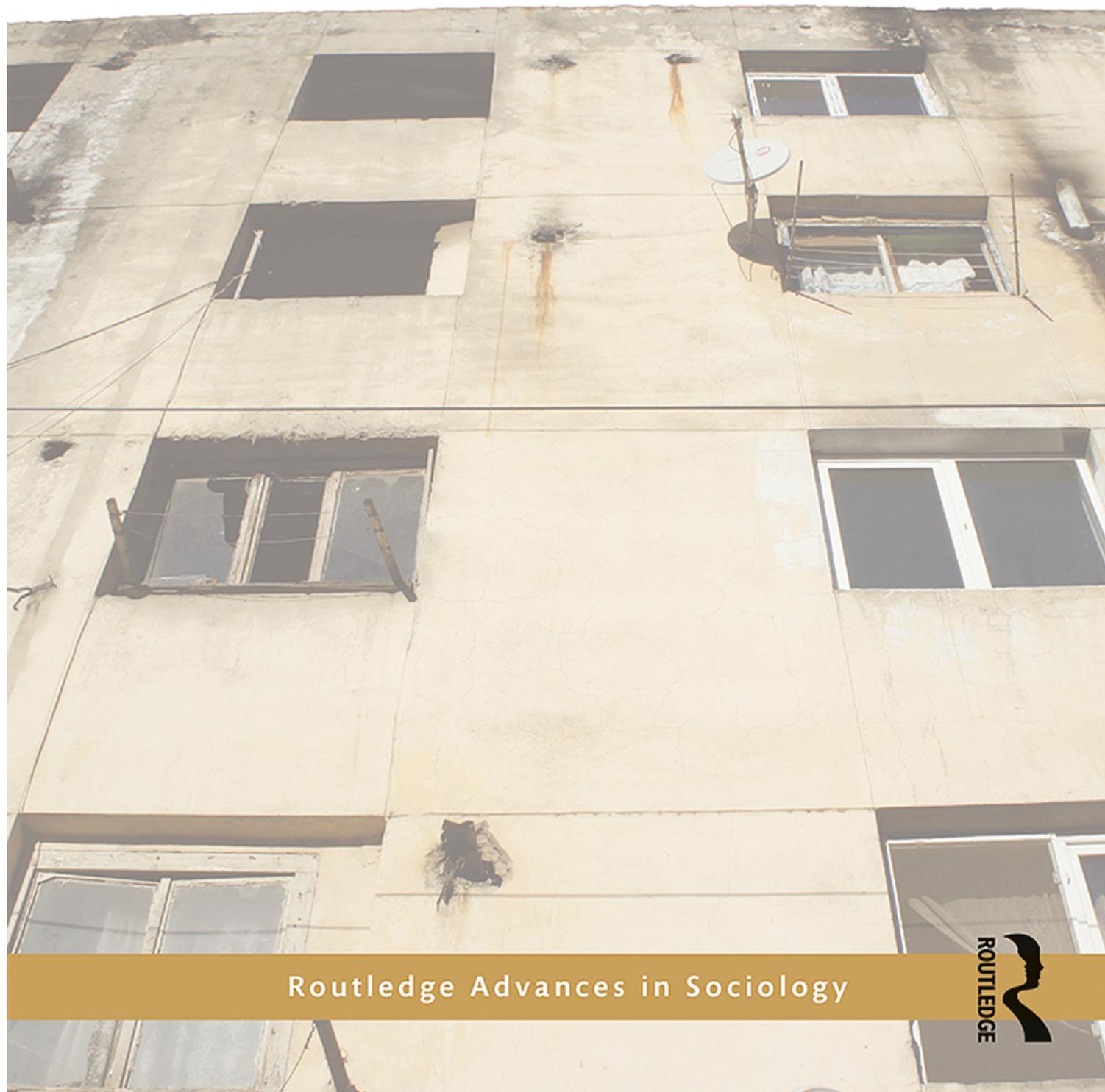


RACIAL CITIES

Governance and the Segregation of
Romani People in Urban Europe

GIOVANNI PICKER

Foreword by *Éric Fassin*



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Racial Cities

Going beyond race-blind approaches to spatial segregation in Europe, *Racial Cities* argues that race is the logic through which stigmatized and segregated “Gypsy urban areas” have emerged and persisted after World War II. Building on nearly a decade of ethnographic and historical research in Romania, Italy, France and the UK, Giovanni Picker casts a series of case studies into the historical framework of circulations and borrowings between colony and metropole since the late nineteenth century.

By focusing on socio-economic transformations and social dynamics in contemporary Cluj-Napoca, Pescara, Montreuil, Florence and Salford, Picker detects four local segregating mechanisms, and comparatively investigates resemblances between each of them and segregation in French Rabat, Italian Addis Ababa, and British New Delhi. These multiple global associations across space and time serve as an empirical basis for establishing a solid bridge between race critical theories and urban studies.

Racial Cities is the first comprehensive analysis of the segregation of Romani people in Europe, providing a fine-tuned and in-depth explanation of this phenomenon. While inequalities increase globally and poverty is ever more concentrated, this book is a key contribution to debates and actions addressing social marginality, inequalities, racist exclusions, and governance. Thanks to its dense yet thoroughly accessible narration, the book will appeal to scholars, undergraduate and postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and equally to activists and policy makers, who are interested in areas including: Race and Racism, Urban Studies, Governance, Inequalities, Colonialism and Postcolonialism, and European Studies.

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Introduction

Inside segregation

[I]n order to understand the specificity of the national formation, we have to look outside it.

(Catherine Hall 2002, 9)

December 17, 2010 is a day to be remembered. In an open public space of Tunis, Tunisia, twenty-six-year-old street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, at the time unemployed, set himself on fire; he would die two weeks later. His gesture, in protest against the humiliations he had been suffering from the state, not least the confiscation of his wares, inspired revolts across much of the Arab world, leading to social changes with effects that continue to resonate. In what was soon to be called the “Arab Spring,” several cities across North Africa and the Middle East became the material and spatial hubs of concerns and social mobilizations against political and economic measures, which were predicated upon dominant ideologies of economic growth and social order. December 17, 2010 is thus remembered globally as the beginning of trans-nationally interconnected urban revolts against equally interconnected ideologies of governance.

About 2,000 kilometers northeast of Tunis, in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, December 17, 2010 is remembered for a partially similar reason. At 6 a.m. local time, municipal police officers arrived en masse in a street in the city center. Before even turning their car engines off, they had handed in a relocation notice to fifty-six families, the vast majority of whom self-identified as Roma. The eviction took about an hour – just enough time to load the families onto municipal buses and take them about six kilometers away to Pata Rât, an area right next to the regional landfill. With temperatures well close to zero, people were relocated in prefabricated houses with no heating, no hot water and an average of four square meters per person. As a result, many adults lost their jobs, several children were forced to drop out of school, and health conditions among the group worsened considerably. The eviction was the result of dominant ideologies of governance and economic growth intersecting with local discourses of hygiene and civility. December 17, 2010

appears as a transnational landmark disclosing local articulations of increasingly powerful global governance ideologies.

In considering these interconnected global processes of political and economic restructuring, this book examines the genesis and persistence of the segregation of Romani people in contemporary Europe. The phenomenon has so far eschewed systematic and comprehensive analyses, partially due to its high variety and contextual variability within contemporary accelerated processes of urban restructuring and the concomitant spatial distribution of resources. In such a relative analytical vacuum, media chronicles have occupied the available discursive space of what is often named “Roma segregation,” providing chronicles yet not explanations. This book sets out to critically intervene in this discursive space by uncovering typically unnoticed mechanisms and dynamics of segregation through a field-based research in and around a number of segregated areas. In the process, I will show that my concern is not only on the conditions of spatial segregation as such, but primarily on its multifarious genesis and constant making, both historically and geographically. Conceptually, the book title takes its cue from Goldberg’s (2002) *The Racial State*, where the author clarifies that “[T]here is no singular totalized phenomenon we can name the racial state; more precisely, there are *racial states* [...]”¹

Segregated and stigmatized “Gypsy urban areas” (GUAs)

Fakulteta in Sofia; Cañeda Real and Gallinero in Madrid; Luník IX in Košice; La Barbuta and Casilino 900 in Rome; Jozsefvaros in Budapest; Saint-Jacques in Perpignan; and Ferentari in Bucharest – these are just some of the most segregated and stigmatized urban areas of twenty-first-century Europe. Mainstream media and political elites largely associate these areas with danger, urban decay, social deviance and – invariably – “Gypsies.” At times existing as entire neighborhoods, but elsewhere as blocks of flats, improvised settlements, or camps, segregated and stigmatized “Gypsy urban areas” (GUAs) are either partially or entirely populated by Romani households. They are regularly marked by higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the city, few or no public services, dilapidated housing, poor sanitary infrastructures and harsh stigmatization. All these elements signal the presence of a significant and rather consistent urban phenomenon across European national borders (and beyond). What are the distinctive features of this social phenomenon, how and when did it emerge, and under what conditions does it persist? *Racial Cities* answers these questions, and argues that the fundamental principle behind the genesis and persistence of GUAs is race, in its tight connections to contemporary urban processes of economic restructuring and governance.

Being present all across the world without a designated territory, Romani people in Europe live mostly in Central and Eastern regions. Amounting to

about twelve million across the whole continent, they are over seven times more likely than the European average to live in segregated households – 38 percent versus 5 percent, and 20 percent of them live in slums or ruined houses (FRA 2011); the number of those living in households with income below the poverty line has reached a striking 90 percent (FRA and UNDP 2012), approximately six times the European average (Inequality Watch 2012); neighborhood effect is prevalent – regardless of self-identification, people living in GUAs have on average 30 percent lower employment rates than those living outside it; and yet, Romani people living in GUAs have 50 percent lower employment rates than non-Romani living in the same GUA (FRA 2011, 27). These data are accompanied by numerous polls and reports accounting for the fact that Romani people are one of the least wanted and most stigmatized population in Europe.

Research on the spatial arrangements, fragmentation and exclusion of Romani collectives has primarily focused on either Eastern or Western Europe.² The only work connecting both regions is Bancroft's (2005) study of British and Czech contexts, which draws historical and theoretical attention to the deep-rooted power of race in establishing spatial hierarchies in which "Roma and Gypsy-Travellers" are typically trapped in the lowest ranks. While convincingly tracing race and racial thinking back to the Enlightenment, however, the discussion ignores the colonial experiments of race-space intersections as among the first modern regulatory mechanisms of territorial rule. In adopting "a European perspective" (2005, 6), the work sides with standard Eurocentrism and overlooks colonial capitalist expansion as the cradle of race and racism; as a consequence, the wider context of contemporary political economy and class formation as constitutive of processes of racialization is nowhere to be found, in a study otherwise abundant in empirical data. Hence, Bancroft's (2005) work, while empirically comprehensive, remains anchored to the contemporary relations between space, identity and race, without accounting for the ways in which racism and urban marginality, stigmatization and class formation variously intersect to keep spatial exclusion in place. Similar to other works on Romani people's socio-spatial conditions, the study sees segregation as a direct consequence of prejudice.

In a European (and global) context of increasingly deregulated economy, precarious and desocialized wage labor, and skyrocketing inequalities, spatial segregation is changing ever more quickly, sometimes without following precise patterns (Tammaru et al. 2014, 363). Hence, its trajectories need to be studied in their dynamic and relational making, by keeping the multidimensionality of the phenomenon under scrutiny without limiting the discussion to only spatial, territorial, racial or ethnic units of analysis. Accordingly, a comprehensive and relational approach to segregation should probably include supranational, national and urban political economy as well as such social phenomena as the making and reproduction of urban marginality; forms of stigmatization; policies, practices and ideologies in governing segregated

areas; everyday knowledge; media discourses; and representations circulating in municipal offices. In addition, since these phenomena do not necessarily play out together in relation to every city, an in-depth and context-sensitive analysis of the various local segregating mechanisms seems necessary in order to critically single out the most important factors influencing peculiar configurations of segregation and their precise local logic of functioning.

Racial Cities does precisely this. By taking segregated and stigmatized “Gypsy urban areas” as a unit of analysis, the book empirically analyzes four of what I have termed “local segregating mechanisms,” through which many GUAs have formed and persisted. These mechanisms are displacement (Chapter 2), omission (Chapter 3), containment (Chapter 4) and cohesion (Chapter 5). The continuous circulations and borrowings between colony and metropole establish the main historical and theoretical axis alongside which the analysis is organized. The overall historical standpoint maintains that the socio-spatial segregation of groups defined as essentially “different” was first experimented in colonized cities as a way of keeping variously defined “threats” spatially isolated from the colonizer (Nightingale 2012). In light of this, Europe is a fundamental dimension of the entire analysis – not only as a geographic unit where segregating mechanisms operate, but also, and perhaps primarily, as a global hegemonic social formation chiefly influencing them; the making of its economic power, rooted as it is in the history of colonial empires, plays a key role in understanding why and how, after about five centuries of colonial experimentation and domination, race and its immediate extension, racism, remain a pivotal and largely ignored social force regulating urban life in the “old continent.”

In extending previous and ongoing inquiries on the role of race in shaping contemporary European societies (e.g. Goldberg 2006; Essed 1991; El-Tayeb 2011; Hesse 2007; Lentin 2008), the following seven chapters will discuss the ways in which race, in its various socio-spatial articulations and class-based ramifications, appears as the main organizing principle of a number of post-1945 European urban areas. The historical discussion (Chapter 1) and the closing analysis (Chapter 6) will show that, from a relatively open and proudly embraced principle of spatial rule in colonized cities, race has permuted into a largely silenced and subtle ideology of segregation in postcolonial Europe. The four case studies (Chapters 2–6), approached from historical and ethnographic angles, provide evidence of the structural conditions under which – and the obvious and subtle ways in which – race and its most immediate extension, racism, variously pervade and shape socio-spatial configurations in one of the most affluent corners of the world.

In doing so, *Racial Cities* aims to provide a threefold contribution: first, to the scholarship on cities, primarily on spatial segregation, by approaching the phenomenon from an everyday and historical perspective as a dynamic process, and by grasping its making at both the street and institutional level; second, by contributing to understanding social heterogeneity and its

underpinning power relations in Europe through documenting the power and mechanisms of race and racism; and finally, by contributing empirical knowledge to anti-racist and desegregation strategies at both grassroots and policy levels.

Segregation as a dynamic process

Segregation is defined here as a process of spatial concentration and separation of a homogeneously categorized group deemed “different” from the majority by the majority itself, be this difference framed as socio-economic, cultural, religious, ethnic, or racial. As a process, segregation occurs in multiple ways, variously unfolding for days, months, years, decades and possibly centuries; it may mutate, stop partially or completely, and perhaps start again. Largely distant from this processual view, the English-language scholarship primarily understands segregation as a condition to be assessed and explained from a macro and longitudinal perspective. One of the most commonly shared results of segregation research on Europe is that, in comparison to the United States, the levels of ethnic minority spatial segregation, although at times rising, remain relatively low (Weir 1993; van Kempen and Özüekrem 1998; Musterd and Ostendorf 1998; Musterd and Deurloo 2002; Musterd 2005; van Kempen and Murie 2009; Preteceille 2009; Iceland et al. 2011³). Working primarily with statistical data and large-scale surveys, these studies provide a key comparative understanding of segregation that has informed both academic and public debates, the latter too often void of reliable and rigorous data.

Besides the lack of processual understanding of segregation, however, two additional limitations emerge from this scholarship. First, as noted by van Kempen and Murie (2009, 386–387), among others, segregation research has largely overlooked a systematic understanding of Central and Eastern Europe, which, due to its non-capitalist recent past, has often been considered incomparable with Western Europe and consequently left to “regional experts”; second, while relatively concerned with contextual specificities and the “embeddedness” of segregation in local histories and social structures (e.g., Arbaci 2008; Marcuse and van Kempen 2000; Maloutas 2012), the literature prioritizes “disembedded” research approaches, largely overlooking the street-level dimension of segregation and the everyday economic, social and political dynamics underpinning it.

What remains to be done, therefore, is to “widen segregation studies beyond their usual current boundaries” (Lloyd et al. 2015, 413) and to investigate ethnographically and historically the genesis and everyday conditions under which segregation is (or is not) perpetuated. The current increase in complexity and rapid change of certain patterns of socio-spatial isolation and dispossession is an additional structural reason for looking at how spatial segregation emerges and unfolds at the local level beyond a limited focus on Western Europe and the United States. Throughout the

subsequent seven chapters, I will show that, along with measuring its levels and longitudinal transformations, we need to see segregation *as a dynamic process* by looking at how it originates, evolves and persists at both the street and institutional level. In *Racial Cities*, hence, my effort is to detect local segregating mechanisms and systematically uncover their varied logics. In addition, as will become clear in the following paragraphs, my wider intention is to expand beyond West-centric perspectives.

With regard to the comparative lack of focus on Central and Eastern Europe, it is important to notice that research on segregation has foremost highlighted the difficulty of comparing cities across Western Europe only (Musterd 2005). The chief reason lies in the myriad heterogeneous variables across countries, regions and cities in terms of housing markets, broad political and economic structures and cultural frameworks. This point stems largely from a more or less implicit comparison with the United States, where, being a confederation characterized by relative political and linguistic homogeneity, “difference” between its cities, all in all, is comparatively lower than the difference between European cities. However, it should also be acknowledged that comparison is always, as such, an artificial device that inevitably reduces complexity for the sake of heuristic explanations (Mateos 2015); hence, the notion of “difference” between case studies is to a large extent relative. Following this observation, Central and Eastern European cities can and should be included in Europe-wide studies, as for instance in Tammaru and colleagues’ (2014) recent work on socio-economic segregation across twelve national capitals. The study shows that, while in the early 2000s Western European cities were far more segregated than their Eastern European counterparts, in the early 2010s this imbalance between East and West became much less prominent. Under these converging conditions and the overall increase of inequalities across much of the continent and beyond, the question remains to what extent the two European parts are still incomparable in terms of socio-spatial arrangements.

As for the second limitation – that is, the relative lack of “embedded” research on segregation – a number of field-based studies have contributed to the knowledge on everyday dynamics. Phillips’ (2006, 2009) work on various experiences, desires and life trajectories of segregated individuals and households in Britain has suggested the importance of focusing on segregation’s subjective dimensions. In addition, Bolt and colleagues’ (Bolt et al. 2009) work on the relationship between segregation and social integration shows how in-depth, field-based research is able to critically challenge the public discourse that often falls into reductionist theses. Another seminal work excavating the complexity of socio-spatial segregation is Wacquant’s (2006) comparative sociology of urban marginality focusing on the American black hyperghettos and the French *banlieues*. By putting the global, national, and urban political economy, the state, and neighborhood dynamics all under the same analytical gaze, the author shows how different the social structures of

the two socio-spatial configurations are, arguing that a comparative sociology of urban marginality should focus squarely on both material and symbolic structures, as well as urban histories and the action of different state agencies. Along similar lines, Mudu's (2006, 423) exploration of complex "press discourses, political acts, and the diachronic evolution of the urban context" in the making of segregation in Rome reveals the importance of considering the multidimensionality and dynamism of the phenomenon. And Gruner's (2009) study of white Germans' racializing representations shows the pivotal role of stigmatization along racial lines in perpetuating spatial segregation. Extending this stream of research, *Racial Cities* uncovers local segregating mechanisms in their ordinary making.

Race, colonialism and (European) cities

In combining and expanding these contributions to the scholarship on segregation – by including Central and Eastern Europe, and by focusing on everyday dynamics – this book also proposes to consider the chief role of colonialism in the making of contemporary (urban) Europe. The current widespread silence, in education curricula and the public sphere, about the history and legacy of five centuries of European colonialism can also be found in the scholarship on urban Europe. Part of its reason may lie in the Orientalist stance of the literature's main historical references. Weber's (1958[1922]) work *The City: Non-legitimate Domination* is among the most important of such references. The comparative historical sociology argues that medieval Central and Northern European cities were the first real examples of modern democratic citizenship, essentially due to the coeval emergence of guilds and other non-kin groups that represented a rupture in previous kin-based citizenry. The main condition for these autonomous groups to appear was the simultaneous presence of Christianity and capitalism, which suggests that, as Weber argues elsewhere, "only in the Occident does the *city* exist in the specific sense of the word" (quoted in Isin 2002, 119). The point here is that Weber's historical analysis is not only constructed by opposing Occident and Orient, but is also predicated upon a supposed primacy of the former over the latter (Isin 2002, 2005). Weber's rather deterministic conclusion – that democracy and citizenship not only first appeared in the West, but could *not* have appeared anywhere else – clearly sets up a symbolic hierarchy in which the Orient (defined as the non-Occident and non-Christian) remains at a lower stage than the Occident. While Orientalism was familiar to the scholarship of Weber's time (Said 1979, 255–259), uncovering it is of fundamental importance, as the constructed asymmetry between the Orient and the Occident was both a driver and a result of colonialism. Hence, Weber's claim of Western superiority may have arguably contributed to downplaying the importance of thematizing colonialism in analyses of contemporary Europe, including those of its cities.

By contrast to Eurocentrism, heeding Hall's (2002) claim in her *Civilizing Subjects* that I quoted in the epigraph to this Introduction, *Racial Cities* contributes to "provincializing" European cities by squarely framing the analysis within the colony–metropole nexus as one of the foundational processes of past and contemporary global inequalities. The most immediate reason for such a decentering perspective is not only that socio-spatial segregation alongside "diversity lines" first appeared in colonized cities (Nightingale 2012); it is primarily that my very multi-focal ethnographic inquiry of segregation discloses a set of dynamics, which can be linked to the ways in which segregation played out in colonized cities. In expanding the mainstream scholarship on segregation in European cities that typically relies on categories such as ethnicity, nationality, cultural difference/specificity, and mobility/migration, my fieldwork encounters and analyses will expose how *race* as a typical modern colonial product variously yet primarily sustains and regulates the segregation of Romani people. This is not to deny or downplay the importance of ethnicity, mobility, cultural difference and nationality/nationalism in the ways segregation unfolds. As will emerge from the four empirical analyses, these phenomena are part of the picture, but the specificity and dominant role of race in its multifarious local declinations, power and authority, emerged inductively, rather than deductively; hence, race is the central motive of this book. The genesis of race – its various elaborations and proliferation throughout imperial rule – is a heuristic angle and a valid reason for detecting correspondences between contemporary segregating mechanisms and colonial segregation rationales, as I will do in Chapter 6.

Due to the importance of race within this analysis as a whole, I would like to clarify its historical context and significance for this book. Having its roots in the colonial capitalist exploitation of mainly labor and land, race is a politically charged social force that regulates social arrangements. Functioning in relation to ethnicity, gender and class formations, race tends to connect nature to culture, namely the discourse of essential, innate human characteristics and the discourse of human behavior and morality, respectively. It does so by regulating perceptions, seeking to naturalize the world that perceptions construct. At the same time, race does not only work at the level of perceptions, or only within a subjective dimension, as ethnicity, for instance, tends to do. Due to its accent on lineage, heritage, and fixed, immutable characteristics, race claims objectivity – it operates as an institutionalized social force, a self-fulfilling prophecy-maker, which makes existing unequal power relationships appear as a self-evident and objective necessity – shaping in this way racist configurations. In practice, racism's dynamics and constant fluidity reside precisely in this continued oscillation between immutable (lineage, "natural") and mutable (behavior, "cultural") processes, differently structuring the two poles according to each social context. Such an oscillation organizes the objective social world as well as its perceptions in material and symbolic hierarchies – race, therefore, other than as a social

force, can also be viewed as an organizing logic and principle in the process of social transformation.

Originated upon the rise of empires, since its birth, race has been conceived as a way of organizing exploitation, and more generally subjugation, of Jews, Muslims and other non-whites in the forms of religious-based stigmatization and exclusion; slavery, segregation and mass deportation. Race emerged as part of the colonial project not as an exogenous product, but within continuous circulations, borrowing and learning processes between external (colonial) and internal (within the metropole) strategies, observations, interpretations, beliefs and practices concerning personhood and morality. Colonies, in this process, largely functioned as laboratories for experimentation in social engineering in the metropole (Stoler 1997; Stoler and Cooper 1997). After about five centuries of colonial subjugation and exploitation, race remains pervasive and powerful – mainly because it is predicated upon the discourse of morality, whereby the racially categorized and the immoral are juxtaposed. This juxtaposition sets the basis for a “set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order” along a continuum between the poles of purity and pollution (Douglas 1984, 35). As a system legitimizing “the good,” purity, and by extension sameness and appropriateness, while discarding “the evil,” dirt, otherness and incongruity, race is a structuring social force rather than an ex-post rationalization of exclusion. The racial(ized) “other” is rendered not only inferior, but also a dangerous threat to a deemed non-racial and non-threatening economic, social and cultural order, which legitimizes that threat. And it is this fabricated state of menace that by symmetry produces and perpetuates the allegedly pure and neutral, self-proclaimed “non-racial” self. Accordingly, the surplus that the racial, non-white other represents is at times “[made] live” while at other times “let die” (Foucault 2003, 241).

Class formation is intimately part of racial hierarchies. The naturalization of class difference is deeply rooted in social organizations, material arrangements and social perceptions. In light of this, race is, as Stuart Hall (2002[1980], 62) maintained, “also the modality in which class is ‘lived,’ the medium through which it is appropriated and ‘fought through.’” Race and class, therefore, are mutually linked; their link is historically inscribed in the colonial encounter, which structured “native” societies around the naturalization of gendered class hierarchies, and in which the poor were infantilized and deemed “naturally” at a lower stage of civilization. This remains chiefly relevant today as a principle reproducing global inequality between the wealthier, largely white Global North, and the poorer, mostly non-white Global South (Winant 2004). Due to relational constitution of race, it becomes clear how racial dynamics happen in various and changing ways according to each social context, and unfold in sometimes totally unpredictable manners. Disclosing these processes, therefore, implies keeping categories of analysis open and malleable to the encountered realities.

In contributing to structure the cultural, economic and political order, race plays out differently in each context. Moreover, its multidimensional and relational nature renders it a flexible and highly adaptable social force. Therefore, in order to uncover the very urban conditions of possibility for race to emerge, operate and powerfully organize the social, it is necessary to focus in depth on its local mechanisms. This is yet another reason why segregation should better be approached as a dynamic and mutable process alongside – yet not rather than – a slowly changing and macro phenomenon. It may be argued that every social force, including class, gender and ethnicity, plays out differently in different contexts. However, in the case of race, especially in Europe, scrutinizing local ways and mechanisms of functioning appears somehow more demanding. The main reason for this, as I will unpack in Chapter 6, is twofold. On the one hand, at least since the UNESCO (1950) “Statement on race,” race as a category of analysis for understanding the world has largely been abandoned and replaced by the less politically implicated “ethnicity.” On the other hand, race essentially functions by obfuscating and dissimulating itself, in the sense that its chief *raison d’être* has become the shaping of forms of domination that would not be identified as “racial” or “racist.” As a consequence, racial hierarchies and dynamics of subjugation and exclusion are among the least acknowledged and recognizable social phenomena. Due to both its variety and variability, as well as its self-dissimulating constitution, race requires social scientists to reflexively and critically scrutinize its configurations, documenting and putting into historical perspective its differently located and configured mechanisms and ways of functioning. This is *Racial Cities*’ main task.

Ideologies of racial purity and miscegenation may well structure socio-spatial arrangements, the chief focus of this book. While indisputably heterogeneous and contextual, race can be said to be invariably constructed by moving the outside of social life to a state of domesticated inside. One of the ways in which this shift is made possible is spatial segregation: relating to the outside, while striving for ordering and disciplining it. This point may be useful for illustrating the movement from the United States’ plantation slavery to the contemporary (hyper)ghetto (Wacquant 2002); similarly, yet including numerous differences, it also contributes to explaining some of the aftermaths of decolonization in Europe: as Goldberg (2002, 174) maintains, upon decolonization “the focus shifted, slowly and imperceptibly at first, but by the 1930s quite evidently, from measuring bodies and heads to the racial mappings, sociologically and psychologically, of urban spaces, of ‘the city beautiful’” (see also Chapter 1); and “[t]he principle of racialized urban segregation accordingly insinuated itself into the definition of postcolonial city space in the West, just as it continued to inform post-independence urban planning in Africa” (Goldberg 1993a, 191).⁴ As such, in their spatial articulations, racial ascriptions may not necessarily refer to bodily features, but to a similarly naturalized “urban body” or “cities as organisms” in which space, along with housing – and, by proxy, its population – is racially connoted.

One of the logical extensions of these considerations is that looking at colonized cities of European empires allows access to some of the ways in which race has been experimented as a tool for “solidifying fluid social categories through urban space structures” (Legg 2007, 49). It is exactly race’s appeal to “nature” by reference to appearance and lineage that allows the fixity of the urban space to become a perfect medium for racism: “[I]n such racial characteristics as color, ethnic origins, geographical position, etc.,” writes Stuart Hall (2002[1980], 63), “racism discovers what other ideologies have to construct: an apparently ‘natural’ and universal basis in nature.” Low (1996, 165) vividly articulates this point by discussing British Indian cities, where the “Other [...] always threatens to spill over the geometric division of the civilized body, oozing its contaminated bodily wastes, disgusting ubiquitous body of the native which is forever invaliding hallowed ground.” In this way, “natives” were largely deemed a potential menace to the colonial order, that is, the hierarchical order imposed and maintained for the sake of labor exploitation and social, cultural and political experimentation. And while colonized cities engaged in racially segregating “natives,” at the end of the nineteenth century, the cities of the metropole displayed similar spatial exclusions and enclosures of another perceived threat – the so-called “dangerous classes.” In this regard, Romani people’s urban social conditions in Europe reveal these fast-changing, relational and contingent processes, due to a long history of racial stigmatization, experimentation and eventually extermination, but also and equally due to their diffuse material and symbolic deprivation.

Today, racial principles of division and domination vis-à-vis Romani people work in various ways, at times making global headlines. Take, for instance, the case of supposedly abducted Maria. When media consumers across the globe got to know her face, they also saw the faces of the two adults who were taking care of her: the most widely shared photo portraying the little girl, also featured them (Figure 1.1). The case made worldwide news in October 2013, when Maria, a six-year-old blond girl with white skin, was found in a so-called “Roma camp” in Farsala, central Greece. Media reactions were unanimously scandalized – Maria was *visibly* not the daughter of the two adults with whom she was living. In the twenty-first century, non-biological parenthood is neither unusual nor perceived negatively. In the case of Maria, however, not only was the public reaction that of a big scandal, but the two adults were immediately accused of abduction. The hysteria was so racially connoted that the two adults’ names and ages were not reported by any media source, and Maria’s name was variously (mis)spelled as the Latin “Maria,” the Bulgarian “Maryia,” and the Greek “Μαρία”: what counted, one was led to think, was skin color and physical appearance.

In the photo, moreover, the two anonymized adults look deeply stressed (and perhaps shocked by the fuss happening around them), an emotion that does not fit the dominant standard of “good parenthood.” Coupling darker



Figure 1.1 Maria and her adoptive parents.

Source: Athena Picture Agency.

skin color with inept parenthood, as the picture did, clearly established a racist combination that ultimately became the main subtext of the whole media story. The photo and the media frenzy around it, therefore, are racist products. They are not so in the sense that those who circulated the photo may have had racist assumptions; rather, they are racist primarily in the sense that the very relationships *they* (the photo and the entire media case) establish between the perceived natural (appearance) and the apparent social (behavior) are inscribed in the continuum alongside which human relationships are supposed to work – darker-skinned (ineptness) versus whiter-skinned (innocence). Hence, the main condition for that photo to be globally shared, contributing to the media business, and for the lack of virtually any reaction against anti-black and anti-Romani racism, is that race and racism fundamentally constitute and organize the social world and our perceptions of it. If someone would have raised a voice against that racist discourse, who would have listened, let alone understood? Who – especially in Europe, where the case resonated more vividly – would have admitted that a bluntly racist message was replicating centuries of white supremacy? These questions are of fundamental importance, and a number of answers will emerge in Chapters 6 and 7.

Over the last ten years, the story of Maria's alleged abduction has been just one instance of what can be named a (social) media *racial pornography*: performing racial exclusion, exposed without mediation *and* mass-mediatized,

generating profit.⁵ Accounting for this phenomenon is fundamental, I suggest, in order to understand contemporary segregating mechanisms. Indeed, alongside the changing social meanings of race and its varied and contingent articulations, racist expressions addressing Romani people on a daily basis display a certain degree of homogeneity. While the mythical stories of the past – those of “free spirits,” “exotic dancers,” palm reading, storytelling, etc. – account for a prevalently “historicist” form of racism, beginning in the early 2000s a clear shift can be registered toward a “naturalist” anti-Romani racialist conception.⁶

This shift has brought with it straightforward verbal humiliation and denigration, in the forms of racist slurs in media and political discourse, and racially motivated physical violence, taking the life of tens of Romani people and injuring hundreds across Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic (ERRC 2012). In the spring of 2015, during a primetime TV show, Italian MEP Gianluca Buonanno described Romani people as “the scum of society”;⁷ about a year earlier, I witnessed several racist comments such as “they should be turned into soap bars” and “they are parasites” in a Facebook thread commenting on an anti-racist letter which I and other scholars had addressed to the Italian web magazine *Linkiesta*.⁸ Since the mid-2000s, moreover, racist slurs have repeatedly pervaded the French media and political discourse, especially during and after the 2009–2010 mass expulsion of over 18,000 Romani people back to Romania and Bulgaria (Fassin et al. 2014, 21–63). And the Hungarian mainstream media has steadily turned anti-Roma racism into an acceptable civic expression (Vidra and Fox 2014). This list could go on and on, but these sets of racist expressions should be understood as neither individual opinions nor single discourses.

Similar to the case of Maria and her carers, the very conditions under which racist idioms circulate, and remain largely unchallenged, fully reinforce the structural – and material – dynamics of oppression experienced by Romani people across Europe. They account for those systemic relations between: (a) racist notions, (b) practices with racist implications, and (c) their effects of reinforcing underlying ethnic and racial relations that Essed (1991) has aptly defined as “everyday racism.”

Race, neoliberalism and urban governance

Racial Cities directly engages with neoliberalism and its connections with colonialism, race and urban governance. The root causes of liberalism can be traced back to the beginnings of colonial capitalist exploitation of labor and natural resources (Hall 2011; Venn 2009). As such, neoliberalism does not only refer to economic maximization. Rather – a point I will unpack in Chapters 1 and 6 – it can more comprehensively be viewed as an extension of that logic: a set of ideologies with “pervasive effects of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in and understand the world” (Harvey 2005, 3). Hence,

contrary to what is sometimes understood, neoliberalism requires a firmly intrusive state: only through the legitimate monopoly of violence, engineering what Foucault (2004) called “biopolitics,” can neoliberal doctrines really influence common sense. One recent example of neoliberal statecraft is the post-2008 transformations of global financial (im)balances and transnational ideologies of growth and population governance. The most widespread state response to the 2008 global financial crisis has been a series of cutbacks in public spending, particularly for social care services, resulting in an increase in already burgeoning socio-economic inequalities, social insecurity and precariousness, especially toward the bottom of the class structure (Sassen 2014). The impact of this process has largely resulted in impoverishment, indebtedness and shrinking access to social rights. These trends took a peculiar shape in European cities, expressed primarily in increased poverty concentration and socio-economic spatial segregation across the continent (Madanipour and Weck 2015; Tammaru et al. 2014).

Until the 1980s, the proliferation of marginalized households and their urban territories was typically governed by pouring public money into welfare-state programs. Since then, public actors have increasingly been collaborating with private ones, and their agenda has shifted, gradually yet obviously, toward containing social exclusion rather than curing it. Today, the goal of governance seems largely to be “offering relief not to the poor but *from* the poor by forcibly ‘disappearing’ the most disruptive of them, from the shrinking welfare rolls on the one hand and into the swelling dungeons of the carceral castle on the other” (Wacquant 2010, 204; quoted in Uitermark 2013, 2). In the European context, this process has occurred in various ways, but ultimately with less prominent use of incarceration than in the US, while since 9/11, the penal apparatus for governing the poor has steadily become ever more prominent (Lacey 2013). For instance, a common phenomenon within Belgium, the UK and the Netherlands is the invariable presence of ideologies and practices of control in programs aimed at social integration (Uitermark 2013). In this context, the governance of the urban poor, increasingly beyond the realms of solidarity and inclusion which has been typical of post-WWII welfare states, needs to find new terms of reference, new modalities of action and new rhetorical instruments of self-legitimization. Where does one look for these modalities and terms? How did the governance of the poor prior to WWII occur? These questions lie at the core of contemporary doctrines of social integration, inclusion, cohesion, and control. One answer comes from understanding the dominant meanings and values of poverty – and by extension of its possible remedies – in both the metropole and the colonies between the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

It was Lydia Morris (1996) who, in a seminal debate on *Urban Poverty and the Underclass* (Mingione 1996), recalled the importance of understanding the genealogy of the modern idea of “the urban poor.” The sociologist illuminated that in its original understanding, poverty was a highly moralized

concept, imbued with nineteenth-century social Darwinist conceptions of competition and success. She then recounted that the post-Fordist idea of poverty still today carries this moralized value, as the “common assumption is that state provision has created a culture of dependency which has undermined the work ethic, and has been damaging to the stability of the nuclear family” (Morris 1996, 161–162). Here lies one of the main drivers of neo-liberal statecraft, and by extension neoliberal urban governance, that vividly resonates with Thatcher’s (1981) famous idea: “Economics are the method: the object is to change the heart and soul.” Hence, the nineteenth-century framing of poverty seems to reappear in a different and largely disguised shape in post-1970s Europe.⁹

Against this background, then, the question becomes why has the debate on poverty in Europe largely ignored the hypothesis of systemic and pervasive post-1970s racial thinking and structures? Since race as a “scientific” doctrine emerged in nineteenth-century Europe in strict relation to urban poverty, fear of overcrowding, and related hygiene hazards, why is race assumed to be absent in today’s governance doctrines and practices across Europe? One may argue that this is because the scientific basis of race has been disproved. Yet has race always been exclusively so? Ever since the beginning of colonialism, the idea and practice of classifying humans in hierarchies of moral worth according to perceived lineage has been politically charged and mobilized. Why, then, is the political mobilization of race assumed to be absent from contemporary doctrines and practices vis-à-vis the urban poor in Europe? As I will show at length in Chapter 1, indeed, the continuous borrowings and circulations between colony and metropole since the late nineteenth century appear as a fundamental background against which to understand contemporary forms and mechanisms of segregation. An analysis of segregated and stigmatized “Gypsy urban areas” shows how powerfully tight the connections are between nineteenth-century racial doctrines and contemporary segregation. *Racial Cities* strives to cast a sharp analytical gaze on these often-ignored circulations and connections.

Structure of the research and the book

This book is the result of a multi-focal research across European GUAs that I have been conducting intermittently from 2006 to 2015. Data sources have been numerous and varied. I first drew on several secondary sources including previous segregation research, urban history books, media accounts, including documentaries and online material, and socio-economic statistical data whenever available. My fieldwork was organized in various ways, always aiming at understanding the local mechanisms through which segregation and stigmatization first appeared and could persist. I spent more time in certain cities than others, mainly due to the history of the local GUA(s): for instance, I spent more time in Florence, where two local “Gypsy camps” had been persisting for over

20 years, than in Montreuil, where the local camp was only six years old. For the same reason, I have regularly gone back to all cities except Montreuil. All in all, I have conducted over 120 semi-structured interviews with policymakers at both regional and municipal levels, NGO activists, and families living in and around GUAs. Renting accommodation in or around GUAs has always been a priority for me, in order to become familiar with everyday life. I have spent several hours and days with police officers, Romani and non-Romani leaders, social workers, municipal employees, GUA inhabitants and neighbors, always speaking the local language and trying to gear my approach to the very local context and dynamics I was continually coming across. My informal dialogues, interviews, participant observations and all other encounters aimed at understanding the various roles different people and groups had, within local segregating mechanisms. Alongside personal encounters, I have also accessed local libraries and archives, including state, media and NGO archives, where I could access useful material for tracing the history of local dynamics, which shaped past and current segregating conditions. Data analysis was organized by triangulating these three main types of sources: secondary data, personal encounters and observations, and archive material. Part of my analysis has already appeared in journal articles and book chapters, but for this comprehensive book I have felt the need to delve deeper into the study of colonialism, race and their multiple urban connections with both metropole and contemporary Europe. The reason for this need I hope to clarify throughout the seven chapters into which this book is organized.

Chapter 1 outlines the historical framework, which in turn informs the main theoretical references I have discussed in this Introduction. The chapter is centered on the various and variable circulations and borrowings linking colony, metropole and contemporary Europe. These dynamics shape contemporary “Gypsy urban areas,” which I consider as geographical nodes, connecting different European cities, and historical nodes, linking colony and metropole. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part – *Colony: segregation rationales* – sketches a threefold scheme of rationalities of colonial urban ruling, based on three colonized cities: Rabat under French rule, New Delhi under British rule, and Addis Ababa under Italian rule. This threefold scheme is a key reference for analyzing the four local segregating mechanisms in the following four chapters. The second part – *Metropole: from sedentarization to segregation* – is a historical overview of the formation of stigmatized and segregated GUAs from the late nineteenth century to the last quarter of the twentieth century. This section is concerned with presenting the main lines of connection between dominant representations of the urban poor, the nomad, and “the Gypsy.” From nineteenth-century racist theories, to Nazi and Fascist genocidal policy, through post-1945 divergent trajectories of state sedentarization of “nomads” in the socialist East and the capitalist West, this section underlines the main conditions under which the first GUAs appeared in European cities after 1945.

Chapter 2 discusses the first local segregating mechanism: displacement. By focusing on the 2010 eviction in Cluj-Napoca, which I mentioned at the beginning of the Introduction, the ethnographic analysis shows how economic conditions, everyday representations and public policies shaped the formation and perpetuation of a highly segregated GUA right next to one of the largest garbage dumps in Central Europe. Displacement is scrutinized in both its constitutive dynamics and social effects in terms of the radical worsening of Romani families' socio-economic conditions after the eviction. As I will discuss, the chief racial logic through which displacement unfolds in Cluj has to do with lack of hygiene, which Romani people are deemed to embody.

Chapter 3 empirically turns west, focusing on Pescara, Italy, in an analysis of the second local segregating mechanism: omission. The stigmatized and segregated "Gypsy urban area" in Pescara is Rancitelli, a semi-periphery neighborhood in which the majority of Pescarian (Italian) Romani families live. The ethnography scrutinizes multiple historical and contemporary dimensions and dynamics, including urban policies in the neighborhood, media discourse, local politicians' representations, police enforcement and everyday racial stigma. Against the background of a general lack of political engagement in dealing with Rancitelli's material and symbolic marginality, along with a constant local media criminalization of "Gypsies," political omission seems to be the most effective strategy for perpetuating segregation of Romani people in the neighborhood. Ultimately, the racial connotations of various discourses and social dynamics in the neighborhood render political omission a racist endeavor.

Chapter 4 presents the case of urban camps, which are case studies of the third local segregating mechanisms: containment. The twofold empirical focus is on Florence, Italy, and Montreuil, France, and the discussion shows that containing a racially deemed and articulated threat, that is, Eastern European Romani people, seems to be the main interest of governance actors in view of ensuring social order. First experimented in colonized territories by the French and Spanish empires, camps for civilians have occupied a central role in post-1945 European urban societies. Today, they are still considered preferred solutions for the social integration and cohesion of Romani subjects, who are largely deemed socially deviant.

Chapter 5 discusses the fourth and last local segregating mechanism: cohesion. The empirical focus is on Salford, England, specifically its local "Gypsy camp." Rather than resulting in containment, however, the analysis shows that camps for Romani and Traveller people across the UK are legitimated by the underpinning and pervasive discourse of social and community cohesion. The various legislative texts dealing with spatial control in the UK are the main background against which the empirical analysis unfolds, disclosing the racial imprint of the discourse of cohesion. Originally articulated in terms of a hygiene threat, later of public order, and more recently of the benevolent

provision of “sites,” this discourse is determinant in perpetuating a condition of racial segregation.

Chapter 6 takes stock of the four local segregating mechanisms by linking them to the threefold scheme of colonial segregation rationales I offer in Chapter 1. The socio-historical discussion builds on Carlo Ginzburg’s (1989) concept of “clues,” sketching a number of correspondences between each local segregating mechanism and at least one colonial segregation rationale. I argue that this type of analysis helps to decenter one’s own perspective in understanding the rootedness and longevity of race as a colonial product that informs socio-spatial organization in both colonized and contemporary European cities. This view also sheds light on the local dynamics of suppression, removal and the oblivion of race in contemporary Europe. Racelessness, alongside depoliticization, as I show in the chapter, is thus one of the most crucial conditions under which race can silently drive segregation and maintain it largely undisturbed.

Chapter 7 continues the discussion on racelessness and, building on the various colony-(former) metropole correspondences, sketches the contours of possible European postcolonial urbanisms as lenses through which to detect the multiple correspondences linking today’s European cities with colonized cities. These various “urbanisms” are sites in which one can not only detect the workings of race(lessness) in assembling European cities, but also the privileged conditions for manufacturing archives – intended to be repositories of stories that account for the contemporary European postcolonial condition. *Racial Cities*, ultimately, is one such archive.

Note on names

Following Ian Hancock (2002, xxi), a Romani author and professor of linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin, in this book I use the expressions Romani people and Romanies (and the derivate Romani families etc.) to include all persons variably and contextually identifying with groups acknowledging Romani descent. “Rom,” in Romani language, originally meant “‘married Romani male,’ but [...] [F]or some it kept this interpretation but restricted it so that it applied to themselves and no one else, while for others, it came to mean only ‘husband’” (Hancock 2002, xix). Recently, the word “Roma” has widely been used especially within public policy circles; its popularity has largely turned it into a bureaucratic construction indexing the technicalities of social inclusion measures carried out both by European institutions and national governments. Among Romanies, there are people and groups self-identifying as “Gypsies” (and variations in other languages such as *zingari*, *cigani*, *gitanos*, etc); again following Hancock (2002), I refrain from using this term, because it has originated outside Romani production and has supported, and continues to support, oppression and humiliation. For this reason, and for emphasizing the power of stigma, I use “Gypsy urban areas”

(and “Gypsy camp,” etc.) within inverted commas, while writing GUA(s) without inverted commas for the sake of readability. I have replaced all names of persons that appear in my ethnographic accounts with pseudonyms.

Notes

- 1 Along similar lines, in *The Urban Racial State*, Cazenave (2011) has documented the fundamental conditions under which urbanity, class and race intersect in the United States, leading to racist partitionings.
- 2 See, among others, Ladányi and Szelényi (2006); Vitale and Claps (2010); Mionel and Neguț (2011); Szalai and Zentai (2014); Filcak and Steger (2014); and Vincze (2015).
- 3 This study introduces an interesting complexity, showing that the lower segregation levels in the UK than in the US relate only to people of African descent; the reverse is true in the case of people of Asian descent.
- 4 For a more comprehensive analysis of the various shifts from colony to metropole upon decolonization, see Comaroff (1998). An interesting framework for comparatively studying socio-spatial segregation as the heritage of empires, for example in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and the Balkans, has been developed by Anderson (2008).
- 5 I take the idea of “pornography” from Wacquant (2009).
- 6 The difference between naturalist and historicist racial rule and conceptions is developed at length by Goldberg (2002, esp. chapter 4). See Lentin (2008) for a reflection on this issue in the European context.
- 7 An Italian court later condemned Gianluca Buonanno to pay 12,000 euros to the two associations that had sued him.
- 8 In the letter we expose how one story about “Gypsy camps” in Rome reproduced criminalization also by adopting a performative noir-like writing style for describing the dilapidated housing conditions in which a number of Romani families were living. This kind of performative style speaks to the media pornography I introduced above. The letter has been published on the magazine website under the title “Quando scrivete di rom siete razzisti.”
- 9 Interestingly, Dorling (2015, 384) has noted that

Growing class segregation means a return to Victorian inequalities where murder is relatively common in what were called slum areas, but hardly known among the gentry. [...] [Today] murder rates have returned to what they were then.