

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of
Central European University in part fulfilment of the
Degree of Master of Science**

**Environmental Injustice: A Case Study On Roma Waste Pickers And Collectors in
Albania.**

Ina MAJKO

July, 2019

Budapest

Notes on copyright and the ownership of the intellectual property rights:

(1) Copyright in text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies (by any process) either in full, or of extracts, may be made only in accordance with instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European University Library. Details may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made. Further copies (by any process) made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the permission (in writing) of the Author.

(2) The ownership of any intellectual property rights which may be described in this thesis is vested in the Central European University, subject to any prior agreement to the contrary, and may not be made available for use by third parties without the written permission of the University, which will prescribe the terms and conditions of any such agreement.

(3) For bibliographic and reference purposes this thesis should be referred to as:

Majko, I. 2019. *Environmental Injustice: A Case Study on Roma Waste Pickers and Collectors in Albania*. Master of Science thesis, Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy, Central European University, Budapest.

Further information on the conditions under which disclosures and exploitation may take place is available from the Head of Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy.

Author's declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Ina MAJKO

ABSTRACT

The management of municipal solid waste is an issue for most of the cities in the world. In developing countries such as Albania, the municipal waste management system was not always successfully managed, therefore, after the 90s, Informal waste pickers mostly from a Roma origin started to collect the recycling materials, to sell them and make a living out of it. However, in 2016, the Municipality of Tirana privatized the waste management system in the city, and 2018 passed a decision in which prohibited the waste collection from unauthorized people. As a consequence, the informal Roma waste pickers were left out of the system without any solution. This thesis aims to analyze the privatization of Waste Management System in Tirana, Albania by using the lenses of Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism and focusing on the recognition, participation, fair distribution and the role of the race of the Roma waste pickers in Tirana. The study used qualitative data and Maximum Variation Sampling in order to collect people's perceptions over the privatization and the formalization process. After comparing the finding with the existing literature, it can be said that the privatization and formalization of WMS in Tirana constitutes an environmental injustice because it lacked participation, recognition, and fair distribution. Besides, it constitutes also environmental racism because even though the motives were not racial, the race played an important role and the decision affected the majority of this community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my thankfulness to all the people that helped and assisted me practically and emotionally to put my ideas into words.

My deep and sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Prof. Tamara Steger, for her invaluable guidance and feedback regarding my work. Also, I would like to thank her for our endless conversions about Environmental Justice in general and Roma in particular, which inspired and motivated me in choosing my thesis topic.

I am extremely grateful to the Romani Studies Program and the Department of Environmental Science and Policy for the opportunity to study and deepen my knowledge in the field of Roma and Environment. Hope I have made them proud.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my family (Majko, Liljana, Marsela, and Edlira) for their unconditional love, caring, and sacrifices in educating me. In addition, I would like to express to my mother-in-law, Kyria Fani, my appreciation for her emotional support and her amazing cookies.

Also, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my friends in CEU, especially Klea and Irena for the funny, challenging, and stressful moment we had together.

Lastly, I would like to thank the love of my life for listening to all my dramas and fears and for making me believe that I am stronger than them. Thank you, Theodoros Alexandridis, for teaching me how to be a better person.

Table of contents

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Table of contents.....	v
List of Abbreviations	viii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – Theoretical Background	5
1.1 Introduction.....	5
1.2 The origin of Environmental Justice.....	5
1.3 Environmental Justice and Roma.....	6
1.4 Theorizing the environmental justice concept	7
1.5 Theoretical framework.....	10
1.6 Conclusion	11
Chapter 2 – Tirana as a Case Study	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Waste management system (WMS) in Albania	12
2.3 Roma in Albania and their association with waste collection.	15
2.4 Roma in Tirana as waste collectors.	18

2.5 The present-day (2019) situation of Roma waste collectors in Tirana.	20
2.6 Conclusion	21
Chapter 3 – Methodology	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Research Design.....	22
3.3 Method	23
3.4 Study Sample	23
3.5 Data collection	25
3.6 Ethics and Research limitations	26
3.7 Data Analysis	26
3.8 Conclusion	27
Chapter 4 - Waste Management System in Tirana	28
4.1 Waste Management System during Communism.....	28
4.2 The rise of informal recycling businesses.....	31
4.3 The privatization of Waste Management System in Tirana.....	36
Chapter 5- Recognition of Roma Waste Pickers	38
Chapter 6 – Public Participation of the Roma waste collectors in Albania.	44
Chapter 7- Fair Distribution and Roma waste collectors in Tirana	49
Chapter 8- The role of Race.....	54
Conclusion	58

Bibliography or Reference List.....	60
-------------------------------------	----

List of Abbreviations

EJ Environmental Justice

ER Environmental racism

EJM Environmental Justice Movement

WMS Waste Management System

CEE Central and Eastern Europe

Introduction

“The biggest challenge cities are facing nowadays is the management of municipal solid waste which is related to population growth (Khajuria, Yamamoto, & Morioka, 2010) and increasing urbanization.” (Hoornweg & Bhada-Tata, 2012). Aware of this, cities allocate to the departments of waste management a considerable budget and human resources in order to ensure proper treatment of urban waste (Hoornweg & Bhada-Tata, 2012).

However, there are also countries in which the municipalities do not always successfully manage the waste. This fact has opened space for informal waste pickers and collectors to develop and engage in recycling activity by picking or collecting reusable materials from the municipal garbage bins and sell in exchange of an income. In some developing countries, informal waste pickers collect from 50 to 100 percent of the waste without being employed or reimbursed by the municipality (Dias, 2012).

Millions of people protect the environment and the people by reducing daily the release of gas emissions and preventing environmental pollution by working as waste collectors (Woman in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing WIEGO, n.d.). Despite all the benefits that this activity brings to the economy of the city but also to its environment, the people who perform this work are not yet appreciated enough from the society because they are mostly uneducated, poor and marginalized (WIEGO, n.d.). Belonging to the lowest social strata and enjoying limited if non-existent recognition and support for their work in what is becoming a lucrative market, they also increasingly run the risk of being left out from the waste management system due to the privatization of this activity from powerful corporate entities (WIEGO, n.d.).

For instance, in Europe and more specifically in the Balkan region the majority of informal waste pickers are of Roma origin, and they play a fundamental role in recycling waste (Vaccari & Perteghella, 2016; Rosa & Cirelli, 2018). 'Roma people are the biggest ethnic minority in Europe,' and also the most discriminated against ("Roma," 2012). The activity in which they are engaged in reinforces the stigma that the non-Roma society attaches to them. Therefore, Roma waste pickers have a negative image and are often either ignored or perceived as an eyesore, if not as outright criminal elements (Gutberlet, 2010). According to Rose and Cirelli (2018), Roma live in a parallel world to that of non-Roma, which means that they are socially excluded, segregated, and invisible. In some cases, they are not even legally visible since they lack documents to be officially recognized as lawful citizens (Vaccari & Perteghella, 2016). For this reason, the only moment when they became socially but also legally visible is when they collect, transport and trade the waste (Rosa & Cirelli, 2018).

Similar to the situation in Europe, 84% of the waste pickers in Albania belong to the Roma community (Environmental Center for Protection, Education and Rehabilitation EPER, 2012). The fall of communism created room for Roma to engage in this activity since they were unskilled and left out of the labor market. Doing this job exposed them to the same prejudices faced by Roma in Europe; thus Roma in Albania engaging in waste collection are considered as "thieves" by the public since the activity that they perform is informal (EPER, 2012). The situation worsened when the municipality of Tirana privatized the recycling activity by banning and criminalizing the illegal waste picking. The majority of the informal waste pickers who were predominantly Roma were left out of the formalization scheme which created to them a social and economic damage.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse whether the privatization and formalization of the waste business in Tirana constitutes an environmental injustice or/and environmental racism for

Roma community in Tirana based on citizens' perception. This research used the working definition of Steger (2007) about environmental justice and the definition of Bullard (1994) about environmental racism as theoretical framework in order to detect the possible ways in which injustice might manifest. Since the study is focused on people's perceptions, qualitative data and Maximum Variation Sampling were used.

This thesis intersects two important issues, respectively Roma and environmental justice. Moreover, and in light of the lack of research in regard to environmental injustice on Roma communities not only in Albania but generally in Europe, this thesis will also attempt to fill in this gap. The novelty of this thesis is that in contrast to other pieces of research focusing on the occupational hazards of waste picking, this thesis will analyse the privatization of an environmental activity such as recycling through the lenses of active participation, recognition, fair distribution and discrimination.

I chose this topic because I want to voice the environmental injustices that Roma waste collectors face in Albania. My work may not be perfect, but it is a start and will create the base for future research in this field, which hopefully will raise awareness and positively change the situation of Roma waste collectors in Tirana.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the existing literature on environmental justice and environmental racism. The second chapter describes the chosen case study by looking first at the changes in the waste management system in Tirana, second the theoretical background of Roma in Albania and third the research problem will be described. In the third chapter, I present the methodology approach and research design. The fourth chapter analyzes the changes in the waste management system in Tirana from communism until 2019. The fifth discusses the lack of recognition of Roma waste pickers in Tirana by looking at the cultural domination, non-recognition, and

disrespect that the privatization of the waste management system brought to Roma waste collectors. The sixth chapter will analyze the access to the participation of Roma regarding the environmental municipal decision No. 156/2018, which prohibit the informal waste picking by looking at power relation and relationship dimensions. The penultimate chapter will argue the lack of fair distribution of the social, economic and environmental harm that the privatization of the waste management system in the society of Tirana by looking at the exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation of Roma waste collectors. The last chapter will examine the role of race in the privatization process, and in the end, conclusions will be drawn.

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Background

1.1 Introduction

The objective of this section is to present a short overview of the origins of Environmental Justice, with a special focus on Environmental Justice and the Roma. It will also attempt to approach theoretically the environmental justice concept and provide a theoretical framework.

1.2 The origin of Environmental Justice

Although Environmental Justice (EJ) is a very broad concept, there are three dimensions from which we can approach it (Filcak, 2007). The first dimension concerns the Justice for the future generations, the second seeks to reach Justice related to non-human beings, and the last dimension, also called the social dimension of Justice, deals with humans and their relation to the environment (Steger, 2007). The third dimension focuses on the role that the environment plays to human rights by discovering connections between the environmental problem and the socio-economic aspect of development (Filcak, 2007).

Before defining EJ, it is important to mention the three most important turning points which created the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) in the world. The birthplace of the modern EJM is Warren County in the United States in America (McGurty, 2007). The US Government wanted to build a hazardous waste landfill in this location inhabited mostly by poor people and people of African origin (McGurty, 2007). It was this event that led to the creation of a social movement that waged a four years campaign against the decision to build the landfill (McGurty, 2007).

Thanks to the Warren County case, scholars and activists started to pay more attention to the locations in which hazardous landfills or other environmental harms were placed. This led to the second turning pointing, the publication in 1987 of the Waste and Race report (The United Church of Christ & Commission for Racial Justice, 1987). This was a powerful document report which revealed that unfair distribution of the environmental harms was correlated to race, noting that three out of five people of African and Hispanic origin lived near a waste site (“Environmental Justice History”).

It was this increasing realization that led to the third turning point, the holding in 1991 of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. The Summit brought together all people of color such as the Africans, Hispanics, and Native Americans who joined their voices in demanding EJ and a better environment for all (Alston, 2010)

1.3 Environmental Justice and Roma

Environmental Justice (EJ) as a concept was born in the US in the 1980s. In Albania, the concept is very new and little research has been carried out in that respect. As a post-communist country, Albania has not paid close attention to EJ but it is hardly the only country in this respect. Lack of EJ and environmental discrimination of different minorities such as Roma are common issues in most of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (Varga, Kiss, & Ember, 2002)

Indeed, research on EJ of Roma minority in CEE is limited. Although governments, pushed by International Organizations, started paying attention to Roma integration in most of their strategies, they nearly never mention EJ as a distinct pillar to focus on. Usually, the EJ agenda falls under the field of access to housing, and of course, such a viewpoint on EJ drastically narrows the discourse about it (Filcak, 2007).

This however might be changing as some (limited) research has been recently undertaken by different stakeholders. For example, the European Roma Right Center (ERRC) conducted research in 2017 regarding the access to water of several Roma settlements in Europe. The findings showed that access to water and sanitation is not guaranteed in many Roma households throughout Europe (ERRC, 2017)

In the past, the scholars who voiced for the first time the environmental discrimination of Roma in CEE are Richard Filcak and Tamara Steger. Both of them have produced academic papers and reports (Steger, 2007; Filcak, 2007; Harper, Steger, & Filcak, 2009; Filcak, 2012) in which they describe and analyze the different types of environmental injustices faced by Roma in CEE. Thus, Roma are placed near waste landfills and are located in very polluted areas (Steger 2007), they lack access to water and sanitation (ERRC 2017), they lack recognition and participation (Filcak 2007) and live ‘beyond the pale’ (Filcak 2012).

1.4 Theorizing the environmental justice concept

Since ancient times, the notion of Justice has drawn the attention of society, and it has been changed and transformed many times until now (Hendrics, 2018). The typical mainstream definition of Justice was given by Rawls (1971), who defined it as the fair distribution of benefits in society. Drawn by this definition of Justice, also the EJ was initially defined as the fair distribution of environmental benefits and harms (Schlosberg, 2004).

However, throughout time, scholars and environmental activists felt the need to expand the definition beyond the distributional aspect of Justice which focuses solely on the fair distribution of goods and bads (Filcak 2007). They also added the procedural aspect of it, which concentrates on the equal treatment of all people regarding procedural decisions (Filcak 2007).

One of the first scholars who opposed the mainstream definition of EJ was Nancy Fraser. She argued that Justice has two elements that are redistribution and recognition, which are independent of each other but also very interrelated (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Fraser (2003) described that the lack of distribution is the result of lack of ‘socio-economic structures’ such as ‘exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation.’ At the same time, the lack of recognition is a consequence of the lack of ‘representation, interpretation, and communication’ which leads to ‘cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect’ (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Influenced by the work of Fraser and other scholars, Schlosberg (2004) came up with a three-fold definition of EJ. Environmental Justice for him consists of three factors, which are respectively fair-distribution, recognition, and participation. In his papers (2004) and his book (2007), Schlosberg describes the importance of defining EJ not only as of the fair distribution of goods and harms among people but also as the recognition of all the needs of different individuals or social groups and as their equal access to information and participation. Schlosberg (2004) emphasize that the lack of recognition of social, cultural and institutional differences leads to the lack of information and active participation in decision-making processes which consequently will lead to an unfair distribution of environmental harms and benefits. Therefore, in order to ensure EJ in the society, the decision-makers need to acknowledge the social and cultural differences of all the affected groups and guarantee that everyone’s right to be informed and participate actively in the decision-making process has been respected (Schlosberg, 2004). Only by taking into consideration recognition and participation, a fair distribution of environmental harms and benefits in a society can be ensured (Schlosberg, 2004).

As Filcak (2007) argues, environmental injustices are mostly attributed to the lack of procedural Justice. Distributive Justice is considered as the outcome and the procedural

Justice as the process (Filcak 2007). Both Filcak (2007) and Schlosberg (2004) agree that in order to ensure the outcome (fair distribution), we should focus on the process (recognition and participation). Even though the mechanism exists to ensure the participation of all in the decision-making processes, usually not everyone gets involved (Filcak 2007). Since is not only a matter of creating a system but also of watching closely who has more and who have less access to institutions, whose voices are being heard and whose are being ignored (Filcak 2007).

However, finding the roots of environmental injustice is not that easy. Lashley (2010) discusses that environmental justice problems are very complex as such; also, the assessment or analysis of such problems requires a complex approach. Therefore, in order to assess an environmental justice conflict three main themes should be investigated: (I) the decision-making process by evaluating the level of participation, (II) the relationships dimension by investigating the history of other factors that contribute to the relationship of the involved parties and (III) what role plays the 'race, class and disempowerment' in an environmental conflict (Lashley, 2010). To conclude, it is impossible to separate environmental Justice from social, economic, historical, public health, and racial Justice (Lashley, 2010).

Since the topic of race was touched above, it is worth noting that it is almost impossible to study EJ literature without encountering references to the concept of Environmental Racism (ER). Indeed, some scholars do not separate these two concepts while others such as Bullard (1993; 1994; 2000) have dedicated most of their academic work to gathering and presenting the facts which proved the disproportional distribution of harms and benefits among people in color and whites in the United States of America. Based on that, Bullard came up with the following definition of ER:

“Environmental racism refers to any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color” (Bullard 1994 p. 451).

In other words, ER, according to Bullard, is any decision which intentionally or unintentionally puts individuals, groups, or communities at risk just because they belong to a specific race or color.

1.5 Theoretical framework

For the aim of this thesis, I will use the following working definition of EJ:

A condition of environmental Justice exists when environmental risks, hazards, investments, and benefits are equally distributed without direct or indirect discrimination at all jurisdictional levels and when access to environmental investments, benefits, and natural resources are equally distributed; and when access to information, participation in decision-making, and access to Justice in environment-related matters are enjoyed by all (Steger,2007 p.10).

In other words, environmental Justice occurs only when the distribution of harms and benefits are equally distributed and without discrimination in any kind of forms or levels; and when all the people have the same access to information and participation.

Since my research will focus on the four areas of fair distribution, recognition, participation, and discrimination, it is important to clarify what I mean when I use them.

1-As fair distribution, I understand the equal distribution of social, economic, and environmental benefits and harms in society.

2-As recognition I understand the acknowledgement and respect of the history, culture, tradition, different needs or specificities of all the social groups and communities in the society.

3-As participation, I understand the equal access to information and participation in the environmental decision-making process by taking into account the special needs that specific groups might have. For example, even though all the people can have access to written information, only the once who know how to read will be able to access it.

4-As lack of discrimination, I understand any kind of environmental decision which does not create any kind of social, economic, and environmental harm to any minority or particular social groups in society.

1.6 Conclusion

This section has sought to provide some background on the emergence of Environmental Justice and take stock of the state of play in scholarly and other literature of the issue of Environmental Justice and the Roma. It has then presented the different theoretical approaches to environmental justice and concluded by adopting a working definition of Environmental Justice.

Chapter 2 – Tirana as a Case Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present an overview of the Waste Management System (WMS) in Albania with a focus in Tirana, from the communist era until 2019 in order to understand the shift from a public and informal WMS into a private and formal one. Furthermore, since the majority of waste pickers in Albania are Roma, it is necessary to understand the social context that has created the possibility for the Roma to be involved in the waste recycling market. Therefore, this section will outline two historical periods and the treatment of the Roma during them. Firstly, the period before and during communism will be presented, with an emphasis on how the Roma were treated during the time of the Ottoman Empire, the German occupation during WWII and then the communist regime in Albania. Secondly, I will provide an overview of the period after the collapse of communism and will attempt to explain the socio-economic changes that pushed Roma to become waste collectors/pickers. In addition, the recycling activity carried out by Roma will be described and, in the end, the problem which I am interested to research will be stated.

2.2 Waste management system (WMS) in Albania

Reviewing the laws in Albania, the WMS was established by the Albanian Socialist Government back in the early 60s (Mekulli Press, 2019). In that time the families were separating waste at source, and they were allowed to sell the reusable materials such as glass, paper and metal to the state companies which needed them in exchange of money (Mekulli Press, 2019). Therefore, even though the motive to recycle was only economical, during the

communist era, Albania had an efficient, eco-friendly Waste Management System (WMS) (Mekulli Press, 2019).

After the collapse of communism however, this successful scheme unfortunately stopped functioning. Under the new democratically elected Government in the early 90s, the operation of WMS was delegated to local authorities which were made fully responsible for its implementation (Ali, Bodinaku, & Kadilli, 2016). During this period people stopped recycling at the source and started disposing of waste without separating it. Therefore, the urban solid WMS consisted of a single stream, transport and storage at the landfills (Ali et al., 2016).

Another factor that compounded the problem was the rapid urbanization period of Albania during the same time and the corresponding increase in the generation of (urban) waste (Altin, 2015). As the state was unable to deal with the generated waste, an informal system was created, organized in four stages (Environmental Center for Protection, Education and Rehabilitation EPER, 2012). The first stage consisted of the individual collectors, mainly Roma people who picked up the waste from the garbage bins or elsewhere and separated them (EPER 2012). The second stage consisted of the collection points in which the Roma went and deposited the collected recyclable material in exchange for money (EPER 2012). The third and the fourth stages were large collection centers and large recycling companies respectively which dealt with the waste at the national level (EPER, 2012).

Even though the informal sector contributed to the environment by reducing the amount of waste dumped into the landfills and to the economy by saving the municipalities' budget that would otherwise be allocated to recycling (Medina, 2008), in Albania this activity was always illegal because waste is considered to constitute municipal property (Law No. 8904, dated 21.03.1996 "On Public Waste Disposal") Although the law regarding the ownership of

waste was adopted in 1996, the informal recycling activity was taking place undisturbed until 2016 when the municipality of Tirana decided to privatize the waste management sector by allowing six small private companies to operate in the eastern and western outskirts of Tirana and one public-private company named Eco-Tirana to operate within Tirana in the so-called “Red zone” (Municipality of Tirana.) In this thesis I will focus on Eco-Tirana as the main waste management company in Tirana. This company is formed as a Private-Public Partnership between the municipality of Tirana and the Municipality of Verona, Italy with the participation of the private sector (Albanian Supreme State Audit, 2016) and is carrying out most of the waste management of Tirana.

It is important to mention that shortly after the privatization agreement, a 17-year-old boy was found dead in the landfill of in one of the small private companies (Albanian Supreme State Audit, 2016). The media claimed that he was working for the company without a contract and he died as a consequence of occupational hazards, however, no one was ultimately held responsible for his death (Cela, 2016).

Furthermore, with the privatization (or the formalization) of WMS, the informal activity became a problem because persons partaking in it were competing for recycleable materials with the formal companies. Therefore in 2017 a considerable number of informal small and big collection points was closed down as their activities were, on the basis of Law 81/2017 “On Protected Areas” was considered illegal and harmful for the environment. Nevertheless, even though the majority of the informal collection points was closed, no real attempts were made to stop the activity of the informal waste collectors until 2018.

Thus, on December 2018 the municipality of Tirana passed the decision No 156/2018 in which in the article 11 “On administrative offenses in the field of environment” is stated:

“Searching, manual selection, and picking waste from the bin done by unauthorized people is an administrative offense”. (p.7)

In other words, every person who searches, collects and transports recycled materials from the garbage bins without a permit is committing an environmental administrative offense. As a result, all the people who are engaged in the informal recycling activity in Tirana are running the risk of incurring fines under this law.

Even though the recycling activity is formally banned, there are still Roma waste pickers which perform this activity illegally. Usually they are caught by the police which confiscate the recycleable materials they had collected and in cases in which Roma are unable to pay the fine for the environmental administrative offense they are escorted to the police station.

2.3 Roma in Albania and their association with waste collection.

The Roma community is an ethnolinguistic minority of people originally from India which came in Albania around the 15th century (Koinova, 2000). Controversies exist regarding the way Roma were treated in Albania under the Ottoman rule. Some define the treatment as lenient (De Soto & Gedeshi, 2002) while others claim that during this period Roma were considered second class citizens as regardless of whether they were Muslim (and in principle exempt from taxation, Roma still had to pay a tax to Sultan only because they belonged to that community (Koinova, 2000). In any case, a social gap between Roma and non-Roma in Albania did exist at that time and remained even after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Koinova, 2000). At the same time however, and despite the existence of this social gap and the anti-Roma prejudice that existed in the Albanian society, the Roma in Albania were not affected by the genocide that took place in World Word II against the Roma. On the contrary,

there is ample evidence that Roma were allowed to join forces with ethnic Albanians in the fight against the German occupation forces (De Soto, Beddies, & Gedeshi, 2005).

Following the establishment of the communist regime after the end of the war in 1945, the general perception among scholars is that during this period the status of Roma was ameliorated (Koinova, 2000; De Soto & Gedeshi, 2002; De Soto, et al. 2005). This belief finds ground on the fact that in this period, Roma were employed, had housing rights and access to social services such as education and health (Koinova 2000). However, Koinova (2000) also mentions the other part of the coin, that is that Roma endured a process of assimilation due to the Communist policies that wanted Albania to be a homogeneous country. Although Roma in Albania, similar to other Roma in the former communist countries, have a nostalgic feeling for the socialist period (Kamm, 1993), this does not mean that in that regime the discrimination and exclusion of the Roma had disappeared. Thus, although, Roma were included in the centralized labor market they were still assigned to perform unskilled work which did not require any professional background (Koinova, 2000; De Soto & Gedeshi, 2002; De Soto, et al. 2005). Roma were therefore left without any particular level of education or work skill that would have helped them not only to find better jobs but also to increase their income.

In this respect, it should be noted that, the socio-economic parameters of the country changed drastically and immediately after the fall of the communist regime in 1991 (De Soto et al., 2005). These changes led, either directly or indirectly, to the collapse of centralized economy and the emergence of a free (indeed, one would say lawless) market and the awakening of different cultural identities that were oppressed under the former regime (De Soto et al., 2005). Even though these changes influenced the entire Albanian society, they had a more adverse impact on the Roma community as they directly violating their fundamental rights

(Lucero & Collum, 2006). As a consequence, the majority of the Roma population in Albania were left out of the labor market due to their incapability to adjust with the requirements of the new market because they were untrained and uneducated (De Soto et al., 2005; Koinova 2000). In addition, since people were free to proclaim their identity, an increase of hatred toward the Roma community was noted during the transition period in Central and Eastern European countries (Lucero & Collum, 2006). Although, there were not many hate incidents against Roma during the '90s in Albania as in other Central European countries, the Roma were still perceived as inferior to other ethnic groups and faced institutionalized discrimination which restricted their access to social services (Koinova 2000). Facing these problems, Roma in Albania soon developed two coping mechanisms to withstand these socio-economic changes; the first consisted of migrating to other countries and the second (regarding those Roma who remained in Albania) consisted of engaging in informal activities and jobs such as begging, playing music on the street, collecting recycleable materials and selling second-hand clothes (De Soto et al., 2005).

Nowadays, the situation of Roma remains problematic and the gap between Roma and non-Roma has not yet been closed. The latest reports reveal that 51.8% of Roma are illiterate, while only 2.8% of Albanians suffer the same fate (Simon, Gallanxhi, & Dhoru, 2015). In terms of housing and living conditions, 15% of Roma population live in barracks under unacceptable living conditions (Pasha, Nelaj, Taco, & Bala, 2014). Lacking education or useful market skills, living in conditions characterized by lack access to basic needs such as water and sanitation, (Pasha et al., 2014) and facing widespread discrimination (Steger, 2007), Roma experience considerable problems in integrating into the labor market. More than three-quarters of the Roma population were unemployed in 2011 (Simon, Gallanxhi, & Dhoru, 2015). The two coping mechanisms that the Roma developed as a temporary solution

to counter from the economic crisis following the end of the socialist regime became throughout the years, the only real choice they have in order to be able to make a living.

2.4 Roma in Tirana as waste collectors.

There is a lack of scholarly literature regarding waste collectors in Albania. The majority of the academic papers are focused on how to improve the WMS in Albania (Alcani, Dorri, & Hoxha, 2010). Most of them (Ali et al., 2016) acknowledge the fact that the informal activity exists and is performed by members of the Roma community without however going into any detail or analyzing the phenomenon.

More worrying however is the fact that the Albanian state has not yet conducted any assessment on waste collectors and specifically on Roma waste collectors. Even though the Ministry of the Environment was required under the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 to conduct an assessment regarding the Roma waste pickers in Albania, on the basis of the latest progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan, this requirement has not been fulfilled (Government of Albania, 2018). The lack of data complicates my work but also make this research very important because it will, if only partially, address this lack of information by producing new knowledge which can be used in future research.

Until now the most comprehensive study was conducted in 2012 from the Environmental Center for Protection, Education and Rehabilitation (EPER). According to it, the number of Roma in Albania varies from 80,000 to 120,000, and over 92% of the Roma population worked as waste collectors. Around 62% of them were men between the age of 26 to 35 (EPER, 2012).

The report “Roma and waste recycling in Tirana” (2012) revealed that Roma worked under challenging conditions for up to 8-hours per day. According to the report, waste collection is done mainly by hands and without protective means either because they lacked information about what tools to use or, they had no financial opportunity to buy them (EPER 2012).

Waste pickers collected recyclable materials from street garbage containers on neighborhoods, landfills and former industrial areas (EPER 2012). Around 88% collected used iron and cans, about 81% accumulated aluminum, 70% gathered copper, 51.1% collected various plastics, 7.8% accumulated glass and only 1.1% collected paper (EPER 2012). They collected materials were kept close to their homes and usually at the end of the day, they transported them at the collection points (EPER 2012). The transportation was done by horses, carts and modified motorbikes (EPER 2012).

In addition, they sold these recyclable materials to the collection points for small amounts of money (EPER, 2012). The daily income of the Roma collectors ranged from a minimum of 1.5 Euros per day to a maximum of 35 euros per day (EPER 2012). A Roma family in which at least two members worked could expect to have an income of earns an about 420 euros per month, which is still a meager income to sustain the family (EPER 2012) bearing in mind the fact that Roma families are large ones.

Even though Roma in Albania contribute significantly to the protection of the environment by assisting in recycling, from the institutional point of view they are considered part of the grey economy. Consequently, the public often considers Roma as criminals because they collect recycled materials from the municipal trash bins which are a property of the municipality.

2.5 The present-day (2019) situation of Roma waste collectors in Tirana.

The privatization of WMS in Tirana on the one hand solved the issue of the waste treatment and management but on the other hand left without any means of income thousands of waste collectors. This problem was pointed out by a Roma activist who claimed in an interview that the privatization of WMS affected nearly 15,000 Roma people (Mitre, 2016). As it was stated above, the Roma community in Albania is a very vulnerable group living in difficult conditions and for them waste collection was their main source of income. Consequently, even though the privatization process and more specifically the decision No. 156/2018 was general and applied to all the citizens of Tirana, the main ethnic - social group it truly affected were the Roma people.

There is a lack of attention from the mass media regarding the Roma people left out of the system without any solution and the only source of information can be taken from the social media in which often short videos of police confronting Roma waste pickers are uploaded (*Citizens for the Park*, 2019) The videos on the one hand help to raise awareness regarding the side effects of the formalization of the WMS but on the other reinforce once again the stereotypes regarding the criminal nature and predisposition of the Roma.

In light of the above, this thesis aims to analyze the privatization and formalization process of WMS in Tirana from the lenses of environmental justice and environmental discrimination. The topic chosen admittedly does not concern a mainstream case of environmental justice in which research usually focuses on the distribution of typical environmental harm and benefit such as water, air, and so on. Rather, I am researching the fair distribution of a different kind of benefit, namely the recycleable materials and I am investigating the recognition and participation on the environmental decision-making process of Roma in Albania.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter aimed at providing an outline of the changes in the WMS in Tirana from the communist period until 2019. During communism the WMS was very efficient because people were required by the state to recycle at the source (as well as because presumably the waste generated was rather limited). After the communist system's collapse the WMS was not working efficiently thus opening space for the informal waste system to thrive until 2017. At that time the municipality of Tirana privatized and formalized the WMS by putting an end to the informal waste collection activities that had arisen almost spontaneously. The chapter also gave an overview of the main problems that Roma in Albania endured from the Ottoman Empire until the present day. It maintained that two social conditions prompted Roma to be overrepresented among waste pickers of Albania. Firstly, the continuous and continuing discrimination they suffered (and continue to do) and secondly, the lack of alternative professional skills. Even though these are two different reasons, they are a consequence of each other. Social discrimination against Roma was the reason why during communism they were assigned to perform mainly menial jobs. The failure of the communist regime to ensure Roma with equal access to education and work opportunities in turn led to them lacking any useful market skill; as a result, they are perceived and viewed as less valuable for, if not a burden on, the Albanian society and treated like second class citizens. It was this situation that led 94% of the Roma population in Albania to engage in waste collection. For this reason, the privatization and the banning of the waste picking activity in Tirana caused a social problem as it led to the weakening of the social and financial position of an already marginalized social group such as the Roma waste collectors in Tirana. The case study used the environmental justice and environmental discrimination lenses to analyze the formalization of the WMS in Tirana

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to analyse people's perception over the privatization and formalization of recycling activity in Tirana and to detect whether the way how the privatization took place constitutes an environmental injustice or/and environmental racism for Roma community in Tirana. This chapter will outline the research design and methodology used. Since the thesis is focused on perceptions, it was decided that a qualitative study will be especially useful since it gives content based on which it will be drawn conclusions.

Further, it will be introduced the purpose of this thesis and the motivation behind the chosen philosophical paradigm. Also, it will be outlined the study sample, data collection, methods, ethics, and limitations behind that. In the end, it will be defined how the data found was analysed.

3.2 Research Design

Since the study will try to find “the truth” based on people's experiences, a interpretivism approach is a well-suited paradigm because this philosophical pattern indicates that the people's experience or background can comprehend the understanding of the world (Bryant, 2011). In this case, any other paradigm such as positivism in which knowledge is based on facts would not work since this study focuses on people's belief and not a measured variable. Thereupon the reality in this study is viewed as a social construct, and the knowledge is considered to be subjective. Due to the chosen ontology and epistemology, qualitative data were used. However, quantitative methods might have worked if the study would have a more extensive scope, but in this case, the focus is not on the numbers but on the deep

understanding of what the citizens of Tirana believe. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of data, I chose my sampling wisely by trying to include a prototype of all the target groups. As such, this study will not represent a one-sided story but will indicate the perception of waste pickers, non-waste pickers, Roma, and non-Roma people who live in Tirana.

3.3 Method

As it was stated above the study is based on qualitative research methods because it answers best the research question. The nature of the latter is somewhat investigative because it requires not only to know what people think in regard to the privatization and formalization of the recycled business in Tirana but also the reasons why they think so. Therefore, in these conditions, in-depth interviews were more likely to make the respondents elaborate on their answers and provide the needed data for this study. In-depth-interviews were used as instruments to get information that after were compared with the threefold definition of Schlosberg regarding environmental Justice and Bullard definition of environmental discrimination.

3.4 Study Sample

At this point it is essential to define which were the criteria that helped on choosing the proper sampling. By recalling the aim of this thesis which is to collect people's belief about a specific case, it was found out that Maximum Variation Sampling is the best technique since allows to have a variety of different opinions in a quite small number of in-depth interviews (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, for the sample size, the study aimed for quality and not quantity, which means, I approached people who I believed would give a valuable contribution to my thesis.

The sample of this research is focused on Roma and non-Roma people. Thirteen interviews were conducted in which six out of them belonged to the Roma community. The sample as originally prepared aimed at including all the possible actors such as local authorities, NGOs, academics, recycling companies, informal waste pickers, formal ones, and other citizens not directly involved in this case.

Although I could not manage to fulfil this inclusive scheme successfully because the recycled companies did not respond to my invitations to an interview, I did manage to secure interviews from most of the other stakeholders. The profile of the respondents chosen for this study is the following:

- 1- The first respondent was an employee who works for the municipality of Tirana as the Roma focal point.
- 2- The second and the third interviewees were municipal counsellors who were involved in the process of passing the municipal Decision No. 156/2018. They have the same position, but they run for different parties, respectively, the party in power and the opposition party.
- 3- The fourth respondent was a non-Roma academic whose field of expertise is the Roma minority in Albania
- 4- The fifth and the sixth interviewees represented the civil society; more specifically, one was a representative of a Roma NGO and the other was a representative of an Environmental NGO.
- 5- The seventh and the eighth and the ninth respondents were informal waste pickers, two for a Roma origin and the other for a non-Roma one.
- 6- The tenth interviewee was a formal Roma waste picker who works in Eco-Tirana, a recycling company based in Tirana.

- 7- The eleventh and the twelfth respondents were non-Roma citizens. One lives in an affluent neighbourhood, while the other in the Shkoza area of Tirana which is an area with a heavy presence of Roma, respectively.
- 8- The last interviewee was a Roma citizen who lives in a non-Roma neighbourhood in Tirana and is considered from the society as an integrated Roma.

3.5 Data collection

Data collection is based on in-depth interviews with the citizens of Tirana. The data collection phase lasted three weeks, and each interview was around 45 minutes long. The interviews were conducted in different places adjusted to the needs of the interviewees. Therefore, interviews were conducted in the office premises, coffee bars and houses.

The in-depth questions which were addressed to the above respondents were divided in five sections. The first section was focused on the Waste Management System (WMS) in Tirana and its changes over time. In addition, the respondents were asked to evaluate these changes based on their experience. The second section was trying to highlight the relation between the Roma community in Tirana and WMS over time by asking the interviewees to describe the experience that they might have with Roma waste pickers or waste picking activity in general. The third section was trying to assess the respondents' level of information and participation into the process of passing the municipal decision No. 156/2018. The fourth section was focused on the benefits and harms that the formalization of the recycled business and the prohibition of the illegal waste picking brought to the Roma waste pickers in Tirana. The last section tried to understand the reasons behind such a decision and revealing based on people perceptions if these reasons were driven by ethnic motives.

3.6 Ethics and Research limitations

The research had ethical concerns as well. Therefore, all the participants were above 18 years old, and they all signed the consent form. Most of the interviews were recorded, and the material will be destroyed right after this thesis will be published. Moreover, the names of the respondents will not be published in order to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

Furthermore, it is crucial to point out the limitations that the research had. The first limitation has to do with the size which can be estimated as not sufficient, and for that, the reliability of the research may not be generalized. Since there is no other known research in this field and especially in Albania, it is not possible to make comparison with previous pieces of research. The lack of Albanian academic research which deals with the environmental rights of waste pickers which assesses the formalization of the recycling activity in Tirana comes across as a second limitation. The third limitation lies at the fact that I am Roma myself. On the one hand, this helped me gain the trust of the Roma community, but on the other hand, it might have intimidated the non-Roma interviewees and made them hesitate to express their sincere thoughts about the issue in question.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were analysed after the data collection, and they were examined in three stages. Firstly, I transcribed all the interviews. Secondly, I synthesized all the coded material in six main frames, which are the changes of WMS over time, recognition, participation, fair distribution, discrimination and possible solution. Lastly, the elaborated data were connected and compared with the theoretical framework in order to come up with the proposed objectives and fulfil the aim of this theses.

In the following chapters, I am going to explore the concepts introduced in the Theoretical Background part. Taking into consideration the importance and relevance of these concepts in my thesis, this chapter will analyze the data collected from the thirteen interviews with the local authority, municipal councilors, academics, civil society, citizens and formal and informal waste pickers from Roma and non-Roma origin.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I indicated the methodology that this research used. Since this research will draw a conclusion based on people's belief, the paradigm chosen was interpretivism, and the data collected had a qualitative nature. The methods used were in-depth interviews and the sample was a purposive one. The limitations of the research had to do with size sample, lack of time and lack of academic research. In the end the data were collected, transcribed and analyzed as in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 - Waste Management System in Tirana

Based on the interviews, it was noticed that the changes in the Waste Management System (WMS) in Tirana are divided into three periods. The first one is during the communism era, where the system was regulated by the state, and the citizens were asked to separate the waste at source. The second one is the period of 1991 -2018 when the previous recycling scheme fell apart, and the WMS was not successfully managed from the municipality. To fill in this gap, the informal collection and trading businesses of recycled materials started to flourish. The third change comes as a consequence of the banning of informal recycling businesses due to the collaboration between a private company and the municipality of Tirana. Therefore, this chapter will describe the socio-economic changes and relationship dimensions that accompanied the WMS during these periods.

4.1 Waste Management System during Communism

Ten out of twelve interviewees lived during the communism period. They stated that all the families were responsible for the separation of solid waste at source, in three different types: glass, metal, and paper. This activity also had a small monetary benefit because the respective companies in which the recycled materials were sent to, were paying a few pennies for the returned wrappings.

A non-Roma citizen living in a rich neighborhood in Tirana expressed:

“We were asked by the government to separate the waste at home and then to take them back to the companies. For example, if we were buying yogurt in a glass bottle, we had to return

the bottle. Sometimes we were also getting little money, it was not so much, but it was still something.”

As it is stated in the quote above, people were asked to separate waste at source from the communist government. In this case, the non-Roma citizen revealed that they had to exchange a container of a product in order to obtain another product. Therefore being “trapped” in this cycle, they were obliged to follow the recycling system.

An informal Roma waste picker, who during communism was a child, was involved in recycling activity by collecting paper, glass, and other materials from the extended family and neighbors. He was collecting unwanted recycleable materials and took them to the companies, in exchange for a small amount of money.

“I was a kid during the communism era. I saw this activity as an opportunity to earn some money, and I was not aware of the benefits that this activity had to the environment.”

Driven by this little incentive people tended to recycle more, and thus they became more environmentally friendly. However, they did not consider that their actions were fundamental to the protection of the environment. They perceived this action as a requirement of being a socialist citizen, and they followed it by the fear of being considered deviants. Nevertheless, throughout time, recycling became a social norm that everybody followed without questioning.

A non-Roma scholar who is an expert on Minorities in Albania, especially on the Roma community, argued:

“People were recycling without being aware that they were recycling. People did not engage in this activity because they wanted to prove their commitment to the environment but to the communist party.”

In this statement, the scholar claimed that the recycling activity in Albania during communism was not an outcome of the environmental consciousness of the people, but it was boosted by the politics of the socialist government.

Nowadays, all the people who were interviewed highly regarded this form of WMS, despite the incentives which lead people to follow it. The responders claimed that during the communist era due to this recycling activity, the environment was cleaner, and people were healthier.

A Roma citizen who lives in a non-Roma neighborhood in Tirana explained her experience:

“Back then, the environment was clean. There was not so much waste around the city. All these diseases that are spread nowadays are the product of all this waste that is generated”

There is a higher potential for pollution due to the accelerated demographic changes. She expressed her experience as a kid when the streets, the air, and the soil were cleaner than nowadays. Also, she claimed that people were healthier because they were not exposed to so many environmental hazards.

Thus, as a conclusion, it can be said that the communist government was applying this WMS scheme due to the limited resources that Albania held during that time. Albania was a very

poor country, and the recycling policy helped the country overcome both economic and social pressures.

The economic pressures consist of the limited economic potentials to import the primary sources and the social pressures consist of the communist beliefs that pushed Albania to trade nearly nothing with the Western World. As a result, the government created a self-sustained scheme to limit the cost and the need to import by using power relation and economic incentives; back then, a good socialist was a recycler and who was not recycling was punished.

This approach was successful indeed, but as the time showed (after the collapse) as a tactic, it was temporary because it failed to raise environmental awareness to the people and categorized this habit as a communist one. Even though the people were eco-friendly (at least regarding Waste), they were forced to recycle. However, it can be said that this policy protected the environment and the health of the people regardless of the motives which created it in the first place. In addition, the Roma, and the poor who were using this opportunity to earn some money were not perceived as inferior because they were performing a task which was socially recognized as politically correct.

4.2 The rise of informal recycling businesses

After the collapse of communism, the WMS scheme fell apart because the companies which were collecting the recycled products shut down and people lost the habit of separating the waste at source. From the interviews, it was concluded that from 1991 until 2005, the WMS was not truly functional. The respondents described a reality in which the waste picking vehicles and waste picking employers were not visiting regularly their neighborhoods.

Moreover, there was a lack of garbage bins, and the waste was accumulated in inadequate places very close to living areas.

One of the municipal councilors which run with the opposite party explains:

“When the communist regime collapsed, everything was frozen, then the civil war in 1997 happened, and everything got destroyed. It was impossible for a poor country like Albania to have an effective functional WMS. Only the last years more or less the municipality has given more attention to Waste Management boosted by the negotiation for joining the European Union.”

It can be noticed from the quote above, that the economic and political turmoil that happened in 1997 as a consequence of the pyramid scheme bankruptcy created a socio-economical gap in Albania which influenced the WMS in the country. Taking into consideration this turmoil, WMS was not a priority, and money was allocated elsewhere.

From 2014 the Albanian Government is making its effort to join the EU. Thus, the country is required to improve WMS in accordance with the EU standards. Therefore, this was the impetus which not only brought to the attention the waste management problem in Albania but also pushed the government to take actions to improve it.

A non-Roma citizen who lives near a Roma settlement expresses:

“As far as I remember until ten years ago, the neighborhood was filled with waste such as plastic, cans, and construction waste. The waste picking machines was coming maybe once or twice per month, but it was not enough [...] after they came more often maybe twice a week but still was not enough, still people were throwing the garbage everywhere even near the houses”.

The quote clearly states that the WMS was not functioning well because the garbage were thrown everywhere, and the waste picking vehicles were visiting the neighborhoods very rarely. However, also other respondents expressed that throughout the time the WMS changed, but there was still room for improvement. Although the municipality started having a regular waste picking activity in the city, overpopulated areas were still over polluted due to lack of waste management resources.

In addition, a new type of waste was introduced. Products such as plastic bags, bottles, and other plastic items for maintaining the household became very popular. People were not prepared for this amount of waste, and they were not aware of the harm that the accumulation of plastic waste would bring to the environment and their health. As a consequence of poor management of plastic products, more waste was generated.

An informal Roma waste picker explains:

“During communism, we did not have plastic. The plastic came in Albania together with the democracy. It was cheap and useful. We all fell in love with that immediately. Most of the kitchen utilities were replaced with plastic.”

From the quote above, it is visible the fact that people saw just the benefits of the plastic at that time. Low-income families could access it easily due to its low cost, but also, they could replace it easy for the same reason.

Most of the respondents claimed that the informal recycling businesses opened as a consequence of the accumulation and the poor management of waste from the municipalities. The informal recycling activity was tackled by everyone, but more detailed information was given by the four waste pickers who were interviewed. They explained the informal waste management cycle as follows:

First, the informal waste pickers followed several patterns for collecting waste. All the informal waste collectors considered the garbage bins as a place where they can gather recyclable materials. However, for the metal waste pickers, the main sources were the destroyed and abandoned buildings, as well as the broken metal devices such as washing machines, ovens, and irons, they got for free or bought in villages and cities where they commuted. The paper and glass collectors followed the same pattern. Nevertheless, for the plastic collectors, the garbage bins were their primary source.

Second, the informal waste pickers took their recyclable materials to the small collection points. Third, the recyclable materials gathered to these small collection points were sent to the bigger collection points and traded to the companies which use them as primary source such as the “Metalurgjiku” company in Elbasan.

The scholar and the municipal councilors explained that this activity was always considered illegal because the urban waste was the property of the municipality. However, until recently, the municipality did not take any action against these informal businesses. It was only in 2016 that the municipality of Tirana took actions to shut down these informal recycling collection businesses and more specifically the small collection points. In the eyes of my respondents, this happened because the municipality considered very necessary to formalize this activity. Beside formalizing it, all of the informal waste pickers and the representatives of the Roma NGOs perceived that this action was based on monetary profits of the municipality.

An informal Roma waste picker claimed:

“Most of the collection points were closed, but some remained open, they allowed their people to run the businesses. We were taking our recycled materials only to these remaining collection points which sometimes they were giving us less money than before”.

Despite the closure of the collection points, the informal activity of the waste pickers continued until December 2018. However, from the quote above, it can be noticed that what happened in 2016, helped the monopolization of the informal recycling business. The remained collection points exercised their power over the waste pickers by deciding the price of the recycled materials. Moreover, waste pickers were powerless and depended on them, because there were no other alternative / competing collection points.

To conclude, the collapse of communism was followed by many social, economic, environmental and relationship dimension changes. The economy was in decline at least until early 2005. Some of the causes of this decline were the closure of the state companies, the pyramid scheme bankruptcy and the turmoil that happen right after. In addition, the people were trying to get rid of any communist behavior such as recycling and since they were free to move (and settle in the major urban centers) demographic changes followed. The impoverishment of the country but also shift in the people's behavior hindered the municipality to have an efficient WMS. Therefore, the environment was harmed, and the hams accelerated when plastic was introduced. People unaware of the damage were overusing it by polluting the environment. Based on that the informal waste recycling activity flourished as an economic need but also as an environmental need. Job opportunities were limited, and recycling materials were easily found all over the place.

There were two components that pushed the Albanian government and the municipality of Tirana to privatize and formalize WMS, first Albania's aspiration to be part of EU which made it necessary to improve the WMS and protect the environment and second, the recycling business is very profitable and private companies are very interesting to invest in it.

4.3 The privatization of Waste Management System in Tirana.

Most of the respondents described that after the privatization, the WMS in Tirana improved a lot. The pick-up vehicles visit twice a day the neighborhoods and the environment is cleaner.

However, the representative of an environmental NGO claimed:

“In terms of recycling, Roma were recycling more efficiently than Eco-Tirana. Even though Eco-Tirana has placed separated bins in the neighborhoods, the citizens mess up the garbage, and when they go to the landfill, the recyclable materials are contaminated.”

From the quote above, it can be stated that the privatization process puts the environment as a risk by increasing the release of gas emissions in the landfill and increase the amount of unrecyclable waste.

Furthermore, the informal waste collectors, together with the representative of a Roma NGO, explain the social and economic changes that the privatization has brought to the community of waste collectors. The majority of them were left unemployed, without any mean of income and unable to make a living.

An informal Roma waste picker described:

“After the privatization, I was not allowed to perform my job, I do not know what to do. I have three small kids which I need to take care of.”

From the quote above It can be said that informal that the privatization did not affect economically only the waste pickers but also their families.

To conclude, the respondents had different opinions regarding the work of Eco-Tirana. Some express positive regards, while others expressed negative ones. The positive opinions had to do with the fact that the WMS of Eco-Tirana is better than the previous one and the negative opinions rely on the claim that after the privatization the amount of the recycled waste has been declined. Besides, part of the outcome was also the socio-economic changes that the privatization has brought to the waste pickers community and their families.

Chapter 5- Recognition of Roma Waste Pickers

The second set of questions was focused on the relation of Roma to the WMS. All the respondents admitted the fact that Roma are part of the informal waste picking activity in Albania. They were engaged in recycling activity since the communist period on a very small scale by collecting recycled materials directly from houses and trading them to the companies. The people who had low income or wanted to get some additional money used to collect recycled materials from the neighborhood or other families who were not interested in trading them. From the respondents, it was stated that most of the people who were doing this activity were poor and of Roma origin.

The interviewed scholar notes that:

“Roma were engaged to the recycling business since communism. They were collecting metal, glass, and paper by going house to house. This activity was not perceived as problematic because the income was very low and was not significant to make a difference between those who were engaged in this activity and those who did not. Therefore, the attitude of citizens regarding waste pickers during communism was lenient because it was not perceived as today [...]. Nowadays waste pickers have a bad image to society because their job is illegal, not in very good conditions and more ethnically based”.

As it can be seen from the quote above, Roma were agents of WMS since the communist times. They were collecting the recycled materials directly at the source and trading them to the companies in exchange for some money. The Albanian society has a different perception of this activity during that time because this job was not illegal but encouraged by the state.

However, during the transition period, things changed. All the respondents except the two non-Roma citizens were able to describe these changes and to explain the involvement of Roma in this informal business. The informal work of Roma people started initially by collecting metal. At the early 90s, after the collapse of the Communism regime, the Roma found themselves less prepared than the majority population. Hampered by lack of education, non-certificated skills, and lack of mutual assistance networks, they chose the sector of entertainment, such as playing music at weddings, immigration, and recycling. They used to collect metals such as iron, bronze, aluminum, and copper from communism abandoned factories. At that time, the 1990s, 2000s to 2005, Albania was rich in this kind of resources because before the economy was centralized, and they did not trade metals in the free market. Therefore, they started to work on this sector informally. This activity was very profitable that Roma also opened small collection points in order to earn more money.

An informal Roma waste picker explained:

“My uncle opened a metal collection point back in 2000, with the money he earned also helped other siblings to open collection points, but they were closed in 2016 from the government.”

From the quote above, it can be understood that waste picking became an important job not only for Roma as individuals but as a community. They were helping each other to engage in this work because they were the only profitable activity in which they could engage easily into the market.

The respondents admitted that this activity became very popular among Roma because it was also very profitable. The price of the metal in the market increased throughout time. In the beginning, when this metal was abundant, in exchange of 1 kg of copper people could get 150 Albanian Lek (approximately 1,20 EUR with the current exchange rate). After some years the

price increased significantly from 250 Albanian (approximately 2 EUR) Lek to 700 Albanian Lek (approximately 5,7 EUR) because the amount of metal found around decreased significantly but the demand was the same. The last 5-10 years, many Roma wandered in remote areas and villages to buy the metals in order to sell it to the collection points.

Nevertheless, a decline in metal trading profit started at early 2005-2006. The trade and collection of metals weakened, and people started to work with plastic recycling due to the large amount in circulation and the increased demand for such good. This fact pushed Roma to shift their attention to the plastic and to consider as their primary source the garbage bins. Therefore, Roma became more exposed to the public eye because firstly, because the number of Roma people who engaged in this activity increased significantly and secondly, because the location of their source was not anymore in the outskirts of the cities or abandoned places but in populated neighborhoods.

A Roma citizen who lives in a non-Roma neighborhood noted the following:

“Regarding plastic recycling, the number of people working on this sector increased from year to year. I remember at the beginning 8 or 10 years ago, there were fewer people wandering to recycle bins, but now the number is greater.”

From the quote above, it can be understood that the economy shifted from metal to plastic and plastic became the second most important commodity for the Roma waste pickers in Albania. Even though this shift was more profitable it also made Roma people more visible to the public eye. As a consequence, a stigma was created which equaled Roma with waste pickers. Roma people were perceived as thieves, because they were collecting plastic from the garbage bins that were the property of the Municipality. In addition, this job was associated with dirt, diseases, and pollution.

A non-Roma citizen who lives in a rich neighborhood expressed:

“In my neighborhood I see all the time Roma who collect waste. I feel sorry for them because this is the only thing that they can do. This kind of job is not something a person should be proud of. They can get all kind of diseases from that work. Unfortunately, they cannot do much, and they do not have an education and proper culture”.

It is obvious from the quote above, the stigma that categorizes recycling as a not decent job, and that it is related to dirt, deviancy, and diseases. Therefore, Roma people were stigmatized since they constitute the vast majority of the waste pickers, and they are associated with recycling and dirt.

The last question asked about the interviewees' perceptions related to the lack of legitimization of this venture, given the fact many Roma people have performed this job daily for decades.

According to the response of some interviewees, the government has not undertaken initiatives to legalize this informal sector. First of all, they did not set up the relevant mechanism until late, in 2014-2015, when private companies approached to monopolize this informal sector. There is a large number of Roma recyclers who wander all over Tirana and other major cities to collect plastic materials. The respective Municipalities cannot cope with such a situation, nor they can control or monitor the distribution, the collection, or the market price of recyclers. Thirdly, they do not have the political will to acknowledge it.

To conclude, Roma in Tirana have a long history of recycling, starting at least from the 1960s. It is essential to mention that their involvement in the recycling activity was not always the same. During communism, the number was low while after the 90s the number of

Roma involved in the recycling activity increased as a consequence of the social and economic changes that happened during that period. From my findings, I can state that Roma in Tirana are lacking recognition; as noted by Fraser (2003), the lack of recognition leads to ‘cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect’ all of which are elements easily discernible in my case.

During communism, recycling was seen as a responsibility of all the socialist citizens, and the people (Roma) involved in it were perceived as good socialists. However, after the collapse of communism Albanians (mainly non-Roma) shifted their culture and considered recycling as a culturally inappropriate job and as a consequence, the people who were engaged were seen as inferior, second class citizens. The above argument is typical of a culture domination case, in which the lack of recognizing recycling as a decent job has led to the creation of stigma and disrespect. However, here I can argue if the job was considered inappropriate in the first place or the fact that Roma were performing it (having in mind the long history of discrimination) made this job not decent in the public eye.

The stigma or the bad image that follows Roma collectors was also increased throughout time. From the 90s until 2005 Roma were collecting metal, and they were placed in the outskirts of the town; they were therefore invisible to the non-Roma. The conflict began when Roma started to collect recycleable materials from the trash bins within the city thus making themselves visible to the non-Roma. The non-Roma who were – and are- unaware of the environmental importance of this job, were disturbed and started to show disrespect by relating Roma to dirt, deviancy, and diseases. Therefore, the lack of recognizing recycling as important for the environment and human health and the visibility of a discriminated minority lead to the disrespect of Roma recyclers in Tirana.

In the end, the long-standing failure to acknowledge the importance of the work Roma collectors and waste pickers has led to lack of political will to formalize this sector. The municipality only paid attention when the economic benefits of this activity became known by the private companies.

Chapter 6 – Public Participation of the Roma waste collectors in Albania.

The third set of questions was focused on the Tirana Municipal Council Decision the Municipal decision No. 156/2018, article 11, paragraph m (the municipal decision or the decision), which prohibits waste pickers from engaging in recycling activity by trying to reveal to what extent the respondents had access to information regarding the decision and to opportunities to participate in its drafting. All the respondents except the municipal councilors and the municipal employ explained that they were not informed on time regarding the decision.

The Roma civil society representative described that she was informed about this decision only three days before it was passed. She sent a complaint letter to the municipality of Tirana together with other Roma activists in order to stop this decision which, according to her, would affect all the Roma involved in the recycling activity. She predicted that they would be left out without any alternative solution. She also claimed that the fact that they were informed very late and they did not participate in the drafting constituted an unlawful procedure.

Furthermore, the Roma waste pickers expressed that they were informed about the decision from the Roma civil society. They described that the Roma activist had a meeting with them in which they discussed what the decision was about and what were the options left to protest against this decision.

An informal Roma waste picker explained:

“The government did not inform us about the changes. Only the NGOs came to us and explained what is happening. I found myself days later arguing with the Municipality Police as they were attempting to seize the plastic items I had collected”.

From the quote above, it can be understood that the Roma waste pickers were not informed by the Municipality regarding this decision. The information was sent to them by Roma NGO's and was not time left to complain.

This description was also confirmed by the municipal councilor who run for the opposite party. The councilor explained that the decision was introduced to the municipal councilors only five days before being adopted. He expressed that the time was not enough to inform and ask for the opinions of the citizens of his administrative unit.

However, when the municipal councilor who run for the party in power and the municipal employee were asked to justify the lack of information and participation of the citizens, they answered that this decision came as a need of the citizens of Tirana. Many citizens of Tirana were constantly complaining to the Municipality about this illegal recycling activity. Firstly, the Roma waste pickers were perceived as a threat since they were driving illegal vehicles which were used for transporting the collected materials. Secondly, waste pickers selected the recycled materials from the bins by extracting most of the waste out. This fact caused the dissatisfaction of some citizens who argued that the waste pickers were polluting their neighborhoods. Thirdly, since the waste pickers did not use protective equipment and are more exposed to hazards, they were considered as a threat to the others' health wellbeing.

Consequently, it was very important to understand what the perception of the respondents regarding the usefulness of this decision was. The opinions vary, some people so it as a very good solution while others saw it as a beginning of another social problem.

The pro arguments were related to the fact that this job was illegal, which means that the Roma waste pickers were not paying taxes as any other Albanian citizen. Besides, this decision would break the stereotype, which equals Roma to waste pickers, and this would push them to chase the new opportunities. Furthermore, this decision will eliminate the traffic and will minimize other kinds of troubles created by waste pickers.

For example, a non-Roma citizen who lives near a Roma neighborhood explains:

“I have a Roma family who lives near my flat. Every day when I pass from his place to go to work, it stinks from the garbage they collect in their balcony. During the summer, it is even worse because the smell is stronger. I am very happy that this decision was passed because now the air and the environment will be cleaner. We did not owe them this behavior.”

From this quote, it is visible the disturbance that the Roma families have caused to other citizens who feel uncomfortable from this activity. For this reason, the perception regarding the decision is positive because they see it as a solution to such disturbances.

However, the against arguments were related to the fact that this decision would segregate and make Roma more vulnerable because they are unskilled to perform any other job. Moreover, being left out of an activity from which they were making their living, they have a higher predisposition to get involved in criminal schemes. Based on that, some of the respondents claimed that the decision helped to close a social problem by generating another one.

The scholar described:

“After 90s Roma were segregated and discriminated against. The segregation was also a consequence of the recycling activity because Roma were no longer going to school,

they migrated from one city to another to find better sources, and they were placed on the outskirts of the towns. The segregation will deepen further because the Roma have no longer money to afford life. Therefore, it can be said that the decision gave a solution to a huge problem but opened another one.”

From the quote, it can be understood once again that the informal recycling activity was perceived as a problem for the city. However, the solution given to these problems was not perceived by some as the right one because it generated another social problem.

To conclude, it can be stated that Roma waste pickers in Tirana lacked participation in the decision-making process regarding the municipal council decision No. 156/2018. As Schlosberg (2004) explains in his theoretical perspective in order to have environmental justice, decision-makers should ensure the active participation of all affected groups. Based on this fact, I state that the decision was passed unjustly.

In order to find out more, it is important to look deeper and to understand whom voices are being heard (Filcak, 2007), the relationship dimensions between different actors (Lashley 2016) and understand some of the reasons why Roma did not participate in the decision-making process.

My research shows that the voices of Roma in Tirana were ignored. Even though Roma collectors were not informed from the municipality but a Roma NGO, they somehow sent a letter of complaint which was not taken into account. However, one of the municipal councilors expressed that the decision was draft as an answer to the complaints of some non-Roma citizens who lived in a rich neighborhood. It is obvious that the non-Roma wealthy citizens had more voice, even to initiate a decision-making process while the Roma were totally ignored.

Regarding the relationship dimension, I can argue that Roma do not have a fruitful relationship with the municipality or the non-Roma because they are discriminated against and are considered “the others” in society. Based on that, the relationship between the municipality and the non-Roma wealthy people will undoubtedly be more fruitful than the Roma ones.

In the end, the reasons why Roma lacked access to participation can be explained by linking it with the previous chapter. The lack of recognition would have affected the participation of Roma in the decision-making process. Roma were not seen as agents of environmental protection; they were seen as hazardous, thieves, and dirty. Therefore, this disrespect and lack of recognition could have affected the policy-makers to forget or even willingly avoid asking Roma to participate.

Chapter 7- Fair Distribution and Roma waste collectors in Tirana

The fourth set of questions tried to reveal the available options which were left for the waste pickers after the municipal decision was adopted. Based on the respondents, a very small part of the waste pickers, nearly 350 people, started to work legally as waste pickers in the recycling company ECO TIRANA while for the rest was not given any job opportunity.

The Municipality of Tirana together with UNDP in Albania started a pilot program from April 2018 to March 2019 to reintegrate 50 Roma people. The program aimed at helping Roma people become formal waste pickers and have better working conditions. The joint initiative was inclusive. Despite the economic dimension, UNDP paid attention to the social dimension by providing to the families social assistance for performing well and attending the course for illiteracy. Moreover, the Roma involved in this pilot project got assistance for the social housing program, and their kids were registered in schools and kindergartens.

The Municipal employee explained:

“The Transitory recycling program implemented as a joint initiative by UNDP and Eco Tirana was an effective practice that helped Roma people on many levels, such as socially and economically. They had an appropriate job which is not perceived negatively by society. They started to acquire the culture of working, cope with the schedule, and work as a group”.

From the quote mentioned above, the Municipal employee highlights the importance of utility of implementing such initiative and formalizing for Roma people a venture they use to generate incomes. Furthermore, it helped them to cope with stigma and broadened new

perspectives for employment without being judged or perceived as dirty second-class citizens.

From the interviews, it was claimed that the recycling company ECO Tirana employs 350 waste pickers 85% of whom are of Roma origin. However, even though the majority are Roma, they are placed to perform only waste picking activities.

A formal waste picker explained:

“As far UNDP implemented the program with ECO TIRANA, our supervisor was from the Roma community I felt comfortable and motivated to work. Once the project terminated, the Roma supervisors were substituted with non-Roma supervisors.”

From the statement above, it is understood the power relation dimension within the company. It can be claimed that Roma people are employed exclusively as waste pickers while the non-Roma employees are assigned to more prestigious jobs such as supervising.

Furthermore, the answers differed also when the interviewees were asked to evaluate the benefits that the Roma waste pickers were getting before the decision and what they are getting now.

The municipal employee, the Roma, and non-Roma citizen and the municipal councilor who run for the party in power expressed the view that the Roma people benefited more from the formalization. For instance, they had a regular job, earned a monthly salary, paid social and health insurance, and could benefit from other social programs provided by the government. Besides this, they did a decent and formal job and were not threatened by the police for picking illegally plastic from the garbage bins.

However, the situation was described differently by the NGOs, the municipal councilor who run for the opposite party, formal and non-formal Roma and non-Roma waste pickers.

Their main argument was focused on the fact that even though this is a lawful activity, the monthly net salary falls on the minimal salary and is less than what used to earn as self-employees. Some other claim that the minimum salary is half of the incomes they generated previously. The unprepared formalization brought about social damages besides the economic damages. For instance, the formal waste collectors who were employed at Eco-Tirana were mostly male, and this fact created an economic dependency of women on men, which has deepened the inequalities and reinforced power relations within the household. If before the formalization the couple would go together to collect recycling materials, now only men went to work, and women stayed home. The dependency on a monthly salary and the lack of financial management skills within the household has given rise to another problem. In the past the family used to generate income daily and spend it according to their needs, Now, they have to wait for the monthly salary which is not enough and finds the household unprepared to cope with its needs.

Finally, most of the interviews were focused on the benefits and damages of the formalization of 350 people who were employed at the Transitory Recycling Program. However, from the interviews with the informal waste pickers who were not employed at Eco-Tirana, it was pointed out that the formalization of this sector did not bring any benefit to them. They were left out without any solution. They explained during the interview that they are still performing this job informally and are often threatened by the Municipality police.

To conclude, in order to assess the whether the distribution was fair I will use the argument of Fraser (2003) which describes that the lack of fair distribution can be the exploitation,

marginalization or the deprivation of a social group from a benefit in our case from the recycled materials.

Therefore, the finding showed that after the formalization, only 350 waste pickers started working as formal waste pickers. The rest were left unemployed. In addition, those who got employed were appointed out only as waste pickers with a minimum wage, which was as half of the wage that they were getting before. Even in the cases that they were holding a higher position (e.g. that of a supervisor), they stopped working because the contract was not extended. Although the privatization provided formal employment and health insurance and access to social programs, it caused social and economic damages. Firstly, it created a gender disbalance within the family because women were left at home versus men going to work. Thus, the economic dependency of women on men increased. Secondly, Roma were used to being paid daily while now they are paid once a month, and this fact has deepened the economic problems within the family.

I argue that Roma collectors are exploited because now they have to work the same work as before with less money, they are marginalized because the privatization has brought them social and economic problems and Roma are deprived because they are not allowed to perform a job which helped them have an adequate living. In addition, it is worthy of noticing the power relation in the company between Roma and non-Roma, which reinforces the inferior status of Roma at work and society.

Last, and drawing a link with the previous chapters, I argue that it is impossible to distinguish the recognition, participation, and fair distribution from each other. For example, a finding of this chapter was also the lack of recognition of Roma working culture; Roma like to get paid daily and not monthly and Roma that the couple like to work together. It is impossible to have a fair distribution in this case when the Roma working culture is not recognized. Thus,

not only because the privatization of WMS in Tirana exploited, marginalized, and deprived the Roma but also because it failed to recognize their culture, I state that the privatization of WMS lacked fair distribution.

Chapter 8- The role of Race

The fifth set of questions were focused on the reasons behind the motives that pushed the municipality of Tirana to undertake this action such as adopting Municipal decision No. 156/2018, article 11, paragraph m (the decision). Overall the interviewees explained that these reasons were not ethnically based.

The municipal employee and the municipal councilor who run for the party in power claimed that the reasons which drove the municipality to stop the informal activity of waste picking were to put an end to informality and to protect the environment by raising awareness to its citizen to recycle at source. They acknowledge the fact that this decision affects Roma community, but they explained that the municipality has taken this fact into consideration. However, they described that poverty cannot be an excuse for informality and the decision is taken for a greater good which is the protection of the environment by making the city greener.

In contrast, the municipal councilor who run for the opposite party together with the representative of the environmental NGO claimed that the reasons were not ethnical but economical. They described that in 2016 the government proposed in DRAFT LAW No. 92/2016 and gave permission to three incinerations to open in Albania. Based on these facts, they draw the conclusion that the decision to formalize the recycling business was a step to economically control this sector by the private company and the government.

A representative of an Environmental NGO explained:

“I think that the decision was not intentionally harming Roma. The decision fulfilled a greater purpose which was to monopolize this business. Albania is a small country and

the incinerations will cause a greater harm, more than what informal activity was causing until now.”

From the quote above it can be understood that the formalization of recycling business in Tirana was planned in advanced and aimed to monopolize the informal sector of recycling, but also to expand it through importing waste from abroad. Thus, it was not ethnically oriented, but the Roma people were affected. Additionally, it had a negative cost to the environment.

Furthermore, the representative of the Roma NGO together with the Roma waste pickers claimed that the decision was discriminatory. Even though de jure the decision prohibited all the citizen in Tirana to collect recycleable material for the municipal garbage bins de facto the decision affected the majority of Roma population in Tirana.

A Roma waste picker explained:

“I believe that they discriminated us because we are Roma. They know that we do not have the power to complain and nobody will hear us. So, they do whatever they like.”

The quote above implies that the Roma do not have a say in matters that affect them directly. They are seen as vulnerable groups, unorganized who cannot claim their rights and address complaints to the Albanian authorities.

An interesting perspective on this topic was given by the informal non-Roma waste picker. He explained that the decision was not harming Roma as an ethnic group but waste pickers in general as a social status group. The non-Roma waste picker stated that waste pickers are not only people with a Roma origin but, recently with the increase of poverty, also non-Roma saw it as a solution to earn some money and make a living.

A non-Roma informal waste picker described:

“I face the same discrimination as a Roma when I collect garbage. I am often called ‘gypsy’ even though I am white. I believe this confusion comes as a consequence of doing an activity that is considered gypsy work. However, I do not think like this, I believe that the formalization is unjust for the waste pickers. The decision discriminates us all, white and black because we are poor and vulnerable”

As we can read above, the recycling has been seen as a Roma venture only. But, with the increase of the poverty, more people from the majority populace saw it as a way for survival. Nevertheless, such informal activity is attached definitely to Roma people due to the fact they are the largest group to work on recycling.

To conclude, there are controversial findings related to the role that race played. Some people claim that the formalization was driven by discriminatory purposes and Roma waste pickers perceived as being discriminated against. Both groups acknowledged the fact that Roma were harmed by this decision. An interesting finding came from the representative of the environmental NGO which claimed that the decision was driven by other motives and Roma were affected unintentionally. However, as Bullard (1994) mentions even in cases when a decision is harming unintentionally an ethnic community constitutes an environmental racism. In the case of Roma in Tirana, the decision even though was driven by other motives affected the majority of this community. Therefore, it can be said that it constitutes evidence of environmental racism.

Even though the waste pickers are not only Roma they are perceived as being so. This happens as a consequence of cultural domination. Waste collection is not a job for non-Roma therefore if a non-Roma is performing it, he / she has to belong to “the others” – the Roma.

Therefore, Roma are not only an ethnic group in the Albanian society but also a social group which include the ones that are not politically correct and do not obey to the “social” norms.

In the end, I argue that it is possible that race has played an important role in the privatization of WMS in Tirana. Roma are the most vulnerable group in Albania and the most unsupported one (at least politically). Based on that if the majority of the waste pickers would have been non-Roma maybe their voice would have been heard because they could have got political support. However, in the case of Roma such a support is always missing because usually politicians do not want to be associated with Roma. Therefore, even though the privatization may have had purely economic motives, the fact that Roma were engaged in this activity helped the process.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to assess whether the privatization and formalization of the recycling activity in Tirana constitute an Environmental injustice or/and Environmental Racisms based on the perceptions of thirteen people who were interviewed. The research was based in Tirana, and in-depth interviews were used in order to find out whether the formalization process lacked recognition, participation, equal distribution, and it was driven by racial motives.

The findings showed the complexity of this environmental justice issue. The privatization of the Waste Management System (WMS) in Tirana, indeed is an environmental issue because the municipal decision falls in the category of the environment and the recyclable materials can be considered environmental resources/benefits. However, the privatization impacted society and mostly the Roma in Tirana not only by affecting the environment but also by creating social and economic problems.

The research identified the privatization and formalization of the WMS in Tirana lacked recognition and participation, the social, economic and environmental harms were unfair distributed in the society and even if the motives of privatization were not racial, the race played its role by making the process and decisions easier to pass without any opposition.

Roma are always seen as “the others” in Albanian society and always perceived as inferiors because they lack recognition. In addition, working with waste but also being Roma is considered culturally appropriate. Therefore, in Tirana, the derogative epithet “gypsy” was given to all the waste pickers (Roma and non-Roma) by making Roma not only an ethnic group but also a social group.

The lack of participation is very connected to the lack of recognition. Roma were not recognized as agents. They were always seen as a threat to public order / health, as thieves, and as second-class citizens. Therefore, they were seen as the problem and not the solution and for that their voice was muted and ignored.

By lacking to acknowledge the cultural differences and specifics of this group and by ignoring their voice, it is impossible to achieve fair distribution among Roma informal waste pickers and the private companies. Thus, the privatization exploited, marginalized, and deprived Roma waste collectors of a job which was culturally affiliated with the Roma.

To conclude the privatization and formalization of WMS in Tirana constitutes an environmental injustice because it lacked participation, recognition, and fair distribution. Besides, it constitutes also environmental racism because even though the motives were not racial, the race played an important role and the decision affected the majority of this community.

However, these conclusions are drawn based on a limited sample and limited time, therefore for future research I would suggest a bigger sample and more time. In addition, I would suggest more academic research focused on Roma and environmental justice in Albania.

Bibliography or Reference List

Albanian Supreme State Audit. (2016, December 28). *Decision No 168, Date 28/12/2016:*

For the Performance Audit Material evolution, "Urban Waste Management in the Municipality of Tirana."

Alcani, M., Dorri, A., & Hoxha, A. (2010). *Management Of Municipal Solid Waste In Tirana: Problems And Challenges.*

Alston, D. (n.d) *The Summit: Transforming a Movement.* Retrieved from RP&E Reimagine! website: <https://www.reimaginerpe.org/20years/alston>

Ali, K., Bodinaku, E., & Kadilli, G. (2016). *Strategic Environmental Assessment. The General Local Government Plan of Tirana.* Retrieved from Environmental Management Albania website: https://tirana.al/uploads/2019/1/TR030_VSM-report.pdf

Altin, B. (2015). *Waste Managment in Albania: Cerrika and Lezha Case* (Master of Science Department of Political Science and International Relations, Epoka University).

Bryant, A. (2011). *Leading Issues in Business Research Methods.* Academic Conferences Limited.

Bullard, R. D. (1993). *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots.* South End Press.

Bullard, R. D. (1994). The Legacy of American Apartheid and Environmental Racism. *St. John's Journal of Legal Commentary*, 9, 445.

Bullard, R. D. (2000). *Dumping In Dixie: Race, Class, And Environmental Quality, Third Edition.* <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429495274>

Cela, L. (2016, August 23). The death of Ardit Gjoklajt reveals the inhumane site at the Sharra landfill. Retrieved July 26, 2019, from Reporter.al website:

<https://www.reporter.al/vdekja-e-ardit-gjoklit-zbulon-kantierin-cnjerezor-ne-landfillin-e-sharres/>

De Soto, H., Beddies, S., & Gedeshi, I. (2005). *Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/0-8213-6171-6>

De Soto, H., & Gedeshi, I. (2002). Dimensions of Romani Poverty in Albania [Text].

Retrieved June 5, 2019, from European Roma Rights Centre website:

<http://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/dimensions-of-romani-poverty-in-albania>

Dias, S. (2012). Not to be taken for granted: What informal waste pickers offer the urban economy. Retrieved June 16, 2019, from The Global Urbanist website:

<http://globalurbanist.com/2012/11/27/waste-pickers>

Environmental Justice History. (n.d.). Retrieved July 28, 2019, from Energy.gov website:

<https://www.energy.gov/lm/services/environmental-justice/environmental-justice-history>

EPER. (2012). *Report: Roma and The Waste Recycling in Tirana* (p. 47). Environmental Center for Protection, Education and Rehabilitation (EPER).

ERRC. (2017). *Thirsting for justice: Europe's Roma denied access to clean water and sanitation*. European Roma Right Center.

Filcak, R. (2007). *Environmental Justice and the Roma Settlements of Eastern Slovakia: Entitlements, Land and the Environmental Risks* (Dissertation, Central European University).

Filcak, R. (2012). *Living beyond the Pale: Environmental Justice and the Roma Minority*

Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7829/j.ctt2jbnb5>

Fraser, N. H. (2003). *Nancy Fraser From Redistribution to Recognition ? Dilemmas of Justice in a ' Post-Socialist ' Age*.

- Fraser, N., & Honneth, A. (2003). *Redistribution Or Recognition?: A Political-philosophical Exchange*. Verso.
- Government of Albania. (2018). *Report on the Implementation of Roma Integration Public Policy in Albania for 2017*.
- Gutberlet, J.(2010). *Waste, poverty and recycling*.
- Harper, K., Steger, T., & Filcak, R. (2009). Environmental Justice and Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 251–268.
- Hendrics, S. (2018, March 19). The evolution of justice, from Socrates to today. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from Big Think website: <https://bigthink.com/scotty-hendricks/the-ever-changing-definition-of-justice>
- Hoornweg, D., & Bhada-Tata, P. (2012). *What a Waste. A Global Review of Solid Waste Management*.
- Khajuria, A., Yamamoto, Y., & Morioka, Y. (2010). Estimation of municipal solid waste generation and landfill area in Asian developing countries. *ResearchGate*.
- Koinova, M. (2000). Minorities of Southeast Europe: Roma of Albania. Retrieved June 5, 2019, from http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/46231/Koinova_RomaofAlbania.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Law No. 81/2017, dated 4.5.2017, "On Protected areas"
- Law No. 8904, dated 21.03.1996 "On Public Waste Disposal"
- Lucero, F., & Collum, J. (2006). The Roma: During and After Communism. *HUMAN RIGHTS*, 9.
- McGurty, E. (2007). Transforming Environmentalism: Warren County, PCBs, and the Origins of Environmental Justice. *ResearchGate*.

- Medina, M. (2008). The informal recycling sector in developing countries. *World Bank*.
- Mitre, O. (2016, June 29). Veliaj: It is forbidden to intervene in waste bins. Roma: Give us solutions. *BallanWeb*
- Municipal Council Decision No.156/2018, dated 23/12/2018" On administrative offenses"
- Municipality of Tirana. (n.d.). Directorate of Urban Cleanup and Waste. Retrieved July 29, 2019, from Waste Management System in Tirana website:
<http://mmu.tirana.al/drejtoria-e-pastrimit-dhe-mbetjeve-urbane/>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Pasha, A., Nelaj, D., Taco, B., & Bala, B. (2014). *Roma Households and Population in Albania-CENSUS 2014*. Tirane, Albania: OSFA.
- Qytetarët Për Parkunâ "Home. (n.d.). Retrieved from
[https://www.facebook.com/qytetaretperparkun/?__tn__=kCH-R&eid=ARDFSEJkZmUNxmPn5wcVCujbhFE8sVq6mm_-aAz9htCkCOyXA9g0gflPzclubSA1mRSdjCXq6r4KRtcP&hc_ref=ARSWAdkx0X-hTgSI4V24sVy5tH4cpnsQar7kiY6z-aNIZ1W3j4GAGdWtTV6p0PdDcI&fref=nf&__xts__\[0\]=68.ARBpROAGkYdJzzAnxzFAgkL20Ib7_oE60uJOGLTIFULvo02Jqdpig1LLsAvRtcNE_FS2ytjchHnU60jO1xVZ6OrGKMxVVY2OU93Z8R4UEKLoHHQHO_8eXAG5k6ZU-jRkgTb-UGXC_71aRYlu_bwI_mLAOWCiJ4QPZJBjHD9EWrwsLjyy-DI6pB60YPzX2J5veGGZBivCjuVDoY1WkQpqHBG5px4j3T4gKj_B5aJRZU6M-zCN2EEGh8Mxw7IDqYVi1bJhUdXI0-](https://www.facebook.com/qytetaretperparkun/?__tn__=kCH-R&eid=ARDFSEJkZmUNxmPn5wcVCujbhFE8sVq6mm_-aAz9htCkCOyXA9g0gflPzclubSA1mRSdjCXq6r4KRtcP&hc_ref=ARSWAdkx0X-hTgSI4V24sVy5tH4cpnsQar7kiY6z-aNIZ1W3j4GAGdWtTV6p0PdDcI&fref=nf&__xts__[0]=68.ARBpROAGkYdJzzAnxzFAgkL20Ib7_oE60uJOGLTIFULvo02Jqdpig1LLsAvRtcNE_FS2ytjchHnU60jO1xVZ6OrGKMxVVY2OU93Z8R4UEKLoHHQHO_8eXAG5k6ZU-jRkgTb-UGXC_71aRYlu_bwI_mLAOWCiJ4QPZJBjHD9EWrwsLjyy-DI6pB60YPzX2J5veGGZBivCjuVDoY1WkQpqHBG5px4j3T4gKj_B5aJRZU6M-zCN2EEGh8Mxw7IDqYVi1bJhUdXI0-)

QRfTbryrVsnrQMsbx4oXx9qKEM3gixUs3CLVYrPoNnRuULuL2Gyv1q4xwvfDjB
5jW_TbKZFSFWaFyEGi6TTj_qsuQ49tA

Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.

Roma. (2012, August 11). Retrieved June 16, 2019, from European Union Agency for
Fundamental Rights website: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>

Rosa, E., & Cirelli, C. (2018). Scavenging: Between precariousness, marginality and access
to the city. The case of Roma people in Turin and Marseille. *Environment and
Planning A: Economy and Space*, 50(7), 1407–1424.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X18781083>

Schlosberg, D. (2004). Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements And
Political Theories. *Environmental Politics*, 13(3), 517–540.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0964401042000229025>

Schlosberg, D. (2007). *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature*.

Simon, P., Gallanxhi, E., & Dhoru, O. (2015). *Roma and Egyptians in Albania: A socio-
demographic and economic profile based on the 2011 census*. UNDP.

Steger, T. (2007). *Making_the_case_for_environmental_justice.pdf*. Hungary: CEU Center
for Environmental Policy and Law (CEPL) . The Health and Environment Alliance
(HEAL) . The Coalition for Environmental Justice.

The United Church of Christ, & Commission for Racial Justice. (1987). Toxic Wastes and
Race In the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic
Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites. *The United Church of
Christ Commission for Racial Justice.*, 10.

Vaccari, M., & Perteghella, A. (2016). Resource recovery from waste by Roma in the
Balkans: A case study from Zavidovici (BiH). *Waste Management & Research*, 34(9),
866–874.

Varga, C., Kiss, I., & Ember, I. (2002). The lack of environmental justice in Central and Eastern Europe. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 110(11).

<https://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.110-a662>

Waste recycling in Albania before the 1990s was the “German model.” (2019, April 4).

Retrieved June 16, 2019, from Mekuli Press website:

<https://www.mekulipress.com/riciklimi-i-mbetjeve-ne-shqiperine-e-para-viteve-90-ishte-i-modelit-gjerman/>

WIEGO. (n.d.). Waste Pickers. Retrieved June 16, 2019, from

<http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/waste-pickers>