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The Evolution of Anti-Gypsyism in Poland: From Ritual Scapegoat to Surrogate Victims to Racial Hate Speech?

Abstract: Building my argument on the analysis of two cases of anti-Roma violence (Oświęcim 1981 and Mława 1991), I would like to search for a pattern of evolution of anti-gypsyism in Poland. In the 1980s, the ambiguous stereotype of Roma, has been giving way to the picture of Roma as a convenient scapegoat to be blamed for the insecurity and economic hardships. This shift in the stereotypical image of Roma, together with the specific "management of discontent" performed by the communist authorities, prompted pogrom-like outbreaks of anti-Roma violence in the towns of Konin and Oświęcim. Similar attacks on Roma have taken place again in the beginning of the next decade, already in post-communist Poland. The mob aggression against Roma in the town of Mława in 1991, although retained many features of the earlier acts of violence, has already represented a new pattern in which Roma personified the fears associated with the transformation toward neoliberal capitalist economy. This new pattern of perception has provided fertile ground for the racialization of the anti-Roma discourse which I intend to trace down in the most contemporary instances of hate speech against Roma.

Keywords: Roma, anti-gypsyism, stereotype, scapegoat, surrogate victims, racism

Anti-Gypsyism

The term "anti-gypsyism" has recently gained currency in scholarship and human right activism as an expression of belief that discrimination against Roma is a well-established social phenomenon that has similar historical background and cultural features as anti-semitism. Following Markus End (2014: 30), we may understand anti-gypsyism as:

(1) a homogenizing and essentializing employment of a stigma "Gypsy" (or similar concepts) in the approach to or representation of particular social groups and individuals;
(2) an attachment of specific deviant characteristics to such stigmatized groups and individuals;
(3) a development of discriminatory social structures and practices on that cognitive and cultural basis.

As such, anti-gypsyism operates with a fundamental distinction into "Us" and "Them" and those classifies as "Gypsies" are perceived as essentially different and thus denied membership of a We-group. This exclusion often takes the form of racially motivated denial of the human features of those excluded, as in the definition of Clough Marinaro and Sigona (2011: 585), who understand anti-gypsyism as "the phenomenon of dehumanizing Roma, reducing them to a set of negative stereotypes and acting on these in the private and public domains."

This is achieved through the process of "naturalization" of the psychological and cultural features attributed to Roma that leads to "pathologizing their actions and character and, on the other hand, to presenting them as 'abject,' as out of place, as something that invites contempt and rejection" (Tileaga 2006: 37).

Anti-gypsyism is a product of European modernity with its emphasis on control and self-discipline, rationality and productivity (End 2014: 42). In the course of the process of modernization of the Western society, the Roma have been depicted as the opposite of modern values, and thus excluded from the modern concept of a civilized human being. They have been presented

> as a carefree, defiant, disruptive alternative to a Western culture…Moving through civil society, the Gypsies apparently remain beyond reach of everything that constitutes Western identity…outside of historical record and historical time, outside of Western law, the Western nation state, and Western economic orders, outside of writing and discursivity itself… (Trumpener 1992: 860).

In this paper I intend to present the mechanisms that contributed to the evolution of this phenomenon on the Polish ground.

Roma in Poland

The exact number of Roma in Poland is unknown (partly due to the unreliable data provided by the last censuses) and can only be estimated for ca. 40,000 people, which in a country of 38.5 million means less than 0.2 percent of the total population: the lowest percentage in East-Central Europe. We may therefore expect that many non-Roma Poles very seldom have any contacts with the Roma people and their attitudes towards Roma are not formed on the basis of their own experiences. Similarly to other societies in the region, however, anti-gypsyism is quite widespread among non-Roma Poles which makes Poland an interesting field for a studying this phenomenon as a process of social construction or imagination, largely independent from the real encounters in everyday life.

The situation of Roma in communist Poland has been marked by relative (in comparison to other communist countries) lack of strictly implemented controlling measures on the part of the authorities. Nevertheless, the Law of 24 May 1952 (On the Assistance to Gypsy People in the Transfer to Settled Life) set up the guidelines for the forcible sedentarization, including police inspections of the encampments, registration and fingerprinting. It took twelve years, however, to turn this law into a set of concrete administrative measures which eventually lead to the gradual settlement of the nomadic or semi-nomadic Roma groups. This process commenced in March 1964 and involved registration of nomadic Roma, issuing of "permanent residence certificates" (in Polish: "zameldowanie na pobyt stały"), and penalization of travelling Roma groups that employed the existing legal regulations such as the law on public gatherings, the law on combating contagious diseases, the law on fire prevention and firefighting, and the law on security and traffic organization on public roads. In result, 129 Roma families ceased the nomadic way of life already in 1964, 360 declared to do it in future, and 657 disregarded sanctions and continued nomadic lifestyle. The process of sedentarization has been practically accomplished only in the end of 1970s (Mirga 1997: 167–168).

Moreover, Poland's economy, quite specifically in the communist system, preserved residual private business, and, first of all, private ownership in agriculture. This left space for traditional Roma crafts, especially horse dealing, blacksmithing, and coppersmithing, particularly important for the small-size traditional farming. The lack of consistent anti-Roma measures, combined with the continued existence of traditional economic niches, enabled Polish Roma to preserve traditional way of life for a relatively longer time and to resist assimilation to a much greater extent than their compatriots in other countries of Eastern Europe (Barany 2002: 120).

It must be noted, however, that this description applies for the nomadic or semi-nomadic groups. The Carpathian Roma who have lived settled life for centuries have been more eagerly embracing the offer of the communist state on the one hand and, on the other hand, spontaneously undergoing the process of convergence that made their culture closer to the surrounding patriarchal rural communities. Paradoxically, in the time when the nomadic groups have been more or less forcibly settled, the already settled Carpathian Roma started to move from their mountain settlements to bigger towns and make use of the job opportunities offered by the communist industrialization.

In spite of their different situation, both groups faced problems caused by the lack of any reasonable integration policy of the state. Since the processes of settlement/relocation have not been assisted by any meaningful program of adaptation to a completely changed lifestyle, they often led to conflicts with non-Roma who, often for the first time, experienced a permanent coexistence with groups of Roma, for which they have not been prepared (Mróz 2001: 258).

The situation of Roma was not helped by lack of Romani organizations that would mediate in dealing with the authorities and non-Roma environment in general. Unlike other communist countries, the problem was not so much an official ban on the creation of such organizations but the reluctance of Roma themselves to any contact with the authorities. This was especially true for the formerly nomadic groups who treated the relations with state institutions as collaboration and betrayal of the interests of Roma. Few Roma organizations created during the communist era had local significance and were created almost exclusively by the Carpathian Roma, which further restricted their importance, given the deep reluctance felt by the representatives of the nomadic groups to their settled kinsmen, reinforced by the traditional barriers of ritual. They, however, served an important role in the communities of Carpathian Roma, helping to improve their situation and creating better arrangement of the relations with non-Roma majority (Mirga 1998).

It was precisely in the period following the settlement of the nomadic Roma population and the economic migrations of the settled ones that the stereotype of Roma started to change. Before those processes the stereotype had been an ambiguous construction in which positive elements balanced negative ones. The former fit the anti-modernist romanticization of Roma as an embodiment of the ideal of freedom. In the Polish context this romantic picture of "freedom-loving Gypsies" had clear political overtones that can be traced back to the 19th Century's representations of Roma in Polish literature and music. Longing for freedom, stereotypically attributed to Roma, has been in this tradition a projection of values claimed to characterize Poles, whose country was at that time divided between neighboring powers (Piotrowska 2009). In the communist times, such projection could have acquired

new political meaning in which the figure of "freedom-loving Gypsy" would be in popular consciousness the opposite of the oppression of the communist regime.

The communist propaganda, on the other hand, instrumentally presented Roma as "backward" population (which was a part of the popular stereotype as well) whose situation was, however, caused by the "capitalist relations of production" and can be improved by the process of assimilation facilitated by the opportunities created by the new political system. Therefore, the communist press eagerly presented "positive examples" of Roma switching to settled life and undertaking "productive" activities in socialist industry or agriculture.

In the time following the settlement of the nomadic groups, some non-Roma Poles have been for the first time exposed to live in permanent contact with Roma which caused a number of intercultural conflicts that have not been mollified by any reasonable policy of integration. This situation activated negative elements of Roma stereotype which caused the attitude of contempt towards "backward" Roma. The negative stereotype (presenting Roma as the antithesis of modern civilization) was therefore gradually gaining dominance over the romantic idealization of freedom, allegedly incarnated in "Gypsy life," although the latter still persisted to some extent in popular image.

The process of "vilification" of Roma has continued through the 1970s and 1980s, having been aggravated by the worsening of the economic conditions in the last decades of communism, growing sense of instability and uncertainty, as well as corresponding deterioration of general mood in the society. This process can be illustrated by the data collected in one of the very scarce at that time quantitative research on the attitudes of Poles towards other groups. The research has been conducted among Polish university students in 1974 and repeated in 1991. In the table 1 we may find the results (in %) for the most disliked groups.

Table 1

Antipathy/sympathy Towards the Most Disliked Groups Expressed by Polish Students (%)

	1974		1991	
	dislike	like	dislike	like
Gypsies	45	16	60	6
Ukrainians	51	9	34	9
Jews	51	7	17	26
Germans	59	9	39	17

Research conducted by Zakład Badań Socjologicznych Instytutu Polityki Naukowej i Szkolnictwa Wyższego (Bartosz 1994: 49).

As we can see, "Gypsies" is the only group that in 1991 has been more disliked and less liked than in 1974. In the same period, the attitude towards other disliked groups has generally improved (most considerably regarding Jews). Moreover, in 1974 "Gypsies" was the least disliked and most liked among "disliked" groups while in 1991 they become the most disliked and the least liked. To explain that exceptional position of Roma and the development that exacerbated their perception in the Polish society we shall refer to the peculiar features of the situation of Roma in the last phase of communism, illustrated by the anti-Roma riots that in 1981 occurred in the town of Oświęcim.

1981 in Oświęcim

On October 21, 1981, in the Polish town of Oświęcim, internationally better known under the name it was given in the time of the Nazi occupation of Poland—Auschwitz, a random incident—a fight in a bar, in which a Rom participated—resulted in series of acts of violence against Roma, including setting their houses in fire, destruction of property and acts of physical aggression. Residents of the city formed a committee for the expulsion of the Roma and the communist authorities engaged in discussions both with its members and with the representation of Roma. In result, Roma of Oświęcim have decided to leave the country and went to Sweden and Germany.

The main reason for the decision to leave Oświęcim was the fear caused by acts of violence against the Roma as well as the attitude and actions of the authorities that have used the situation to get rid of the Roma from the city. First, in consultation with the central authorities, it has been decided to move the Roma residents of Oświęcim to a cabin settlement in Bielsko. When Roma refused, the authorities offered them issuing passports and arranging for emigration to Sweden or Germany. Most of the Roma decided to emigrate, which was mostly due to the information about similar events in other cities. Especially important was the Konin incident of September 9 and 10, 1981 (which could have been an inspiration for the Oświęcim crowd). It could make the Oświęcim Roma think that nowhere in Poland will be safe for them.

The event that triggered anti-Roma violence was an incident in a local bar, when a Rom attempted to get his beer without waiting in line. The brawl that followed had turned into series of incidents, instigated by a man whose brother served in the security police and who persuaded the others that nobody would be penalized for "thrashing the Gypsies." Allegedly, the communist authorities had nothing against using the incident instrumentally to channel social discontent and to direct the displeasure of people frustrated by the economic hardships to a convenient scapegoat.

The deeper causes of the incident can be, however, related to the growing wealth of the Oświęcim's Roma. They have always been professionally active, having been employed in the local chemical plant or working in the coppersmith business that served the needs of the town's private entrepreneurs. Especially the latter offered good opportunities to make quick profit while leaving Roma coppersmiths time to be used for trade. In addition, private import of consumer goods has been particularly important since the end of the 1970s, when the economic situation worsened. Roma travelled to the former Yugoslavia and from there to Italy, bringing scarce commodities to Poland and selling them at a profit. They were also trading gold and specialized in recovering precious metals from the industrial waste. That has made Roma earning better and better which has sometimes manifested in the conspicuous consumption that caused negative reactions in town. These reactions have intensified in the time of the economic crisis in the beginning of the 1980s and created around Roma an atmosphere of the undeserved wealth, the origins of which have been associated with criminality and "special favors" of the bribed police and administrative authorities, especially regarding issuing of passports and turning a blind eye on the illegal commercial activities.

An important factor that has influenced the relations between Roma and non-Roma in Oświęcim was educational segregation. In the period immediately after the Roma families

settled in town, Roma children attended school together with their non-Roma peers. However due to the linguistic problems (Polish was the second language for the Roma children) their school performance was less satisfactory than that of non-Roma. The educational authorities reacted by creating segregated classes for Roma pupils (and for non-Roma with learning difficulties of psychological background). This has broken the evolution of social ties between Roma and non-Roma children, and stigmatized the former as worse. The division was aggravated by the fact that although the classes for Roma had been located in the very same school building, their pupils were not allowed to play in free time with their non-Roma colleagues. Those Roma who went through that system believe it to be the source of the negative stereotypes and conflicts that occurred later.

We should also mention the religious dimension of segregation: in the period described, Roma—formally being Catholic—had not been paying attention to religious rituals and their children usually did not go to meetings in preparation for the adoption of the First Communion. Thus they did not participate in a "rite of passage" that was very important for Polish culture, which deepened their isolation and caused negative reactions on the part of the clergy which was important in a predominantly Catholic country.

According to the non-Roma inhabitants of Oświęcim, the unrest of October 1981 was a result of the escalating conflict between the "indigenous" inhabitants of Auschwitz (or, in their opinion, the "Poles") and the Roma, who settled there in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

The Roma allegedly showed "lack of respect" to the Poles. This would find an expression in insults, quarrels and arguments, and also in disrespect to "civilized" forms of social life (such as, for example, the rules of polite behavior in queues). Some remember also rumors circulating around the town that rich Roma bought a part of a block of flats, in order to bring their brethren there, which corresponded with the belief that the Roma are becoming rich in a morally undeserved way and caused fears of an increase in the number of Roma in town.

These motifs were already evident in 1981, for example in the conclusions of the meeting of the "Committee for the expulsion of Gypsies" (delegates of the rioting mob) with the authorities. The meeting called to verify residence registrations (it was suspected that many Roma lived in homes of their relatives without the permits required at that time), to inspect driving licenses obtained by Roma (who in popular opinion obtained them for a bribe), the inspection of the allocation of communal housing (taking housing shortage the allocation of communal housing to Roma, who were considered wealthy, was treated as an injustice), and finally to secure "absolute respect for the law" by the Roma (Mirga 1997: 173).

More generally, the period of the 1980s has been characterized by the process of destabilizing the status quo regarding both Roma and non-Roma. In short, the non-Roma ceased to be a party unequivocally dominant, and Roma—subordinated. Roma broke the stereotype: they have not been clearly poor (for they improved their position mainly through trade and foreign contacts), and have not indicated their subordination and inferior position. Sometimes they have openly manifested wealth which for non-Roma, accustomed to the stereotype of "poor Gypsies," might seem like arrogance. The prosperous Roma, on their part, still remembering the time of submission, tried to relieve it through conspicuous

consumption and the manifestation of self-esteem that for the non-Roma Poles might seem offensive and arrogant (Giza-Poleszczuk and Poleszczuk 2001: 232).

The situation of the Polish Roma in the 1980s can be therefore interpreted in the perspective of René Girard's theory of scapegoating. According to this approach, the phenomenon of a scapegoat is a resolution of the growing violence within a community that threatens the life of its members. To avoid self-destruction, a community attempts to channel violence and direct it at a victim that can be sacrificed without remorse. It is through such sacrifice that social harmony and cohesion is reintroduced. Girard was interested predominantly in the religious rituals of sacrifice that encoded the mechanism of neutralizing social violence but his approach can be also applied to the situation of real acts of violence that re-unite perpetrators.

People who are casted as scapegoats usually are not perceived as fully belonging to a community: they are not connected with others by social bonds of solidarity. They cannot be, however, radically different from the others because in such a case they would not be able to be the target of aggression that could be potentially directed at any member of the community. They form therefore a liminal, ambiguous category of marginalized people who partly belong to the community and partly are excluded. Such categories of people often emerge in the period of rapid social changes described by Girard as the "crisis of degree" that is the collapse of the existing order of social differences, enabling people to relate to one another in a stable way and thus sustaining their identities. The essence of Girard's argument is that it is not difference that causes social violence but the collapse of the system of differences and cultural crisis that accompanies it. To put it simply, people search for scapegoats more eagerly when the established system of social division changes and does not any longer offer a clear orientation in the social world. In such circumstances certain groups that used to be perceived as outsiders become liminal that is neither fully in nor entirely out. Such blurring of classification makes them convenient scapegoats (Girard 1972).

We may say that social uncertainty, economic hardships and political conflict that characterized Poland in the 1980s coincided with the changing status of Roma that made them seen as slipping through the system of classification, subverting the dominant stereotype and thus personifying the collapse of the social order. These factors together made them a convenient scapegoat, a target of aggression that helped to unite otherwise differentiated and conflicted local community. The members of the latter have therefore unconsciously participated in the process that from their own perspective might have looked like self-defense and re-introduction of social and moral order, i.e. bringing everything in the right place.

The scapegoating of Oświęcim Roma required partially denying them the status of members of community and even de-humanizing them in which process the ethnic or racial features performed an important role. According to Mirga (1997), as long as Roma performed roles accepted by majority and interactions with them were limited, the perceived ethnic difference did not cause conflict. But at the moment when the regular contacts in many areas of life become inevitable, Roma lose their specific social place and economically slowly move into the mainstream, the majority's ethnic hostility is activated.

Dehumanizing references to ethnicity or even race often occurred in expressions of negative attitudes against Roma during the conflict in Oświęcim and in other places where Roma had been attacked in the 1980s. Jerzy Ficowski (1981: 31) wrote on this occasion that "people united in hate attacks directed…to…those other, black-haired, frail, lonely…the Gypsies. Because 'strangers' do not deserve anything." An analysis of the conflict in Oświęcim enables us therefore to see how, in some cases, ethnicity and race become categories socially constructed in acts of perception and intergroup relations, serving as justification, stimulus or catalyst of hatred that may have non-ethnic, social sources. Ethnic or racial discourse of hate has been invoked in order to socially construct the "difference" of Roma and thus to deny them an equal status, to which they, partly successfully, aspired. A poignant example of such denial was a text, still remembered by the Oświęcim Roma, written on a sheet of paper and fixed on the door of a restaurant in the days following the riot: "No entrance for dogs and gypsies."

The process interpreted here resembles very much the psychosocial mechanisms of anti-Jewish pogroms (Cała 2005), in which we might observe a similar symbiosis of cultural prejudices and social situations. In the time of crisis, when the social order collapses, latent superstitions and prejudices are activated, they grow in strength and become the basis for a meaning which people want to find in the meaningless world around them. This is what happened in 1981 in Oświęcim: the crisis in the socio-economic conditions and erosion of the moral order activated negative stereotype, gave it an ethnic/racial twist, and Roma became the real victims of the process of restoring the symbolic order. According to the specific logic of pogroms, they were burdened with the responsibility for the collapse of the world order (of symbolic importance here is the fact that violence against Roma broke out when one of them interfere with the order of the queue) and then they fall victims of what they were accused of: the order of their life was disrupted.

1991 in Mława

The fall of communism caused initially genuine enthusiasm in various Roma communities, in particular among Roma activists of Eastern Europe. This optimism, however, began to gradually disappear with the progress of economic transformation carried out in the neoliberal spirit, which caused unemployment, frustration of marginalized groups and social violence. On the other hand, the fall of communism put an end to the state's efforts to destroy traditional Roma culture, ways of life, economic base and structure of Roma communities. However, the communist policies of forced assimilation were largely successful: in many Eastern European countries Roma have gradually lost their distinctiveness, while not getting the status of the accepted members of society.

The collapse of communism had undoubtedly positive consequences in the sense that it allowed the Roma self-organization and expression of their own interests. Post-communist governments were also more likely to recognize the existence of the Roma as a group. But in general, the period of transition has affected the situation of the Roma in a negative way. First, the difficulties of the transformation period and the uncertainty of the future, lead

again to the already described effect of a scapegoat. In the initial period of transformation Roma had been for example portrayed as black market traders who become illegally rich and at the same time responsible for the shortages in consumer goods and high prices. Later, the Roma became the opposite: the "social burden," a group whose poverty spoiled dynamic picture of emerging economies, the post-communist governments have sought to present (Gheorghe 1991).

Once again, therefore, it turned out that Robert K. Merton (1968) was right when he wrote about the members of the so-called "foreign ethnic groups" that whatever they did, it would still be wrong. Roma who isolate from the rest of society by the barrier of tradition and ritual are stigmatized as culturally alien. Roma who cross ethnic boundaries are seen as pushing up where it is not their place. Poor Roma are "burden" and—as weaker—a convenient target of aggression caused by frustration, often associated with non-ethnic factors. Rich Roma are hated as those who do not deserve their wealth.

After the fall of communism it has become increasingly possible to manifest openly the anti-Roma hostility and aggression, which have so far been hampered by the state. This can be described as a phenomenon of decentralization of violence. In communist countries violence against Roma was effectively limited, if the authorities could not use it for its own purposes. Weak postcommunist governments had to take into account public opinion in their countries and they could do little if the racist prejudices prevailed (Kapralski 2008).

On the other hand, democratization in post-communist Europe meant also the development of institutions dealing with human rights, monitoring the situation of minorities in each country, and subjecting governments to international control, which, however, hardly balanced the increase of open discrimination and exposure to the threat of the racist attacks by the radical groups.

The economic situation of the Roma started to deteriorate along with the development of free market for goods and services, while the state has practically resigned from caring for the weakest groups. This has led to increased competition between various excluded groups for a small pool of assets available to them and to an overlap of the economic antagonisms and ethnic prejudices. Those Roma who managed to economically succeed become, on the other hand, the target of racially tinted hatred of the less successful members of majority.

The situation in the first years after the fall of communism in Poland was in many ways similar to the one that characterized the beginning of the 1980s. The multidimensional transformation of Polish society stimulated hopes in better future but at the same time contributed to the growing sense of uncertainty aggravated by the economic difficulties that affected large sectors of Polish society. At the same time, however, certain individuals and groups benefited from the economic transformation, which increased economic diversification and caused negative sentiments in the society that had previously been largely egalitarian. These sentiments often resulted in the search for scapegoat and Roma were, as usual, available as a convenient target.

In this framework we may understand the acts of anti-Roma aggression that happened in the town of Mława in June 1991. The event that triggered anti-Roma violence was a car accident caused by a young Rom, in which one person died and one was seriously injured.

The perpetrator fled the scene of an accident and was handed over by his family two days later, after the consultations within Roma community. This, however, did not calm down non-Roma locals who were enraged by the young age of the victims (a soldier on leave and his girlfriend) and allegedly unclear circumstances in which the perpetrator obtained his driving license. In the evening of June 25, the crowd gathered in a local bar and then went on to demolish houses inhabited by Roma. It should be noted that the first target of the attack was not the house of the young man who caused accident, nor the wooden cabins in the vicinity of the bar, inhabited by the poorest Roma. The crowd demolished the houses of well-to-do Roma and, on the second day of the riot, also the flats of less prosperous Roma (but the cabins of the poorest were left undamaged).

According to Giza-Poleszczuk and Poleszczuk (2001), this means that the main motive of the crowd was neither revenge nor ethnic hatred but a deep sense of social and moral injustice that manifested in the relations between Roma and non-Roma. The non-Roma inhabitants of Mława believed that the guilty of the accident would avoid punishment anyway because rich Roma would bribe the police and justice as they do to avoid military service (we shall bear in mind that the victim of the accident was a soldier), school attendance or to obtain driving licenses. Moreover, they claimed that Roma were free-riders and did not contribute to the well-being of the whole local community: they did not work, were involved in illegal activities (car dealing) and did not pay taxes from their businesses (again, thanks to the bribes). Roma were perceived as showing contempt to the values such as education, hard work and honesty, and as arrogant people who obnoxiously manifested their wealth and did not observe the rules of social behavior.

This catalogue of accusations resembled very much the beliefs of the violent crowd in Oświęcim ten years earlier. Besides, all of them could actually be applied (as they in fact frequently were) to the non-Roma successful people, who took advantage of the opportunities offered by the postcommunist transition. Roma have therefore been once again casted as scapegoats for the frustrations and antagonisms that haunted social majority.

In the picture of Roma presented by the non-Roma citizens of Mława we can, however, see also new elements: the focus on Roma as "bad citizens," lazy and dishonest benefactors of the common resources to which they did not contribute. This image of Roma as a "burden" to community has been facilitated nationwide by the influx of Romanian Roma who in the beginning of the 1990s could be found in many Polish cities, having been visible predominantly as destitute beggars.

It was in that period when the mechanism of scapegoat has been in the perception of Roma supplemented by the mechanism of "surrogate victims." This term has been coined by Herbert Heuss to present anti-Roma policies of modern states (Germany in particular) as targeting indirectly the whole population in order to educate it in citizenship and socialize it to the post-Enlightenment values of productivity and respect to social order. "This law and order policy, which regularly sought to subdue and secure the 'Gypsies,' was not directed primarily at the Roma, but at the members of the majority, for whom the 'Gypsies' were a demonstration of what they could expect if they refused to submit to the constraints of modern society" (Heuss 1988: 58).

In the Polish context, the very existence of Roma has served as an example of marginalization that can be the fate of all those who cannot succeed in the conditions of post-

communist society. While projecting their fears on Roma, the non-Roma Poles were symbolically removing the danger of degradation outside their community and linked it with the specific features attributed to Roma. These features had been juxtaposed to the values that were meant to characterize ethnic Poles and in terms of which the latter preferred to present themselves (such as hard work, responsibility, fairness, social adjustment). This helps us to understand the "irrational" character of the anti-Roma sentiments, often expressed by people who never had any contacts with Roma and referred to the alleged cultural features of Roma that are harmless to the non-Roma (Bartosz 1994).

In other words, for the non-Roma Poles it was a way of reassuring that "such things" (social degradation) cannot happen to "us"—it is something that happens to "them"—to people perceived as radically different. But in order to achieve this reassurance, a sense of radical difference needs to be constructed and this is the moment where essentialist beliefs can be involved to present the "otherness" of Roma as "naturally" founded.

Such naturalization of difference can indeed be seen in the results of research conducted in Poland in the 1990s. In a study on the attitudes of young Poles (high school and university students) to various nations conducted in 1991, Roma have not occupied an important place because respondents attributed to them only two features: "dirt" and "dishonesty" (Kowalski 1996: 143). This is a significant combination of physical appearance and a marker of (a)social behavior which may indicate that the latter is for the respondents connected with the biological constitution. Moreover, in the anthropological interpretation of Mary Douglas (1966), continued in the field of cultural studies by John Jervis (1999), dirt, similarly to ugliness, represents the transgression of an aesthetic order that can be translated or encoded as a threat to social order. Dirt may therefore serve as an indication of being outside the social order which means, following Aristotle's famous line that whoever lives outside the polis is either a beast or a god, an exclusion from humanity. In this way social distance is translated into essential difference that subsequently justifies the maintenance of this distance: those who do not fit the social order are presented as its negation, a-social and thus non-human creatures.

A similar connection has been discovered in the ethnological research conducted in 1994–1995 by Ewa Nowicka in three mountain villages in Poland where Roma and non-Roma have been traditionally living next to each other. The non-Roma respondents perceived their Roma neighbors in social categories, emphasizing their social inferiority and closed, separated character of their community. On the other hand though, these social differences are framed in the racist language in which Roma are presented as "blacks" who "smell" in a characteristic and rather unpleasant way. At the intersection of the social and racist discourses respondents locate "different way of thinking" (or "mentality"—in Polish: "mentalność") that allegedly characterizes Roma. According to the non-Roma villagers, Roma are unable to live responsibly and according to a plan, and are unable to undertake a long-lasting, steady effort. This creates for the non-Roma Poles an unacceptable contrast of lifestyles in which Roma culture is perceived as degraded or "funny," although the stereotype has also positive elements such as hospitality, social solidarity, and joyful celebrations (Nowicka 2001).

Contemporary Hate Speech

Hate speech consists of attributing particularly negative features to certain social categories and/or of calling for discriminatory actions against them. The membership in such categories is in hate speech usually perceived as naturally or biologically determined (that is it cannot be changed by individual choice) and concrete individuals are reduced to the role of typical bearers of the features attributed to their groups (Tulli, Kowalski 2003: 21–22; Nijakowski 2008: 132).

According to Judith Butler, hate speech is a special case of language that conceals the relations of power. Its main function is social exclusion: it shows one "one's own place" that can sometimes be no place whatsoever (Butler 1997: 4). Hate speech hurts not only because it may be followed by hostile acts but also immediately, by causing psychological damage and locating its addressee in a subordinated position. In such way hate speech has the power to create reality: it "does not merely *reflect* a relation of social domination; speech *enacts* domination" and "*constitutes* its addressee at the moment of its utterance;…it is, in the very speaking of such speech,…where the injury is understood as social subordination" (Butler 1997: 18). In Butler's approach, this process receives deep existential foundations. Since one's existence as a subject depends on having been called, addressed or recognized by the Other, the hate speech used in the social rituals of calling, addressing or recognizing may "instill the fear of death and the question of whether or not one will survive" (Butler 1997: 5).

Because of its emphasis on biological determination of membership, hate speech is closely related to racism. Both share the idea that cultural and social difference is biologically grounded and thus immutable: a belief that gains particular attraction in the periods of rapid social change (Mosse 1995: 163). "Otherness" of bodily features (often presented as ugliness or dirt) is perceived both in racism and hate speech as representing the transgression of dominating aesthetic order which can be translated/encoded as a threat to social order and thus as something that needs to be excluded or eliminated. This leads simultaneously to dehumanization and social exclusion of those defined as "other": they are apparently "unable to create or to live in an ordered society, and for that reason alone must be considered subhuman" (Mosse 1995: 169). In racism and in hate speech that contains racist elements, the physical difference and social incompatibility mutually enhance each other: physical features are perceived as indicators and determinants of social inferiority or asocial character of their bearers while simultaneously they form the basis for their social marginalization or exclusion.

Like in the mechanisms of scapegoating and construction of surrogate victim, we are dealing here with an existential deadlock: the majority, particularly in the periods of rapid change and related anxieties, strengthens the existing order by stigmatizing and excluding those who are perceived as threat and thus really threating the existence of those excluded. In addition, the targeted minorities are constructed by majority as a "counter-type": the representation of the features opposite to what the members of majority believe to be or should be their own (Mosse 1995: 169), which not only strengthens the self-image of the majority but also eliminates ambiguity that often accompanies the periods of social transformation.

Racist discourse and hate speech that started to emerge as the rationalization of anti-Roma attitudes expressed in the riots of 1980s and 1990s, and as a means of the social construction of difference that supported the mechanism of "surrogate victimization" in the time of postcommunist transformation, have consolidated in the first decade of the twenty-first century and found a new medium—the Internet. This has happened in spite of the slow but steady growth of sympathy and decline of antipathy towards Roma as indicated by the pools carried out by CBOS in which Roma have been included in 1994.

If in 1994 only 6 percent of respondents declared sympathy towards Roma, in 2012 positive feelings have been expressed by 24 percent. Correspondingly, the level of antipathy towards Roma decreased from 75 percent in 1994 to 50 percent in 2012. This is much stronger dynamics of positive change than the average for attitudes towards all other national groups, but it still leaves Roma as the most disliked group in 2012 (CBOS 2012). Similar results can be found in the survey conducted within the project "Antisemitism, Xenophobia and National Stereotypes—For the Third Time" led by Ireneusz Krzemiński where the stereotype of Roma is the most negative in comparison to stereotypes of other national groups: 50 percent of respondents mentioned at least one negative characteristic of Roma and did not mention any positive features of this group. What is particularly interesting, the negative stereotype of Roma was the most popular among the youngest group of respondents (18–24 years old) which surprised the researchers who had expected this group to be more open-minded and reject stereotypes. This expectation has been generally confirmed in the case of the stereotypes of other groups but not in the case of Roma (Chomicki, Jóźko, Ogrodnik 2015: 160).

I would hypothesize that one of the possible interpretation of this surprising result can be the fact that the members of the youngest generation are most intensively using the Internet and social media, and thus they are to a greater degree than the older generation exposed to the specific "culture of offence" that characterizes the Internet and involves both racism and hate speech. The Internet creates the main space where, according to the reports, young people encounter stereotypes, negative attitudes towards minorities and, more importantly, learn that hostility towards stereotypically represented categories is acceptable and somehow normal (Włodarczyk 2014).

That is why the Internet presence of anti-Roma stereotypes and hate speech that targets Roma is of crucial importance for the future evolution of anti-gypsyism in Poland. It is very easy to find anti-Roma hate speech in the Internet (Włodarczyk 2014; Odrzywołek 2015) and particularly worrying in this context is the growth of the elements of racist discourse in various Internet representations of Roma. Ewa Werner (2013), in her analysis of the Internet debates on Roma in Poland pointed out that the negative features attributed to Roma can be grouped in three categories. In the first of them we may find characteristics associated with the way of functioning in the society, such as being free-riders, reluctant to work and to educate children, rejecting assimilation, having undeserved privileges in welfare and recognizing begging as the way of life. In the second category we list up negatively evaluated aspects of social behavior such as stealing, importunate conduct, failure to comply with the hygienic rules and even pedophilia.

This latter term gained currency in the language of Polish journalism with no connection to Roma but is commonly used in the Internet portals with reference to the young age in

which Roma are getting married (although traditionally arranged marriages of youngsters are already a matter of the past among Polish Roma). In this way the Internet reproduces the modern image of Roma as violating the norms of sexual behaviour which locates them in the "wild," non-human zone inhabited by creatures who cannot control their biological drives (End 2014: 46).

The third category contains clearly racist elements, expressed in the beliefs that Roma are racially, genetically or culturally predisposed to certain forms of behavior or ways of life. Cultural determinism is mentioned here along biology with an intention to emphasize a primordial and inescapable character of the inherited culture which is thus perceived by the Internet users as equally given and unchangeable as biological features. Dirtiness has also been mentioned in this category, this time not as an inability to comply with norms but as a part of the "Gypsy nature."

Racist discourse has been often used in the sample studied by Werner to justify views, according to which it is pointless to assist Roma in any way because they will not change: their way of life is a part of their genetically transmitted "nature" or they are unwilling to change because of their culture. Generally, however, the racist argument prevails over the cultural one. The expressions like: "They have a gene of cheating" are much more widespread than for example the following one, reminding, by the way, the structure of the modern anti-Semitic claims: "Gypsies did not make any harm when they travelled in caravans and camped in tents. I would not have any problem with that. But I have a problem with their 'culture of stealing'" (Werner 2013).

Racist discourse is used either independently or as a "deeper" support for the views that focus on the social or behavioral features attributed to Roma. Moreover, Werner in her study points out that the positive elements of the stereotype of Roma that existed in the past and to some extent still exist among mountain villagers who live next to the Roma, have completely disappeared among the Internet users. In the sample studied by Werner there was not a single positive statement on Roma that would be a counterpart to clearly racist statements, calling for the extermination of Roma, that we may find in the social media and in the Internet (a sample of such statements can be found in Włodarczyk 2014).

A particular feature of the representations of Roma in the Internet is that they often take a form of indirect message that does not deliver any concrete content but creates an environment in which dehumanization and exclusion of Roma becomes taken for granted and acceptable. In this context Odrzywołek (2015) points to the role of the Roma-related memes and Gryszkiewicz (2015) to the websites with jokes about Roma. An interesting example of Roma memes is a sudden popularity of the association of Roma with rubbles (in Polish: "gruz"). In several sites where Roma-related memes can be found (Kwejk.pl, Demotywatory.pl, Memy.pl), Roma are presented as people who eat rubbles, collect rubbles and, in consequence, are rubbles. Odrzywołek's interviews with the Poles high school students indicate that these memes are well-known and although the interviewees have absolutely no idea why Roma are associated with rubbles they found this connection obvious and rather funny. In this way, Internet memes create a discursive environment in which the estrangement of Roma and their presentation as the "others" with non-human qualities (humans do not eat rubbles) is perceived as something taken for granted.

Jokes about Roma that circulate in the Internet (e.g. www.kawaly.tja.pl) usually refer to the image of Roma as thieves and work-shy. In this context, particularly disgusting is the use of the archival photograph of the Roma prisoners of the slave labor camp in Bełżec in the memes that refer to "Gypsy laziness" (Odrzywołek 2015). They often contain racist elements as in the example given by Gryszkiewicz (2015) that actually is an international joke, circulating in the Internet in different versions (in some of them, especially German ones, the main hero is not a Rom but a Pole)[1]. This joke corresponds with the racist thinking of Roma as creatures who, regardless their situation, always remain determined by their in-born criminal proclivities. Thus the joke enhances the image of Roma as a race, the members of which have criminal predispositions in their genes (Gryszkiewicz 2015: 53–54), and delivers clear message that no corrective actions targeting Roma have sense because Roma cannot be changed (Gryszkiewicz 2015: 59).

Conclusions

In the paper I am arguing that anti-gypsyism in Poland has evolved from an ambiguous stereotype to racist opinion. The mechanisms of this evolution, scapegoating and surrogate victimization, continue to exist in contemporary Poland and their effect increases in the situation of uncertainty caused by contemporary economic crisis. Both mechanisms require a social construction of difference that casts a "Gypsy" in the role of "the other" which is particularly important in the country with a very small Roma community. This process leads to the naturalization of difference which employs the elements of racist discourse, clearly visible today in the Internet and social media.

Although it would be tempting to say that the anti-gypsyism in Poland in many way resembles the well-known phenomenon of antisemitism without Jews (because the contact with real people is not necessary for the development of negative feelings towards them), the situation of the Polish Roma communities and the danger that what happened in Oświęcim and Mława can happen again, does not enable us to use this literary figure. There are Roma in Poland and their future very much depends on the further evolution of the mechanisms described here. Nevertheless, the anti-Roma hate speech in the Internet has an ambiguous role. On the one hand, it reproduces the discourse of exclusion, often supported by racist arguments. On the other hand though, it may serve as a safety valve that helps to partly remove extreme hostility from the real (this can help to understand the recent growth of positive feelings about Roma recorded in the pools, although there are many other reasons of this phenomenon). Finally, the Internet helps to monitor and localize the potential danger (for example anti-Roma mobilization of local communities) and therefore to counteract it.

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[1] "In a good day a gypsy is caught by cannibals, who want to make some great soup out of him. The group gives him to the chef, which he starts working on the soup. After a while, when the chief of the tribe comes to the kitchen to check out the progress of the dinner, he sees the chef taking the gypsy in and out of the boiling cauldron. The chief asks why the chef can't keep him inside the boiling cauldron, and the chef replies: 'How can I do this, the gypsy is eating all the potatoes'." (www.goingyourownway.com/mgtow-random-mgtow-subjects/gypsy-jokes-2596/, access 7/04/2015. In: Gryszkiewicz 2015: 50–51).

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