ROMANIA OF THE URBAN GHETTOS – FAVOURITE SPACE FOR THE AMASSES OF SOCIAL SUPPORTED PERSONS

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Abstract:
After 1990 appeared in the cities of Romania, regardless of their size, several poor urban spaces that gather Roma population. These are often regarded as second hand urban habitats. Some of them transformed during time in real ghettos, as a consequence of the continuous process of urban segregation. Starting mainly from the data provided by the media, and not only, this analysis desires to sketch an image that is as comprehensive as possible. Also, an important objective of this article represented to emphasize social support and the way in which it is carried out (social housings, utilities paid by the authorities, daily food at the social canteens, payment of some social taxes, etc.) The amass of social supported persons in these ghettos is obvious because of the persistent poverty on one hand and, on the other hand, of the disadvantages that the population of these habitats have to face (lack of education, professional training, discrimination, etc.).

Key words: ghettos, urban segregation, social support, poverty, Romanian urban space

1. Introduction

Romania is the host of a lot of poor urban spaces where some, starting with few tens to few hundreds of social supported people live. Out of these some became over time real ghettos as a consequence of the urban segregation process (Mionel, 2012) and, at the same time, because of the increase of the Roma population. The spatial concentration of Roma people and the shortages gave birth to some second hand urban habitats. Poverty, social supported persons, lack of education and professional formation, no identity papers, illegal inhabi-

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tance, insufficient living space, no basic utilities, increased birth rate and high density, physical decay of buildings, destitution, sanitary risks (diseases, epidemics, disabilities), presence of disease carriers (insects and animals), high rate of crimes and conflicts, presence of drugs and beggary are only some of the realities of the ghetto life. Appealing to the writings of Alfred Omenya (2003, p. 13) on the *circuit of disadvantages* and looking also at the Romanian urban ghettos, we can observe that in Romania there is a rapid development of such a process that self-reproduces at a very high rate. Therefore, it’s no wonder that the data above make the worries even bigger when faced with these kind of problems to which we add, as well, a very high number of social supported persons.

Of the Romanian urban ghettos it is worth mentioning: Craica (Sabău, 2011; Herman, 2011; Dragomir, 2010) and Horea (Ruja, 2011; Popescu, 2011, Brădeanu, 2011) from Baia Mare, Muncii (Ostahie, 2007) and Speranța (Doboș, 2003) from Piatra Neamț, Checheci from Arad (Buga, 2008), the Colony at km. 10 from Brăila (http://www.realitatea.net), the *ghetto near the sewage treatment plant* from Miercurea Ciuc (Kovacs, 2011), *ghetto Tineretului Park* from Botoșani (Maxim, 2012), *ghetto from the Munții Tatra Street* in Constanța (Dumitrov, 2011), *ghetto Zăvoi* from Sibiu (Ion-Cristea, 2011), *former ghetto G1* from Bărlad (Călin, 2010) moved in a new location in the outskirts of the city, *ghetto G4, Micro 19 quarter* from Galați (Obrejan, 2011; Romanită, 2011), *Istru* from Giurgiu (Cimpoeuru and Rotaru cf. http://www.stirigiurgiu.ro), the *former ghetto L2* from Drobeta Turnu Severin (Caraibot, 2010) moved also in a location at the outskirts, the so-called *NATO ghetto* from Oradea (Criș, 2006), the *ghetto from the Ostrovului street* in Satu Mare (Răchitan, 2011), *Turturica* from Alba Iulia (Stânculescu (coord.), 2010; Țimonea, 2010), *ghetto „Berlin wall”* of Miercurea Ciuc (Petrovic, 2010; Kovacs, 2009) and *ghetto Pata Rât* in Cluj Napoca (Mionel, 2012). To these we add of course the ones from the Capital city (Mionel and Neguț, 2011): *Aleea Livezilor, Tunsu Petre, Amurgului* and *Valea Cascadelor*.

This analysis wishes to create a more extensive image on the ghettos formed in the last 20 years in Romania, which crowd most of the social supported persons. The analysis of the poor urban spaces ghetto type
has been based on placing the concrete examples from the country in the classic theory of the ghetto formulated mostly by the French sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2004 in Smelser and Baltes eds). Starting from this given state, according to Wacquant, the ghetto is a space which is (in our case) urban, and which indicates a different way of socio-moral and spatial isolation and stigmatization of a certain human group (Wacquant, p. 1 in Smelser and Baltes eds, 2004) – in this case the Roma population. Furthermore, Wacquant observes that the ghetto represents a habitat where the slum intersects with the poor districts, over-crowding, physical decay and exacerbation of certain “urban diseases” (Wacquant, p. 1 in Smelser and Baltes eds, 2004): criminality, poverty, destruction of family, etc. In other words, the ghetto has the characteristics of a slum, which means an improvised and informal space, the Romanian urban ghettos placing themselves mostly in this conceptual pattern, as we showed in the first fragments of this study. Last but not least, the emphasis placed on the characteristics or on the proofs of the segregation process has represented an important point in the development of the analysis, these sort of elements emerging mostly from the spatial concentration of the Roma population; the concentration are both voluntary and involuntary. The size of these spaces is growing because of the very high rate of birth. The ghetto, besides its look of improvised dwelling, poverty and violence, involves ethnic homogeneity and, at some extent a congregational character (Mionel, 2012, pp. 33-35) or, in other words, the necessity to be together for a common purpose or the internal cohesion of the community.

2. The methodology of the study

The analytic methodology is not simple at all because the study of the Romanian urban ghettos proves to be a delicate subject for most researchers from the social sciences field, an issue that is not encountered among journalists for example. They have much more freedom of speech transposed in an analytical easiness that is rarely seen among researchers. While scientists need more data and concrete
examples to form an opinion as well shaped as possible, journalists simply show the information without any barrier, therefore the abundance of the provided information. It is desirable today that the two communities help each other and exchange information. They could borrow from each other in order to draw conclusions as relevant as possible, and, why not, practical solutions. The collaboration between the two “sources” of information can prove to be beneficial when there is a leaking flow of inter-changeable information. The exchange of information is very useful for the academic world. The analysis of the abundant news and information produced by the media helps knowing very deeply the ghetto life, and the subject shall not be considered any longer “taboo” from the scientific point of view. Journalists and the articles produced can be regarded as local relays for transmitting the information to the researchers, or as local operators for collecting the data from the field, to be centralized and analyzed at a later time by the researcher.

There are some analytical weaknesses in the way the media fashions the information. For example, the geographical x-ray of the Romanian urban ghettos should have taken into consideration the so called theory of the ghetto. The concept of ghetto presumes the existence of a geographical space, most of the time urban, where a minority of a certain ethnic, racial type or of other nature is gathered, and, in one way or another, is forced to live in that habitat because of some constraints. Shortages or constraints can take different forms according to the ones described in the beginning part of the article. Only that in reality, the ghetto that the press talks about does not always coincides with the ghetto theory. In the press certain urban habitats are considered ghetto just because that space is decayed from a physical point of view. Also, some articles consider that a geographical space invaded by dirt and trash is also a ghetto. And the examples can go on. Therefore it is forgotten the fundamental tone of the ghetto: the concentration in a space of a minority and the shortages and constraints it faces. Obviously the physical decay of the buildings and the abundance of trash represent the typical shortages of these spaces, but they are not the most important ones. That is why, some so called ghettos have been
removed from the analysis based on the previous theoretical and methodological principle.

In order to produce this analysis, there have been reviewed articles especially from the written press both local and national. The data and the information obtained have been linked as we said earlier with the classic theory of the ghetto and at the same time have been compared with similar cases from different cities of the country. There was an emphasis placed, according to the title, on the link between ghettos and the spatial concentration of the social supported persons.

3. The Geography of the Romanian urban ghettos

The spatial position of the ghettos within the city is different from one case to another. While the Turturica ghetto is in the middle of the town, Checheci, Zăvoi and Munții Tatra, for example are located far enough from the central habitats. There are others that today are located at the outskirts as a consequence of certain administrative policies: the one from Bârlad, Muncii and Speranța from Piatra Neamț or the one from Drobeta Tr. Severin. These last ones captured the attention of some NGOs and international institutions that accused the moving measures from centre to the outskirts, being considered discriminatory and causing segregation. Regardless of the fact that they are located in the centre or at the outskirts, they “collect” the most social supported persons, being necessary to have policies of economy social type in order to eliminate some of the financial burden that fall on the shoulders of the local administration, both national and especially local.

**Table nr. 1. Romanian urban ghettos: location and approximate number of persons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Host city</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Approximate number of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Craica</td>
<td>Baia Mare</td>
<td>Near Păltinișului street, Vasile Alecsandri district from the south of the city, along the Craica creek.</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Checheci</td>
<td>Arad</td>
<td>In the western part of the city, between the Confeții și Șega districts</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nr.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Host city</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Approximate number of persons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Colony from km. 10</td>
<td>Brăila</td>
<td>Habitat located 10 km from the city on DE 584 road, close to the former chemical platform Chiscani.</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ghetto near the water treatment plant</td>
<td>Miercurea Giuc</td>
<td>Located in the western part of the city, near the water treatment plant, on the extension of Primăverii street.</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ghetto from Tineretului Park</td>
<td>Botoşani</td>
<td>Located in the park with the same name, the ghetto is made of the buildings T135 and T140.</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ghetto from Munţii Tatra street</td>
<td>Constanţa</td>
<td>The name of the ghetto shows the location: Munţii Tatra street, Palas district from the western extremity of the city.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ghetto from Zăvoi</td>
<td>Sibiu</td>
<td>Close to Zăvoi street from Turnișor district and to the Cibin river. The location of the ghetto is practically outside the city.</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>Bârlad</td>
<td>The old location was right in the middle of the city. Meanwhile the Romani ni people were moved in a new location on Cpt. Grigore Ignat street from the north-east outskirt.</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>G4</td>
<td>Galaţi</td>
<td>The three entrances G4 building is located in the Micro 19 district.</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Horea</td>
<td>Baia Mare</td>
<td>In the west of the city on the street with the same name.</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Istru</td>
<td>Giurgiu</td>
<td>Located in the south-western part of the city in the immediate vicinity of Slobozia Road.</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Drobeta Turnu Severin</td>
<td>The old location was on Nuferilor Alley, Crihala district. Today people live in the new building in the outskirts on Serpentina Roşiori street.</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Ghetto NATO</td>
<td>Oradea</td>
<td>The space of the ghetto is in the vicinity of Voltaire street from the south-western outskirt of Oradea city.</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Ostrovului</td>
<td>Satu Mare</td>
<td>Located on the street with the same name from the Soarelui district.</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Pata Rât</td>
<td>Cluj-Napoca</td>
<td>Located near the trash dump with the same name.</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Turturica</td>
<td>Alba Iulia</td>
<td>The indicative of the G2 building. The building is located on Arnsberg street from the Cetate central district.</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Ghetoul „Berlin wall“</td>
<td>Sfântu Gheorghe</td>
<td>Varadi Jozsef street, Orko district.</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Host city</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Approximate number of persons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Muncii</td>
<td>Piatra Neamț</td>
<td>Located on the street with the same name, close to 1 Mai and Mărășești districts.</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Speranța</td>
<td>Piatra Neamț</td>
<td>Located 3 km from the city, inside an ex-chicken farm and, in the same time, neighboring the new residential area Speranța.</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Zăbrăuți</td>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>Located on the street with the same name from the Ferentari district.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Aleea Livezilor</td>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>It is developing within the area of the street with the same name from the Ferentari district.</td>
<td>together they have over 12.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tunsu Petre</td>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>It is developing within the area of the street with the same name from the Ferentari district.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Amurgului</td>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>It is developing within the area of the street with the same name from the Rahova district.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table contains some information about the spatial distribution of the Romanian urban ghettos. Their classification can be done according to different aspects, such as: the number of inhabitants, position within the city, texture or type of settlement etc. With few exceptions, the urban ghettos seen in the Romanian cities are recent, mostly emerged after the ‘90s. As we can observe, their implantation took place in several cities, regardless of their size. Many of them are located in the outskirts or semi outskirts and collect together less than 3,000 Roma persons. In the case of Bucharest ones we cannot even say an approximate number of Roma persons pertaining to each ghetto, because they are regarded as a whole because of their spatial proximity, except the one located on the Valea Cascadelor street. We cannot neglect the fact that in these ghettos the number of Roma persons almost never reaches one hundred percent.

For a better illustration I shall describe below some general aspects of geographical nature, alongside with emphasizing the social, economical and environmental ones for some of the ghettos from the above table.
a. Ghetto at km. 10 from Brăila

10 km from Brăila in a district far away from the city centre, some few hundred people live isolated for years now in a colony close to the former celluloses and paper plant of Brăila. There are journalists who compare living in the Colony at km. 10 with an inferno, because, they say, “as you go on DE 584 [European road nr. 584], towards Slobozia, across the Chemical Platform Chiscani, you cannot help to see several grey, poor buildings...the place where most of the criminals of Brăila hide... Among sludge and dumps, stray dogs and hollows, live approx. 700 Roma persons, most of them without legal forms. Also there live tens of children...left up to fate” (Grosu, 2010).

The inhabitants of the colony, most of them Roma persons – more than 80 percent (Institute for an Open Society, 2004, p.53)-, barely manage to live. For 2006, it is specified in the press of the time, that the heating of the inhabitants is done with improvised stoves “made from dirt” (http://www.realitatea.net/Romania-from-ghetouri_24573.html). The water supply from the nearby fountain appears like a theme song of the Romanian urban ghettos, and the Colony at km. 10 makes no exception from this rule.

From another source we find out that “just residing in that place is enough to have a life much darker than other people. The Roma community...has confused years in a row the local community with all kinds of cases, all in eager rivalry brought suspense for the transmission of the local or national TV stations. Some of the darkest cases” (Ivan, 2007).

What is understood by the previous quote taken from an article of Sorina Ivan presumes that in the collective conscience of the people of Braila the Colony at km. 10 became a place of stigma, a space of shame and of criminals (or crimes). But, let’s not forget though, the same author reminds us, the life restricted by so much indigence, caused by the lack of knowledge, lack of care, bad luck or who knows what other reasons. An overwhelming number of people live from a social allowance that dooms them to survive and from which they also have to pay the rent, electricity, get clothes if they afford it or “get some of the things any person needs in their house” (Ivan, 2007).
Many of the inhabitants of km. 10 Colony should work, should produce... But here comes a barrier identified by Sorina Ivan: the 10 km distance to the city, just by itself, marginalizes the inhabitants and creates real problems in getting a work place. Strictly connected to the mobility of these people there is also the money problem for the tram subscription, the only mean of public transportation to and from the city.

There are many problems at kilometer 10 and much more social necessities. Only to mention a few of the deficiencies from the Brăila ghetto, we should think of the need to have a police station, a kindergarten and a school, important means for the education of the people from the area, and last but not least, the need to have a medical office that operates practically in the colony.

b. Ghettos of Craica and Horea from Baia Mare

The ghetto of Baia Mare, the poverty bag of the city, the district of improvised shacks etc., this is how journalists Cătălin Țineghe and Lavinia Săbăciag start their article from the January 14th, 2012. Misery, chaos and rats are everywhere. These ones formicate freely near children of 2-3 years old (Țineghe and Săbăciag, 2012). When it rains it is almost impossible to move in the area of Craica because the sludge is above the ankle in some places. 15-16 years ago, an inhabitant from the area said, there was nothing in the place where the ghetto is now, no building... just a field. The Roma people who live in the area of Craica are not the owners of the land or of the shacks chaotically and spontaneously build, and the building permits are completely missing (Sabău, 2011).

Craica creek has become a true curse for the inhabitants of Baia Mare. Despite the fact that it crosses many villages, the creek becomes in the truest sense a dump only in the area of the county’s capital. The main cause is the behavior of the hundreds of Roma persons that have settled on the water banks. This becomes a sanitary danger, threatening the inhabitants of the close by neighborhood, especially during the hot season. During summer time the pest hole is born “because of the unbearable smell and the dumps that lay right under the windows of
the inhabitants of Baia Mare from the Păltinișului street [who] are obliged to keep the windows closed" (Săbăciag, 2011).

Together with the poverty, dirt, rats etc. another constant of the ghetto life is, states Cosmin Mesaros (2011), the alcohol. The stark view of Craica makes the journalist that we previously quoted to cry out that “it’s no longer «just a street with gypsies». It’s a ghetto with no walls! ... There are no walls, so you can say «someone» separated them, closed them, isolated them from the rest of the people! They put up a wall, between themselves and the other Baia Mare people. It’s a wall of verbal violence, swearing, threats, dirt, crimes!” (Mesaros, 2011).

On the other hand, it seems that the analogy with Craica seems imperative for Horea ghetto because of the similarities. Most Roma persons are very poor. Except the ones that work at the local sanitation company of the city, many of them live from social securities and the allowances of the children:”...we do not work anywhere. We only have the children`s allowance, that`s it” (Popescu, 17 Nov. 2011).

Following a control, in 2011, the authorities discovered that the people had great debts for paying the housing service, although the imposed rent was moderate. The social and economic burden is much higher because the Roma families have 6-7 children that they have to feed and clothe. Several tenants live in a constant fear that they will be evicted, and on the other hand, the authorities are afraid to evict them in order to not increase the number of shacks and people who live illegally in Craica (Popescu, 3 Nov. 2011). Continuing the similarities with Craica, we can say that the squalidity is indescribable, and trash is everywhere. People create an impossible to measure trash, they throw on the road bags, jars... (Ruja, 2011). According to what Mihai Șoica said (2011), there is a logical contradiction between the dumps among the buildings and the fact that most of the people here who work are employees at the Sanitation Company and collect the trash of the city every day, and in their home, the trash is everywhere. The view of the area is rounded by the facades of the buildings which are almost destroyed.

_c. The ghetto near the wastewater treatment plant from Miercurea Ciuc_

The evolution of the ghetto near the wastewater treatment plant of the city of Miercurea Ciuc starts almost ten years ago. The beginning of
the relegation from the city happened – according to the notes of the *Gândul* newspaper – in 2004 when the local authorities from the city decided that over 140 Roma persons to “be taken out of the city”. [Therefore], the Roma persons were crowded in six shacks at the Ciucului border, within an area surrounded by high wired fences” (http://www.gandul.info/news/maghiarii-majoritari-au-bagat-lagar-minoritari-tigani-253965), in a space of only 700-800 sqm. In time, as Anna Kovacs (2011) observes, although it is hard to imagine, almost 200 souls lived here “with inhuman conditions, crowded in some few metallic booths and insalubrious shacks” (Kovacs, 2011), fact that was registered also in the own reports by the *Amnesty International* Organization (Safta, 2010) that reminded that the “ housings”, meaning the metallic trailers used once by the forestry workers, were overcrowded and the sanitary conditions were extremely inadequate.

*Poverty, dirt and infections* are normal words in the “dirtiest” outskirt of Ciuc. The Roma people survive from the money they obtain for the old iron collected from the dumps of the city. They use some stoves that make more smoke than heat the rooms. And they get water from the fountain near the “creek... [which] is in fact, the water that washes the pigsties from the prison located a few hundred meters near the colony” (http://www.gandul.info/news/maghiarii-majoritari-au-bagat-lagar-minoritari-tigani-253965) and that freezes very much during the low temperatures of the winter. The people are obliged to melt the snow in order to drink water. Despite all these, except the trash that is being collected once a month, inside the ghetto the image is truly horrifying:”a mire of sludge mixed with trash, where your foot goes deep to the ankle. The shacks are STAS, designed for 5 persons. Inside there are nine-ten people. The ones that had no more space build their own shelters – some small places made from wood and plastic. They didn’t make them from adobe, because they didn’t have clay” (http://www.gandul.info/news/maghiarii-majoritari-au-bagat-lagar-minoritari-tigani-253965).

Even more, some people call “house” the improvised chamber made from birches lifted up and covered with plastic bags.
**d. Ghetto from Tineretului Park, Botoșani**

The Tineretului Park habitat is the poorest area of the city of Botoșani. The people here barely have money for bread and some little left. The two buildings (T135 and T140) from Tineretului Park that compose the so called *ghettos* of Botoșani, or the ghetto area „Vietnam”, as shown in an article of *Adevăril* newspaper (Sârbu, 2011), were build in the year 1970 and given for use one year later. According to what journalist Otilia Maxim states (2012), we understand that at the time the buildings were the pride of the people of Botoșani. In time though, the buildings became almost a ruin, because of the behavior and the attitude of the inhabitants. For example, the journalist from Botoșani observes, the today’s measures for the civilization level of the ghetto are mainly the *lack of education and poverty* (Maxim, 2012). The level of education is extremely low (maximum middle school). The study carried out by Popescu, Arpinte and Neagu register that in 2005, for example – the year when the research was made – there were only two women that graduated 10, respectively 12 classes. The main income sources are the children’s allowances, social securities and the money/products obtained by daily work. The families, quite numerous (3 children on average) send the children to work or use them for work already at the ages of 10-12, in order to increase their incomes (Popescu, Arpinte and Neagu, 2005, pp. 4-5). At the same time, the children play under the windows of the one-room houses among the space full with *waste* of all type stored inadequately and among *rats*. The drama of this community is connected to the children born and raised within inhuman conditions and that are left in a lost world. Their parents, unfortunately, are accustomed to wait for the authorities to fix their problems without them doing anything.

**e. Ghetto G4 from Galați**

Before anything we must say that each day that passes by transforms the G4 building from the Micro 19 district in a real and authentic ruin. Not by chance G4 can be found on the list of the buildings of Galați that have an increase seismic risk (Mototolea, 2012), rank 1. In this situation, keeping in mind that, in Vrancea, which is not far from Galați, there is the intersection of three continental tectonic plates and there is
an intense seismic activity, the condition of this building is critical, being in danger to crash in case of an earthquake with a higher magnitude.

The building has three entrances and shelters a numerous community, no less than 350 families (Aur, 2011); if we are to believe the information published in the *Evenimentul Zilei*, 5 years ago “three quarters of the inhabitants are gypsies and homeless people”, the block gained the name ghetto because of the ones who live it and who destroyed it in most part. It doesn’t have doors, and at some extent, no windows. The halls are gloomy, dark and much clogged by a hard to breath air that comes, most likely, from the former space of the toilet. On the cement walls near the former space of the toilet (we found out from an article) there is a “moving” sludge, sign of the sanitary disaster, because, even if this space was dismantled “people still throw from upstairs all kind of trash” (http://galateni.net/forum/topic/819-g4-blocul-groazei/). And the alleys from the vicinity are “paved” with some kind of yellow soil that looks more like what you would see on the by-lanes of a poor vill (http://www.ziare.com/galati/stiri-actualitate/mana-vizitiu-prin-micro-19-1804829). And still, this background shelters a community. A community of promiscuity, disease, indifference and even unconsciousness.

*f. Ghetto Istru from Giurgiu*

The people that currently occupy the Istru ghetto from Giurgiu, approximately 500 souls, most of them Roma persons, (Vladu, 2011), struggle with extreme poverty and severe dirt. In some houses there are even 10 people. The most alarming case is the dismantled building where still lives a few people. The living conditions – if we can name them like that – are completely inhuman “Broken windows, covered with cellophane or plastic bags. Missing doors, clothes and trash thrown in deserted rooms, rats, smell of urine and dejections everywhere. In order to get money, people started to break the inside walls and sell even the bricks” (Vladu, 2011). Not long after the revolution, and only in a few years, the former hostels for people with no families were already destroyed. Out of these, a part was reinstalled by the local authorities over ten years ago: “The hostels from Istru were repaired in 2000, all
the plumbing were changed, the rooms were painted, each room was taken care of, but in half of year they destroyed everything, they broke the pipes, they stole the heating radiators” (Alexandru, 2011), and for the other part we are still waiting for funding. Therefore, three of the buildings (B1, C and D) look today as if they are not inhabited. They stole almost everything that could be rendered valuable: from casements to plumbing and from bricks to iron (Vladu, 2011). The advanced state of decay made one of these blocks to be dismantled. The other two that remained to be renovated have a growing informal commerce or a “black market” rent prices (Grigore, 2012).

As for the children, they use to play among the food leftovers, trash and they even go inside the dumpsters “looking for food” (Tomiţă, 2011), from where they collect sometimes all kind of objects that they take home afterwards. A preferred play space for the little ones is the Saint Haralambie cemetery in the close vicinity, where they are not ashamed to beg (Sminchise, 2011). The number of children is quite high; the families have up to 8 children that they have to support. Leaving school is alarmingly high and is caused by the poor financial situation of the family where the child comes from. Therefore, some children go to school, but most of them “while their classmates of same age spend time on the internet, the children of Istru have the rats as their playmates. And the dumps behind the blocks...this is their whole childhood universe” (Cimpoeru and Rotaru cf. http://www.stiri-giurgiu.ro/). The hopes of the children here, if there are some, are only vain hopes.

g. NATO ghetto from Oradea

The beginning of the ’70s marked the moment when the Roma families from Oradea that lived in Calea Clujului and in other areas around Voltaire Street, were simply taken from their houses and expropriated in order to make room for the future socialist plants. “They were moved by force in 6 blocks build especially for these families. Nowadays (year 2008 – a.n.) the blocks and the area looks like after a military operation. Many broken windows, some replaced with cardboard, metal sheets or cloths; walls with fallen coating, full of graffiti; holes everywhere clogged with trash; dumps of iron and
cardboards; lots of poverty and dirt ... the walls [of the inside lobbies] full of damp...cold stairs, decayed and oily” (Horgoș, 2008). This is the way Cristian Horgoș sketched the evolution of the NATO locative space, where in 2008, in one housing lived up to three families, a situation never encountered in any of the other Romanian urban ghettos.

The ghetto is located today, as it has been in the past, at the southwestern outskirts of the city of Oradea. Here, within a space of approximately 40 sqm lived up to 20 souls “parents, children, grandparents and other relatives” (Horgoș, 2008). To complete the history of the communist inheritance, Adrian Criș (2006) adds that the Roma people that could not be crowded anymore in those 6 blocks were left to build houses, even without permits, in the same area. The NATO blocks that shelter over 150 Roma families or, better said, 700 people, have an urgent need for repairs, as it is understood from the quote taken from the article of Horgoș. In fact, this is the stark view where dirt is almost inherited, where people keep (kept) their dogs and horses in their apartments, where they bring (brought) their dinner made from leftovers taken from dumpsters, but where the TV satellite antennas grow at each window” (http://hunedoreanul.gandul.info/magazin/via-ta-in-ghetou-4922382).

h. Ghetto Pata Rât from Cluj-Napoca

Adrian Dohotaru (2011) believes that the habitat of the Roma people from Pata Rât is the biggest ghetto near a trash dump in all Europe”, a fact that was reaffirmed by Mădălina Gorschi (2012). The Roma Civic Alliance of Romania (ACRR), in a post on their website, debates the issue of the Roma people living here observing that they live in a border habitat that functions as an ethnic ghetto. One of the most comprehensive descriptions about the Roma people from Pata Rât was made by the journalist Alexandra Păcurar. According to her „Pata Rât represents for tens of years the image of a life in poverty, dirt, sustained by the Roma people that live from selling waste” (Păcurar, 2010). The image sketched by Alexandra Păcurar is also validated by Adina Fartuşnic (2012), which states that the Roma people from Pata Rât simply live from “collecting trash”, [because] they don’t have any other source of income”. Pata Rât and implicitly the Roma community here,
represents, as the journalists from the City News publication from Cluj wrote “the stain on Cluj`s cheek”. Today the community is formed by three human groups or dwellings as Ramona Costea calls them (2012): Cantonului, Dallas and the New Pata Rât. They gather approximately 2,000 de Romani persons.

Looking in the past, Alexandra Păcurar (2010) observes that the “first people «installed» in Pata Rât were not Roma persons. In the ’70s of the last century, the western border of Cluj became the host for the future trash dump of the city, and at the same time frame, some few people that were breeding animals settled here. The director of the sanitation company says that until 1989 only about ten Roma families from Cluj were here, lodged on the ramp following the animal breeders. Afterwards they multiplied because the Roma persons already settled here at Pata Rât started bringing their relatives. After the ’90s more and more started to come (Păcurar, 2010). Even the representatives of the Amare Phrala organization say that all the people that live at Pata Rât settled here in the ’90s. The lack of houses and incomes are the two major factors that have encouraged the emergence of the Roma community from Pata Rât.

According to what Ramona Costea says, Dallas was named like this ironically “because of the fact that it has nothing to do with the famous city of rich people from the American TV show. They live here for years ... Roma families that earn their living exclusively from collecting the waste from the trash dump and selling it ... they have no houses, just some places made from cardboard, they don`t have a sewage system and drinkable water and they are not connected to the heating network” (Costea, 2012). In the same line, Maria Roth (2011) concludes that in the Dallas of Cluj “live for more than 20 years, in Indian slum conditions, making a living from the city trash dump” several people of Roma ethnicity.

If the emergence and the evolution of the so-called Dallas are identified with the previous history, the Roma persons from the Cantonului Street have been relocated from the city to the outskirts in the ’90. Although the action of the authorities, at least at official level was named temporary, it was proven afterwards that “alongside with the moved people came maybe three times more others, and made for
themselves wooden shacks and lived there illegally” (Păcurar, 2010) because meanwhile no other solution could be found, and the Roma people remained still in the same area. Furthermore, the number of shacks increased when the children now grown up didn’t want to live with their parents and made their own housings.

To the two groups of Roma persons a third one is added, that started to form in 2010. The local authorities launched then a project to build ten modular social housings on a blank field in the illegal vicinity of the trash dump. Elza Almasi noted in an article form 2010 that the “social housings build by the local authorities ... are right on the hill above the shacks ... and above the dumps”. The modular housings were conceived to host four families each. The whole project developed on a surface of 3.000 sqm cost the local authorities a little over one million lei. Therefore, in 2010 the social housings were ready to receive the Roma families brought here by the authorities from the houses of Coaştei Street, so the Roma persons that lived on Coaştei Street in the vicinity of the municipality, but also in improvised housings, were relocated in December 2010. According to Elza Almasi (2011) „they were announced two days before the moving”, being very outraged by the move “consumed” during full winter and “in haste, at the outskirts of the city, where they had housings without a gas heating system” (Almasi, 2011).

i. Ghetto „the Berlin wall” from Sfântu Gheorghe

In 1989 when the true Berlin Wall fell allowing millions of people who have been separated to start a new life in freedom, said Dejan Petrovic project manager at ERSTE Foundation on his post on Facebook social website, a new wall emerged in a small city of Romania, which divided a street in two, separating the Roma population from the non-Roma population, the old from the new and the dirty from the clean (Petrovic, 2010). Petrovic was talking of course about the solid fence made from concrete named suggestively “the Berlin wall” from the city of Sfântu Gheorghe, that cut in two the last 200 meters of the Váradi József street along its central axis “separating the gipsy community from the «civilized world»” (Kovacs, 2009) and sketching a Roma people ghetto. On one side of the wall there are few blocks with four floors where live a few tens of Magyars and Romanians and on the other
side range the housings of the Roma persons from the Őrkő district (Mateescu, 2010). In short, the communist authorities – because they were the ones who build it more than 20 years ago – wanted, as both Dejan Petrovic and Irina Mateescu observed, to keep away as far as possible the animals of the Roma population the sludge and the dirt and at the same time to determine the Roma persons to go home on a separated way from the other inhabitants of the city (Rotar, 2010).

According to the ones said above, this communist construction was build in the period 1985-1987, and is illegal as one of the two vice-mayor of the city of Sfântu Gheorghe says, because there is no building permit for it (Kovacs, 2009). Therefore, beyond the wall lives a significant Roma community. Their number is approximately 1.000 people. The families are very numerous having four, five or sometimes more children. The Roma community from the Berlin wall ghetto is presented as follows: “the allowances received for them (the children –a.n.) and the social securities sometimes paid are, in most cases, their only income source. When money ends, the people start digging with more persistence through the dumpsters of the city” (Kovacs, 2009).

As long as is it very hard for them to find a work place, the Roma people are left – if we were to exclude what is seen in the other Romanian urban ghettos – to earn their living from selling old iron collected from the trash dump, “that is being stormed daily by cartmen who search through the chucked leftovers hoping to find some food, or more precious than that: old iron” (Székely, 2012).

j. Ghettos Muncii and Speranța from Piatra Neamț.

The investment from Muncii Street that meant building about 80 locative units cost approximately 2,2 million Euros and extends on a surface of 20 thousands sqm. A part of the funding, approximately 600 thousand Euros, came from the state budget. Because there are families with 10-11 members, it seemed mandatory to adapt the household. The way the studio apartments were conceived didn’t offer the necessary space, their total surface being 21 sqm. Each housing had a room and a kitchen with a stove. Therefore, the Muncii district area changed once more as time passed by. The inhabitants adapted their homes in order
to improvise either a porch, or a summer kitchen. The rent for each house was only 30 lei (Ostahie, 2007).

Many journalists from different local publications, Ion Ochişor included, simply name the social housing district from the Muncii Street a ghetto. Together with the images attached to his article from 7th of May 2100 that illustrate the dirt and the precariousness of living in that space, the authors gives as argument for sustaining the term ghetto “the crime elements that come from this place” (Ochişor, 2011) that create problems to the citizens from the neighboring space. Laurenţiu Huma also talks about the subject of dirt, but this time in the Speranţa district, saying that the space near the living places is gradually transformed in a real trash dump (Huma, 2009). One of the negative events that often take place in the Muncii ghetto is the protection tax according to the publication Ziar Piatra Neamţ. The journalists from this newspaper carried several investigations in the disreputable areas of the city, the Muncii ghetto being included, and they draw the conclusion that the socially supported “took the bad habits from the non-supported society and the strongest one started to aggress the weaker ones in order to obtain advantages or sums of money” (R.I., 2010). Basically the first information regarding this kind of events came exactly from the Muncii ghetto.

As for the Speranţa ghetto from Piatra Neamţ, some first specifications must be made. In order to avoid the confusion that often occur, we must mention that in the Speranţa district, which is located approximately 3 km from the city, there are two different structures, both as life style and inhabitance and as housing type. These two spatial structures are separated one from the other with a fence. On one side of the fence there is the ANL housing assembly (blocks and villas) populated with an overwhelming number of Romanians, and on the other side lives a significant community of Roma persons inside some spaces that belonged to a former chicken farm, currently set up by the authorities as one-room houses. The ambiguity or the confusion that I tried to solve in the above lines was treated in a very plastic way by the journalist from Ziar Piatra Neamţ as “these territorial structures are separated by a fence and what do you see in the [residential area ANL] Speranţa, has no connection with the pest hole across the fence” (http://ziarpiastra...
meaning the spaces of the ex-farm, pointing out to the dirt that persists in the space occupied by the Roma persons. Dirt, rats and tens of stray dogs are only a few of the elements of the Speranța ghetto life also according to the opinion of journalist Simona Țărnă.

**k. Ghetto of Bucharest: Zăbrăuți, Aleea Livezilor, Tunsu Petre, Amurgului and Valea Cascadelor**

The so called ghettos of Bucharest, as the inhabitants call them, represent a stain of urban color, a diferent morphologic frame. The ghetto connotations within the Bucharest habitat were born as a consequence of the spatial amasses of Roma people and of the poverty in the areas with poor technical-urbanite infrastructure. The inhabitants of these areas are constrained to live in this kind of space due to, mainly, lack of income, education and poor professional skills. These types of flaws or handicaps are excluding the individuals from social participation and access to the urban area with good housings. Habitats of this type are met mainly in sectors number four, five and six and less or even at all in the other administrative units. In short, if we were to make an inventory of the daily problems of Bucharest ghettos, these would be: (Mionel and Neguț, 2011, pp. 205-206):

- lack of locative space because the rooms are under the normal standards of living;
- lack of hygiene and lack of basic housing utilities (furniture, sanitary installations, etc.);
- no identity papers;
- no owners right in many cases;
- lack of education and high rate of school dropout;
- brutal acts of violence; inter-communitarian conflicts;
- high criminality (thefts, protection taxes, threats, kidnaps etc.);
- drug trafficking and drug users;
- lack of sanitation which promotes the persistence of trash;
- pollution created by the abundance of trash which most of the time are thrown out the window; a real ecological urban disaster because the wilderness of wastes has attracted the vectors that disseminate diseases (rats, bugs etc.).
In other words, the urban problems that the population of the Bucharest ghettos has to face are absolutely identical with the ones exposed at large in the description of the other ghettos located in different cities of the country. It is observed, from what was showed until now, a certain social pattern specific for the ghettos of the Romanian cities that can be conceptualized and singularized according to the spatial and social dimensions met in the analyzed cases. Also, we can see here a significant amass of socially supported persons in different ways according to the ones described below.

4. Instead of conclusions: social support in the urban ghettos

It is almost undisputable the fact that the so called urban ghettos amass great number of social supported people, because of poverty and because of other disadvantages that they face and that we discussed at large in the previous sections. The type of social support and the examples that shall follow come to strengthen the previous statement. We must keep in mind that the population benefits from social security in different forms, from housing with moderate rent and payment of utilities to having a daily meal and payment of some allowances.

Practically speaking, with regards to Arad, an article published in the year 2005 says that most Roma persons not only from Chechechi, but also from the city in general are socially dependent to an extent of 80 percent: social security, meal at the social canteen, material support, social and legal consultancy etc. This is a sad reality where the “Roma people ... in shacks, wait hungry and dirty the social food, with children that die of fever or flu [and] with un-educated youngsters” (Gheorghe, 2006).

Also in Transylvania, but more to the north, in Oradea people live as Ovidiu Morcan said (2007) in very difficult conditions, most of them only from the social security and what they find in the trash dump. The situation seems unchanged also in Satu Mare, where the ghetto Ostrovului hosts most of the social supported people of the city (Pop-Vladimirescu, 2012).
Following some edge situations regarding the provision of electricity, the Roma people from the Craica area requested, among others, to continue to be tolerated with regards to the supply on one hand and to continue to receive social support from the Mayor`s Office, on the other hand, until an alternative is offered. The other ghetto of Baia Mare – Horea – is, in fact, a space of social housings where a lot of very poor Roma persons live. Except the ones that work for the local sanitation company, most of the people left live only from social security and the children`s allowances (Popescu, 2011). In Miercurea Ciuc, for example, the relationship of the people near the water treatment plant with the Mayor`s Office is strictly pragmatic. The Roma persons work four days a week, for the “City Hall” (as mentioned in an article from Gândul in October 2005) and in exchange the institution pays the common expenditures (water, electricity and picking up the trash) (Kovacs, 2011), fact that is recognized by the Roma persons.

On the other hand, at Sibiu social support means daily meals offered to the people from the ghetto. They eat at the social canteen from Guşteriţa (an area of the city), or they bring the food home so that the whole family can “enjoy” it. Their social and economical situation is so dramatic, that, stated a woman from Zăvoi „if they would cut us the canteen, we would simply be left to eat trash” (Mocanu, Orlandea and Carabaşu, 2011). And from Alexandra Ion-Cristea we find out that some of the today “residents” of Zăvoi area were evacuated of different reasons from the social housings. Among these there are people “who lost also their social security because they didn`t want to work the hours for community service according to the law” (Ion-Cristea, 2006).

In the cities of Moldavia things are not different in comparison with what was presented so far. In the ghetto from km. 10 in Brăila, an overwhelming number of people live from social security from which they are condemned to survive and pay also the rent, electricity and get clothes if they afford it (Ivan, 2007). At Botoşani, except the children`s allowances and some products or money obtained from daily work, in the ghetto from the Tineretului Park the most important source of income for many people is the social security. Over 150 families have huge debts for utilities. The total value of the debts was in 210, 60
thousand lei according to some (Constantiniu, 2011), 180 thousand lei according to others (Maxim, 2011). The Roma persons from the two blocks often say they are poor people, that they live in *social blocks* and are supported by the Mayor’s Office (http://stiri.botosani.ro/stire/34282/Cetatenii+de+la+ghetouri,+nemultumiti+ca+au+fost+debransati+de+la+caldura+si+apa+calda.html).

On the Munţii Tatra Street only a very small number of the inhabitants of the informal dwelling are “better off”, with this we understand that they have a job or a pension. The rest, most of them live their tormented daily life from incomes derived from social security, or from selling old iron (Dumitrov, 2011). The same situation is met also in Drobeta Tr. Severin where the inhabitants of ghetto L2 live from “wagging, old iron, begging and social security” (Lobda, 2003). Most of them being *social supported* cannot afford even to pay the utilities bill, and the same thing happens also in the Botoşani ghetto as we have seen previously.

„The new tenants are awaited with a real luxury in the new house made available from the authorities” or “houses more than luxurious”, this is how Adrian Arnăutu was writing in August 2010 regarding the move of the Roma people from the Bârlad ghetto to the new *social houses*. The houses where the Roma people from ghetto G1 were supposed to move looked impeccable and had all necessary utilities (running water, electricity, gas etc.) People had here practically everything they didn’t have there, at G1. Most of the tenants of G1 were moved in the three blocks on Cpt. Grigore Ignat Street and only a small part in the block on Alexandru Vlahuţă Street located nearby. The move from September 2010 took place using all the legal rules and norms for a civilized living, the action being supervised by the authorities. The people that came in the new houses made contracts for utilities: sanitation, gas, water, electricity etc. In total the project of the new social houses from Bârlad cost the local authorities approximately 6 mil. RON (Călin, 2010).

The report of the previous section shows, also, some of the *elements of social support* from Pata Rât. The authorities launched a project to
build ten modular social houses on a blank field near the trash dump that now has the name the New Pata Rât. Some few hundred people benefited from this social project, without reminding the ones that benefit from social security and live in the three locations near the trash dump.

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