The racialization of exclusion and limits of "Roma inclusion policies" in Romania[1]

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This paper addresses "Roma inclusion policies" in Romania as forms of governmentality, or as politically informed options that are unable to treat the structural causes of socio-territorial exclusion of marginalized Roma. The paper briefly discusses about the latter, and - by three examples - it illustrates how Roma socio-territorial exclusion is racialized. My main message is that Roma exclusion is produced at the intersection of neoliberalization and racialization, and - due to this - instead of social inclusion policies conceived as technical interventions, there is a need for a politics of social justice capable to act on the behalf of redistribution, recognition and political representation of ethnic Roma, including its better-off, marginalized or excluded classes.

Understanding "Roma inclusion policies"

Generally speaking, policies are instruments of putting into practice particular politics, so they are not neutral technical instruments for solving problems, but are politically and ideologically informed measures and processes. As anthropology of policy recalls (Shore and Wright 1997; Shore, Wright and Però 2011) policies are forms of discursive power that name, regulate, control, define problems and their solutions; they are discursive formations, which produce subject positions, subjectivities and social hierarchies; they are tools in the hands of policy-implementers to reproduce or change the socio-economic status quo; and last, but not least, they are vehicles of empowerment, or contrary of reproducing inequalities, having material consequences on people's life.

In particular, "Roma inclusion policies", even if seemingly are non-political, they are also having their politics which might be unrevealed in different ways. For this reason one might use the so-called governmentality approach, following Huub van Baar (2011), at his turn applying a foucauldian perspective on the relationship between the technical activity of governing

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(government) and the ways in which we think about governing (mentality). Among others one might use a comparative analyses of how Roma inclusion policies are different from other paradigms, such as the politics of culture and the politics of rights paradigm regarding ethnic Roma. The latter two explicitly assumed political options that defined and constructed the political umbrella term "Roma" or as a collective subject of cultural recognition or as a universal rights-holder body. On the contrary, inclusion policies are de-politicizing Roma, focusing on poverty and social exclusion understood at their turn not as problems belonging to political economy, but as technical issues. This trend is visible in how for example the EU funded operational programs implemented in Romania between 2007-2013 framed "the problem" and "the solutions" by urging for more education or more vocational courses for Roma with the aim of transforming them into the ideal labour force of the capitalist market. Moreover, willingly or not, for most of the times social inclusion policies – on the one hand – reproduce the association of Roma with social problems (poverty), and – on the other hand – perpetuate the belief that the socio-economic and institutional system within which Roma lives is acceptable, and it is only Roma who need to change to better fit into the system.

Based on my own researches on Roma socio-territorial exclusion (Vincze 2013a, 2013b) but also on other analysis (Sigona and Trehan 2009), my paper argues for at least two needs: (1) the necessity to address poverty and exclusion as a systemic issue and eventually to re-politicize it by viewing Roma exclusion as part of broader socio-economic processes of creating divisions and inequalities in the neoliberal post-socialist Romania, processes in which racism has a constitutive role by being used for justifying the economically created divisions and the exclusionary practices; (2) the requirement to reconstruct Roma politics by redefining the intersections between redistribution, recognition and political representation both in the relationships between Roma and non-Roma, and within Roma communities.

Processes of socio-territorial exclusion of marginalized Roma

Our research on the spatialization and racialization of Roma exclusion in Romania[2] was conducted only in five cities, nevertheless it managed to reveal a whole range of forms of socio-

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[2] The research *Spatialization and racialization of Roma exclusion. The social and cultural formation of "Gypsy ghettos" in Romania in a European context* (www.sparex-ro.eu) is

spatial segregation and processes generating them. Completed by another investigation,[3] I may affirm that the identified processes and forms are representative for the neoliberal post-socialist Romania. As such, they underscore the need for a politics of inclusive and rights-based development assumed both at national and local levels, that eliminates the systemic causes of socio-spatial segregation and carefully responds to the heterogeneity of (local) communities shaped by both the (power) relationships between ethnic majority and minority, and those between different Roma groups.

These researches highlighted that among the structural/systemic causes of Roma socio-spatial segregation, besides the economic ones and trends of everyday cohabitation between Roma and non-Roma, there are many factors linked to the Romanian public and social policies (Vincze 2013a), and as well as to ways in which local administration functions, but also how is Roma political representation acted out at national and local levels (Vincze 2013b). Due to lack of time I am referring here very briefly only to the Romanian housing policies that had an instrumental role in the process of regime changes from socialism through post-socialist transition to current neo-liberalization that included complex and intersected transformations of the state, the society, and the market. Housing policies actively supported the major social-economic trends (which nowadays are privatization, financialization and marketization), and by neglecting to tackle the negative/ exclusionary/ discriminatory consequence of such developments they substantially contributed to the creation of social inequalities and exclusion. Housing inequalities and housing exclusion are crucial part of the neoliberal socio-economic order, while housing policies are sustaining the accumulation of capital on the side of residential

[3] *Faces and Causes of the Roma Marginalization in Local Settings. Contextual inquiry to the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011, focusing on Hungary, Romania, Serbia,* conducted between December 2012 and June 2013. A joint initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Open Society Foundation's Roma Initiatives Office (RIO) and the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Inclusion program, and the Central European University/Center for Policy Studies (CEU CPS), implemented in Hungary by the Research Centre for Economic and Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in Romania by Desiré Foundation from Cluj, and in Serbia by the Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University. Between July 2013 and June 2014 this contextual inquiry continues with a further, qualitative phase conducted in three localities of each of the participating countries (see more about this at http://cps.ceu.hu/research/roma-marginalization, accessed on 21.11.2013).

entrepreneurs and the dispossession of the poor transforming them into homeless (or homeowners on the margins), excluded from the socio-political body enjoying citizenship rights. In the post-socialist Romania, housing policies are focused overwhelmingly on promoting homeownership, a tendency that is strongly linked to the general public concern constructed around the right to private property on the expense of the social right to affordable and adequate housing for all (the latter being considered as part of the egalitarian, denigrated communist past).

As a reaction to the work of the structural forces, impoverished people move to residential spaces where the living costs are lower and where they might find a source of living (e.g. garbage dump). On the other hand, as we could learn on the field, post-industrial Romania knows the formation of impoverished (inner city) slums in different ways, among them the following: the abandoned former worker dormitories as a consequence of the collapse of socialist industries, disconnected from utilities and devastated, are occupied by impoverished families; the extension of the initially formal settlements with informal housing improvisations, or the growing of informal settlements due to the fact that new generations could not afford moving out or buying homes on the housing market; in cases in which there is an interplay of interest between real-estate companies, and multi-national or national firms and banks in occupying these areas, local authorities get rid of the "poverty pockets" characterizing them by evictions, hiding the forced nature of such interventions by intimidating and manipulating the dwellers.

So, at the local level, it is the long-term neglect by local public administration of the creation of the so-called poverty pockets or underdeveloped areas in the locality or generally speaking of the neglect of evidence-based development, and most importantly there are the administrative measures of forced evictions that dispossess people of their homes and enforce them to settle down on the geographically isolated, socially segregated, culturally stigmatized and polluted margins.

Racializing Roma socio-territorial exclusion

Further one, let me illustrate how is socio-territorial exclusion racialized by public authorities when, while forcibly evicting poor Roma families, are constructing the "people" (the "civilized Romanians") against the "dangerous others" (the poor Roma) who are supposedly threatening the former. I am referring here to three cases of forced evictions in Romania

(happened in the cities of Cluj-Napoca, Baia Mare, and Eforie Sud in the past four years), respectively to the declarations and actions of the mayors of these cities:

In December 2010, the mayor of Cluj Napoca (Sorin Apostu) who orchestrated the eviction of 76 families (their vast majority Roma) from a centrally placed urban space (Coastei street) affirmed: "*the eviction from Coastei street was made due to the fact that the way of life generated a lot of controversies for the inhabitants of the area and for the companies from the area and for everything that the city meant – later they were moved in a zone from Pata Rât.*" Despite of prior petitions against evictions and residential segregation, all the families living on Coastei street were evicted, their homes were instantly demolished, and they were relocated nearby the city's toxic landfill, into improper homes sharply isolated from the city, by this increasing the number of the inhabitants of that area to 1500.

In the spring of 2012, the mayor of Baia Mare (Cătălin Cherecheş), who put on his electoral agenda the demolition of Craica (a neighborhood of poor housing inhabited mostly by Roma) and won the local elections with more than 80%, argued for his actions by stating: "*the poverty pockets of the city, where since 20 years there were only improper constructions, and where there was no water, sewerage, or electricity, had to be eradicated because they created discomfort to those who lived in the housing districts of the municipality.*" About half of the houses were demolished, and 60 families were relocated into the buildings of a former chemical company. After the municipality was criticized by human rights organizations, the mayor started talking about his plans for integrating Roma, and for looking for alternative territories where the remaining families of Craica, and other poor families from other areas of Baia Mare might be relocated.

In October 2013, the mayor of Eforie (Ovidiu Brăiloiu) demolished the homes of circa 100 ethnic Roma persons leaving them homeless, by affirming: "*by winter they will go to the landfill. I am not sending them anywhere, but they will go on their own. We do what we need to do: we drain the zone, we clean, and we remove the garbage from there. You know how it is: when the butchery closes, the dog stays there for a few more days, but eventually it has to go away*." After a couple of days, when the mayor was criticized by

human rights organizations, he allowed some of the children left homeless to move into a disposed building without any utilities.

These three cases, which are completed by several other instances of socio-spatial exclusion in Romania, respectively the related public discourses might be placed on a scale of classifications that evolved from defining the relocated ones as people who generated "controversies" and created "discomfort", to comparing them to street dogs. We could see: supposedly their lifestyle, the fact that their neighbourhood lacked elements of a civilized housing, and the increased amount of garbage around, but most importantly the assumption that all these factors disturbed the others, "the normal people and companies", justified their eviction, demolition and relocation administered by local authorities. In this way, without any proper interventions against poverty, the latter ended up championing a war against the poor by which they also supported both real estate interests, winners of gentrification processes and their own political and economic capital.

These are cases in which authorities justified their actions by referring to the need of "slum clearance", or "urban generation", or "urban development programs". But their attempt to rationalize went even further: they, as elected representatives of the cities, put one against the other , "The people" who deserved being served by the local governance and those who were not worthy of this. Even more, they sanctioned the distinction between those who merited belonging to the city, and those who did not. In addition, while legitimizing the housing and territorial exclusion of the latter, they even excluded them from humanity by associating them with trash, by relocating them to polluted areas that endangered their health and life, and by comparing them to animals. In none of these cases, "urban regeneration" meant the improvement of housing conditions of the dwellers of these areas in a way that they could support them living a proper human life while remaining there and become integrated into the desired urban landscape. But in each of these cases, the way in which and where they were relocated or left homeless increased their material deprivations, territorial separation and cultural stigmatizations, strongly damaging their human dignity and social relations. This is a strong evidence of the fact that these poor people are not imagined by decision-makers (and by the mainstream population) as being part of the urban space that needs to be regenerated and developed, but they are at the most tolerated on the margins, or on territories that are tried to be made invisible or non-existent and, as such, do not require or deserve administrative attention or socio-economic development. Simply put: by

these measures, public authorities construct a physical and symbolic bond between people regarded as non-humans and spaces regarded as non-territories (such as landfill, chemical deposits, water treatment plants or other toxic environments).

The arguments of local authorities for performing evictions, demolitions and relocations, were also referring to the illegality of the respective human settlements. In some cases this meant that people were let to stay informally there since ages and now this consensus was disrupted unilaterally by authorities. And in other cases it meant that people renting their homes on those areas, were evicted together with the informally settled and/or those who did not posses legal documents of any kinds, being pushed together, as "the group that deserve such treatment", out of their status of citizenship. In each of these cases, relocation meant that people's access to resources of a life defined by our society as normal for a citizen belonging to a member state of the European Union, or their access to the means of living accepted as legal in the same world, became even more restricted. Consequently, their effective access to citizenship rights or to fundamental human rights including the right to life was dramatically hampered.

Dispossessed of their houses, of their citizenship rights and even of their humanity, evicted people continued living in their home countries and cities as undocumented immigrants do live in a foreign country or as refugees live during times of war. Or they tried going abroad, in the economically more promising member states of the European Union, where they continued to experience the fact that they were unwanted, they were non-citizens, they were non-humans, and on this base they continued being subjected to evictions and deportations across countries.

Conclusions

Consequently, as argued in my works (Vincze 2013a, 2013b) nor spatiality, or poverty are the ultimate explanatory factors of Roma exclusion conceived as manifestations of advanced urban marginality (Wacquant 2008). Encapsulated spaces and precarious living conditions produce exclusion, and vice versa, but ultimately it is the intersection of processes of neoliberalization and racialization, which, under post-socialist condition, create economically, culturally and politically the "Gypsy ghettos", as spatialized and racialized forms of social exclusion whose inhabitants are subjected to multiple and disempowering forms of injustices.

In order to repair this condition there is a need to re-politicize it on the public agenda, and

– while exploring the best legacies of politics of culture and politics of rights – to transcend the stage of policies for social inclusion towards a politics of social justice.

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