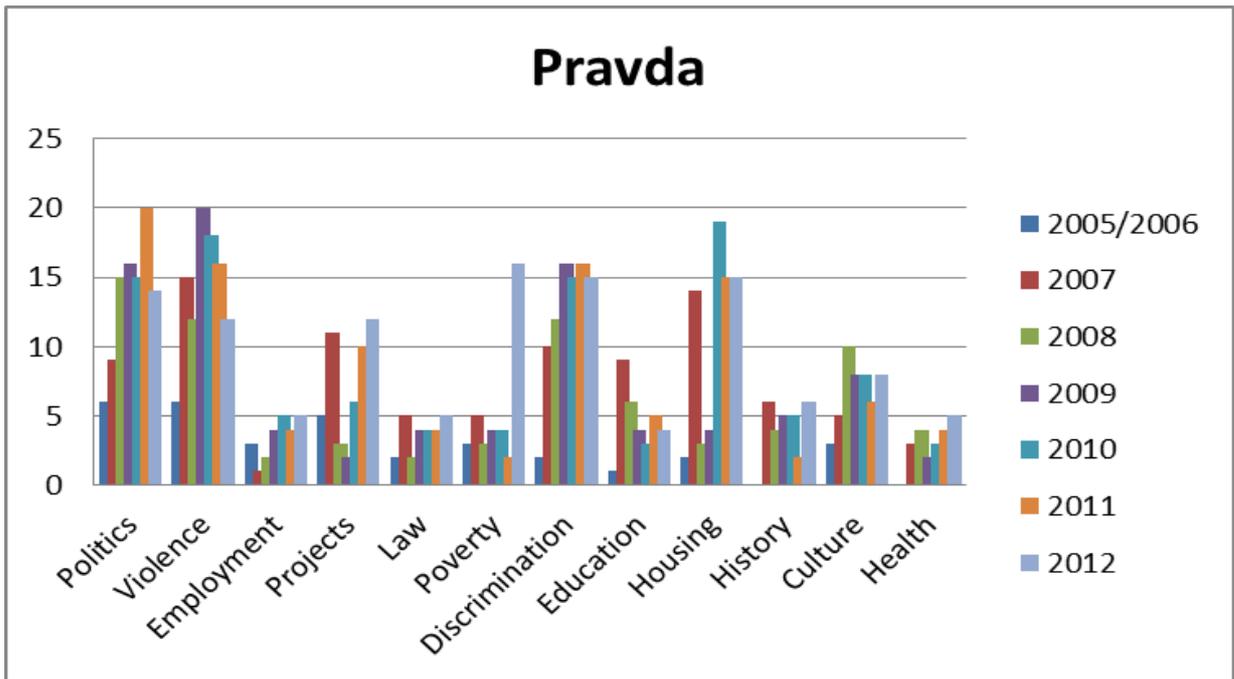


Chart 6.

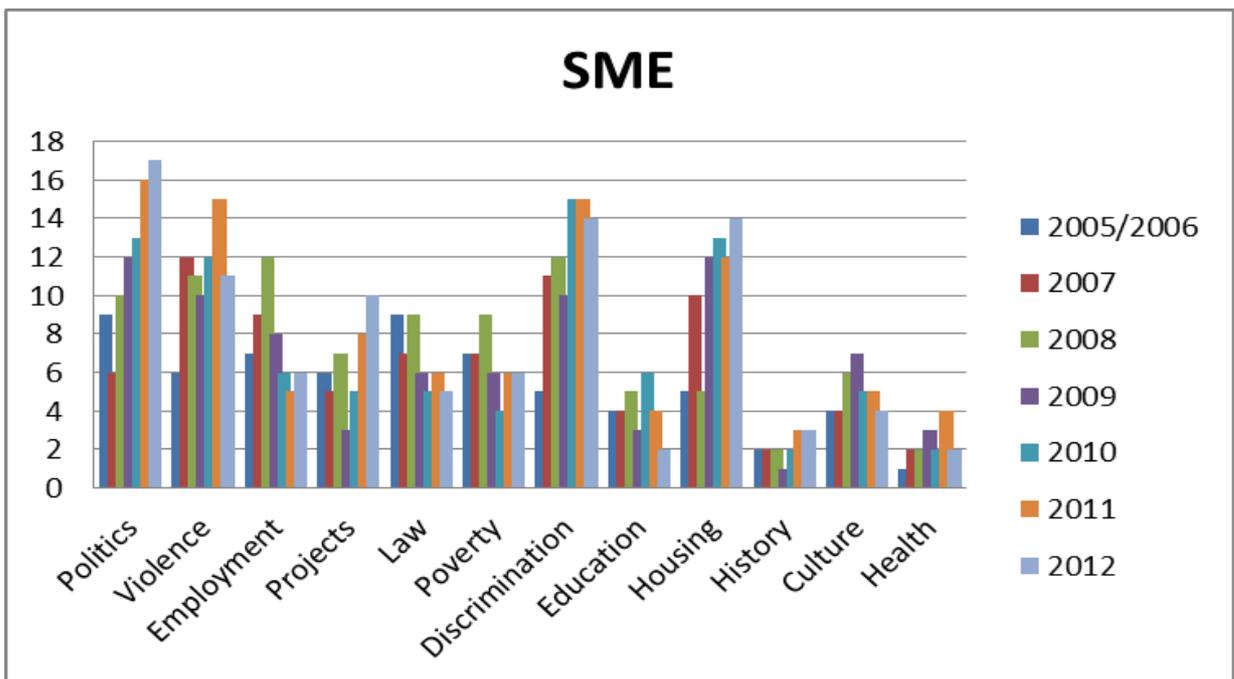


Chart 7.

Major Topics

Both PRAVDA and SME move three main issues – discrimination , politics and violence . All these issues combine clearly in most texts. Violence is a dramatic symptom of hatred and discrimination – a situation that politicians relate to in order to gain political capital based on the emotions of readers (or indeed due to ideology, holding their own ideas on how to help Roma in Slovakia). These articles are often accompanied by information on

ministerial or government projects that address all mentioned above the problems – in particular the housing of Roma. Slovakia faces the problem of the formation of Roma ghettos (though the word is very rarely used by the authors of articles) – which in combination with poor education of Roma in Slovakia and a low career prospects leads to formation of slums. This type of living conditions force some Roma to carry out criminal activities (such as theft). Thus, this leads to an increasing stratification of society into Slovaks and Roma. PRAVDA strives in these situations, referring to the emotions and pointing to the lack of legitimacy of social inequality, while SME is slightly more prone (although not significantly) to refer to the legal principles of the country .

Used language

The language used by the nationwide media in Slovakia can be considered politically correct. They shun the words like “gypsy”, at the same time, however, they limit the scope of the issues to a number of most discussed topics exclusively. By doing so they reify all stereotypes on Roma, giving the image of unemployed victims of the system and the policy authenticity. As such they are the object of constant violence and discrimination. Also, by combining legal issues with the issue of poverty of Roma, SME does unfortunately give the impression of certain hopelessness of the situation. This may lead to the conclusion that human solidarity is not worth effort and only system solution may cure the situation.

Characteristics

I found no characteristics in both newspapers significant enough for the analysis in addition to those described in the Major topics section.

Media genres and columns

Articles about Roma issues are often head articles in both newspapers. Interestingly enough, the electronic edition of the SME has a special tab (romovia.sme.sk), which collects all the information regarding Roma and posts them on the SME portal . This is certainly connected to the high number of Roma in Slovakia.

The arguments used

As already said, the only significant difference between PRAVDA and SME is the slightly different distribution of pressure when it comes to Roma issues. The first newspaper operates with issues affecting equality and solidarity by means of describing the discrimination (that is: it shows social inequalities, moving consciences of the readers). SME has a somewhat different approach, emphasizing the role of law, economics and the

need to extend political “recovery plans”. It can be generally said that two approaches to the topic are present – system-wide and local.

Authorship

Determining the profiles of authors is impossible, as most of them shift their interests very often.

Whose interests are represented

The lecture of SME and PRAVDA articles leads to the conclusion that both of them mainly represent the voice of politicians and journalists. One can see here also an interesting discrepancy between the two centers of power – the central government and local one. Generally speaking, the state-level politicians are portrayed in a positive light (mainly as initiators of projects for the Roma), whereas the local ones are rather looked at as people seeking economic profit and chasing their political career by treating the Roma in a discriminatory manner. The person quoted most often was a politician, Peter Pollak, the first Roma sitting in the Slovak parliament and government plenipotentiary for issues of Roma. Unfortunately, he has become a token in the hands of the media and politicians, while holding a rather negligible executive power. As a token this figure is rhetorically an evidence of the alleged equality of Roma in Slovakia.

Narration frame and perspective

Language of the two newspapers could be considered politically correct. The term “Rom” is used consistently, and the auto-ethnonym “Gypsy” is present only in the form of a quote. Journalists try to convey the content described objectively, though as I mentioned, it is quite clear that PRAVDA’s approach is more emotional. SME is set to for “true” objectivity based on law and market rights. We deal with two sets of language – emotional and socially aware, and legal-economic.

Local level, Košice

The local aspect takes into account two electronic media, that is Košice.korzar.sme.sk and udalosti.noviny.sk. What may be surprising, between years 2011-2012 both media represent a small number of articles on the Roma – that is only 87 (the first: 29, the second: 56). An even greater surprise awaits when looking at the local media topics.

Košice, which is the subject of this brief analysis, is the place that currently holds the largest Roma settlement in Europe (Luník IX is rightly called a ghetto). Unemployment reaches almost 100%, people live without supplies of electricity, gas and water. A few years ago, all Roma inhabited houses were surrounded by a high wall, which sealed off the “troublesome tenants” from the rest of the society. Naturally, this has led to an escalation of poverty of Roma and deepened social divisions. Local media, however, do not write about Luník IX housing matters, but rather seem to take part in the national media trend. They describe therefore discrimination against Roma and politics involving them, but refer to a wider range of forms of discrimination – not only the local ones. By doing so they do not focus on urgent and serious local problems and one could get the impression that it’s a question of embarrassment. This is probably also related to public demand of the non-Roma community, which, judging by the comments online, is not especially sympathetic for the Roma.

Below one article informing about the concept of digging a well in Luník IX, entries (comments) mocking the Roma were in a vast majority (“until they won’t have three meter rats there”, or “we should tell them [Roma] that 20 meters below the earth’s surface there are some copper wires, they would dig it by themselves”). Commentators point out the economic costs of the investment, while stressing to the lack of financial benefits from help given to Roma. According to them, they should “get to work” or “start respecting what they have”. It should be noted, that local media refrain from describing the whole housing conflict in an attempt not to incite readers to any further acts of Roma discrimination. Naturally, both SME Košice and Novosti inform about violence faced by Roma in Košice, they also write occasionally about the culture and history of Roma.

Much light is shed on the matter of discourse in Slovakia when reading comments posted under articles about the Roma in Slovakia. It is evident that most topics touched by the media have their colloquial counterpart – i.e. users are writing about discrimination, but at the same time the real fault for this lies within the Roma themselves, as they are unable to benefit from democracy in a “civilized manner”. Similar, violence directed against them stems from simple attempts of ethnic Slovaks to respond to the problems with Roma, and housing and health issues are only a problem for them alone, not for the majority. Most of the comments give “simple solutions”, like “if they care for their houses, they have to go to work, and get pay”. Interestingly, the media discourse does not highlight the otherness of the Roma, but rather their exclusion, strongly related to territoriality. This

creates a picture of the Roma people as a homogenous mass. In the media Roma do not occur as individuals, but always at least in family groups. For the general public they move in packs – and this imposes a collective responsibility on them for any criminal acts committed by a Roma. For readers that had enough of funds aiming to heighten living standards of Roma this is a very convenient excuse to continue any discriminatory practices. It is also a great argument for local authorities, allowing them to build closed settlements with high walls for Roma camps, just as it was in Lunik IX.

Very rarely newspapers addresses the broader issue of education, which seems to be crucial for the integration of Roma in the Slovak society. Also, local projects designed to prevent the widening of the still high unemployment are similarly omitted. It is intriguing on one hand, and on the other hand – understandable for economic reasons. The media have the power to form colloquial discourses, however they must also be part of the discussions that already exist – so if people are talking about system solutions of the problem rather than focusing on individual issues, the media, even local ones, are required to allow their readers to see and hear just about such things. Most cases of Roma in Košice are therefore positioned in a much broader context of the national debate on the Roma. The only issue strongly associated with the locality and not being merely a backdrop for the national discussion about Roma is the question of how the Košice community should deal with a huge number of rats that roam in the Lunik IX district at night. It is a sad picture, showing a tendency to cut off Roma from any help whatsoever in order to obtain personal ease.

Discourse Analysis – conclusions

What in particular drew my attention during the analysis of materials from both countries is the question of representation of different actors or actants. In both cases we deal with the creation of token-like figures, designed to be representatives of the entire community. Production of macroactors, who advocate for whole groups is of course not surprising, however, in the context of media discourse it strongly limits the expression or negotiation of meaning of specific events. For the Polish communities such tokens are representatives of Roma associations operating in the country. In Slovakia, Peter Pollak stands out clearly, as he is the only Roma representative in the Slovak parliament and at the same time holds the chair of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Issues. This form of representation is convenient from the perspective of the media, as it allows to

recall the opinion of someone who is seemingly the voice of the people. At the same time this contributes to the homogenization of all Roma, regardless of where they live or what their social status is. In the context of ghettoization, this helps to shroud the entire ethnic group into one territory, as it seems a natural habitat for Roma to live in such places, as is the case in Košice and Lunik IX. Polish media participate in this trend, but because of the small number of Roma in the country it is difficult to talk about the formation of closed compartments like those in Slovakia (this does not change the fact that there are cases of Roma living in empty houses in Poland – there are also few such cases in Poznań – but usually we deal with one multigenerational family). The frequency of words like “ghetto” or “gated community” shows however that the risk of their production in Poland is rather neglected. This is reflected in all evaluation reports of the “Program for the Roma Community in Poland” - a program which systematically (since 2004) aims to improve the “life situation” of Roma. Though when it comes to housing issues, the program is limited to current repairs of homes occupied by Roma, without any broader, long-term conception. What is more – the evaluation report from 2011 states, that due to the large financial outlay compared to the actual number of households covered by this project priority, it is recommended to limit the funds assigned to improve Roma housing standards to minimum. The largest concentration of government operations and funds in Poland lays in different sorts of educational projects (extra-curricular activities, Roma culture clubs, class level equalization).

Most media coverage and Roma associations reports pinpoint issues of discrimination and violence. It is important to understand, that these reports are virtually unrelated to spatiality. An interesting fission occurs when we look at this discourse as a whole: on one hand we see Roma orientalisation (highlighting their strangeness, otherness) as a way of reifying the whole group, and on the other hand all cases of aggression towards Roma are described as acts of hooliganism relating to individual persons of Roma origin. This leaves the impression that discrimination acts are rare and disconnected from each other. Ultimately we see Roma as a “different” and homogenous group only then, when they are being blamed for something.

The same issues also appears in the Slovak press, but there is one significant difference. It is repeatedly pointed out that the Roma settlements themselves constitute a problem for urban residents. Košice prove to be a good example of such an understanding – residents outside of the Roma ghetto fear for their health and wealth, and because of this

fact, the local government came to the conclusion that it is only natural to separate Lunik IX blocks from the rest of the city. Here we see a reified group strictly connected to the space that they inhabit. The Slovak media discourse supports this way of thinking. Although it condemns discrimination, it does at the same time give a reasons to multiply concern of readers. The absurdity of such a situation is pinpointed in numerous reports of Slovak Roma associations. These reports indicate also, that the only effective tools against social exclusion of Roma and ghetto creation processes are modern and organic education programs. Unfortunately, the Open Society Foundation reports prove that current educational programs in Slovakia are only sham operations and the money spent on them are given away in an unreasonable manner. One of the reports of The Association of Roma in Poland (“Cognitive functioning of Roma children attending special and mass schools - social contexts”) shows a different perspective – the authors prove the problem of education of Roma children lies not directly in the Polish state, but rather in the understanding of the concept of education as such by the Roma themselves.

There is a clear link between government and local political programs and media discourse. Both in Slovakia and Poland these programs can be divided into different priorities, that is:

- Education
- Living conditions
- Tackling unemployment
- Culture

At the same time I think it should be noted that the implementation of these projects have a rather assimilative than integrative character. This is mainly due to local applications of individual priorities.

Education in Poland and Slovakia is focused on children, especially on giving them competences in the use of the national language of the majority. According to these programs Roma children should be brought up bilingual. In principle this is strongly integrative, but when one adds the disastrous living conditions of Roma households and continuing acts of discrimination it all sums up in Roma children being stigmatized by their peers as inferior. Many times articles in both Slovakia and Poland raised the issue of

segregation of Roma children from their peers, whether through the creation of special classes, or by recognizing them as less intelligent and thus making them attend special schools, where the level of education is significantly lower than everyday standards. Children who have completed these special schools or have no education at all fall into a vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment.

Living conditions is a priority which focuses on current repairs and preventing the formation of Roma slums. However, as I wrote before, in the case of Poland it was considered ineffective to fund this priority because of the relatively high financial expenditure which the state had to bear. It should also draw attention that the media coverage often leaves the impression that the poor living conditions of the Roma is their own fault. In this configuration degradation of the environment in which they reside is actually regarded as the norm. For the reader it is connected directly with the equally frequently cited problem of begging, criminal activity and cultural alienation. In this way, media discourse creates a strong feeling that Roma people are just like that – poor criminals with lack of education. The ethnic group is thus transformed into a low level social class.

Tackling unemployment is usually temporary in nature and focused on financing of specific jobs (so actually the money goes to the employers) that are to be allocated exclusively for Roma. This action has no long-term traits, i.e. this process private companies are not involved in establishing contacts between them and Roma, which could lead to a stable improvement of their situation. Another way of unemployment tackling would be organizing business workshops (on how to start your own company) for Roma. On first look this project looks effective, but in Poland and Slovakia owning your own business is obligatory connected with a rather big initial financial outlay, that Roma do not have (due to poor education and social status). At the same time this priority project does not carry a negative discursive connotation – according to most comments under articles referring to this type of activities Roma “should” be involved in economic life in the same way as the rest of society. It is considered a way to deal with their “natural” reluctance to work. It is worth to note that that some initiatives aim to tackle unemployment of Roma, but also involve other project priorities. One such example would be the opening of the Roma restaurant, where employees are predominantly Roma. Another example would be the establishment of a construction company conducting repairs of Roma apartments. In

this way values of educational, unemployment tackling and improving living conditions priorities are combined. Unfortunately, examples of this type of activities are scarce.

Priority “culture” was meant to counter a trend of assimilation, but due to the media discourse it may cause the opposite effect. I do not question the legitimacy of projects promoting Roma culture, however – a overall look at the situation of Roma culture coverage in the media reifies them as a group ethnically and culturally “different”. The reader gets mixed signals – Roma are constructed as people being excluded, poor, often living on the margins of the law – and at the same time he reads about their cultural events. This leads to a confusing combination of “otherness” on two levels and in consequence may be viewed not as an element of multicultural society, but rather as an oriental curiosity.

From a general review of the reports provided by Roma associations, state and local documents and media discourse I draw two conclusions that may prove helpful in understanding the deadlock in which the Roma society is.

1. Lack of coordination between the various EU, national and local projects.

The existence of various forms of projects aiming to assist Roma is without a doubt something positive, however, their implementation in a haphazard manner restrains them from full utilization. As a result, significant changes do not take place. Ultimately this stabilizes some forms of ghettoization as a natural outcome of marginalization practices.

2. The vicious circle of discrimination and exclusion.

Roma are constantly on the margins of society due to the exclusion from normal education system and employment possibilities. These two factors are intrinsically linked to each other. The media condemn acts of violence and discrimination against Roma, but also give reasons to continue these practices by informing about high financial aids given to Roma groups and their activities on borders of criminality. This results in the reluctance of the readers towards Roma people and, consequently, their continued exclusion.

But what most strikes in the analysis of media discourse is the superficial way in which Roma issues are description. In creating an image of Roma most media do not plunge into matters they are referring, thereby helping readers in creating a simplified

stereotype about all Roma. They create an illusion of comprehension of Roma problems, while concealing their true depth.

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