Confined faces of informality:

the governance of informality and experiences of confinement in an informal Roma settlement in Serbia

By

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Abstract

This research explores Veliki Rit, an informal settlement in Serbia, significantly enlarged and transformed by the displacement of many Roma from Kosovo (1998-1999). I contextualize my researched locality within significant post-socialist changes that have been ongoing in the region. The political and socio-economic changes heavily impacted social downward mobility of many Roma households. I am specifically approaching my field site as multiscalar, targeting the presence of many actors embedded within power hierarchies. Relaying on the theoretical framework of 'confined informality' proposed by Pasquetti and Picker (2017), I examine informality through the prism of confinement at two levels. On the level of governance, I specifically focus on the city government, while on the livelihood level, I explore the social coping strategies of inhabitants. Firstly, I argue that confinement is a significant mechanism in governing Veliki Rit, by examining the usage of different means, mainly urban planning. Secondly, I claim that inhabitants experience informality as confined. Experiences of confinement are not just spatial, but also temporal, emotional, influencing cognitive capacities to plan future-life projects. As for the methodology, I combined participant observation, completed with 11 ethnographic interviews, and one semi-structured interview with an NGO activist. As a contribution to my main framework, through my empirical analysis, I bring into the framework gender experiences of confined informality. The thesis contributes to the relational framework of 'confined informality' and further suggests that gender is a significant social axis to be included in the understanding of confinement and informality.

Key words:

informality, confinement, Kosovo Roma, Roma women, IDPs

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Abbreviations

IDPs - Internally displaced people

UNHCR - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UN-Habitat - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme

NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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Introduction

The broad ethnographic literature on informality has overwhelmingly emphasized agency and its political power, arguing that under conditions of neoliberalism informality transforms into 'a way of life' (Clough Marinaro, 2017; Pasquetti & Picker, 2017). For example, Holston (2009) analyses how citizenship conflicts in Brazil have increased with the democratization and urbanization throughout the twentieth century. He thoroughly explores how cities, which were the centers of citizenship's development, are becoming densely inhabited by marginalized urban poor, and non-citizens, who resist and contest their exclusion. This new political subjectivity emerges in informal, squatter settlements, which Holston calls 'insurgent citizenship'. On the other hand, exploring forms of urban 'subaltern urbanism' and activism in the Middle East, Bayat (2000) revealed less direct resistance. In escaping the reductionism of 'survival, passive poor', Bayat suggests the 'quiet encroachment perspective'. He argues that the urban poor not just strive for survival, but also to improve their conditions through 'quiet encroachment' on the various public goods: while not directly challenging the effects of globalization, they negotiate in order to maintain "autonomy in any space remaining unaffected" (p. 553). I would agree that the urban poor strive not just for survival, but I do not agree that those marginalized spaces are left unaffected by globalization processes while offering some autonomy to the urban poor. With a different stance on globalization, Benjamin (Benjamin, 2008) explores how poor communities claim their rights to public services and defend their territory, resulting in the political spaces called 'occupancy urbanism'. Such spaces are produced through informal land arrangements embedded within complex local histories, within which communities contest existing institutions, radicalize the economy, and contest the global capital, while the conflicts go beyond the government programs and policies. More generally, this literature in variegated ways (Bayat, 2000; Benjamin, 2008; Holston, 2009)

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approaches informality or squatting of urban spaces as spaces of contestation and/or claim-making, subverting the interest of capital and remaking the relationships with the state. Are there other faces of informality, beyond agency, resistance, claim-making?

There are recent explicit efforts in shifting the approach towards informality. The journal titled: *"Confined Informality: Global Margins, Statecraft, and Urban Life"[1]* published by the International Sociological Association in 2017, is an example of such an effort. Many authors within this journal, on whose work I rely (Clough Marinaro, 2017; Pasquetti & Picker, 2017; Smart & Smart, 2017; Weinstein, 2017) discuss informality and confinement, and their relations within different contexts. Specifically, Pasquetti and Picker (2017) propose a new relational framework for the analysis of informality and confinement, which opens a new horizon of thinking about the role of confinement in producing various forms of informality and vice versa. They argue that without paying attention to their numerous connections and influences, urban informality and confinement cannot be properly understood; they demonstrate how these connections and influences between the informality and confinement function in the level of structure and level of experience (p. 533). Keeping informality and confinement within the same framework in this thesis, my aim is to understand the role of confinement in informality- 'confined informality'.

My field site is an informal Roma settlement called Veliki Rit, located in the second largest city in Serbia-Novi Sad. It was produced and enlarged mostly by the Kosovo war (1998-1999), and the influx of many Roma. Therefore, next to the informal practices, it also includes refugee-like conditions. I am examining the role of confinement at two levels: one level of governance, particularly focusing on the city government, and on the livelihood level, focusing on the social coping strategies of the inhabitants. Firstly, I am arguing that confinement is a significant mechanism in governing Veliki Rit, by exploring the usage of different means,

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[1] Get the access to the all articles within the journal here: https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/issa/32/4

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mainly urban planning. Secondly, I claim that inhabitants experience informality as confined. Experiences of confinement are not just spatial, but also temporal and emotional, influencing cognitive capacities to plan future-life projects. This thesis focuses on the two levels of confinement, on the level of the structure and the level of the livelihood. Therefore, the thesis's goal is to provide answers to the two research questions: *1. What does it mean to govern informality through confinement? 2. What do social provisioning strategies inhabitants, particularly Roma women, use to cope with informality? How do those strategies reflect the experiences of confinement?*

To explore the governing through confinement, I am engaging with various works on urban planning (Roy, 2005), 'tolerated' informality (Smart & Smart, 2017), 'negation' of informality (Hart, 2009), neo-ghetto (Clough Marinaro, 2017). In order to explore temporal and spatial confinement in the level of experiences, I rely on the 'permanent temporariness' concept (Picker & Pasquetti, 2015) and citizenship in wait (Huq & Miraftab, 2020). A significant premise that guides my work on social strategies is the notion that what is commonly perceived or labelled as resistance can actually be seen as a form of confinement, particularly when informality is explored through long-standing insecurity that informal inhabitants face (Weinstein, 2017).

The relational framework (Pasquetti & Picker, 2017) is also very fruitful in bridging the gap between the theories of informality with the literature on urban control and securitization. I also engage with some part of Wacquant's work on urban relegation, class, ethnicity and state punitive management of urban poor (2004, 2007, 2014, 2016). I am also briefly discussing race and class relations (Hall et al., 1996) in order to understand conceptually who is confined within informality. As a contribution to my main framework of confined informality, through my empirical analysis I bring gender experiences of confined informality within the framework. Experiences of confined informality of Roma women are fueled by their race, class and gender

identity. Gender is a significant social axis to be included in the understanding of confinement and informality.

I will now give a brief outline of my thesis. In chapter 1, I am offering a multisular and historical contextualization of my researched locality, which is substantially shaped by structural transformations in transitioning countries since the 1990s. Historical contextualization is crucial to understand how Veliki Rit came to be. Many radical changes and processes went on during the 1990s in the region and played a substantial role in the lives of the subjects I encountered in my fieldwork, such as: the rise of nationalism, hostilities, wars, the transition from socialism to neoliberalism, the new housing policy etc. In chapter 2, I am exploring my positionality in Veliki Rit and methodology. I am mainly discussing the positive effects and challenges of being a cultural insider in the field. In chapter 3, I explore the theoretical literature on informal urban spaces and empirically unpack confinement as the governing mechanism in governing Veliki Rit. In chapter 4, I explore diverse social coping strategies of inhabitants living in the informal settlement Veliki Rit, including those with IDPs status and those without it. My particular focus in this chapter is on the gender experience of confined informality, and on the expanding temporalities of informal inhabitants, by making visible their future aspirations.

Chapter 1: Veliki Rit and its relation to political and socio-economic changes

Veliki Rit and "emplacement" of its inhabitants into the city of Novi Sad

The informal settelment Veliki Rit is located in the second largest city in Serbia, Novi Sad. There are many ways that the inhabitants ended up there. Some families were moving in from Kosovo throughout the 1980s, because of better economic opportunities. Many Roma found their refuge in the settlement after fleeing the Kosovo war. Some were born there and have never moved out of the settlement. Others tried to get refugee status abroad, but they were deported, and ended up in the settlement again. A few moved in from other urban zones due to the high costs of rents, through having family connections in Veliki Rit.

My subjects are displaced, and by the process of displacement, I refer to those various physical and social displacement, which means downward social mobility, produced by the processes of dispossession; as Caglar and Glick Schiller (2018) define in the trans-historical sense that "displacement refers to the city-, state-, and empire-building processes that have stripped people of land, resources, and their means of livelihood and forced them to reposition, reorder, or relocate their lives and relationships" (p. 9). Veliki Rit has a negative public image in Novi Sad, influencing the symbolic degradation of inhabitants, while material and infrastructural conditions are poor. Inhabitants have been building their own houses on the state land, which "cannot be" legalized, and the majority have rebuilt their own world after the war in this settlement. Hundreds of houses are auto-constructed, but many other social and religios spaces which serve the inhabitants have also been self-built. The settlement has informally thrived. For example, there is street vending, informal shops, and an informal house that functions as a mosque. There is a billiard room where youngsters often gather. Recently,

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one man, who lives in Veliki Rit, has opened a grill cafe at the entrance of the settlement. Every time I visited the settelment, I passed by this grill caffe and I noticed that only men would ever sit there chatting or playing cards. These socially created places are in general more used by men than women. These spaces are maintained mainly by those inhabitants who live in Veliki rit, and serve for them to make a living, while meeting the needs of the community. There are plenty of informal transactions between inhabitants when they are buying and selling a house, paying rent for living in someone else's house, buying groceries, clothes or furniture on the street and similar. Besides street trading many sell on the markets around Novi Sad at large (it is done by men, women, teenagers), many of them collect raw materials and sell them to larger companies (mostly it is done by men, and assisted by women), seasonal agricultural work in villages around the county (it is mostly done by men and women, and sometimes by children), informal or low-paid cleaning jobs in the city (it is done by women and man), care work (domestic unpaid work almost fully assigned to women). These inhabitants are 'emplaced' (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018) into the urban marginal conditions, and most of them into the informal economy in the city and region.

I am approaching my research site as "multiscalar", as every research site indeed is, as Caglar and Glick Schiller claim "all sites are in relationships to elsewhere as parts of intersecting networks linking multiple forms of disparate institutionalized power" (p. 11). In my research site, during my fieldwork (2022), I could map the presence of different actors with uneven power, but all have some influence on my researched locality: state and city actors, urban planners, local and international NGOs, the Muslim' religious community. In my ethnographic analysis in the following chapters, I am unpacking specifically the relationships between the city government and inhabitants in the settlement.

I have also found it important to embed Veliki Rit, as a socio-spatial formation, within the structural transformations since the 1990s, with regards to complex political, ideological, and

economic relations. Gramsci was critical towards "economism" and "reductionism", a theoretical approach that tends to perceive economic foundation as the only determining structure, as within classical Marxism; he resisted reducing spheres of political, ideological, legal superstructures to the level of economic structure. Hall (1996) updates Gramsci's work and argues that it is appropriate for the study of race, ethnicity and class. He emphasizes how Gramsci analyzed "a particular historical conjuncture", arguing that exploration of the particular historical conjunctures should reveal the dialectical relationships between economic structure and the sphere of the political and ideological super-structures, which are active in specific time and space (pp. 417–419). I am therefore exploring how political and ideological systems have changed, in relation with the changes in the economic structure taking place in the post-socialist region, resulting in a new historical conjuncture shaped by new, neoliberal forces.

Geographical and political anxieties: through the angle of Roma

In this section, I do not aim to provide a historical in-depth analysis on war and crisis, but rather to contextualize the political and social changes in order to situate the inhabitants' historical trajectories in time and space that I encountered in my fieldwork. The Kosovo war (1998-1999) was for many of the people I met a significant turning point in their lives, but it has also produced long-term consequences for the generation born after, who have the status of IDPs which they inherited from their parents. I will later reveal these diverse and individual embodied historical trajectories through empirical analysis.

Looking back briefly at the history of Kosovo, confrontation between the Serbian and Albanian populations existed throughout the 20th century based on different views of who laid claim to the territory of Kosovo. After five centuries of foreign Ottoman rule, Kosovo was

liberated and reintegrated into Serbia in 1912. In the following years, Kosovo became part of Yugoslavia. In 1974, Kosovo became a semi-autonomous province within Yugoslavia. But as Yugoslavia fell apart in the 1990s, tensions between the Serbian and Albanian population in Kosovo began to grow. (Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003)

The tensions were triggered by the end of the autonomous status of Kosovo province, imposed by amendments to the Serbian constitution in 1989, forced under Milosevic's regime. The new amendments into the constitution introduced the closure of Albanian language media, the end of teaching in Albanian, an introduction of a new curriculum, and huge dismissal of ethnic Albanians in public institutions (Peric & Demirovski, 2000, p. 84). During the 1990s, before the war broke out, Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Albanians shared the motivation for the migration and mostly migrated through illegal channels in reaching Western Europe (p. 84).

The armed conflict escalated between the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian police and military, in the first half of 1998. News were appearing in the press about Roma suffering at the hands of both sides of the conflict; Roma were being "killed, wounded, raped, threatened, expelled" by both ethnic groups, and their property was being being confiscated or damaged by both sides (Peric & Demirovski, 2000, p. 86). This resulted in many Roma flying through the region, towards any countries they could enter, many feeling towards Serbia and Montenegro.

On the 24th of March in 1999 NATO started the bombing of Serbia as an emergency protection of vulnerable Albanians, which caused a heightened wave of migration by people from Kosovo, where the bombing was the most intensive. After the war, the shift in power took a dramatic turn, as "the former victims, Albanians, became the persecutors" , and many radical Albanians accused the Roma for collectively collaborating with the Serbian military during the war, and new violence sprang up against whole Roma communities (Rainer, 2011, p. 41). Roma were in the middle of this conflict, in a liminal position. Sigona (2003) opens the discussion of how it was difficult to label Roma within a conflict which was not theirs, and in which there

was a dichotomy between "good–bad – Albanians–Serbs" (p. 73). Roma were treated as "second-class refugees among the Kosovo Albanians", but also "pushed back to Kosovo by Serb authorities" (p. 74).

The issue of the Roma community from Kosovo was brought up in the political discussion and raised anxieties of the Western countries. This was followed by the widespread reluctance of the Western Countries to offer Roma asylum (Peric & Demirovski, 2000). However, after the declaration of Kosovo independence (2008), international communities start referring to Kosovo "as a safe country" (Rainer, 2011, p. 45), to justify forced repatriation; but while fulfilling technical criteria for the repatriation, it did not guarantee that Roma could start the new life without experiencing fear and further exposure to violence.

Sigona (2003) explores how Kosovo Roma were labeled as nomads, not refugees in the Italian context. He argues how labels are not used just as a tool for the definition of collective identity, but also as a political instrument in physically segregating people into camps, which further reinforces the public image of Roma as nomads (2003, p. 76). Sigona (2003) also pointed out that the camp policy that had already existed as a justification of protecting "nomadism" was expanded with the arrival of thousands of Roma seeking asylum in Italy.

Within a different geographical and political context, in Serbian cities, I open up a discussion on informality, which did serve as a place of refuge for many Kosovo Roma. Before the war, in Veliki Rit, a small number of houses had existed. There were circa 150 houses in the settlement in 1994, but it has been growing as more people were moving in; from 180 in 2004 to circa 500 in 2017, according to research done by Vladimir Macura, an urbanist tackling issues of informal Roma settlements in Serbia (p. 68). Many who fled the war would describe Veliki Rit from before 2000 as if *"it was a meadow".* One man, being a teenager when he fled the war with his family, remembers:

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> *As we could, we took the plot of land, it was the state land. Then, we built houses there as we could, with wild construction, with nylon, just to put a roof over our heads. If anyone told me earlier that I would end up here (in Veliki Rit), I wouldn't have believed them. We had the house and my family members were working (in Kosovo)... but then we fled from our own house, that had legal water, electricity and everything, I fled here into a completely different life.*

This quotation presents that Veliki Rit is an informal settlement with refugee-like conditions. The Serbian government has been labelling many of them as "internally displaced persons" (IDPs), as they are perceived as displaced within the borders of the same country, maintaining its own national project in claiming sovereignty over Kosovo. My aim is to understand how this informality is governed and how the people, having different historical trajectories and legal statuses, cope with living in Veliki Rit.

Housing policy in the transition countries

In this section, I briefly explore how the housing policy changed within the transitioning processes, and how illegal construction has its legacies in the socialist period. I am discussing how the high-status groups benefited the most, specifically from the social housing policies, rather than the disadvantaged groups, during socialism. With the transition to market-oriented policies, housing has become, at the contemporary moment, in ideological and practical terms, more of an individual than public concern.

A radical transitioning process in post-socialist countries brought to the dissolution of the single-party, politically controlled and centralized housing model, to the creation of a new housing system(Hegedüs, 2013). The problem of the socialist housing system was caused by the imbalance between the housing policy aims and reality; the rapid process of industrialization and urbanization confronted the socialist housing system, which resulted in many "cracks" within it (Hegedüs, 2013). As described by Hegedüs, agents were no longer aligned with

centrally planned state policy. However, different countries reacted differently to these "cracks", either through implementing strict control (Bulgaria, Russia, East Germany) or by allowing quasi-market processes (Yugoslavia, Hungary) (2013, p. 6).

More specifically looking at Serbia's case, Petrovic (2013) examines the lack of social housing in socialism and post-socialism by presenting how social housing failed. Her main argument is that Serbia, from a historical point of view, has never developed a fully-fledged social housing policy. The largest share of socially owned flats was in major administrative and political centers, and those were housing "elites, professionals, highly skilled workers", whereas in small towns, even important industrial towns, the share of socially owned flats was much smaller (Petrovic, 2013, p. 245). Therefore, Petrovic emphasizes how social housing was mainly distributed to the higher-status social groups, while remaining open to various other groups, and leaving other groups excluded. During socialist regimes, lower income groups would often construct illegally- or self-built housing, which was tolerated by the authorities, and was in a way an "unofficial social housing policy" (Petrović, 2001). Public rental housing in Serbia has almost disappeared during the transitioning processes, by decreasing from 23% in 1991, to 2% in 2002 (Petrović, 2013, p. 248), turning the housing issue into an individual citizen concern, and not a concern of the public. With the large-scale privatization in the whole region, affordability of housing became an essential problem, while self-built and illegal construction was a widespread strategy in response to it, and it was exacerbated by the influx of refugees (Vukadinović, 2010).

In Serbia, during socialism, it is argued that just a small number of employed Roma were granted benefits such as socially owned housing (Berescu et al., 2013). The majority of Roma relied on self-built and often illegal construction, which resulted in the creation of settlements with poor housing and virtually nonexistent infrastructural facilities. It has been argued that the transition period "significantly accelerated the downward mobility of Roma households, who

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were the first victims of the social and economic changes in the whole region, and housing exclusion is a result of border social exclusion" (Berescu et al., 2013, p. 98). Nowadays, individuals are being blamed for their poor urban conditions; some political actors in their speeches keep Roma, as individuals, responsible for their poor condition, neglecting structural and institutional racism.[2]

During the transition period in Novi Sad, huge changes have been happening in the area of housing and secure dwellings, which has resulted with the new housing policy, the introduction of the market and new requests and requirements, the privatization of transition banks and mortgage loans, followed by changes in the demographic structure (Vukadinović, 2010). On the other hand, as a result of wars in the region and disintegration of the former country, thousands of refugees came in Novi Sad, which had a great effect on urban development and urban planning of the city, with the emergence of "massive illegal construction" (or squatter construction) in the new suburban parts (p. 159). Vukadinovic lists Veliki Rit as an example of a squatter settlement developed by an inflow of population from the war zone (p. 173). After discussing the political and socio-economic changes, in the following section, I am giving an overview of the urban planning for Veliki Rit.

An overview of urban planning for Veliki Rit

Veliki Rit is a city neighborhood formed in the middle of the 20th century, but the squatter settlement of Veliki Rit has developed intensely around the end of the century. The squatter or informal settlement that I refer as Veliki Rit is a part of the bigger city's neighborhood under the same name. Therefore, the informal settlement is not completely

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[2] An example of the recent accusation of Roma for failed integration efforts by the mayor of Belgrade. See more: https://n1info.rs/english/news/belgrade-s-mayor-s-statement-on-roma-condemned/

isolated, but it is surrounded by legal streets and houses inhabited by mixed ethnicities, such as Serbians, Hungarians, Roma, etc.. In the wider neighborhood , various registered businesses are operating. However, in the squatter settlement, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants are of Romani ethnicity, and most of the operating businesses are informal. .

Within the neighborhood Veliki Rit itself I could find uneven infrastructural conditions and an uneven degree of legitimacy. When I mention Veliki Rit, I refer to the squatter or informal part of the settlement. Some of the streets are without names, created by the people in the informal settlement, and they intertwine with the formal streets in the surroundings. In the informal settlement of Veliki Rit, houses are illegally connected to the power and water grid, which is not the case for the formal part of the neighborhood . Inhabitants in Veliki Rit also do not have access to sanitation and street lights. Once, when I was going back home from my fieldwork, it was dark and I could observe how the inhabitants improvised street lighting using some kind of private reflectors. Just 50m away, I could see street lights coming from a street with more legitimacy. Experience of the threat of eviction is shared by the whole community in the informal settlement, while it is not the case for the wider neighborhood . The settlement is 7 km away from the city centre of Novi Sad.

Macura (2017, 69-70), an architect and scholar, shows how there were many urban plans that have been changed considering the neighborhood Veliki Rit. Drawing on his analysis, he claims that the General Urban Plan of Novi Sad in 1994 envisioned single-family housing, which corresponded to the reality on the terrain back then, when the Roma settlement had circa 150 houses. Macura then analyses how in the year 2000, instead of single-family housing that are compatible with the Roma settlement, the plan envisioned park surface areas as well as objects intended for a University and a Clinical Centre, zones of secondary and tertiary activities, and business. In 2008, the city of Novi Sad continued to ignore the situation on the field, by adopting a new detailed regulation, which envisioned one high school, one elementary

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school, one hospital, and one sports field on the surface area of the Roma settlement. According to Serbian law[3], an object cannot be legalized if the terrain is intended for public use. Macura concludes that if anyone cared about the implementation of public objects envisaged by the city's urban plan for this terrain where Veliki Rit exists, then somebody would stop this growth of the settlement. He describes the circle of absurdity that exists between the city authorities and inhabitants in Veliki Rit: while the city makes plans, the inhabitants keep building.

The last detailed urban plan (*Detailed Regulation Plan 'Mali Beograd-Veliki Rit I' in Novi Sad*, 2018) I have found on the website of the city's urbanism department, and some of the inhabitants I encountered are also familiar with this plan, through conducting self-initiated research. This urban plan covers the part of the neighborhood Veliki Rit and the neighborhood Mali Beograd, which is next to it. Below, I am presenting the visual representation of the urban plan. Most of the space is planned for family housing, which is represented in yellow colour; spaces planned for the public use are represented in other colours. In the squatter settlement, which is in the poorest conditions and largely inhabited by Kosovo Roma, the plan envisioned a sports centre, high school, elementary school, kindergarten, complex for various public services, and green space. According to the urban plan, this is the terrain where the exclusively public objects are envisioned. I circled it on the visual representation. There exists no proposed solution about the people that could be evicted, and the plan did not consider the existing inhabitants in the process of urban planning.

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[3] https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2015/96/1/reg

Figure 1. *Visual representation of the urban plan in 2018*

This chapter presented how the informal settlement Veliki Rit has been developed, placing that within political and socio-economic changes. In the following section, I will discuss my own positionality in the settlement and the methodology I used to understand how this informality is governed and what kind of strategies people use to cope. Inhabitants live in insecurity and fear for their future as their house may be demolished and they evicted.

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Chapter 2: My positionality in Veliki Rit and methodology

I always knew about Veliki Rit as I have an autobiographical connection with it. I have had some experiences in this space, without ever knowing that it could become my research site. My family, of Muslim Roma origin, fled the Kosovo War in 1999, and moved to Novi Sad. My father has a cousin who has been living in Veliki Rit since the 1980s. My family lived in my cousin's house for about two months and found a temporary refugee there. After that, my family rented a part of a house outside of Veliki Rit, and we have been living outside of it since. My father went to college in Belgrade, where he learned Serbian well, which has helped us in finding an apartment. I do not have many memories of this hard period for my family, as I was two years old at the time. Nevertheless, I remember that we occasionally visited some distant cousins in Veliki Rit. After the war in 1999, some more of our cousins from Kosovo settled in Veliki Rit and built houses there. I remember I would play with other children in the streets of Veliki Rit or eat ice cream from a man who was selling it from his food truck. During my fieldwork, I found out that he had died, but some people told me that his brother has continued family businesses, as he opened an informal pastry shop.

I later discovered the place from a whole new perspective while working (there) as a social mediator on an NGO[4] project for 6 months in 2020. My tasks as a social mediator were to recognize the difficulties of the inhabitants and further facilitate communication with a psychologist or a lawyer. I talked with the inhabitants on a weekly basis and visited them at their homes, which helped me to extend my social network in Veliki Rit outside my kin-relationships. This experience with the NGO got me to think about the questions regarding urban and legal challenges that residents face. In a previous paper I have observed these questions through the lenses of Wacquant, I have previously examined the territorial

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[4] Forum Roma Serbia, more about the project see here: http://www.frs.org.rs/en/roma-community-centers/

stigmatization that the inhabitants of Veliki Rit experience, which is exacerbated by the stigma associated with living in poverty and being Roma and Muslim in 2021[5].

How did my positionality affect my recruitment, building rapport, study design and analysis? In the process of being self-reflective, the remarkable analysis on reflections on researcher positionality that was done collaboratively by five feminist postcolonial researchers (Olukiun et al., 2021), helped me to advance my understanding of positionality. From the postcolonial feminist position, they emphasize knowledge development as a collaborative process between researcher-participant dynamic, contesting the traditional dichotomy of researcher-participants (p. 1412), as they say: "it is important to identify ourselves in relation to the participants involved in our research" (p. 1413). Given the complexity of identity, it is hard for a researcher to place themselves entirely as an outsider or as an insider (p.1418). Both researcher's positions, being defined as either more of an insider or an outsider, bring some positive effects and some challenges for the researcher (p. 1422). Nevertheless, based on several categories of identity, such as my ethnicity and my family's historical background, certain shared lived experience and kin-relationships that connect me to Veliki rit, I consider myself as a cultural insider. However, there are other lived experiences and other categories of my identity, which make me less of an insider, such as my class and my educational and social capital.

As a cultural insider, through my personal, but also my professional experiences, I have already established connections with several families before I started my fieldwork. Understanding cultural norms and practices, and particularly knowing the language of the community, helped me with participant recruitment and building a quick rapport with new residents I met. On the streets of Veliki Rit, I could hear a mix of Serbian, Albanian, and

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[5] Short-based research I did to graduate in the Roma Preparation Program at the Central European University, in Budapest.

sometimes Romani. Many families identify Albanian as their native language. I would emphasize to my participants that I could talk both Serbian and Albanian, and let them choose how they feel more comfortable communicating. I conducted one interview fully in Albanian. In other interviews or informal talks, most of the time, inhabitants would talk Serbian but insert some Albanian words or phrases, or the other way around, and I was trying to follow that thread. Most importantly, language was useful to gain people's trust. Once I approached a middle-aged man on the street in Serbian, he would treat me as a stranger. He appeared threatened, and he lied about how he was a "guest" in the settlement. When I told him more about myself and that I know Albanian, and explained the research reasons and aims, he became much more open and continued informally to talk with me and share his historical trajectory. In a situation when the community is vulnerable, and threatening to be evicted, as Clough Marinaro (2017) in Roma camps in Italy observes, residents could be reluctant of any kind of formal interviews, recorded data, e.t.c.; which are the reasons for a long-term immersion in the community (2017, p. 547). In this sense, I had a relatively short three months long fieldwork, but my cultural insider position was significant in building up trust.

I also want to share how my gender and age aspects of identity influenced the recruitment, study design and my analysis in general. Female participants were more open to talking with me, and they were my main interlocutors in most of my ethnographic interviews. Plenty of male participants would participate and talk, but fewer than women, and sometimes, they would leave in the middle of an ethnographic interview and leave me with others to continue. Importantly, when I was doing participant observation, I spent more time at their homes with female participants. Taking my age into account, being a young researcher, I could also bond with a few youngsters in Veliki Rit. They would informally talk to me and ask me questions, while I would ask questions about the settlement and their experience. Young female Roma in particular would be willing to talk about the patriarchal system that they face. A few

times someone would say to me, assuming my cultural insider position, *"you know that"*. Here, I come to the limitations of the cultural insider position. Sometimes participants would assume my prior understanding. I was trying to ask many follow-up questions to help me understand certain experiences, but I did not want to guide these informal conversations too much, but rather let people share the experiences they want.

The other limitation of having similar cultural identities, as Olukton and others discuss (Olukiun et al., 2021), may be the risk that a researcher is too close to the data, which could blur the lines between observed phenomena and the researcher's biases. I felt close to my participants and my data, especially because of the same historical and socio-political changes that influenced my family's trajectory. However, I grew up in another ethnic-mixed neighborhood . Even before starting my fieldwork, I was afraid of not being able to grasp all the constraints in the informal settlement, as my family had moved out of the informal settlement when I was very young. However, I became aware of the long-period efforts of my parents to transgress the blurred lines of formality and informality. My father struggled for more than a decade with job insecurity between various informal and formal wage jobs. For a time, he was collecting raw materials with one of his cousins from the settlement. After losing one of his jobs in 2007, he started selling bread on the streets of Veiki Rit. He would buy bread that was left from the day before, from a regular shop, and then sell it there. Therefore, informality and hardships are some of the common experiences for my parents, as well as many other residents, which made me aware of the continuous constraints that lasted for my parents too, and moving out unfolded gradually. In order to decrease my bias, I included some new participants that I had not known before my fieldwork. I had one ethnographic interview with a cousin's family, with whom I am not very intimate. I was very tentative in understanding various conditions of the inhabitants in Veliki Rit.

I conducted my fieldwork from September to December in 2022. I did a lot of participant observation at the beginning of fall and spent time introducing my research and research purpose. Along the way, I had many informal conversations with inhabitants. I wanted inhabitants to have some direct benefit from my visits, thus I sometimes help children with their homework, particularly with English. In the second part of my fieldwork, I conducted 11 ethnographic interviews in the everyday environments where the inhabitants live. In many interviews, women were the main interlocutors, but there were many other family members who would participate, who shared various aspects of their lived experiences with me. The ages varied from 17 to 60. My questions were centered around their biographies, their present life and struggles, their knowledge of the urban plan and their housing conditions, and about their plans for the future. I recorded all my ethnographic interviews with the permission of all participants involved. In addition, I was always taking notes during the interviews, as it would force me to listen more carefully and formulate follow-up questions.

The Institute for urban planning in my hometown did not respond to my request to have an interview, and the only urban planning resource I have at my disposal is the last detailed urban plan from 2018. However, people's experience helped me to understand informality from a bottom-up perspective. I also had one semi-structured online interview with a Roma activist familiar with the conditions of the residents in Veliki Rit, implementing a donor project for several years, which provides psychological and legal support to the inhabitants in the settlement, in order to grasp ongoing activities better.

Chapter 3: Governing informality through confinement

'Confined Informality'

I want to borrow from Roy's (2005) work several crucial ideas in understanding informality. She argues that informality is not a separate sector that is the object of state regulation, but rather that informality is produced by the state itself and it should be seen as a mode of urbanization (p. 148). Instead of seeing the informal space as "unplanned" and a separate sector, it is crucial to unpack how that informality is produced and maintained through the involvement of different actors and various governing mechanisms. Roy's pioneering work explores the role of the legal and urban planning apparatus of the state, which has the power to decide "what is informal and what is not, and to determine which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear" (p. 149). The strength of her approach is that it overcomes the duality of informality and formality, and that it seeks to understand differentiation within informality, with very different concretization of legitimacy. Going further, in the context of India's' urban planning, she unpacks how the planning regime itself is an informalized structure and how urban informality is produced by informal practices mentioned above (Roy, 2009). Urban planning is a very important instrument in governing informality and is one of the main tools in maintaining Veliki Rit.

Informality is an important force that shapes the lives of urban poor, however, Picker and Passsqueti (2017) bring to focus confinement as well, by saying how the relationships between informality and confinement remains under researched. They propose a new relational framework for the analysis of informality and confinement, which opens up a new horizon of thinking about the role of confinement in producing various forms of informality and vice versa. They argue that without paying attention to their numerous connections and influences, urban

informality and confinement cannot be properly understood; they demonstrate how these connections and influences between the informality and confinement function both structurally and experientially (p. 533).

This relational approach is very relevant for my work for several reasons. Firstly, it offers me a framework for analyzing informality through the prism of confinement at the level of governance and at the livelihood level. Secondly, it perceives confinement beyond exclusively spatial confinement, emphasizing how "informal urban spaces can be experienced as confining not only physically, but also at the level of cognition, emotions and temporarily" (p. 535). Thirdly, it is a fruitful framework as it bridges the gap between the studies of informality and literature on urban control and securitization. This is the main theoretical framework that I have set up to follow in this master thesis, by exploring the role of confinement in the informality that I encountered in my fieldwork. In this chapter, I am focusing on the role of confinement on the governance level. Next to the urban plan, legal and administrative tools are predominantly used to confine the urban poor in Veliki Rit.

Picker and Pasquetti (2017) are in dialogue with scholars who have been exploring informality and whose work recalls the idea of confinement. They acknowledge the efforts of relational thinking that had been made previously, for example Sanyal's work (2011) that examines how squatting is a regular practice in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. She connects refugee camps and squatting, by showing how squatting can also have a significant role in the politics of identity and belonging. A refugee camp, usually seen as confined space, Sanyal explores through prisms of informal practices. Picker and Pasquetti (2017) are also in dialogue with Roy's work on urban informality. Roy conceptualizes informality as the 'state of exception' (2005), borrowing a Schmitian concept further used and developed by Agamben (2005) which was widely used to understand confined spaces such as refugee camps. Roy's

language has implicitly shown the connections between informality and confinement. Finally, Picker and Pasquetti (2017), explicitly provide the language for relational thinking, making a step forward towards keeping informality and confinement within the same analytical framework.

The Relational framework is useful in the understanding of various socio-spatial configurations of urban marginality. Miraftab and Huq (2020) build their work on the relational framework from Picker and Pasquetti. They explore the experiences of informal dwellers in Korali, an informal settlement in Dhaka, in Bangladesh, through the lenses of refugee and camp literature. Through the temporal comparison Miraftab and Huq reveal many overlapping experiences of citizenship, precarity of life and displacement between informal dwellers, so-called citizens, with camps dwellers, so-called stateless. They, for example, contrast definitions of UNHCR and UN-Habitat: on the one hand, UNHCR defines refugees through their past, experiences of persecution and displacement outside their country of nationality, and future, the probability to return; on the other hand, UN-Habitat defines informal dwellers through the present, through the conditions of dwelling, living in the urban area without durable housing and access to basic infrastructure (p. 359) . Seeing this definition of informal settlement as very narrowed, they call for expanding the temporalities of informal settlement dwellers, through exploring the histories that produced them and their aspirations for the future. In chapter 1, I have shown the importance of historical and social conditions, which have produced informal dwellers in Veliki Rit that I encountered. In chapter 4, I will present some future aspirations of the inhabitants in Veliki Rit. I find it important to emphasize in my empirical analysis the temporality of urban dwellers.

My field-site is very specific: it is the informal settlement which contains refugee-like experiences, as many IDPs found a refuge in the informal settlement. Either approaching this

settlement through one conceptual lens of informality or just through the other conceptual lens of confinement, would be incomplete. The relational framework that advocates for the double lens enables me to approach informality through the prism of confinement. Therefore, with my analysis of Veliki Rit, I aim to make visible the structures and experiences of **'confined informalities'.** Within '**confined informalities'** Pasquetti and Picker (2017) define:

> "a wide range of processes, including the informal practices one can find in places of marginality with sharply policed spatial-symbolic boundaries as well as the distributions of degrees of legitimacy granted by states and dominant public opinions to place specific informalities along axes such as race, class and legal status." (p. 539).

There are various informal practices unfolding in Veliki Rit, mostly informal practices in the area of housing production and income generation. I found "spatial-symbolic boundaries" between the squatter settlement Veliki rit and its surrounding part with higher degree of legitimacy. In the wider public image, the informal settlement Veliki Rit has negative publicity, seen as a very poor, derogatory, and marginalized place, which does not to the same extent refer to the wider part of the neighborhood . A powerful argument by Waqcant (2016) is that territorial stigmatisation is felt at the level of public policies as well, because once a place is publicly defined as a "lawless zone" or "outlaw estate", it becomes trouble-free for authorities to implement special measures (p.69). Informal practices are placed along axes of race and class, and its relations I am unpacking and lacing with the framework in the next section. In chapter 4, I will bring gender experiences of the confined informalities, as a suggestion to further consider gender and add into the above definition as one of the significant social axes in 'confined informalities'.

I have also found a significant intervention that has been done by Pasquetti and Picker (2017), that adds on the literature that already revealed how informality and formality are blurred. They emphasize how many failed to observe the interplay between informality and its

confinement as 'negation' (p. 537), referring to Hart's dialectical understanding of informality and formality. One way of how informal activities are related to formal powers and formal organisations, including bureaucratic processes, is through their *'negation',* meaning 'informal is illegal' (Hart, 2009, p. 10). Picker and Pasquetti (2017) call to keep in focus various moments and locations in which formal and informal merge, blur, and yet remain distinct (p. 537). Although informality and formality merge in the everyday practices of inhabitants that I encountered in Veliki Rit, informality and formality remain distinct when the city government and its officials 'negate' informal settlement Veliki Rit, claiming that it is illegal.

Confining refers to the act of placing limits or restrictions on someone or something, whether it be in terms of space, scope, or time; governments make efforts to confine informal practices and economies by establishing boundaries and regulations regarding what is allowed within specific spatial, temporal, and scope-related parameters (Smart and Smart, 2017). Smart and Smart discuss why spatial confinement could be useful in governing informality. There are two ways how informality can be formalized: by eradication or by regulation. However, the ambiguities appear with 'toleration' of informality, allowing illegal practices to persist, through an administrative system that provides "partial regulation without legalization" (p. 439). Governments may find tolerated informality more advantageous than either eradication or regularization. This is because tolerated informality helps facilitate housing shortages, generates employment opportunities and similar, whereas regularization costs (p. 441).

Clough Marinaro (2017) in her prominent work bridges a gap between theories of ghettoization and informality and urban planning. As she points out, Wacquant's view that urban planning and legal regulation as central in how the state manages social hierarchies, while considering how deregulation and tensions between planning and non-planning can produce similar outcomes. By adopting a gradual approach, Wacquant's analysis reveals how institutions

combine coercion and co-optation, which allows certain areas of informality to exist, but under the monitoring and partial control of state-designated agents, ensuring that these informalities remain within ghettoized marginalized spaces (p. 557). Expanding on Wacquant's theory, Clough Marino (2017) through extensive fieldwork in Roma camps in Italy, views them as alternative methods that replaced traditional ghettos but still function like them, except that Roma camps undermine the internal cohesion; that is precisely the reason why Clough Marino calls them neo-ghetto (p. 548). Her main argument is that 'variable informalities' are the central dimension of contemporary governmental techniques, implemented by different institutions and non-state actors, in managing urban marginality and confinement (p. 557). She examines the role of informality in producing the conditions of confinement in camps. With this thesis, I aim to look at things the other way around, to explore the role of confinement in producing or maintaining conditions of informality. I explore confinements, used by the city government as a mechanism to manage urban marginality and informality. Therefore, I am interested in the confined faces of informality. In the following section, I am discussing race and class relations, in order to understand conceptually who is confined within informality?

Defining race and class relations

In this section, I elaborate on the race and class relations that I embrace throughout this work, and I further entangle them through my empirical analysis within the main framework of 'confined informalities'. Picker builds his understanding of relationships between race and class on Stuart Hall's work, citing a very powerful quotation from Hall's work: "race is also the modality in which class is 'lived', the medium through which it is appropriated and 'fought though' (Picker, 2017, p. 9; see more (Essed et al., 2002). Hall made a substantial impact in understanding the race as a discursive system, which is not solely an ideological or cultural construct, but it is placed in everyday social and economic relations (Solomos, 2014).

Hall (Hall et al., 1996) embraces a non-reductionist approach, as race and class are mutually related, and his work is prominent in emphasising the interconnection of race, class, and other forms of identity. As I mentioned in chapter 1, Hall revised Gramsci's valuable legacy. Hall ascribes significant importance to Gramsci's non-reductive approach to the class, which situates class formations in a historical and cultural-specific society, coupled with other social formations. According to Hall, capital does not homogenize labour power, but rather it exploits and adjusts to cultural differences such as race, ethnicity and gender, which it incorporates into its regimes, while maintaining and further redefining them. (p. 435-440)

With the end of the Fordist-Keynesian era in the 1970s, urban polarization has been increasing at the bottom of our advanced societies (Wacquant, 2016). Wacquant explores the urban polarizations that lead to permanent precariousness and poverty in the neighborhood s of relegation in post-industrial cities. According to Guy Standing, the contemporary precariat is a 'new dangerous class', which includes various fractions: individuals who have transitioned from traditional working-class families or communities into the precariat, ethnic minorities and migrants who experience a lack of belonging, and educated, primarily young individuals, who feel in the disadvantaged position by lacking opportunities for a dignified and fulfilling life; a commonality among all these fractions is the absence of a secure occupational identity (Standing, 2014). Wacquant argues that the precariat is not a 'new dangerous class', as proposed by Standing, but "a miscarried collective that can never come into its own precisely because it is deprived not just of the means of stable living but also of the means of producing its own representation" (2016, p. 1083). In alignment with Wacquant's argument, my exploration of the precarious conditions experienced by the residents in Veliki Rit encompasses not only the deprivation of resources required to make a stable livelihood, but also the lack of opportunities for self-representation. Veliki Rit is inhabited by racialized subjects, in highly precarious economic conditions, while also lacking means to represent themselves.

'Tolerated' informality that confines: "the city doesn't know what to do with us"

Urban planning is a very complex governance instrument, which engages with the land use, and wide visions of public or market investments that the government guides; it does not govern just land, but also community and resources, and it engages with the future (Roy, 2005). As I previously mentioned, urban planning is a very important instrument in governing informality, and it is one of the main tools in maintaining the informal settlement which I am researching.

As I presented in chapter 2, when looking back from the 2000s to the present moment, several urban plans have changed, envisioning different public objects throughout this time on the land where the informal settlement exists. Therefore, the envisioning of the future in the last two decades according to the urban plans, is in a state of uncertainty, constantly changing. In my fieldwork, the urban plan is referred to as a justification of why certain inhabitants cannot start the procedure of legalization of their houses. With reference to the urban plan, the city government makes a threat to evict informal settlement, but at the same time, gets to keep it as informal and 'confine' it, as long as it wishes. Yet, when there are urban projects done in the city's areas which are near the settlement, inhabitants get even more threatened that they may be the next, becoming more anxious about their dwelling situation.

The detailed urban plan that the city of Novi Sad adopted (2018) refers to, amongst other city neighborhood s, the settlement Veliki Rit and wider residential neighborhood , and one other ethnic-mixed neighborhood next to it. Urban plan is used to determine which part is illegal and which not, what is authorized and what not (Roy, 2005). Therefore, those in the wider part of the neighborhood Veliki Rit who fit in the envisioned urban plan can possibly start the procedure to legalize their house. By enacting the "state of exception" (Roy, 2005), in the informal settlement Veliki Rit, inhabitants are prevented from legalizing their houses and

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the settlement itself. In that space, different public objects are envisioned by the city, such as: a sports centre, high school, elementary school, kindergarten, building for various public services, and green space. Informality is determined to thrive in the area of housing production, as in the whole settlement. Although informal and formal practices merge in various moments, Veliki Rit is related to the city government of Novi Sad through its 'negation' (Hart, 2009); which means that Veliki Rit is 'accepted' and endorsed, but with negative connotation, as illegal.

From the interview with an activist from leftist Roma NGO[6], I found out how they were sending requests to the city government's officials from around 2018 to build traffic lights on the road, which exists next to the entrance to the informal settlement. As an activist told me, the justification that the city used is the urban plan according to which it plans to reset the inhabitants from the settlement. The city's officials would also justify it by some technical barriers, as the road further connects with the highway. After the car accident in the fall of 2020, in which one Roma child died on that road, in the spring 2021, the city built traffic lights there. This was also forced after the accident, by the Roma NGO sending a few new requests for building the traffic lights, while the other non- Roma NGO[7], as an alliance, brought visibility of the case in the media.

I would also say how urban planning is also significant in my field as it guides what steps are imaginable and what not in the consciousness of different actors. It is a reference point. It was referred to by the city's officials as a justification to not increase security in the vicinity of the informal settlement. Thus, I grasped that some NGO workers in the field believe that inhabitants in squatter settlements cannot legalize the houses, as there is the urban plan. Although, looking at the last few urban plans, the envisioning of the future and the public

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[6] Name: Forum Roma Serbia
[7] Name: Krov nad glavom

objects in the area have changed from one urban plan to another. The first reason I described the traffic lights story above is to present how urban planning is used as a justification by the city government. Secondly, it shows that there are other non-state actors involved in governing Veliki Rit, which is at the same time one of the limitations in this thesis, as I did not have enough space and time in my fieldwork to research in-depth how non-state actors frame Veliki Rit and produce meaning over it. Although I am aware how state-centered perspective is not full, and these actors may on one hand contest governmental policies, but on the other also compiled with them, as Armiellei and Maestri (Maestri, 2017) articulate different urban and neoliberal citizenship framing in Roma camps in Italy. In the future research, with conducting in-depth research with various NGO actors, different framing by non-state actors over the informal settlement could be explored. I am certainly more occupied in this thesis about inhabitants' views. And the third reason for presenting the traffic lights story, is to show partial regulation of informal settlement; similarly as providing water grids, but not sanitation; or paving one street without the name which lines with a legal street is paved, but not all the others.

The messages that some of my interlocutors received from city officials are that the city does not have the money and resources for the project that is planned. Some of the residents received a message from the city officials and processed it as: *"the city doesn't know what to do with us."*. This phrase refers to the lack of the city's resources to find a solution for the displacement of a huge number of people if they would start the project. In Wacquant's view the legal regulations are pivotal in how the state manages social hierarchies, as he connects class fragmentation with the ethnicity, and state punitive management in neoliberal cities (Wacquant, 2014). Therefore, governing informal settlement Veliki Rit is not just about governing the territory, but it is also about governing those racialized, precarious subjects, overwhelmingly Roma, many of whom are IDPs.

Defined by Smart and Smart (2017) confining refers to the act of placing limits or restrictions on someone or something in space, scope, or time. In Veliki Rit, by using the urban plan as a tool, the city governments confines within space, scope and time, undesirable subjects. The city government has been maintaining the informal Veliki Rit as informal from 2000s to the present moment, confining it in a specific time and space. The urban plan also defines the scope by creating the boundaries for those who can further legalize their houses (in the wider part of the neighborhood) and those who cannot in the informal settlement. The city government partially regulates and maintains the settlement as 'tolerated' informality (Smart and Smart, 2017), allowing illegal practices to continue, particularly in the housing area. Smart and Smart claim how semi-formality (the idea originally coined by John Cross; see more Cross, 1998) is often useful in controlling and spatially confining, by selectively tolerating illegal practices in specific location, but only "for the time being", in conditions that could be formally changed or terminated without any consultation or compensation (Smart & Smart, 2017, p. 441). This is what actually gives flexibility in decision-making to the city government in Novi Sad, as it tolerates Veliki Rit temporarily, "for the time being" and spatially confined it. Although this temporary state in spatially confined conditions turned out to be persistent for more than two decades. The reasons behind such governance could be explored, however, the lack of transparency and non-willingness of city's official to talk with me constrained me to examine that further. Although, I believe that tolerated informality helps particularly in this case in facilitating housing shortages, and therefore the city government is not pressured to come up with any new policy and solution for a huge number of inhabitants in Veliki Rit, particularly for many racialized IDPs.

Streets without names and numbers

Not having street names and housing numbers set up the inhabitants in various confined conditions, as they cannot register at their house where they actually live. Not having a legal address is enormously powerful in preventing inhabitants from accessing a substantial number of social and health services in the city, working for formal wages, and in general preventing them from enacting their citizenship rights. This issue strongly affects IDPs who should first deregister from their previous address in Kosovo, then register to a new permanent address where they live in Serbia, and thus lose the status of IDPs. The police check several times whether the person registered at the new address actually lives there. The difficulty is that many inhabitants in Veliki Rit live in illegal houses and they are not able to afford a new accommodation and hence a legal address. Many of the inhabitants try to get a temporary address that lasts 2 years. Usually, they get their temporary address in informal ways, via kinship or acquaintance relations, not rarely, they pay this informal service. Those temporary addresses are usually located in the wider neighborhood , which as I mentioned before, has more legitimacy. This informal practice is confining; when two years pass inhabitants must again find a new solution or pay. IDPs, although legally Serbian citizens, without an address in Novi Sad, are further prevented from using their political right to vote on local level. Therefore, with the domain of urban and legal regulation, those streets without the names and numbers are 'accepted' as illegal, and the city 'tolerates' informality that emerges there, while at the same time those without the address cannot enact their political rights to vote on the local level. Many other legal, administrative tools may be found which have a powerful impact in confining those who live in informality. In this section I briefly presented the lack of legal address as it is one of the main challenges for the inhabitants in urban informality in Veliki Rit.

Conclusion of the chapter 3

In this chapter, I argue how confinement has a significant role in the level of governance in producing the conditions of informality. It is useful to keep confinement in the same analytical framework when one studies informality. I analyzed urban planning as a main governing instrument in maintaining informality, and revealed how the government 'tolerates' illegal housing construction and the whole squatter settlement, confining racialized and precarious inhabitants spatially and temporally. This also means that the city government keeps Veliki Rit in a liminal space between eradication and formalisation, which gives the city's actors flexibility. Reading on the topic of formalisation, I am well aware that in the process of urban upgrading of the settlement aesthetically, without "upgrading livelihood, wages and political capacities" of the people, is a further trap, and may the most negatively impact the poorest in an informal settlement (Roy, 2005, p. 153). Formalization process of informal sites or informal practices, may also produce more confinement for the people (Clough Marinaro,Smart and Smart, 2017). In the next chapter, I am making visible experiences of confinement in the level of livelihood.

Chapter 4: The social coping strategies and experiences of confinement

Agency and confinement

In this chapter, my aim is to present diverse social coping strategies of inhabitants living in the informal settlement Veliki Rit. Within social coping strategies, I think about behaviours and courses of actions that individuals use to navigate the social situations in which they are. Having diverse strategies for coping with informality and urban marginality is one of my main observations from my field, as inhabitants also have different capabilities to act in everyday life. Although there are different responses to the conditions of informality, as a common experience for many in Veliki Rit, I want to emphasize the experiences of confinement. Following my main theoretical framework suggested by Pasquetti and Picker (2017), I am presenting how the inhabitants experience confinement not just physically, but "at the level of cognition, emotions and temporarilty" (p. 535). I argue that their experiences of living in informality are confined. Particularly, I emphasize temporal confinement, following a call for expanding the temporalities of informal residents (Huq and Miraftab, 2020) by making visible in my analysis inhabitants' aspirations and struggles for making the future.

Liza Weinstein (2017) analyses informal settlements in Delhi and Mumbai, and while acknowledging that informality can be used as a tool of resistance, she presents that informality also becomes an instrument of confinement for marginalized urban dwellers. She writes through the relational lenses of informality and confinement. By exploring struggles over long periods of time and through the historically embedded experiences of insecurity, Weinstein emphasizes aspects such as entrapment in informal urban areas in low quality homes, in settlements lacking adequate basic services and limited social mobility opportunities (p. 526). Her take on the agency of informal inhabitants is that it can be overstated, by arguing that much

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of what is understood or defined as resistance may literally be confinement. She writes her ethnography by keeping strong attention to the historical context, situating inhabitants' responses or claim-making (which could be seen as resistance in the present moment) within the long historical course of multiple attempted evictions and constant insecurity (which creates conditions of confinement and various losses for people). Focusing on informality and confinement, she reveals their transformative power in rethinking the understanding of agency, politics and resistance within marginalized communities in informal areas. Instead of overstating agency and resistance, the relational framework contributes to a more nuanced approach. Long-standing conditions of urban informality could allow both resistance and confinement of informal inhabitants. Although the agency of inhabitants in Veliki Rit is valuable, I do not intend to overstate or romanticize it. Rather, I am exploring how their agency, meaning everyday capabilities to act, are confined.

In order to discuss temporal confinement in urban informality, I rely on the concept of 'permanent temporariness' (Pasquetti and Picker, 2015). In order to establish control, dominance and effective governance, camps became suspended in such a state of 'permanent temporariness'. The concept refers to the situation of refugee camps that are intended to be temporary, but end up becoming long-term, permanent, durable camps; whereas various state and non-state ruling agencies perpetuate such a state of 'permanent temporariness', making most of it for the sake of controlling undesirable and dispossessed subjects (p. 683). The situation in such camps is paradoxical in the sense that many refugees live in permanent uncertainty for a long time, with an indefinite future, while they are trapped in seemingly temporary shelter.

Huq and Miraftab (2020) claim how the lived realities of right-bearing citizens in informal settlements are comparable to those of stateless refugees. They argue that informal

settlements are spaces where 'citizenship is in wait' and where residents are in a 'permanent state of temporariness' (p. 358). The precariousness of everyday life in Korail, characterized by the challenges of limited mobility and frequent disruptive events such as demolition, eviction, flood, and fire, gives rise to a condition they term 'in-situ displacement' (p. 358). This term reflects the inability of Korail dwellers in Bangladesh to easily relocate to other areas of the city or return to their places of origin. Inhabitants of Veliki Rit face similar conditions in terms that they cannot easily relocate themselves or go back to their place of origin from where they were persecuted.

My aim is to reveal experiences of confinement within the diverse social strategies taken by inhabitants in Veliki Rit. As a gap that could be filled in Picker's strong theoretical framework on the governing segregation of Romani people in Europe (2017), Kocze suggests incorporating gender analysis and the application of intersectionality theories encompassing race, gender, place and geographies (Kóczé, 2019). My empirical analysis involves an intersectional perspective of race and gender (Crenshav, 1990) completed with individual embedded historical trajectories and different legal statuses. The significance of adopting a gender perspective lies in acknowledging that women's social and spatial realities are socially constructed on the basis of gender. Women are assigned specific roles based on their gender, resulting in the different rules and practices that refer to them within male-dominated spaces. Veliki Rit is a male-dominated hierarchical space.

As a contribution to my main framework of confined informality, through my empirical analysis I bring gender experiences of confined informality within the framework. I further entangle within the framework different legal statuses: those who fled the war and are still IDPs, and those who were born after the war, but have the status of IDPs, and also those who are not IDPs or lost that status; all of these groups are in just legal terms right-bearing citizens

of Serbia and informal dwellers. Informal practices that I observed the most in Veliki Rit are in the area of housing production and income generation. In the following sections, I try to emphasize the role of confinement in inhabitants' experiences by answering the question: *What do social provisioning strategies inhabitants, particularly Roma women, use to cope with informality? How do those strategies reflect the experience of confinement?*

Actions to stay put: Why wouldn't we get electricity, why wouldn't we get our numbers and street names?

Halima is a 33-year-old Roma woman, and a mother of four children who goes to elementary school or kindergarten. Unpaid domestic work is almost fully assigned to her. She was persistent to subsequently finish elementary school in her 30s. When I interviewed her in October 2022, she had just finished the nursing course. During my fieldwork, I still informally talked with her and did participant observation, as I sometimes visited her children to help with the homework, particularly with English. She had struggles with maintaining a nursing job for a formal wage. Furthermore, she initiated an informal job of collecting raw materials with her partner. Her partner Arif also regularly collects garbage in the city and does informal jobs of cleaning basements and carrying furniture when moving. I even helped her with writing a poster that Halima taped on the gate with the prices of buying iron, copper and aluminium. In this way, other inhabitants in the settlement get informed, and bring the raw materials and sell to them. Further, Halima and Arif sell it to larger collectors of raw materials, mostly to registered companies. Halima has been living in the settlement for around 13 years since she entered into cohabitation. Neither she nor her partner are IDPs. She grew up with adoptive parents in an ethnic-mixed neighborhood in the city of Novi Sad. Her partner Arif grew up in a village in Vojvodina, where his parents moved from Kosovo in the 1980s, during the Yugoslavia time.

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They moved because of the better livelihood and working opportunities. During the 1990s ethnic hostilities were rising in the country and in the village where Arif's family lived. Being a Roma Muslim family in the village, due to the increased hostilities, Arif's parents felt undesirable in the village. They were afraid for themselves and their children's safety to continue to live there. Consequently, they sold the house in the village in the beginning of the 1990s, and bought a house in the settlement Veliki Rit, where they already had some cousins, which gave them a feeling of safety.

Recently, Halima had found out that their father-in-law had started the process of legalizing the house in Veliki Rit in 1994. But the process was not carried out to the end. Since then, circumstances and laws have changed a lot, especially in housing and property rights. However, she started going to certain local institutions to figure out what was happening. She was consulting various people, and the message she got was that it is not possible to legalize the house as it goes against the city's urban plan. She also spent a lot of time finding information about the urban plan and what was envisioned. In this process, she found out that according to the urban plan, a sports centre is due to be built on the plot of land where their house is. However, as she can approve that the process of legalization was initiated in 1994, one piece of advice by a lawyer was that she could sue the city. Further, she consulted a woman who, as she described, works in the mayor's office who discouraged her from starting any suing procedure. In Halima's words:

> *However, that woman told me not to do it (to sue the city), because I wouldn't succeed, because it (the city) is stronger. I gave up. And I started again. I gave up for a while, so I started searching again. I had no peace. My husband says: "You're crazy, you're so crazy that you won't give up..."*

Her husband is not at all hopeful that anything could be changed at this present moment, as the opportunity to legalize was missed in the beginning of the 1990s. On top of that, he also

has unresolved property-legal relations with his father and family. She fights for the right to stay at their house, but she is seen as powerless, in front of the institutions and in front of her partner as well. The structural forces and power dynamics are limiting her capabilities. Starting a legal procedure requires a substantial amount of financial resources, legal support, and informal support as well.

Before they started building the restroom in their house, Halima went to cadastre, a public city register of land ownership, boundaries of property and land use. She asked if there was a point in investing in upgrading the house, as she was afraid that her house could be demolished. In Halima's words, here is the response she got there:

> *The woman said to me (an official in cadastre): "For now the city won't demolish your house", but she told me one thing, "if you have a nice house, the land will certainly not be paid by the state, they will pay for what you have built. If you have a dilapidated house, normally you will not get enough money to be able to live somewhere else...."*

This statement encourages Halima to further invest money and emotions in their house, as it creates hope that if the better house is built, the state will compensate more. These local dynamics reveal how people are trapped in time and space, experiencing the state of 'permanent temporariness'. Their life activities are centered in the informal settlement, whose existence is seemingly temporarily limited, but leaving them with the longstanding uncertainty for their future, constantly worrying about what will happen to their home.

I do not want to romanticise her agency, because structure plays a huge role in determining the outcome of certain situations, and they influence life opportunities and strategies that Halima has. However, she is very reflective and organizes her life around her ultimate concerns, which are homemaking and investing in children's education. Her words mirror her reflexivity about the uncertain future and not having opportunities for decent social

reproduction activities, by expressing conditions of deprivation. She also recognizes her position within uneven power relationships. She gets frustrated with the state of 'permanent temporariness' where 'citizenship is in wait':

> *Something should be done soon, either it (the city) demolish our house or let us simply live here and get all the normal rights and simply live a normal life. Not living in fear that they will come to demolish our house. Either they say we are coming to demolish you, or we won't demolish you at all, to get everything that belongs to us, including electricity, and to have a normal life. If I get a chance to speak to the mayor, I think he would not like to meet me. I think I would really say everything in front of him…Well, he certainly has children too: "If your child lives normally, without fear, your children are protected and provided for. Where are our children? Why wouldn't you let us live a normal life? Why wouldn't we get electricity, why wouldn't we get our numbers and street names?"*

Halima experiences her life in informality as confined, as she and her children do not have regular electricity, especially in the winter season, when it is the coldest. For example, she pushes her children to do the homework during the day, as in the night when there is no electricity, the only way is to use a candle. Another woman, during the interview, shared her experience of how intermittent electricity directly affected her livelihood. She described a situation where there was a prolonged electricity outage for several days, resulting in the spoilage of approximately a hundred chickens that she kept in the freezer as part of her livestock.

The inhabitants of Veliki Rit lack access to many basic rights and services and they strongly feel deprivation. The situations described above reveal experiences of confinement in the level of livelihood. Halima experiences emotions of frustration and fear while being trapped in an informal settlement in a state of 'permanent temporariness'. She is kept in a liminal space of uncertainty which constrains her future possibilities. For example, she is not able to provide her children with an asset and secure any property or any security for herself or their children.

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She does not morally accept the conditions of informality in which her family lives, and she politicized those conditions in her consciousness. However, Halima definitely tries to maintain hope by staying in Veliki Rit, creating livable housing conditions as much as she can for herself and her family. She has been investing in the house, expanding the house by building new facilities and maintaining it with care, which to me resonates to a certain extent with what Dzenovska (2018) describes as creating 'the future as a little bit more of the present'. Although Dzenovska explores temporality in a different, rural context, discussing the actions of staying and leaving in relation to transnational forms of power. She argues how staying in empty rural Latvia has a stronger political dimension than leaving, given also that opportunities for leaving are to a greater extent available and shaped within capitalism. But, in Veliki Rit, opportunities to leave even to another part of the city are very limited, making the life choices of many highly determined. In the next section, I am moving towards the stories of those who try to gradually move out, but they usually move from the city to rural areas.

Actions to gradually move out: from Veliki Rit to rural areas

A Roma woman called Labiba is 36 years old, a mother of two teenage children who goes to elementary school and she works as a cleaning staff in the facility of a TV station. She and her family fled the Kosovo war, but she lost the status of IDPs as she recently managed to get a permanent address in the city of Novi Sad when she became a co-owner of a small land property. Labiba succeeded in cooperation with her husband, who works as a manual building-construction worker, to collect some money and buy, firstly, a small house in the village, and then a plot of land in a legal street that stretched to the edges of the informal settlement. Similar to Labiba's family, I observed that a few of the inhabitants attempted to move out from the illegal part of the settlement into those legal streets in the surroundings by buying some

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property. Basically, inhabitants are still part of the urban poor neighborhood Veliki Rit, but in an area with more legitimacy. Hardly anyone moves from Veliki Rit to another neighborhood of the city.

In order to be able to provide something a bit more for the future of her children, Labiba has been working very hard in exploitative conditions. At some point in time, she worked in three different places. One of the reasons they could collect some money and buy a plot of land, she said, is the fact that her family have been living in an illegal house in Veliki Rit for more than a decade, and throughout this time they have not been burdened with paying regular monthly rent as they used to previously.

Labiba and her partner tried to live in another city neighborhood and rent an apartment, but the regularity of the monthly rents was not sustainable for her family. Working in precarious jobs, with no stable income, monthly rent was a huge burden for them. Labiba moved with her family to Veliki Rit in 2011. The illegal house had been previously auto-constructed by Labiba's cousin, from whom Labiba and her partner bought the house. The house was in very poor condition, without any windows or doors, and they invested a lot of resources in improving them and making the house livable. To me it seemed how the housing improvements have been done with great care to details and everyday needs. They invested in improving the conditions in different facilities in the house, for example, a restroom and a children's room. They have continued auto-construction by expanding the housing space. Three years ago, when I first met Labiba, the dining room did not exist. It is right in the newly-built dining room where I conducted the interview with her. She said how they built the dining room a year ago and it allows her family to have a space where they can eat and be together. Although they bought a house in a village and a plot of land in the neighborhood , which is now empty land, they still live in the informal settlement, in the home they have created for themselves. They certainly

secured some small property in the village, buying a small house in 2016, but their life activities are still centered and ongoing in the settlement and in the city. Her children go to the city school nearby the settlement and her workplace is located in the city. They are still connected with Veliki Rit, in order to continue with their everyday life as usual.

Labiba's strategy is definitely a burdensome and risky endeavor. The plot of land that Labiba and her partner had recently bought, they could not have managed with their savings without taking additional loans. They further intend to divide the plot and give half to their daughter, and half to their son. I also met some inhabitants in the settlement who are very much concerned about building and leaving assets for their sons, but not for daughters. Within the community, patriarchal values circulate, enforcing the importance of marriage as a path through which female-gender subjects should achieve residential security, holding them as less eligible in getting a family asset. Labiba resists these values and through her individual agency, she tries to change patriarchal inheritance patterns in her family and community. She claims that her daughter should have the same as her son. Her ultimate concerns are about their children's prosperity and their future. Labiba basically endorses present informal housing conditions in a way to ensure that her children can have a better life in the future. She surrendered herself to the informal housing conditions as a way to make a little bit more of the future. Her words mirror how she endorses informality, but as a way to ensure a little bit more for the next generation:

> *Little by little, everything came into place, but when I had to pay, for example, 200e every month, plus there were the utilities. I was struggling a lot. I did not always have that amount of money... working or not working, I had to pay the rent and utilities every month. Had I not paid, I could have ended up on the street with the children. And then what?...It's better to build your own house here (in Veliki Rit)...My children are already growing up. Your roof is your roof. But thank God, we bought a small house in the village, and we bought a plot of land up there. We struggled a lot.*

In order to secure a better future for her children and to look a bit more forward, Labiba is also transgressing the border of informality and formality, which is already blurred, and endures hard working conditions for formal wages. Nevertheless, she works in the lowest paid jobs in gender-based racialized working positions, while fighting for the goals of social reproduction.

The Labiba story shows a very rare example of the settlement of finding a way to move out. There are a few families more in the Veliki Rit who bought houses in a village by themselves and gradually started to move out. However, they still maintain connections with the informal settlement because of the work opportunities or kinship-relationships. Not rarely in extended families, some family members stay to live and maintain the house in the settlement, while others move to the village. Roy (2005) reminds clearly how dealing with informality requires recognizing "the right to the city- claims and appropriations that do not fit neatly into the ownership model of property" (p. 148). The idea of 'right to the city' refers to the democratization of urban space, which involves the right to access, participate and shape the city, as well as the right to the benefits of urban life (Lefebvre et al., 2013 [1974]). These actions of moving to villages solve the issues of property rights for some, but limit development of people's 'right to the city' claims. Although Labiba and a few other families display their agency by moving out gradually from Veliki Rit, which is one of the social coping strategies, there is no resistance or claim-making in front of the institutions in a way that appears, for instance, in Holston's work on 'insurgent citizenship' (2008). Similarly, in the previous strategy taken by Halima, in spite of the fact that she goes to ask to get informed in front of local institutions, she does not make a claim yet. These actions bring me to the conclusion that Veliki Rit is a space where citizenship is in wait. In the following section, I am exploring the story of those who have a desire to move out, but capabilities and life chances are enormously limited.

Having a desire to move out but _"I ended up to the street"_

At the end of my interview with Labiba, their siblings Demir and Demira came to her house to visit her. Thus, I met them and explained to them about my research aims and asked them some questions. I wanted to know how they feel and cope with living in Veliki Rit. They were open to expressing their feelings and worries. During my following fieldwork visits in Veliki Rit, I met Demira a few times on the street and we had informal conversations.

Demira is an 18 year old girl, and Demir is a 17 year old boy. While Labiba fled the war as young, their siblings Demir and Demira were born after the war in Novi Sad and they have always lived in Veliki Rit. They have the status of IDPs, passed down from their father. Their experiences all together I explore through the cross cut of race, gender and obviously different historical trajectories.

Demira finished elementary school and then stopped her education. She has been working since she was 13 as a seasonal agricultural worker. She and her brother Demir live with their father, who is IDPs and has many health issues. Demira and Demir do not possess an address in Novi Sad, personal ID or passport, they cannot access health, social services and any basic rights.

Demir was very occupied with a wish to get a driving license. Due to the lack of a personal ID, he is not legally capable of getting one. Consequently, he drives without a license, illegally. He told me a story about when the police caught him driving without a license and he bribed the police. It is a story that reveals micro-everyday corruption within informality. Wacquant (2014) emphasizes the importance of connecting urban relegation as a product of class restructuring and its impact on different ethnicities, while at the same time, binding it with the government's institutions, law enforcement and criminal justice system; the penalty system

is aimed less to reduce crime, and more to restrain urban marginality (p. 1690-91). For Demir, risks of being penalized are higher, as being poor and Roma, with limited resources and not full citizenship, coming from a stigmatized informal settlement. He must strategies how to escape state penalties in his everyday life, which is another burden that is a weight on his shoulders. Moreover, it is crucial that Demir's life chances are highly determined, as he is trapped in the conditions of confinement, as described by Picker (2017) "relegated to a relatively static position of isolation, like a prison" (p. 101). Therefore, he is not just spatially confined, but also socially and emotionally. He told me his desires are to get a driving license and find a job, and further find a partner and start living together. He feels at the same time sad and frustrated because he cannot realize any of his wishes and go on with future-making. This is how he described the exit from these prison-like conditions in his own view: *"The exit would be having a personal ID or maybe a passport… but in the end, I do not have any of them."*

Similar conditions of confinement apply to Demira, but her gender identity amplifies her vulnerability. Those who are organizing the work in the agricultural field are men from the settlement and they get more say and respectability. Several men from Veliki Rit organize a group of around 30-40 people when there is a seasonal working period. Among those 30-40 people, there are men, women, but also children, and they work for a daily wage. The people are transported in a van to the field and back to the settlement, more than is allowed to be transported by van. They are standing or sitting on the floor in the back of the van, packed like sardines, in the dark, as the window is covered, while sweating after the hard work. Demira also complained to me how those men who lead the group sometimes cut their daily wage, exploiting her and others. Her story shows relationships between inhabitants embedded in uneven gender hierarchies.

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While talking to Demira, one thing struck me was when she said: *"I ended up on the street"*, thinking that she was left on her own, taught to live and navigate through the street values and constrained to strive for something more. But, her wish is to move out, similar to her brother. Both of them used negative words to describe life in Veliki Rit: *"ugly", "plague", "loud", "you go outside, you see drug addicts", "you leave your bicycle in the yard, you forget about it".* This condition refers to what was described by Wacquant (2007) by using the term 'territorial fixation and stigmatization', referring to those isolated areas, perceived by "both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, leprous badland" (p. 67). Making a powerful analytical distinction between urban poverty, segregation and the ghetto (2004), I would say the conditions in Veliki rit resemble to some extent more the ghetto-like conditions, as one of the significant elements of the ghetto Waquant finds is spatial confinement (besides stigma, constraints, institutional encampments). I have heard several times from parents during interviews that they do not wish their children to grow up in Veliki Rit as its environment can ruin their lives. To me, this relates in one aspect to what Waquant calls "A tainted Identity Machine" in the ghetto, which sharpens boundaries between outcast people and the surrounding residents (2004, p. 125). But, I say to a certain extent, because it does not resonate fully in my field. The second aspect of the ghetto that Waquant finds substantial is that the ghetto functions as a cultural engine that "melts division among the confined groups", fostering its collective pride while at the same time consolidating stigma (2004, p. 125). From my observation, collective pride is lacking in Veliki Rit. This socio-spatial formation resembles more the neo-ghetto (Clough Marino, 2017), where internal cohesion is undermined. This helps me to further understand Demira and Demir, and many other young people who do not feel collective pride in living in Veliki Rit, as they actually feel fixed in time and space, being enormously constrained to move somewhere else.

The stories of Demira and Demir reveal prison-like conditions that are mentioned before. They are trapped in a state of 'permanent temporariness', as always living there, without opportunities for physical and social mobility. Their capabilities are significantly more limited compared to their older sister Labiba, whose strategy is a more rare exception. More frequently, inhabitants surrender to informality, making them tolerable as much as it is in their hand. This is exactly the peculiarity of Veliki Rit as a socio-spatial configuration, as many surrender to the informal conditions, trying to make them bearable. Confinement they experience is not just spatial, but it is also temporal and emotional, influencing cognitive capacities to plan future-life projects.

Conclusion of the Chapter 4

Through my empirical analysis, I argue that their experiences of living in informality are confined. In particular, I analyzed how those inhabitants are in a state of 'permanent temporariness', while 'citizenship is in wait'. In such conditions, inhabitants use different social strategies to navigate their life according to their capabilities. My conclusion is that many endorse or surrender to those informal conditions, while not accepting these conditions morally or politically, but still not making public claims. While some try to create something a little bit more for the future, either by staying (Halima) or gradually moving out (Labiba), some surrender to those conditions in a way of just making the present bearable (Demir and Demira).

My empirical accounts bring individual embodied histories, which tailor life changes and capabilities to cope. However, I do recognize them as individual historical trajectories, and I did not intend to create any kind of topology of historical trajectories, legal statuses and coping strategies. As a contribution to my main framework of confined informality, I entangle gender

experiences of confined informality within the framework. Experiences of confined informality of Roma women are fueled by their race, class, and gender identity. Gender is a significant social axis to be included in the understanding of confinement and informality.

In future research, extensive research would be needed to understand the reasons and grasp inhabitants' consciousness in terms of not making public claims for the legalization of the settlement and their houses. It is an important question to be asked. Although some inhabitants politicized their own conditions, there are no protests or petitions, or anything in that form going on in the settlement. Informality and its conditions may allow both resistance and entrapment. However, in Veliki Rit, conditions of confinement are prevailing, while resistance lacks in front of the local institutions. On a preliminary level, I perceive a consciousness that is connected with historical persecution and trauma. Some inhabitants think that there is no violence in everyday life in Veliki Rit, compared to what they experienced in their past. Future research could explore more relationships between historical persecutions and trauma of ethnic minorities to understand their political subjectivities better.

Conclusion

This thesis explored informality through the prism of confinement. I examined the role of confinement at two levels: the level of governance, specifically focusing on the city government and urban plan, and on the livelihood level, focusing on the social coping strategies of inhabitants of Veliki Rit. Firstly, I argue that confinement is a significant mechanism in governing Veliki Rit. Secondly, I claim that inhabitants experience informality as confined. Experiences of confinement are not just spatial, but also temporal, emotional, influencing cognitive capacities to plan future-life projects.

For future research, I suggest including other actors who are present in the field, such as non-state actors, religious communities etc. In addition, with the more time in the field and resources, the study could be extended into a comparative one, by comparing my field site with other ethnic-mixed neighborhood s in the city. In general, the relational framework that keeps double lens, informality and confinement, is fruitful in terms of applying it to different socio-spatial formations, such as informal settlements, refugee camps, Roma camps, ghettos, subaltern spaces etc. As a contribution to my main framework, through my empirical analysis, I made visible the gender experiences of confined informality within the framework. Experiences of confined informality of Roma women are fueled by their race, class and gender identity. Gender is a significant social axis to be included in the understanding of confinement and informality.

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