

Tamara Moyzes & Schlomi Yaffe



LACTISM: Mycoremediation,
living fungal sculpture, drawing
of mycelium on paper, surveillance
system, 2023

Exhibition copy

The landfill is a „time bomb“ and potential source of epidemics for all the surrounding Roma settlements.

Using water from local surface streams is a common practice in the settlements. This is an extremely dangerous activity given that the Roma shantytowns are mostly located downstream from the main villages and that most of the villages have no sewage treatment plant. In settlements like Chminianske Jakubovany or Svinia, Roma use water contaminated by household sewage and intensive agricultural activities upstream.

The term social mobility refers to the movement of individuals and groups among different socioeconomic positions (up or down the socioeconomic scale). Lateral mobility refers to geographical movement (freedom to choose a place to live). Environmental injustice contributes to decreased mobility in both cases. In the case of social mobility, an environmental burden negatively influences the opportunity to ascend the socioeconomic scale. Affiliated economic and social costs limit opportunities of the Roma. In combination with other social and economic factors these in practice push the Roma further down the scale.

source:

Filčák, Richard. Environmental Justice in the Slovak Republic: The Case of the Roma Ethnic Minority. PhD. thesis, Central European University, 2007.



Environmental justice

The Lipnica locality in the district town of M. was established as a new area of Roma village on the industrial zone periphery of the town that is not well connected with the center, with no schools, no medical facilities, and no basic civic infrastructure. Although there has been a municipal waste dump in the area since the early 1990s, in 1996 housing for around 200 people was built there. It must have been obvious to city officials that such a site was clearly unsuitable for housing and that the construction of houses in the immediate surroundings of the landfill site was also contrary to the applicable laws and technical regulations. The creation of the segregated village of Lipnica is therefore the result of the intertwining social and economic processes that have been going on in the context of political and economic transformation — rapid deindustrialization, privatization, and liberalization of the economy and the consequent social impacts. An important factor here was the ethnic dimension of the whole process of ghetto establishment.

Environmental factors may also play an important role in ghetto establishment processes. In this context, the Lipnica village is also an example of people's exposure to negative environmental influences. The immediate surroundings of a municipal waste dump are an example of environmental injustice. Access to natural resources and exposure to environmental risks are not evenly distributed, and class or ethnicity plays an important role. Lower socio-economic groups are more likely to suffer from negative environmental impacts and are less likely to have access to environmental benefits such as clean air and water.

Roma housing sites tend to be built near former industrial sites or flood-prone areas and can be found close to municipal and industrial waste dumps. The people, as well as the place they inhabit, are considered „dirty“, „ecologically inferior“, and „dangerous“.

The issue of the Lipnica ethnic ghetto is also an issue of unequal access to environmental justice. Environmental justice is generally defined as the fair recognition of all parties involved in processes related to the distribution of environmental benefits and risks, with the distribution itself being carried out in a manner that does not discriminate against any particular social or ethnic group. It is about the avoidance of unequal exposure to environmental risks or discriminatory access to environmental benefits. Lipnica was located in close proximity to an already existing large municipal waste dump, an example of the unequal distribution

of environmental risks resulting from the contamination of the immediate environment.

Municipal solid waste landfill concentrations

Municipal solid waste landfill presents a risk in terms of water, air, and air contamination. However, the risk of groundwater contamination becomes more significant if the population uses local wells instead of public water sources. Rodents living in such landfills could also be a serious problem. Last but not least, these factors must be taken into concern: the risk of other bacterial infections from close contact with the landfill (landfill rummaging), odors from released gases, and increased dustiness. These factors have a direct impact on the health of the population in the form of an increased incidence of allergic and respiratory diseases. An identified potential problem is municipalities that have municipal waste landfills in their vicinity.

There are 240 such potentially problematic municipalities in Slovakia with 393 sites.

The municipalities with the largest number of inhabitants threatened by the landfills are:

Trebišov (6 685 residents), Jarovnice (6 022), Richnava (2 458), Chminianske Jakubovany (2 249), Veľká Lomnica, Stráne pod Tatrami, Ostrovany, Jasov, Sečovce, Sol', Veľká Ida, Michalovce, Krížová Ves, Medzev, Čaklov, Rožňava, Spišský Štiavnik, Huncovce, Spišská Nová Ves, Žehra, Svinia, Krásnohorské Podhradie, Jakubany. All of the most at-risk villages are located in eastern Slovakia in the Košice or Prešov region.

There are 28 Roma population sites in 24 municipalities in Slovakia, where no waste collection is provided — neither by garbage bins nor by large-capacity containers.

Source:

Škobla, Daniel, and Richard Filčák, eds. *Opad jako sociálny problém vo vylúčených rómskych osídleniach [Waste as a Social Problem in the Excluded Localities Inhabited by Roma]*. Bratislava: Centrum spoločenských a psychologických vied SAV, v. v. i., Ústav etnológie a sociálnej antropológie SAV, v. v. i., 2022.

Municipal waste dumps in municipalities with Roma communities



source: data from Atlas romských komunit (Roma Communities Atlas)