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Homogenised Heritage:
AI and Central Europe



***HOMOGENISED
HERITAGE: AI AND
CENTRAL EUROPE***

***THE IMPACT OF AI ON LOW-
RESOURCE LANGUAGES AND
VISUAL CULTURES IN THE
VISEGRAD COUNTRIES***

Disegno

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VIRTUAL SPACES: TOOLS OF POETIC RESISTANCE OR CENSORSHIP DEVICES?

Albín Kuchta*

ABSTRACT

This article analyses digital and virtual art spaces as ambivalent formations that may operate either as instruments of poetic resistance or as dispositifs of censorship. Engaging with Jacques Derrida's theory of the archive, Bernard Stiegler's critique of technocapitalism, and philosophical accounts of poiesis, the paper examines how institutional and non-institutional virtual archives shape collective memory, affectivity, and regimes of visibility. Focusing on the Slovak context within Central and Eastern Europe, it demonstrates how Roma and queer communities are systematically marginalised within institutional archives and digitised museum platforms, where exclusion frequently assumes the form of soft or indirect censorship. At the same time, the study foregrounds the emancipatory potential of non-institutional virtual spaces, social media, and AI-mediated practices, which are increasingly appropriated by marginalised artists as tools of resistance. Through selected case studies of Roma and queer artistic practices, the article shows how digital and AI-supported poiesis can generate counter-archives, alternative affective frameworks, and new modes of political agency that contest hegemonic, racialised, and heteronormative norms. The paper concludes that virtual art spaces are not intrinsically emancipatory or oppressive; rather, their political significance depends on the conditions of access, control, and interpretation that govern archiving practices. It therefore calls for participatory and ethically grounded approaches to digital archiving and AI data governance in order to prevent the continued reproduction of institutional racism and cultural erasure.

#technocapitalism; #counter-archives; #digital poiesis; #Roma and queer artistic practices

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INTRODUCTION

In this text, we will define contemporary archives, examine their relationship to AI and how they represent marginalised communities.¹ We will ask: what can an archive actually become, or what is an archive nowadays? We will distinguish between virtual and non-virtual archives, and consequently between institutional archives and non-institutional archives. We will clarify these terms, and using Derrida's conception of the archive we will produce a concrete analysis of the culturally specific situation regarding Slovak archives.² The conclusion provides guidelines that should be taken into account by people working on models that aim to increase diversity, however, the paper is primarily conceived as a theoretical intervention. The intersectional approach of my methodology combines theoretical reflection with analysis of the current political situation.

I will focus on the context of Eastern/Central European countries, specifically the Slovak context, in relation to marginalised communities such as the Roma and queer communities. The Slovak context has some unique characteristics. We have more digitised, online, and freely accessible institutional archives than the other V4 countries. There exists little discussion of the relationship of virtual archives to marginalised communities, such as the Roma community, even though there has been some discussion of Romani art (Ludlová and Rigová 2017). Attention has also been paid to the representation of white queer artists in Slovak virtual archives (Tamášová 2021). In this paper, I will treat Roma culture and queer culture as distinct and propose analyses of the different struggles these two communities face. However, many Roma-Slovak artists I refer to in this text are indeed queer, including Emília Rigová, who likes the label “Gypsy and dyke” [“Cigánka a buzerantka”] (Ludlová and Rigová 2017, 16). As Arman Heljic (2021) points out, in addition to the prejudice that Roma culture is generally homophobic, the specific homophobia that queer Roma people face is also not addressed.

To define more precisely what I mean here by Romani art, I will refer here to Damian James Le Bas who says in his interview with Rigová and Ludlová that the concept of Romani art is more of an umbrella term that encompasses many different approaches. In his view, Romani art refers to a community of gypsies that produce art in many different ways. It is hard to propose an essentialist definition of Roma art, and many Roma

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¹ I would like to thank Lili Kriston for her help and feedback during the writing of this paper.

² For more theoretical background of the concepts used in this paper see Kuchtová (2024).

artists refuse the label (e.g., Daniel Baker). For the purposes of this text, I understand Romani art as the artworks of artists from different socio-geographical contexts and of different genders and orientations who identify their own work as Roma art, and, as Baker claims, “produce Roma identity politically, using contemporary art” (Ludlová and Rigová 2017, 40).

There is no existing research dedicated to Roma or queer art and its relation to AI in the Slovak, or Central/Eastern European context. In this text, I subscribe to Sandra Mandić’s statement in which she claims that even if she is not Roma, she has something in common with Roma people. Ludlová and Rigová (2017) describe it as follows:

Firstly as a person who is also limited or privileged by normative social role attributed to their gender, secondly, my point of view is also purely humanistic: we have something in common as we relate to each other as humans. Similarly, the insider’s point of view is multilayered: self-reflexive and relational (to other humans, to the world). [Ať už jako osoba, která je také limitována nebo privilegována skrze normativní společenskou úlohu připisovanou jejímu genderu, nebo čistě z humanistického hlediska, jako člověk k člověku. Podobně pohled zevnitř je vícevrstevnatý – sebereflexivní i relationalistický (k druhému, ke světu)].

On a personal note, I do not consider myself culturally Roma even though my father is probably half Roma. When he sees Roma musicians playing in a Slovak pub, he becomes animated, and goes over, saying he is one of them: “I am a gypsy.” He tells them he has nine kids, and they all share the story about how their kids are now at the university, even if they don’t even a secondary school education. I remember how he accused me of being too white my entire childhood, as a result, I am naturally very suspicious of whiteness and of my own white skin. And as for the queer community, I am now a proud member of it. Academically, the urgency I felt to write this text stems from the fact that our world is increasingly governed by inescapable AI structures, even though I am not a specialist in Romani art or culture, nor an art theoretician, but a philosopher specialising in the philosophies of technology and ecology, and French philosophy. AI governs everything today, and the ways it globally misrepresents or underrepresents various marginalised cultures are largely understudied across all fields.

By institutional archive I understand, e.g., a museum archive; the virtual institutional archive is, e.g., a museum archive that has been digitised. In recent years, there has been a trend toward digitising collections of artifacts in Slovakia (some state-owned museums create virtual archives such as webumenia.sk or <https://slovakiana.sk/domov>). The concept of virtual non-institutional encompasses phenomena far broader than the digitalisation of visual art or collections in state institutions. By non-institutional archive, I mean unofficial archives, e.g. personal archives that are not collected by any institution. This can be the case for various reasons (censorship, invisibility of some kinds of data

and artifacts). The non-institutional archive can be virtual or material. The concept of the virtual non-institutional archive refers to all online content (websites, email, messages, videos, etc.) and AI-generated data that is not stored by any cultural institution. I derive the concept of non-institutional archive from Derrida's general concept of the archive.

Derrida claims that the virtual archive includes everything we create and that this virtual archive existed before the internet. He says that any material creation is indeed always already virtual because it can be transmitted and it contains information that is open to interpretation. The means of transmission could be writing, sound, stone, wind, or any other material form. For Derrida, any kind of archiving and transmission of information is already a virtual technological process. As a result, even a museum archive consisting of what an art historian would call material is in fact a virtual artefact open to endless interpretation. In the Derridean framework, the difference between material and virtual registers is relativised in general. Derrida claims that the archive is not only what is stored in the museum, but also includes personal archives and other kinds of unofficial archives. He goes even further to say there is such a thing as a *psychic archive*, meaning that the human psyche constitutes an archive (Derrida 1998, 94). This brings us to the concept of the collective psyche.

In his later works, Martin Heidegger claims that being is *poiesis*, which means the creation of truth (*aletheia*). The Greek word *poiesis* refers to manual work (*handiwerk*), but also to artistic creation, thought, poetical thinking, and its dissemination. Heidegger claims that technology perverts the process of *poiesis*, which he believes should remain a manual process and, more specifically, be limited to German poetry (Heidegger 1977, 34). In the Derridean and Stieglerian view of *poiesis*, all *poiesis* is iterable and technological, because it is infinitely transmissible and it becomes part of collective memory. Therefore, *poiesis* is creation that is already technological and virtual, because any part of it can be repeated infinitely in an infinite number of contexts. For example, handwriting is already a technology, or even an oral transmission of a story or a fairy tale (in these cases, the speech or writing is the technology that allows us to repeat the story), but even what he calls a psychic spacing is a technology of psyche (Derrida 1998, 92; my translation).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. DERRIDA: PSYCHIC ARCHIVES ARE ALREADY VIRTUAL

In our contemporary world, all creation has become digitalised and AI-powered, and this is possible because creation in general is already technical (iterable). This corresponds with the idea that there is some kind of online archive in which all our writings, images, affects, memories, and recordings are saved. And tools such as AI models use this archive to generate new images or texts. Therefore, the use of AI is another form of technology that makes transmission, which is inherent to the process of

creation (*poiesis*), even more accessible, just as writing or painting. In this way, our contemporary collective memory is archived by AI technologies and the online content we access: online platforms such as social media, e-commerce platforms, the gig economy, and search engines (these constitute what I call the non-institutional virtual archive).

In his book *Archive Fever*, Derrida (1998a, 19) examines the relationship of psychoanalysis to the archive, claiming: “The theory of psychoanalysis, then, becomes a theory of the archive and not only a theory of memory.” He goes even further, saying that what is not archived is not lived or experienced in the same way and the technological aspect of archiving determines the nature of what is being archived (37). He shows that even as a “science” psychoanalysis has to deal with psychic archives that operate between *ὑπόμνησις* (mnemotechnical support, aid, or a mean), which is distinct from *μνήμη* (living memory) and *ανάμνησις* (forgetting, which is linked to the death drive). He contradicts Freud and says that these already contain a technological element (prosthetic element) (37). However, for Freud, the technological element equals the death drive. Nevertheless, Derrida claims memory is *αρχή*, by which he implies that “The concept of archive encompasses, obviously, this memory of *αρχή*. But it also shelters this memory, which it encompasses: but we have to say, that it also forgets this memory” (Derrida 2008, 12; my translation). Derrida claims that the concept of archive often forgets that it refers to the concept of *αρχή* in Greek which not only means origin (original [*ursprünglich*] data), but also *νόμος*, the law and social construction of the origin (of the archive). He reminds us of the genealogy of the word archive, which comes from the Greek concept *αρχή*. *Αρχή* can mean the origin of everything, but as Derrida reminds us, it can also mean commandment. Therefore, this word refers to the principle in which nature or history begins (physical, historical and ontological principle). At the same time, it refers to the principle of the law where gods and humans command, where the authority is exercised (nomological principle). This principle has a *topos*, a place from which it is exercised. Nevertheless, it can be very hard to localise that place and we have to think how the archive is ‘taking place’ [*Comment penser là? Et cet avoir lieu ou ce prendre place de l’αρχή?*] (Derrida 2008, 11). It can be especially hard to localise this authority that commands an archive, as it very often remains invisible, whether it is associated with a figure of divine or human authority. In the context of this paper, this authority is first and foremost the authority of capital in the AI industry, which has acquired a divine-like character in our contemporary imaginary as Big Other (Zuboff 2023). Derrida reminds us that we also forget that, in Greek and other ancient societies, there was a function of *ἀρχων* linked to the word *αρχή*. These archons were officials who archived important documents, and they had *hermeneutical right and competence*. This means they had the power to interpret the archives that often constituted laws. Nowadays, there is also a hermeneutical right and competence of the capitalist and state structures that govern AI and all virtual content, and by doing so, also our collective psyche and

affectivity. This implies the power to censor, and this censorship already takes place in the psychic mechanism, as Freud says. But Derrida (1998a, 9n1) reminds us of its political aspects. Throughout *Archive Fever*, he also reminds us of the dangers of forgetting and of the death drive linked to technological elements of psychic mechanisms. More precisely, it is the danger of the misuse of technology in concrete spatio-temporal conditions of conservation, linked to political conditions. However, he claims that these technological elements (repetition) at the same time enable the preservation of the living. Derrida describes this danger as archive fever. These technological elements are also the condition of archiving, and therefore, for the living, life (62). For the simple reason that what cannot be repeated cannot be transmitted (archived), it disappears, it is absolutely forgotten.

SLOVAK VIRTUAL ARCHIVES AND CONCRETE ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL POWER

Our contemporary state institutions also have this hermeneutical power to exclude some communities, and in the case of Slovakia these excluded communities are the Roma, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Vietnamese, queer, and other marginalised communities and their affectivity and psychic archives. Hungarian archives also belong to the minority archives in Slovakia today. But it is also valid the other way around regarding the colonial effects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which Hungary colonised the Slovak and Roma collective memory and language for centuries. Thanks to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Slovak “written” or otherwise materialised archives could only begin in the nineteenth century, even if the Slovak language and culture existed for a very long time before this. Roma communities in that period were obliged to settle and stop being nomads. Slovak and Roma cultures were totally erased, censored, and forgotten before the nineteenth century. In contemporary Slovak culture, there is ongoing marginalisation of Roma, queer, and other cultures, just as in other Central/Eastern-European countries. Oppression persists with a previously marginalised culture now oppressing another marginalised culture.

Here, we will specifically focus on the different ways in which Roma and queer culture has been marginalised in Slovak virtual archives. My aim is not to compare or hierarchise different forms of oppression, but to analyse shared archival and technological mechanisms of invisibility of these two communities. It is important to emphasise that Roma communities, just as queer communities, are not a homogeneous group, but consist of many smaller groups. I chose to focus mainly on queer Roma artists who are members of both communities. These two communities have different histories, practices, and forms of cultural production, and they face very different struggles and ways of being made invisible. What links them, however, is that institutional representation—particularly in artistic and museum settings—is currently setting a precedent. The

choices being made today regarding what is archived, digitised, classified, or omitted will have lasting effects, extending beyond digital traces, on future understandings of Roma culture and contemporary Roma art.

In our contemporary world, we nevertheless have the possibility to use more modern technology to preserve certain lives and lives in general, i.e., to preserve the archives of today's minorities. However, the danger of the death drive (of being forgotten) hidden in technology is "in-finite", as Derrida says. In this paper, I will focus on the Roma and queer community and the danger of being forgotten that they are facing because they constitute the biggest and most attacked community, even if there are differences in the ways in which they are being forgotten as we will show in the conclusion.

It is important to address the question of collective memory, trauma, and the exclusion associated with it. I would like to examine ways in which the non-institutional virtual archive has a poetical potential and how to unlock its political potential. Today we face increasingly more hegemonic effects of the perversion that this non-institutional virtual archive carries within itself. However, we need to unlock the possible anarchical and anti-hegemonic effects of this perversion within the non-institutional virtual archives that feed AI models. In the next section, I will first clarify what I mean by anti-hegemonic affectivity that the process of *poiesis* can bring forward. Then I will point out examples of artistic practices that, through their anti-hegemonic affectivity, resist techno capitalist censorship and institutionalised racism.

HEGEMONIC PERVERSIONS OF TECHNOLOGY: ERASURE OF ROMA AND QUEER CULTURES IN SLOVAKIA

French philosopher Bernard Stiegler claims virtual networks that are creating and participating in this virtual archive contribute to the erasure of diversity of experience and affectivity. This is linked to the hegemonic effects of the perversion within the non-institutional virtual archive that is nowadays governed by techno capitalism. The capitalist virtual archive incorporates psychic traumas such that they are absorbed by simulacra, which are increasingly sophisticated and perfected (Stiegler 2009, 93–96). This leads to the erasure of individuality in the virtual archive, and this corresponds with the hegemonic perversion of technology. Technologies participating in the virtual archive are, according to Stiegler, also transforming our relationship to memory and the past. Technology is in Stiegler's view a supplement to our faculties of imagination, affectivity, and thinking. As Derrida (2012, 168) also observed, this supplementary character of technologies stems from the spectral character of their representation, but he claims that the spectral character of technology can also be politically emancipatory. Similarly, Stiegler (1998, 61–67; 2017) imagines not only the negative effects of technologies but also their redemptive potential, even while remaining quite critical of AI because it remains embedded in capitalist structures. Nevertheless, technology,

understood as poesis, has the potential to reinvent human existence and culture, and, equally, to reproduce human spiritual and symbolic values. It is important to understand the virtual archive not only as something that erases human affectivity, but also as something that can create new forms of affectivity. This is only possible provided we critically examine the hegemonic aspects of surveillance techno capitalism which can lead to censorship because of the hermeneutical power and competence they dispose of (state, big corporations, etc.).

In Slovakia and the Czech Republic, there has been a long-lasting erasure of Romani art from institutions such as the National Gallery in Prague and which is illustrated by the statement by Knížák, the gallery's director in 2002: "Romani works do not reach the standard of quality worthy of being exhibited in the National Gallery" (Ludlová and Rigová 2017, 4). He claimed that Roma art is appropriate for ethnographic museums or Romani museums, but should not hang next to baroque paintings because they are merely "folk pictures". Knížák therefore used his hermeneutical power and competence to create a very narrow definition of national cultural heritage and explicitly stated what he excludes from the archives. Here, we can observe the hegemonic perversion of the archiving technology at his disposal.

As a result of this power, Roma art continues to be excluded from institutional archives. In Slovakia, we recently observed a form of soft or hard censorship, especially in relation to marginalised communities such as the LGBTQ+ community (this concerns artists such as Andrej Dúbravský or Dorota Holubová).³ Recently, there have also been budget cuts for many queer events such as Košice Pride and the Drama Queer Festival. The right-wing nationalist party SNS has even installed billboards saying "we have cut all funding for LGBTQ+ projects" around Slovakia. This is in direct contradiction with the Slovak constitution, which forbids any kind of discrimination towards minorities (law 365, paragraph 2) including minority communities based on sexual orientation. The new minister of culture Martina Šimkovičová has dismissed almost all of the leaders of the most important state cultural institutions such as the Slovak National Gallery, the Slovak National Museum, the Slovak National Theatre and she has made the functioning of the most important funding source the Foundation for Art (Dond na podporu umenia) practically impossible. There have been many initiatives created and several protests by the employees of these institutions (creation of the platform Open Culture). The most obvious case of censorship happened in Bratislava castle (belonging to the Slovak National Museum) where Dorota Holubová's exhibition *Neskrývaná láska* was banned. This exhibition mapped the lives of queer people living in contemporary Slovakia. According to the artist, Minister of Culture Martina Šimkovičová said it was LGBTQ+ propaganda. In their official statement the Slovak National Museum denied that the exhibition would be a censored. The fact remains that under the new direction of the Slovak National Museum, the exhibition was cancelled. Holubová has exhibited these artworks abroad and she published the

³ For the definition of soft censorship see Tompa (2021) who analyses censorship in art during Orban's administration.

exhibited photos in a book supported by the Netherlands embassy and the Foundation of the city of Bratislava. She is a long-term advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. (See the exhibition *Sami sebou*, raising awareness of trans people in Slovakia <https://sutaz.slovak-press-photo.sk/SK/sutaz-detail-foto?set=217&photo=1188>).

Artists advocating for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community are mostly targeted by hate comments, budget cuts and even hard censorship. The attacks of ultra-right-wing politicians, amongst whom we count also our prime minister, Robert Fico, and almost the entire coalition in the current government, revolve around the idea of national identity. Therefore, the censorship or even attacks, seems to concern all the artists who try to redefine Slovak identity, as is the case of Denise Lehocká. Lehocká's artwork was almost destroyed and removed from the Slovak National Gallery's permanent collection without her consent or knowledge in August 2025. In her installation, she tried to define Slovak identity through motifs of thread-making, potatoes, traditional textiles, and embroidery with obvious reference to the feminist movement of craftivism. Another attack that Minister Šimkovičová orchestrated targeted many of the aforementioned artists, including Roma Artist Emília Rigová. Šimkovičová posted a reel from her visit of permanent collection in Slovak National Gallery, trying to point out that Slovak art is perverted because it is focused on genitalia (<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1317623822805886/>). Her reel shows artworks from the permanent collection that actually problematise the fetishism of genitalia, such as works by Anna Daučíková, who, as a trans person, is rethinking her own relationship to their chest, and, for me as a trans person, this thematises dysphoria (https://www.webumenia.sk/en/dielo/SVK%3ASNG.IM_916-4). The reel finishes with a close-up of Rigová's video, in which she vomits gold. In this artwork, Rigová critically reflects upon Roma art and its use of gold. There are more artists whose works were endangered by the new direction of the Slovak National Gallery such as Jozef Sušienka (removal of his statues from the exterior of the National Gallery, <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/4795317/>), Jiří Franta and David Böhm (whose mural in Zvolenský zámok was destroyed, <https://dennikn.sk/4714130/na-zvolenskom-zamku-znicili-dielo-od-ceskych-umelcov-frantu-a-bohmaskoncilo-v-kontajneri/>). All this led to the cancellation of the planned exhibition of contemporary art *Model: Múzeum súčasného umenia in SNG* in the National Gallery.

The LGBTQ+ community in Slovakia is currently under constant media attacks in which the current government does not hesitate to call them sick and deformed. All of these events are preceded by a terrorist attack on two queer people in 2022: Matúš Horváth (a gay cis man) and Juraj Vačulík (a drag performer identifying as a nonbinary person).

These examples only underline the power of institutions to judge what is art and what is not. This can lead to the creation of exclusions and censorship tools (Tomková 2025, 19). Unfortunately, as Ahmed claims, there is a straightening and whitening device in place in institutions that

we have to reform (Ahmed 2012, 173–174; Ahmed 2020). This message and exclusion are also conveyed through collecting, archiving, and displaying art, but it concerns the virtual art archives.

However, in today's rapidly changing world, the display of art is no longer limited to the white cube format or in situ installations. Art is exhibited in online spaces and uses new technologies and AI tools; it is indeed part of the virtual archive. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the forms of exclusion not only from the "white cube" but also from institutional virtual archives, which offer more accessible ways to display art today. From a theoretical point of view, this is because *poiesis* (creation in general) already contains a technological element; therefore, art and technology are no longer in opposition, as we showed in the previous section.

On the other hand, virtual archives (institutional and non-institutional) can be very important tools for Slovak institutions and artists in resisting censorship because they are much harder to control by government censorship and are very accessible. For example, the Slovak government can ban various offline exhibitions, but the online archive can still be used to represent marginalised artists and disseminate their work even more broadly in the virtual space. The advantage is that the institutional virtual archives are publicly accessible and artworks can be downloaded from there for free by anyone, which is also the case for webumenia.sk. For Derrida (2008, 15): "The effective democratisation is always measured by these essential criteria: the participation and access to archive, to its constitution and interpretation." We could say that a freely accessible virtual institutional archive is a condition for democracy and freedom.

However, current Slovak virtual archives must first be subjected to more questioning. For example, the institutional archive of state-funded Slovak museums and art galleries does not include enough and appropriate representation of works of Roma and queer artists (specifically webumenia.sk), and it is practically impossible to find works of Roma and queer artists that do belong to the archive on the webpage. A simple search for Roma, queer art, or Roma holocaust returns very little on the website of webumenia.sk and there is no visible section of the webpage dedicated to Roma or queer art. Moreover, many works of Roma artists are not digitised (the ones we can find are mostly on the freely accessible virtual museum archive Slovakiana) and the content of the works that can be found mostly consists of ethnographic representations of Roma folk culture with very few entries from the contemporary Roma art scene. The situation is slightly better for queer white contemporary Slovak artists, who have more representation on the webpage of webumenia.sk (e.g. Dubravsky and Daučíková). But again, there is no specific category or tag dedicated to queer art. This contributes to making Roma and queer art invisible and in this case, the virtual archive functions like a soft censorship device, or as Ahmed puts it, a whitening and straightening device. This has a direct impact on the perception, reproduction and

dissemination of Slovak art, contributing to a discriminatory definition of what is Slovak art and culture operating by censorship devices. For example, these institutional virtual archives should be used in AI tools such as AI image generators, as we outlined in the introduction.

EXAMPLES OF ANTI-HEGEMONIC USES OF AI BY ROMA ARTISTS: POLITICAL EMANCIPATION AND VIRTUAL SPACE AS A RESISTANCE TOOL

The emancipatory character of artistic production has been highlighted by many theoreticians, including Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Denisa Tomková, Ewa Majewska, and Grant Kester. Even if Roma and queer art is rendered invisible in Slovak institutional virtual archives (soft censorship), many Roma and queer artists use AI and virtual technologies in their work as a tool of poetic emancipation. Roma and queer artists use technology to reshape the non-institutional archive and thus fight for the place they deserve in the virtual archives. Even these non-institutional virtual and AI technologies are developed by capitalist institutions (corporations) and they are built on West centric, colonial and capitalist values. As we will see, these originally capitalist-oriented and inherently racist technologies can still be used as a tool of emancipation to some extent. Alternative models that are more sensitive not only to the Central/Eastern European context, but also to its marginalised communities, can be built. The use of virtual networks and technology, archiving, and the preserving of marginalised cultures can have an emancipatory aspect for these cultures (Tomková 2025, 29).

We can observe an example of the emancipatory and anti-hegemonic uses of technology in the works of Roma artist Mihaela Drăgan. In her “Roma Futurism Manifesto: Techno-witchcraft is the Future”, she combines witchcraft with technology and magic. Cyber witches, in her view, create a more egalitarian and democratic world, and they are the key figures of Romafuturism. The Roma Futurism Manifesto is a good example of a new kind of affectivity using AI technologies that invites the use of technology as a tool of empowerment for the marginalised Roma community. Drăgan proposes understanding AI as something magical since we do not understand exactly how it works (Parisi 2016). She replaces traditional witchcraft tools with modern technological devices. She refers to:

live transmissions of rituals and spells through the internet, virtual tarot and to healing through technological tools, [...] shamanism rituals (rituals which make the [sic] use of manele [a genre of Romanian pop folk music] to create a gypsiritual experience through music and dance) and virtual psychedelic feelings (the fusion between biologic and technologic with the purpose of self-knowledge and personal development).” (Drăgan 2018)

This implies a belief that technological entities are inhabited by spirits and that the internet is itself an independent and strong spirit that can be

used for diffusing antiracist and anti-discriminatory practices to liberate Roma from oppression (using ethical hacking, for example). The main character of this movement is Cyber-Witch, who fights against Roma oppression and has a superpower to transcend time and access the past in order to create alternative histories. “They will offer a performative answer to the question: If this oppressive past had never existed how would Roma communities have evolved?” (Drăgan 2018) In her manifesto Drăgan directly challenges the censorship, whitening, and straightening device of archival work, whether artistic or historical.

Another example of the emancipatory and anti-hegemonic use of virtual technologies can be observed in the works of Ezra Šimek, a trans* nonbinary artist who was born in Germany, studied at the Slovak Academy of Arts, and lives in the Czech Republic. In their 2020 work *No offense but* Šimek used Instagram live to deconstruct prejudices against trans and non-binary people, creating a parody of a TED talk. Šimek is the TED talk speaker in formal clothes who explains trans and nonbinary identity and they simultaneously play the role of an Instagram live audience that keeps interrupting asking them with very stereotypical questions about queer identities. Their aim was to connect to more international online queer community and to expose harmful stereotypes, underlining that even if trans people form a community their individual stories cannot be generalised as stereotypes. Šimek uses Instagram, a platform accessible to many people to disseminate their message, to reclaim pop-cultural language and social media tools. Šimek claims society faces a “dramatic political divide” and a lack of understanding of the complexities of the situation (Tomková 2025, 103–4).

The work of Slovak Roma artist Robert Gabris also highlights the connection between technology, feminism, and antiracial struggles. Gabris's work inscribed into Glitch feminism movement that embraces the use of technology in art. In their six month long project *Error, Roma Corporeality and Their Non-Binary Spaces*, Gabris used dating apps to connect Roma queer people living in excluded and marginalised spaces who would not be able to otherwise meet. However, “normal” usage of LGBTQ+ dating apps is a space of exclusion for the Roma queer community that quite often perpetuates racism, sexism, and sexual violence. The project *Error* started at the K.A.I.R residency in Košice. First, they met online, and Gabris presented them the project's idea before they met in person for the first time (emphasis on mutual trust and agreement and safety of the participants). As a part of the exhibition, the participants formulated their collective demands, which were then embroidered on ribbons and on a larger textile. It declares the following: “ROMA CORPOREALITY BECOMES A RADICAL TECHNOLOGY OF SELF-ARMORING”. This resonates with the idea that our bodies already belong to the virtual archive because they are already technological and technical devices. Therefore, representation of these bodies through technological means is not itself a violation of a body's image. However, a bad representation is a violation, whether virtual or not. For example, Gabris connects this

problem to a representation of sex workers and of queer Roma people that can be represented in collective memory as worthless and dirty or despicable. He claims that these identities can be destigmatised by the sex workers themselves, who can use them as a weapon, just as Drăgan invites us to do. Sex work can become a tool to fight against white patriarchy, using its weakness and transforming it into strength. The textual part of Gabris' exhibition is the following:

Roma corporeality has become a radical technology of self-defence.

We strategically use the body as a material, the material as a tool, the tool as a weapon against your heteronormative linearity.

We have strategically learned to use ERROR for self-defence.*

The curatorial text by Katerina Kottova explains:

This arrangement also asks art institutions, attempting to become more inclusive places than they have been traditionally, to assume an even more radical position—to offer a space within their inclusivity for something quite exclusive; to provide a territorial space they themselves cannot enter, only assist from outside with humility. The physical installation in the gallery is just one element in the whole project.

Not only is this a call for inclusion in the sense of making space for marginalised groups within the normative space, but also for the creation of closed spaces dedicated exclusively to queer Roma art and other marginalised groups, managed by them only. This implies the need to include queer Roma art in the institutional virtual archives of art institutions, and to give them “prime time” space.

CONCLUSION: CALL FOR DIVERSIFICATION OF DATA FROM V4 COUNTRIES: HOW NOT TO REPRODUCE THE INSTITUTIONAL RACISM REFLECTED IN DATA?

In the case of Slovakia, institutional archives such as webumenia.sk represent internationally successful queer white artists such as Dúbravský and Daučíková, who directly face hate speech or even hard censorship from Slovak politicians, or stars such as Andy Warhol or Ladislav Mednyánszky (a nineteenth century queer painter; Tamášová 2021). It is important that public access to these archives remains free because this will make it harder for governments to control them. In Slovakia, virtual institutional archives remain unnoticed by the government because they focus on non-virtual forms of art, unaware of the increasing role of technologies in the contemporary art scene. On the other hand, Slovak institutional virtual archives do not sufficiently include all marginalised artists, missing the opportunity to provide increased visibility in a regime with authoritarian tendencies. Roma artists are not represented in Slovak virtual archives, and they are reduced to ethnographic material, often represented by white artists (More Roma artists can be found on the slovakiana website than on webumenia.sk).

Nevertheless, marginalised communities are already part of a non-institutional virtual archive in a broader sense, and they can use this to their advantage, often subversively. Technology does not acquire only the negative meaning of an erasure of the heterogeneous affectivities. As we tried to show, it can generate new affectivity or a virtual safe space for excluded affective frameworks of marginalised communities such as the Roma and queer community. I specifically focused on Roma art (which is also often queer art) because it is particularly left out of Slovak virtual archives. This space for new forms of resistance by anti-hegemonic forms of affectivity is possible also thanks to technology, as it allows participants to reflect on individual and collective traumas and feelings of guilt and shame (e.g. dating apps, and social platforms in Gabris' or Šimek's artworks). The possibility to reflect on these affects allows the queer Slovak Roma community to move forward and formulate demands in a manifesto. We can conclude that marginalised authors resist being made invisible and inscribe their work into the non-institutional virtual archive, even if virtual archives leave them out. These artists view technology as their tool, allowing them to revisit the divide between straight bodies and queer, racialised bodies (such as Roma, trans*, and nonbinary bodies). Therefore, in their work technology becomes a tool of poetical resistance to oppression and erasure of their affectivity by the straightening and whitening devices of state institutions and big techno capitalist structures. The practical advantages of using non-institutional archives to present and store their work are better visibility, accessibility, lower expenses, and the possibility of avoiding censorship (if they are also banned online, they can move their content to another location, VPN, or similar). Whether the hegemonic character of general non-institutional virtual archives (the internet and social media platforms) governed by big techno capitalist structures really offers them greater visibility remains an open question. Secondly, it is not clear that all artists trust these platforms; some are afraid of losing their authorship. Nevertheless, in the abovementioned artworks, we have seen that some artists use online social platforms as tools for community building rather than simply storing their artworks.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH IN TECHNOLOGY AND FOR AI MODELS DEVELOPMENT

Virtual space can therefore become a space of emancipation offering tools for poetical political resistance to oppression. However, if we do not revisit the exclusionary and censoring practices embedded in contemporary institutional and techno capitalist techniques of virtual archiving, these technologies will continue to perpetuate these exclusions exercised by institutions and reinforced by governments. This concerns both archives of museums and galleries and techno capitalist structures that constitute a big archive, as explained above. There are existing or emerging precedents of alternative institutional and semi-institutional

platforms and initiatives such as the Roma Pavilion project at the Venice Biennale in 2007, the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno (<https://www.rommuz.cz/en/>), and contemporary Central/Eastern European initiatives such as the Romani Design activist art collective (<https://romani.hu/en/about-us/>) which includes artists such as Erika Vagra, Helena Varga and theoreticians such as Lili Kristen (2024). We should also mention here the K.A.I.R. residence project for young artists from Central/Eastern European countries in Košice, which invites collaboration with local Roma communities (<https://www.kair.sk/>), and creates space for young Roma artists such as Gabris or Júlia Csapó from Hungary. Non-institutional Romani art also collaborates with music platforms, especially queer art and a political, activist art that is very important in contemporary Slovak pop or more underground music culture. For example, the singers Vojtík and ERØ (Šlonerová and Žigmund 2023), Fvck_cvlT, and Čavalenky. Fvck_cvlT is an electropunk/metal singer who criticises oppressive politicians at their concerts and encourages the attendants of the concert to vote and not to fall into lethargy. Their songs directly thematise their Roma identity and the joys and struggles it entails, which is also a theme in the music of Čavalenky and Vojtík.

In some cases, we first need to create virtual archives from what are called “material” archives so they can be incorporated into AI models by fine-tuning. There are doubts about the data used in the development phase of the model and whether fine-tuning or model interpretation (the process of understanding, explaining, and visualising how machine learning models work and their biases) can solve all the problems since the primary data and their management are probably already biased. However, we need a philosophical and politico-ethical framework and a critique of AI to reflect on what diversity in AI can mean. The AI models do not use all internet content equally with most focusing on English or Western-centric content (Couldry and Mejias 2019; Johnson et al. 2022). The newest models produced by OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft do not make public the data sets they use; therefore, their data usage is not transparent (not even to the research community). Current conditions of archiving recreate hegemonic AI structures closely tied to capitalism and reproduce an Anglocentric, racist philosophy embedded in technological practices as such. As Benjamin (2019, 78) says, “Computer systems are a part of larger matrix of systemic racism”. AI mechanisms currently only continue to reproduce the systemic racism already embedded in techno capitalist structures and in existing archiving practices (for example, the relationship of coloniality to written archives).

However, even if we decide to diversify the existing AI image generators (e.g. Stable diffusion, Flux, SD35 Large /Medium, and SDXL) and fine tune them, we must first question what kind of marginalisation will result in relationship to already marginalised cultures (towards Western Europe), such as Slovak, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian cultures, as we aimed to do in this text. Not only is there a lack of representation of the V4 cultures in AI generators, but there is also a lack of racialised and

otherwise marginalised cultures within V4 countries. And this lack of representation and invisibility is reflected in V4 archives (digitalised or not) and across Europe (Junghaus 2025). If we use already biased (racist or homophobic) data to fine-tune the models to be more sensitive to Central/Eastern European cultures, it will not help diversification. We will only continue the work of the whitening and straightening device (Ahmed 2020, 72).

There exist alternative archives with fair data, such as Secondary Archive (<https://secondaryarchive.org/>), that fill gaps in institutional archives and represent queer, Roma, and feminist Central/Eastern European art. But they are not tied to any particular state art institution. The non-institutional virtual archive and alternative archives, such as the Secondary archive and all content created by marginalised communities, should be better integrated into AI mechanisms. This data should also be used as primary data in the first phase of the training, especially because trained models are known to continuously learn from the online content. These institutional and non-institutional archives are now part of the globally accessible online content so they should be incorporated into the AI models at every stage of their development.

To conclude, I will formulate a few clear philosophical guidelines, even if most of them cannot currently be implemented because there is very little will to do so on the part of techno capitalist structures that keep AI development completely untransparent. However, it is important to formulate these explicitly. First, we need participatory data design. This means that diverse data should not be only included in the stage of fine-tuning as is usually suggested, but it should be included from the start, from the very first phases of training. The diverse data should be collected through participatory experimental practice invented by the marginalised communities in question, as for example the artists mentioned in the previous section invited us to do. We need to ask in every context, what community practices facilitate anti-hegemonic data collection and how can they be used in any contexts? Secondly, we need dynamic data monitoring; model outputs should be continuously evaluated across various cultural contexts. Thirdly, we need the datasets to provide rich metadata about their origins and to rethink the criteria used to select the data, to ensure data transparency and avoid hegemonic power structures to govern AI models (Iman 2025, 2–3).

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