

ROMA RIGHTS

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NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US? ROMA PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

2, 2015

CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION PROMOTING EQUALITY



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Guest editor: **ANDREW RYDER, ANGELA KOCZE, IULIUS ROSTAS, JEKATY-ERINA DUNAJEVA, MARIA BOGDAN, MARIUS TABA, MARTON RÖVID, TIMEA JUNGHAUS**

Editor team: **KIERAN O'REILLY AND MAREK SZILVASI**

Language Editing: **KIERAN O'REILLY, VANESSA GILDER STEVENS AND MIRANDA MILLAN**

Layout: **DZAVIT BERISHA**

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Address: 1077 Budapest, Wesselényi utca 16, Hungary

Office Tel: +36 1 413 2200

Office Fax: +36 1 413 2201

E-mail: office@errc.org

www.errc.org

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Nothing About Us Without Us?

MÁRIA BOGDÁN, JEKATYERINA DUNAJEVA, TÍMEA JUNGHAUS, ANGÉLA KÓCZÉ, MÁRTON RÖVID, IULIUS ROSTAŞ, ANDREW RYDER, MAREK SZILVÁSI, MARIUS TABA

Nothing about us without us? Roma participation in knowledge production and policy making was a unique three-day gathering of Roma and pro-Roma activists and thinkers.¹ Held in Budapest in October 2014, this forum provided opportunity to reflect not only on the previous decades of struggle, but also to think about future directions. Looking back on the early days of the Romani Movement, activists recalled the idealism and hope of times past, which had somehow vanished. This loss of hope was attributed to lost connections with communities; inward-looking and narrow ideologies; and hierarchical decision-making within government and civil society structures. It was also felt that acute forms of poverty and xenophobia had done much to disempower and disenchant.

Structural racism in academia

David Gillborn, the renowned advocate of critical race theory, contends that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of society and that institutional racism is pervasive in dominant culture. At Gillborn's public lecture held in Budapest in November 2014, Marius Taba pointed out that racism not only existed within political extremes but had entered the mainstream political agenda, adding that there was also institutional racism, including within universities. Taba asserted that if a Roma scholar makes a statement, it is discounted as subjective, but a non-Roma scholar such as Géza Jeszenszky is able to proclaim without any evidence that Roma culture sanctions incest; thus so-called institutions of knowledge production can produce racist ideas.²

In response, Gillborn agreed that in many European states mainstream politics is lurching to the right rather than facing up to racism, and there is in fact a race to compete for the reactionary vote. With regard to knowledge production, universities are some of the most racist, sexist, disabling, elitist and closed organisations you could ever invent, he claimed. "They pride themselves on how clever and meritocratic they are and it gives them the excuse not to worry about Roma, Black or women professors, they say if these scholars were clever enough we would recruit them."

To break through as a Roma scholar and to combat being discounted one can look at the foundation of critical race theory, where people like Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado outlined how white lawyers argued that we cannot have a black judge. A black judge, they argued, cannot be impartial, unlike a white one, who does not have a racialised identity. In their minds ethnicity was something for 'exotic', 'other' people. In his book *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*³ Bell noted that we are judged as humans by how our ethnicity is judged and whether we are supporting or critiquing the racist status quo; so a member of the oppressed group arguing against oppression is discounted. But if as a Roma you dismissed talk of institutional racism as rubbish and stated that the problem lies in the fact that the Roma do not work hard enough, then you would be lauded on the front page of newspapers and invited to dinner with leading politicians, and foundations would offer you research money.

A key feature of the event and publication is that despite the setbacks and disappointments of the past, a new sense of idealism and optimism may be emerging. This is an invaluable resource, for without a "pedagogy of hope" the Romani Movement would stagnate. One of the most important sessions of the workshop dealt with the role of Feminism and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) minorities within the Romani movement. Feminist and LGBT activists are great resources and allies, who have developed amazing strengths in their battles to overcome not just racism but also

1 The video recordings of most of the sessions are available at: <http://romaempowerment.wordpress.com>.

2 For a fuller discussion see Andrew Richard Ryder, Beáta Nagy, Iulius Rostaş "A Note on Roma Mental Health and the Statement by Géza Jeszenszky", *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol 4, Number 2 (2013).

3 Derrick Bell, *Faces At The Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US?

sexism and homophobia. To be Gay and/or a Feminist and a Roma makes us realise that identity and tradition are not rigid and fixed phenomena, and therefore should not be oppressive but should be dynamic, inclusive and innovative, keeping the best of the old while reinventing and mixing identity with new outlooks and behaviour.

Such bridging and outward forms of social and cultural capital need to be reflected in the development of the Romani Movement, which should seek to build broad intersectional alliances across Roma communities and constituencies, incorporating not only interests but solidarity and altruism. There is important scope for Roma interests to link with wider social justice and anti-poverty movements. For the onward march of neo-liberalism will clearly be a prominent factor in the continuing marginalisation and scapegoating of Roma communities and must be challenged.

A desire for new directions, to give Roma a greater say in their lives, and to bring reality to the rhetoric of empowerment led participants to reflect on the need for new dynamics in power relationships within governmental and civil society decision-making processes. The old politics of tokenism and co-option need to change, otherwise there is a danger that pledges and commitments by decision-makers to co-production will be devalued and subverted. Likewise, decision-makers should champion the weak and marginalised including Roma communities, and be robust in their interventions wherever and whenever xenophobia and acute inequality threaten the cohesion and stability of society.

The old politics of the Romani Movement also needs to change, as there is a danger that different groups are becoming too factionalised and too focused on petty rivalries, impeding partnership and trust. New directions and debates are also needed in the field of knowledge production: there is a growing mood that greater emphasis should be given to research 'for' and 'with' Roma communities through community-based and participatory research. Research which facilitates community voices to be heard and actively involves them in all stages of the research process should not be derided as tainted by bias or as propaganda, for it is grounded in the reality of experience. Yet no one approach to research should dominate or monopolise - there is a need for plurality and diversity. Among all the disciplines, what has become known as Romani Studies should accept and celebrate a diversity of research approaches, and also tolerance and respect in debate.

Following the structure of the workshop *Nothing about us without us?* the journal issue contains critical papers by established and emerging activists and scholars in three sections: (1) activism and civil society; (2) knowledge production; (3) gender and LGBT issues.

We thank all those who have contributed to what may come to be viewed as an historic event and publication. Rather than producing a detailed manifesto, the main output may be a new spirit and attitude in the struggle for social justice, based on solidarity, diversity, innovation and respect.

Roma under erasure – note on the cover by Tímea Jungbaus

The cover image is Daniel Baker's work entitled *Roma strike through*.

The notion *sous rature* (under erasure) does not refer exclusively and literally to the current situation of Europe's largest minority living under the threat of being erased; it activates the concept originally developed by Martin Heidegger, and then used extensively by Jacques Derrida - which involves the crossing out of a word within a text, while allowing it to remain legible and in place.

The Roma under erasure signifies that the Gypsy/Roma/Sinti/Traveller-word/notion is "inadequate yet necessary" and that the particular Roma signifier is not wholly suitable for the concept it represents, but must be used, as the constraints of our language offer nothing better. The premise of deconstruction has the potential to offer an innovative (self-)definition for Roma by questioning the postulation that all of Western history (literature and philosophy) implicitly relies on a metaphysics of presence, where intrinsic meaning is accessible by virtue of pure presence.

The work attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of pure presence and consequently of intrinsic meaning, which leads to the conclusion that any given concept is constituted in reciprocal determination, in terms of its oppositions, and it further contends that "... we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand"⁴ - for example, the signified over signifier; intelligible over sensible; speech over writing; activity over passivity; majority over minority; and the *Gadje* (non-Roma) over the Gypsy.

The primary task of our practice for Roma-deconstruction is to overturn these oppositions, revealing their operation in visual encounters, artistic traditions, institutional histories and their produced texts.

4 Jacques Derrida, "Interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta" in *Positions*, Jacques Derrida (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 41.

On Roma Civil Society, Roma Inclusion, and Roma Participation

IULIUS ROSTAS, MÁRTON RÖVID, MAREK SZILVÁSI

Nothing about us without us?: Participants of the workshop held in October 2014 and the authors of the present journal issue offer critical insights into the manifestations and implications of this noble principle. The first panel and this section of the journal reflect on the main developments of Roma civil society; the ideas behind the founding Roma organisations; the strategies of the main players; and the main challenges.

Recollecting some of the main workshop debates and the themes developed in the articles, we reflect on the concepts of ‘Roma civil society’, ‘Roma inclusion’, and ‘Roma participation’. We end the paper by discussing some possibilities for ‘dismantling the Roma ghetto’.

ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY

What is Roma civil society? What is its distinctive element and who is part of it? In order to discuss Roma civil society, it is worth highlighting the main historical conceptions of ‘civil society’:

(i) The broadest conception is rooted in the tradition of the 18th century Scottish Enlightenment (Ferguson and Hume) that distinguished analytically the State and Society. The contemporary version of such an approach embraces all non-state actors, including political parties, companies, and trade unions. Accordingly, the concept of civil society can be defined as “the area of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules.”¹

(ii) In the 19th century Marx identified the *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as the sphere of competition of economic interests, which is distinctive from the state as the body of citizens. Political emancipation, argues Marx, sets apart the legally equal *citoyens* and legitimises social and economic inequality amongst the *bourgeois*. A contemporary interpretation would thus identify civil society with actors of the economic sphere.

(iii) Although Tocqueville did not use the term ‘civil society’, in his book *Of Democracy in America* he enthusiastically described how individual liberties are guaranteed in the United States by so-called “democratic accessories” such as the separation of the Church and the State, freedom of the press, independence of the judiciary, and the prosperity of associations.

(iv) Gramsci was the first to analytically distinguish the spheres of economy and society. The latter comprises the Church, the education system, and civic associations. The State and civil society form the superstructure (in a Marxist sense). The means of oppression in the former is state violence, and in the latter it is cultural hegemony.

(v) In the 1970s in Latin America and in the 1980s in Eastern Europe a narrow conception of civil society emerged which referred to the autonomous sphere not controlled by the authoritarian regimes of these regions. The dissidents promoting such a conception claimed the moral superiority of civil society over the state. Hence a true social reflex in the post-communist period in which civil society is positively valued compared to politics, which is perceived as a dirty game serving the interests of those groups in power and not the public interest.

Following these conceptual distinctions, we could ask what could ‘Roma civil society’ entail? Is it *possible* to delineate ‘Roma civil society’ from ‘civil society’?

Taking into account the broad conception of civil society, it is possible to identify a great number of non-state actors that claim to advocate on behalf of Roma or implement projects targeting Roma such as international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or political parties. These actors have over the years developed into a transnational network that can be called “the pro-Roma global civil society”.² Furthermore, one could also identify for-profit companies

1 Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 221.

2 Márton Rövid and Angéla Kóczé, “Pro-Roma Global Civil Society: Acting for, with or instead of Roma?”, in *Global Civil Society 2012: Ten Years of Critical Reflection*, ed. M. Kaldor, H. L. Moore and S. Selchow (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

run by Roma and consumers of Romani origin that may be considered as a segment of the market.

Depending on the normative approach, ‘Roma civil society’ may be considered a site of emancipation and resistance (following the classic liberal or recent ‘dissident’ understandings of civil society) or a sphere of economic competition, cultural hegemony, and physical oppression (following the Marxist or Gramscian conceptions).

Emancipatory approaches to civil society tend to neglect some ‘non-civic’ components of civil society, such as criminal groups.³ Furthermore, there are several informal (traditional) institutions that may be considered as part of Roma civil society, such as self-help groups, the *Bulibasa*, or *Criss romano*. For instance, *criss romano*, as a customary conflict resolution mechanism opposing or avoiding the legitimate state justice system may be considered ‘ant-civic’ i.e. anti-establishment and anti-democratic.

Is it *desirable* to delineate ‘Roma civil society’ from ‘civil society’?

Envisioning a closed and separate ‘Roma society’ can undermine social solidarity and promote the ethnicisation of social relations that may further segregate and marginalise citizens perceived as ‘Roma/Gypsy’. Throughout history, the deep-rooted images of ‘Roma society’ have taken both romantic and malevolent forms ranging from the adoration of pure and free *savages* to their expulsion, forced assimilation, enslavement, and extermination.

On the other hand, the rights to mobilise and to set up various formal and informal organisations along ethnic lines should be guaranteed and facilitated. It is vital to develop (pro-)Roma public spheres where the desirability, efficiency, and legitimacy of such ‘Roma’ projects, mobilisations, and formal and informal institutions could be debated.

ROMA INCLUSION

Contemporary conceptions of ‘Roma inclusion’ and ‘Roma integration’ often tend to be paternalistic as they

rely on the exclusionary ethnic view of ‘Roma civil society’. Accordingly, the undeveloped/marginalised/uncivilised ‘Roma society’ has to be included/integrated into the developed/just/democratic/civilised ‘society’. ‘Roma’ often appear on the radar of the actors of inclusion as marginalised passive masses, a ‘vulnerable population’ that has to be assisted in their inclusion into society.

Roma inclusion policies are often closely tied with patron-client relationships where the benefits of patrons designing and delivering services – be it public authorities, international organisations or civil society – dramatically exceed the benefits of activated ‘Roma clients’. Hence, rather than directly empowering the excluded local Roma, the existing system provides civil society and other actors with resources and paths for representing and servicing these ‘clients’.

The patron-client relationship excludes the clients from the design of ‘inclusion policies’ and limits their participation in crucial decisions affecting their lives. Providing socio-economic services can often be aptly described as patrimonial as these services undermine the civil, political, and human rights of their ‘recipients’ by simply taking over their claims and representing their interests while having no accountability structures in place.⁴ The fact that this context allows human rights to be delegated from individual Roma to civil society suggests that the current system paves the way for a certain type of actor, who is already relatively empowered.

As Rancière bluntly points out, human rights can be actualised only by those who understand them as commodities.⁵ These patrons gain unrestricted access to the trade-off of human rights claims on behalf of their clients. Human rights and inclusion policies thus operate in the broader system of the rights economy in which the most vulnerable and the excluded can be further alienated by empowered patrons.⁶ In order to access their human rights, ‘the Roma clients’ need to turn to vanguard actors who are empowered enough to stand up for their claims. In sum, under some civil society settings excluded Roma might remain just as vulnerable with their rights addressed as they would without.

3 Pavel distinguishes three segments of civil society: civic, non-civic, and anti-civic (i.e. anti-establishment, anti-democratic). Dan Pavel, “The Theory of Civil Society Revisited” in *Sfera Politicii*, Vol. XVIII, Number 2, (February 2010).

4 Joanna Bourke-Martignoni, *Echoes from a Distant Shore: The Right to Education in International Development* (Geneva: Schulthess, 2012).

5 Jacques Rancière, “Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 2-3/103, (2004): 297–310.

6 David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004); Slavoj Žižek, *The Future of Europe*, (2009), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL031DE139C14CEE38>.

ROMA PARTICIPATION

Having decades of experiences with paternalistic ‘Roma inclusion’ projects and ‘Roma organisations’, many European citizens of Romani origins have learnt to distrust them. Nonetheless, participating in such projects and organisations may provide a crucial source of income and open channels of upward social mobility.

‘Roma participation’ thus entails a particular market of ‘Roma activists’. On the demand side, various ‘Roma’ projects, programmes, and organisations (from local projects, to national level NGOs, minority self-governments, and various European-level bodies and programmes) require the participation of Roma activists/politicians/professionals to legitimise the structure for which they work.

On the supply side, there is a broad spectrum of persons of Romani origin including some highly qualified and truly committed persons who struggle for noble causes in often ‘imperfect’ structures, as well as token appointed ‘Roma’ whose main job is to approve often shameful ‘pro-Roma’ projects, programmes, or policies with their ‘brown stamp’.

The selection of ‘Roma participants’ and the election of ‘Roma representatives’ are frequently connected with their over-emphasised Roma identity, authenticity, and their availability to assume a subordinate position in relation with authorities.⁷ Authenticity is often linked to being ‘visibly Roma’ i.e. having a darker skin colour, having a well-known Romani family name, or knowing Romani. As a result, not fitting the racial and ethnic stereotypes can be disadvantageous in this market.

It is important to underline that even seemingly democratically elected Roma-led organisations can play a purely tokenistic role. Consider the case of the Hungarian National Roma Minority Self-Government that has supported every Roma inclusion policy of each government without ever formulating any substantive critiques *vis-à-vis* the establishment.

DISMANTLING THE ROMA GHETTO

Paternalistic Roma inclusion policies are typically disconnected from broader social, economic, and political

developments. Roma integration strategies usually comprise smaller-scale targeted policy interventions but do not address the sweeping social changes affecting the lives of most Roma, such as the economic collapse of the so-called ‘post-communist transition’ and the withering of welfare states which is sometimes referred to as the emergence of ‘neoliberal regimes’.

The authors of this section of the journal issue provide ample examples of this process from Bulgaria, Romania, and the United Kingdom.

Analysing the case of Bulgaria, Russinov points out that “during the Socialist period, most of the Roma [...] were relatively well integrated in the macro society. After 1989, many of them lost their jobs and migrated towards the cities. In the cities, Roma families moved to segregated Roma neighbourhoods and their children attended the segregated Roma schools. The levels of school segregation have thus increased from around 50% in 1990 to 70% in 2003.”⁸

Discussing paternalistic Roma inclusion policies, Acton and Ryder claim that “policies which invoke the language of ‘social inclusion’ rest upon narrow, assimilative, interpretations of what it is to ‘civilise’ and integrate. Such structures lead to bureaucratic processes stifling funding streams for community organisations and creating projects with limited goals to achieve service adjustment or give the impression of consultation. This imposes hierarchy on community organisation and constrains community leaders to dance to the tunes of their funders, smothering their appetite for more transformative action.”⁹

Nasture provides a vivid description of what he calls the ‘Gypsy industry’ which comprises “organisations and institutions develop[ing] missions and operating principles that they do not follow, and neither do their ‘beneficiaries’. The hidden agenda is elaborated around the aim to mobilise for funds and therefore the primary concern is about creating and maintaining a positive image of their organisation/institution. As a result the organisations/institutions are report-driven and focused on polished project results. Those who know how to produce these receive funds, even though these ‘experts’ go to the communities more

7 Iulius Rostas, “Workshop Debates: Traditional Versus Modern”, in: *From Victimhood to Citizenship: The Path of Roma Integration* (Biro, Gheorghe, Kovats et al), ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kossuth Publishing Corporation, 2013), 149.

8 See article of Rumyan Russinov in this issue, p. 24.

9 See article of Thomas Acton and Andrew Ryder in this issue, p. 13.

like tourists, take some photos, write some reports and then their work is done, and payment is received.”¹⁰

How to break out from the ghetto of the ‘Gypsy industry’?

Above all, paternalistic conceptions of Roma inclusion - assuming a just and civilized society into which passive and marginalised ‘Roma’ have to be integrated – must be thoroughly debated. Rather than integrating into unjust, oppressive societies, Romani citizens should contribute to the healing of these ‘sick’ societies.¹¹

Rusinov recalls the Bulgaria of 1990 when Romani activists, professionals, and intellectuals founded the *Democratic Union of Roma*, which played an active role in debating and establishing the new constitutional and social order. They advocated the equal participation of Roma in the new democratic society, through political participation, participation in government, and the freedom to develop Roma culture and language.

Discussing the example of the Gypsy Council in the UK, Acton and Ryder draw attention to the importance of developing financially autonomous membership-based organisations that do not depend on external donors. “The Gypsy Council is arguably at its most agile when links to funders are minimal and the organisation depended on membership fees and unpaid activism. A frequent complaint in recent decades has been that the Romani Movement has undergone a process of NGO-isation, in which donor-driven agendas and hierarchical management forms have subverted and emasculated grassroots activism.”¹²

Autonomous grassroots organisations can exert real pressure on authorities by means of non-violent direct action. In the late 1960s, “resistance to eviction became a prominent

feature of the work of the Gypsy Council, generating publicity, attention and recruits. Noted publicity stunts such as parking trailers outside Buckingham Palace, Downing Street, or Parliament, were staged. The non-violent direct action of the Gypsy Council in part reflected the methods in vogue at the time, such approaches having been employed with great effect in the civil rights movement in the USA.”¹³

Nasture argues for linking civic activism to the concepts of *Phralipe* and *Pakiv* i.e. to build on brotherhood, solidarity, trust, and transparency. Roma should mobilise their social and cultural capital in order to transform the unjust societies in which they live.

The above examples illustrate that Romani citizens and Roma organisations can and should play an active role in both broader social, economic, and political developments, as well as in concrete local cases.

Contrary to the common expectation, citizens of Romani origin and Roma organisations should not seek a common voice. Tensions inevitably arise between moderate service providers and anti-establishment activists, or between confrontational anti-racist groups and those seeking dialogue and cooperation with the broader society.

Nonetheless, we do advocate for dismantling the ‘Roma ghetto’. The narrow focus on ‘Roma inclusion’ has diverted attention from questions of social justice, welfare, democracy, and diversity. Anti-racist, feminist, LGBT and leftist movements can be neither credible nor successful without incorporating Romani activists and organisations. In turn, Roma and pro-Roma organisations, institutions and networks cannot be successful without developing alliances with progressive social movements.

10 See article of Florin Nasture in this issue, p. 27.

11 As Saimir Mile, Albanian-French-Romani activist noted at the workshop.

12 See article of Thomas Acton and Andrew Ryder in this issue, p. 13.

13 *Ibid.* p.16.

The Gypsy Council – Approaching 50 Years of Struggle

THOMAS ACTON AND ANDREW RYDER

IN MEMORIAM: DONALD KENRICK - 1929 TO 2015

This article is dedicated to the memory of Dr Donald Kenrick, activist and scholar, who sadly passed away in November 2015, a leading member of the Gypsy Council and author of numerous works such as *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, and *Gypsies from the Ganges to the Thames* who inspired many. For the Gypsy and Traveller families he helped to win planning cases and to develop family caravan sites and for the Roma migrants for whom he helped secure asylum, countless gained security and access to health care and education thanks to Donald, for them he was a true Romani Rai.

England's Gypsy Council, which was founded nearly 50 years ago in 1966 and hosted the First World Romani Congress in 1971, is an iconic element of the diverse history of the Romani social movement. This paper contrasts the leadership styles of its most important long-serving secretaries or chairmen, Grattan Puxon, Peter Mercer, Charlie Smith and Joe Jones, and assesses the historical lessons that can be provided for community struggles today.

During the 1960s and early 1970s the Gypsy Council seemed a 'radical' new form of community politics triggered by the campaigner **Grattan Puxon**. Puxon, a non-Gypsy, was something of a romantic figure. He had attended the elite Westminster public school but rejected the values of the establishment and fled to Ireland in 1960 to avoid national service and the prospect of having to fight in Cyprus to preserve a patch of Britain's crumbling Empire. In Ireland he eked out a living as a journalist and became involved in the struggle of Travellers/Gypsies driven by the rural economic crisis into large unauthorised encampments on the periphery of Dublin. He bought a bowtop wagon, and moved to live alongside them.

Puxon threaded family networks and traditions into a coherent campaign against the eviction of Travellers, which drew on the theory of non-violent direct action protests. In many respects Puxon was what Freire termed as an "outsider catalyst",¹ a mobiliser and galvaniser.² The highpoint

of this radicalism was probably the stand-off at Cherry Orchard in 1964/5, where the police withdrew from the threat of an eviction at a large unauthorised encampment in Dublin because of the huge number of Travellers that Puxon had amassed in protest at enforcement and eviction. Puxon was eventually arrested, held on remand for a few days until released on bail, on charges of storing weapons for the Irish Republican Army. Eventually the charges were dropped and Puxon was released from prison and pressurised back to the UK.³

In the UK Puxon replicated the tactics employed in Ireland. Two existing groups in England, the Sevenoaks Gypsy Resettlement Committee and the Manchester Society of the Travelling People had sponsored his return, and with their support he cultivated the support of a range of English Gypsy and Irish Traveller groups, who like their counterparts in Ireland, were enduring great hardship through a shortage of sites and eviction. In 1966 the Gypsy Council was formed, and through non-violent direct action in response to evictions it became a rallying point for English Gypsies and Irish Travellers.⁴ In a way reminiscent of the radical US community organiser Alinsky who used non-violent direct action to provoke and bait the establishment,⁵ Puxon was able skilfully to exploit the media attention that evictions aroused. As Acton notes "The Travellers began to realise that they were not totally powerless; they had the threat of their nuisance value in creating adverse publicity,

1 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

2 Andrew Ryder, Sarah Cemlyn, Thomas Acton, *Hearing the Voice of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: Inclusive Community Development* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2014).

3 Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

4 *Ibid.*

5 Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Political Primer for Practical Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1972).

if nothing else; if they organised, they could reach out for power.”⁶ Amongst its high points the Gypsy Council campaigned for a new law to oblige local authorities to provide Traveller sites (the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, a private member’s bill introduced by Eric Lubbock, M.P., now Lord Avebury) and in 1971 staged the first World Romani Congress in London which, aside from the adoption of a flag and anthem (*Gelem Gelem*), promoted a sense of internationalism and fraternity between Roma/Gypsies and Travellers which remains to the present day within the Romani Movement. Soon after the 1971 Congress, Grattan Puxon, suffering from fatigue, and feeling the Gypsy Council now could and should carry on without him, and in that year elected (joint) General Secretary of the IRU, moved to Eastern Europe to fulfil that role, accepting an invitation to stay in the Roma settlement in Shuto Orizari.

The radicalism of the Gypsy Council and its fluid and anarchic organisation may be ascribed to the fact that it was largely free of the strings attached to donor-driven agendas. Ultimately though tensions revolving around the charismatic and driven leadership of Puxon and attempts to lure the Gypsy Council into a service-delivery orientation by educationalists, as well as efforts by some traditional community leaders to usurp UK Romani activism, created a series of fissures and splits which weakened the Gypsy Council.⁷

From the late 1970s the Gypsy Council experienced a renaissance over which the English Gypsy **Peter Mercer** presided as chairman. Mercer had been taken into care as a child when a dog on the site barked at a visiting policeman, and placed in a Roman Catholic orphanage, and then when he reached the age of 16 placed as a skivvy (menial worker) in a hotel from which he had to run away to find his family again. A 2013 interview provides some insights into this experience:

Thomas Acton – “I always thought your abduction by the state and fighting your way back to the community gave you an inner steel”

Peter Mercer – “I was put into care [a Catholic children’s home] and taken away from my parents...a lot

of this was down to what I am. I had to put up with the Sisters of Mercy (a community of Catholic nuns), their treatment of children! ...they would come and take you away. I was not a Catholic and they baptized me to keep me. I had just turned 8, I saw people come in and go and I would say ‘When can I go home?’, and they would say ‘When your mum gets a proper home, when she moves into a house.’ They were sadists, they would cane you for nothing, that was their idea of corporal punishment”.⁸

His time in the Catholic orphanage and then the army gave him insights into the non-Gypsy world and an ability to bide his time, to build bridges and forge understanding, skills which served him well in local disputes over stopping places, and in his later roles as a Gypsy Liaison Officer and chair of the Gypsy Council and later the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups. In this work Peter was sustained and supported in part through his strong working relationship with his brothers-in-law and co-workers John and David Day. Thus Mercer, through a more consensual and deliberative leadership style, managed to regroup and unify many of those who had left the Gypsy Council.

In the 1990s the Gypsy Council was led by **Charles Smith**, who also became a Labour Councillor, Mayor and Race Equality Watchdog Commissioner. He sought to ‘modernise’ the Gypsy Council and transform it into a well-funded and staffed NGO. In this venture the Gypsy Council was only partially successful and some would even question the merits of this quest. Some key members, Peter Mercer, Eli Frankham and Sylvia Dunn left to concentrate on other organisations, thus perhaps disseminating the organisational lessons of the Gypsy Council further afield. Possibly Smith’s and the Gypsy Council’s greatest role in this period was to perform its historic role of ‘galvaniser’ in a wider umbrella group known as the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition, in which Smith was a crucial player.⁹ The Gypsy Council’s dependence on a few key figures was sorely tested by the deaths within a short period of time of Chair Charles Smith and President Josie Lee, and the disabling illness of long-term secretary Ann Bagehot. The Gypsy Council managed to survive even after a

6 Acton *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 156.

7 Ryder, Cemlyn, Acton, *Hearing the Voice of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers*.

8 *Ibid.*, 40.

9 *Ibid.*

financial crisis forced its de-registration as a charity and the leadership passed to Joe G Jones and Joseph P. Jones, who took a somewhat reduced Gypsy Council back to a more traditional informal style of organisation, exhausting themselves in the process, but keeping the idea of a campaigning rainbow coalition alive. This attracted – as it was bound to! – campaigners who were not satisfied by the other larger groups, constrained by funders and dominated by particular ethnic groups. The Gypsy Council now has two co-chairs, Valdemar Kalinin, a Rom, and a charismatic Irish Traveller who goes by the *nom-de-guerre* of Phien O'Reachtigain (incidentally, the brother-in-law of former chair Joe G. Jones). There is an English Romani Secretary, Caroline Willis, who is a private site-owner like many of the Council's supporters, including the philanthropic Brazil family who run the South-East Romany Museum in Marden, Kent (and are also mainstays of the Churches Network for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma). It has a Pakistani treasurer, Khurram Khan, and an English community work adviser, Phil Regan, and it has brought back into active membership its founder, Grattan Puxon, who also leads the April 8 movement, UK followers of Peter Antic's campaign for democratic renewal in the international Romani movement. They are looking forward to celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Gypsy Council on December 12th 2016 in the same venue where it was founded.

This brief review of the Gypsy Council charting a range of organisational approaches, which can be seen in a variety of other organisations within the Romani Movement, prompts a series of questions which have relevance for campaigners today:

Can organisational structure nurture or stifle activism?

The Gypsy Council is arguably at its most agile when links to funders are minimal and the organisation depends on

membership fees and unpaid activism. A frequent complaint in recent decades has been that the Romani Movement has undergone a process of NGO-isation, in which donor-driven agendas and hierarchical management forms have subverted and emasculated grassroots activism.¹⁰ On the other hand funding has enabled a professional cadre of Romani leaders to learn the ropes and develop skills to equip them in decision-making roles and in some respects become an effective lobbying force which has been influential at a European level.¹¹ In addition, organised civil society has been effective in providing new role models and leadership positions for women, contributing to the dilution of the restraints of patriarchy.¹²

Some though hold the fear that civil society is being increasingly tamed and subverted by the state. To use the term of the New Right, 'pulling back the state' has been accompanied by a series of governmental strategies and technologies (governmentality) aimed at shaping institutions and subjects in particular ways and proliferated in regimes of enterprise, accounting and commodification.¹³ Policies which invoke the language of social inclusion rest upon narrow, assimilative interpretations of what it is to 'civilise' and integrate.¹⁴ Such structures lead to bureaucratic processes stifling funding streams for community organisations and creating projects with limited goals to achieve service adjustment or give the impression of consultation. This imposes hierarchy on community organisation and constrains community leaders to dance to the tunes of their funders, smothering their appetite for more transformative action.

At the end of his life, Nicolae Gheorghe, an inspirational figure in the Romani Movement, was consumed with the question as to how the Romani Movement could achieve more of a connection with Roma communities and more effectively mobilise those communities, emulating the success of the Romani Pentecostal Movement and competing more effectively with the lure of tradition which could

10 Nidhi Trehan, "In the Name of the Roma" in *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Will Guy (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001).

11 Melanie Ram, "Interests, Norms and Advocacy: Explaining the Emergence of the Roma onto the EU Agenda", *Ethnopolitics*, Volume 9 (2) (2010):197-217.

12 András Bíró, "The price of Roma integration", in *From Victimhood to Citizenship - The Path of Roma Integration*, ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2013).

13 Michal Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

14 Huub van Baar, "Scaling the Romany Grassroots: Europeanization and Transnational Networking" (Conference paper, Re-activism: Re-drawing the Boundaries of Activism, CEU, Budapest, 2005).

be insular and self-oppressing.¹⁵ In this quest Gheorghe may have been right in identifying and even embodying essential ingredients in the formation of a dynamic Romani social movement - namely conviction, integrity but also transparency and accountability. Grassroots activism as espoused by Gheorghe could turn the process of governmentality on its head, and seek a new accountability predicated upon social justice and empowerment, where the state is de-centred and accountable to a civil society composed of what has been called “deliberative publics”.¹⁶ These will have been built from the ‘bottom up’, where excluded people can develop self-help and reciprocity through forms of mutualism and participation, which will shrink and ultimately dissolve what Gough *et al.* have called the “spaces of social exclusion”.¹⁷

Are strong leaders important catalysts of campaigns or can they disempower?

A series of strong characters shaped and tempered by struggle and hardship was a prominent feature of the Gypsy Council’s leadership. Puxon had come from a comfortable and privileged background, his life presented though an intense resistance to what has been termed the British establishment through his conscientious objection and refusal to fight for ‘Queen and country’ and perhaps most challengingly, through his alliance with Gypsies and Travellers. Through this activism Puxon became a central and charismatic figure amongst Gypsy and Traveller families. Acton noted that in tense situations where the threat of eviction loomed families would become calmed and reassured by the news that Puxon was on his way.¹⁸ Around him Puxon was able to support and mobilise a network of leaders, often prominent in their locales or within large extended families. Yet perhaps Puxon’s driven personality disempowered and undermined his avowed objectives of empowerment. Few could keep up with Puxon as he raced from one scheme, eviction or project to another. Whilst this frenetic activism could inspire and mobilise, members of the campaign started to feel the community was not in control, leading to disputes and tensions. The tempo of his activism and the disputes that arose eventually took a heavy toll and

Puxon succumbed to that all too common of activist ailments - ‘burnout’ - physical and emotional exhaustion.

Although Charles Smith differed from Puxon in his aspiration to see the Gypsy Council become a more formalised and mainstream NGO, like Puxon Smith was a charismatic figure with a strong sense of self-belief; bright and articulate, he saw himself as a figurehead. Smith was also brave, living openly with his partner George, despite the censure of more conservative-minded members of the English Gypsy community. In his later years Smith succumbed to cancer. He had been advised by doctors to avoid overwork and anxiety and medical advisors counselled him to take a break from the stresses of UK Gypsy politics. Smith continued, though, until his death. However, such had been Smith’s presence, in the wake of his death the Gypsy Council seemed to be lost and bewildered.

In retrospect it may have been Mercer’s more deliberative and collective leadership approach that represented the most successful phase of the Gypsy Council, restored a greater sense of unity to British Gypsy politics and attracted an array of community leaders, put at ease of any fear of being eclipsed by Mercer’s more collegial approach. Puxon and Smith were both unique characters, but a lesson to be learnt is that overreliance on one leader can be detrimental not only for the community but also for those who assume such classical leadership roles.

Are educated leaders the most effective?

It was Puxon’s elite education that often made him a desirable asset in community struggles. Unlike many of the Gypsies and Travellers of his age, Puxon was not only literate but he possessed the requisite cultural capital to mediate with and persuade authority. As noted above, ultimately though some of the community leadership came to resent that centrality and dependence. Smith and Mercer were what Gramsci termed “organic intellectuals” - despite limited formal education, they were able to school themselves in the art of politics through activism and struggle.¹⁹ In the case of Smith he was able to acquire the necessary skills to

15 Nicolae Gheorghe, with Gergő Pulay, “Choices to be Made and Prices to be Paid: potential roles and consequences in Roma activism and policy making” in *From Victimhood to Citizenship - The Path of Roma Integration*, ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2013), 41-101.

16 Archon Fung, “Creating Deliberative Publics: Governance After Devolution and Democratic Centralism”, *The Good Society*, Volume 11, Number 1 (2002): 66-71.

17 Jamie Gough, Aram Eisenschitz, and Andrew McCulloch, *Spaces of Social Exclusion*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

18 Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*.

19 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

become a mayor. Freire realised the capacity and potential of those at the margins to be the masters of their own destiny.²⁰ It gives some hope for the organic Roma intellectuals of today that centres of power have started to embrace the rhetoric of empowerment and coproduction as symbolised by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, although there are fears that these pledges and entreaties may drift into verbalism and tokenism.

Effective campaigning, though, requires not only the raw leadership and insight of the organic intellectuals but also those equipped with more formal education to service the aspirations of these leaders and translate and articulate campaign aspirations into policy papers and professional advocacy. In the 1960/70s few Romani activists could perform such roles, but Elizabeth Easton was a precursor of today's educated Roma advocates. Easton joined the Gypsy Council when she was just 16 years old. She was working as a junior in a solicitor's office, having left school at 15. Her mother and father, Gypsies from Surrey, had settled in a house when she was 9, and against expectations she passed the 11+ selection examination to go to grammar school, where she was subjected to marginalisation and discrimination.

With another young Traveller woman she joined a Flamenco class at a London community centre which also hosted meetings of a newly-formed offshoot of the Gypsy Council, the National Gypsy Education Council.²¹ After one meeting, Grattan Puxon wandered over to the group of girls in the centre café sitting in brightly coloured costumes, and told them they really ought to be Gypsies to dance Flamenco. Elizabeth replied "I am a Gypsy". After Puxon had explained the work of the Gypsy Council, she volunteered secretarial help. Thereafter she came every Saturday morning to 61, Blenheim Crescent where Grattan Puxon had moved into a flat above that of Dr Donald Kenrick. Kenrick supervised her typing, somewhat impatiently, as at the age of 16 she was less immediately competent than the graduate volunteers he was used to. She persisted, and made her mark in the Gypsy Council when she was one of 11 activists who barricaded themselves in a caravan outside Buckingham Palace in 1972. Thomas Acton recalls his surprise as in the police station this slight, self-effacing young woman, dressed like a city secretary,

used the English Romani dialect volubly to reassure Gypsy men twice her age who were distressed at having been arrested for the first time. After that Elizabeth played a major role in the Gypsy Council and became treasurer of the Gypsy Council offshoot, the National Gypsy Education Council. At the same time she returned to full-time education and gained a degree from the London School of Economics. Elizabeth Easton paved the way for later strong and independent women, who now form a central part of Roma advocacy. In some quarters this cadre of highly educated and professionalised Roma have been accused of becoming disconnected from Roma communities.²² This may be true, but skilled leaders are and will be needed to create a Romani Movement which can penetrate and shape the very highest reaches of power.

At the very start of the Gypsy Council, Puxon recognised the value to campaigning of having closely allied academics, to promulgate and mobilise knowledge production in support of campaign aims. The academics Donald Kenrick and Thomas Acton became longstanding stalwarts of the Gypsy Council and fused research with activism. Such approaches were not welcomed by all in academia. Some imbued with more scientific notions have denounced such activist researchers' work as being tainted with activism, whilst their own work is proclaimed to be more objective and neutral, better serving the interests of policy makers. These tensions and disputes continue to this day, but the ranks of the activist-scholars have been swelled by some of the new generation of Roma PhD-holders often influenced by feminist and critical thinking to favour co-production. Many of these Romani researchers, frustrated by the elitism of scientism, have been engaged in a series of ongoing disputes with the academic establishment centred on relations with the researched, ethics and commodification.

What role should non-violent direct action play in the campaign for Romani emancipation?

The first Gypsy Council meeting was held in 1966 in a pub in Kent which had a sign proclaiming "No Gypsies". Overriding the objections of the landlord made the inaugural meeting itself an exercise in militant resistance to

20 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

21 The 'flagship' summer schools and education work brought the Gypsy Council into alliance with a number of committed educationalists. With Gypsy Council activists they formed in 1970 the National Gypsy Education Council (NGEC) as a registered charity. It was chaired by Lady Plowden, who had led the committee which produced the Plowden Report in 1967.

22 Gheorghie, with Pulay, "Choices to be Made and Prices to be Paid".

discrimination. Resistance to eviction became a prominent feature of the work of the Gypsy Council, generating publicity, attention and recruits. Noted publicity stunts such as parking trailers outside Buckingham Palace, Downing Street, or Parliament, were staged. The non-violent direct action of the Gypsy Council in part reflected the methods in vogue at the time, such approaches having been employed with great effect in the civil rights movement in the USA. Although such efforts were also used in the 1970s and 1980s by other Roma, Gypsy, or Traveller organisations in Western Europe, and even taken into the 1990s by Rudko Kawczynski who was able to mobilise such methods amongst migrant Roma in Germany, Roma activism has drifted into more professional and sanitised forms of advocacy.

Although the value and importance of high-level advocacy and lobbying with national governments, the Council of Europe and the European Commission needs to be appreciated, the dearth of grassroots protests is to be regretted. For a group still marginalised and disempowered in political and media discourse, non-violent direct action, where grounded in the needs of communities, with a touch of imagination can provide agency and a counter-hegemonic narrative. Needless to say such an approach is not an effective strategy in itself. It needs to be counted as part of an armoury encompassing legal challenge, lobbying and community-based politics, threaded to broad grassroots-based social movements which operate at the national and transnational level.

The Next 50 Years

The founders of the Gypsy Council would be surprised and pleased at the proliferation of Romani NGOs across Europe, pleased at progress made but equally disappointed at the mountain still to climb. One feature that would please these pioneers is the sense of fraternity that has been forged across Europe between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, reflecting the Gypsy Council's commitment to work with and for Gypsies and Irish Travellers which, although it has aroused some opposition, has generally remained a core feature of UK activism. This breadth of vision and desire for broad alliances has been facilitated by recognition of the intersectionality of social struggle, and the increasing alliance of anti-racist, anti sedentarist (difficult for some East

European Roma intellectuals), anti-sexist, anti-disablist, and most recently anti-homophobic actions.

Austerity as reflected in cutbacks to services and grants available to civil society has neutered sections of civil society including that of the Roma. Simultaneously the economic crisis has prompted a wave of anxiety and scapegoating, fanned by securitisation and nativism marching to the clarion call of the Washington Consensus. The Roma appear to be amongst the most prominent groups in the 'firing line' of these rampant reactionary forces. But we should not be consumed by a sense of despair; possibly out of this crisis and the contradictions it exposes the political pendulum will swing in a new direction creating a new politics where social justice is brought to the fore. An ability to connect with those at the very margins but also forge broad alliances of supporters, which transcend class, gender, sexual and national classifications, will be a prerequisite for radical social movements seeking transformative change in the coming years.

A long wish list could be produced as to what the campaign for Romani emancipation might need to do in the next half century, some of which has been touched upon in his article. Perhaps the most important ingredient that needs to be retained is a sense of hope. Freire theorised the value of such belief and conviction "Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle but without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearing and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need for a kind of education of hope [...]. One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be."²³

Acton describes the mood and sense of optimism that is often evident at the birth of a new movement, evident when the Gypsy Council was formed in 1966:

"People who came into that movement at the time were caught up in a great surge of enthusiasm, a feeling of new awakenings and mighty forces stirring, a belief that the persecutions of the centuries could now in a brief space be ended by our efforts."²⁴

The great challenge for activists in their struggles in the coming years will be to rekindle and/or nurture such hope.

²³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 3.

²⁴ Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 48.

The Roma Movement in Bulgaria after the Political Transformation in 1989

RUMYAN RUSSINOV

In this article I analyse the Roma movement in Bulgaria in the period 1989-2014. In focus is the activity and conduct of Roma and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Roma and non-Roma political parties, state policy on Roma issues, and media coverage of Roma.

Times of Hope (Romantic Period), 1989-1997

The political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of 1989 brought hope for democratic development and participation in public processes in societies of this region. After leaving the Soviet Bloc and taking a pro-Western orientation, these countries became a part of the “global political awakening”.¹ The prospect for a united Europe emerged, a development which Kissinger considered “one of the most revolutionary events of our time”.²

Millions of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe shared the same expectations and, like other citizens of these countries, were hopeful about major transformations. Roma in Bulgaria saw the transition to democracy as a chance for equal participation in the building of a new society and as an opportunity to have their identity recognised and respected.

In the first months of 1990, Bulgarian society was vibrant with political activity: there were many political discussions, dozens of new political parties and civil society organisations were set up to promote the interests of various groups in society. Many Roma activists, mainly intellectuals and artists – teachers, medical doctors, engineers and musicians – took an active part in the political discussions. Most conspicuous among them was Manush Romanov (1928-2004) – theatre director, playwright, and collector

of Roma folklore. On 10 January 1990 Manush Romanov, representing the Democratic Union of the Gypsies, was invited to the National Assembly for a discussion on the national question.³ On 17 March 1990 he was elected leader of the Democratic Union of Roma and later that month presented the position of Roma at the National Roundtable, the forum that laid down the framework for the future constitutional and social order of the country.

In the period preceding the first democratic parliamentary elections in June 1990 there were vibrant discussions on the Roma issue at conferences and meetings and in the media. Two main concepts about the Roma issue crystallised in these discussions:

The concept of total denial of the past: Adherents to this view criticised the period of Communist rule for the repression of Roma ethnic and cultural identity, for socio-economic problems affecting some parts of the Roma population, and for the existence of segregated Roma schools and neighbourhoods. At the heart of this concept was the perception of Roma as passive victims of the totalitarian government. These positions were supported by Bulgaria’s Western partners and by the core team of the leader of the main opposition party the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), Zhelyu Zhelev,⁴ as well as by Manush Romanov.

The concept of moderate criticism acknowledging the achievements of the past period: The adherents to this concept did not deny the defects and the faults of the regime before 1989. However they recognised the overall development of the Roma community in that period and achievements on the way to the integration of the Roma. This position was supported by evidence that in the Socialist period in Bulgaria illiteracy among Roma was reduced

1 Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second Chance* (translation into Bulgarian), (Sofia: Obsidan, 2007), 220.

2 Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy* (translation into Bulgarian), (Sofia: Trud & Prozorets, 2002), 38.

3 The focus of this discussion was the demand of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria for the restoration of their original Turkish-Arabic names that were forcefully changed to Christian names at the time of the so called “Revival Process”, 1984-1989. The political will of the Bulgarian government to restore the names of ethnic Turks had provoked discontent and protests among ethnic Bulgarians, especially in regions with ethnically mixed population. See “Kam nacionalno saglasie” (Towards National Consensus), Trud Daily, 12 January 1990.

4 The team of advisors on minority issues included Michail Ivanov, Antonina Zheliazkova, and Ilona Tomova.

from over 80% in 1946 to 11% in 1989, mostly among elderly people; the overwhelming majority of adult Roma were employed⁵ and the socio-economic status of Roma had improved considerably compared to the times before the Socialist period; and a Roma intelligentsia of teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. had been formed. In one of the debates on these issues in 1990, Dora Detcheva, a Roma activist from Sliven stated that around 40% of Roma had reached the average level of Bulgarian citizens in terms of social, cultural and educational status.⁶ This position was supported by the majority of Roma activists, including Petar Gheorghiev, Gospodin Kolev, Atanas Zlatev, Alexander Kracholov, Ibro Assov, Dora Detcheva, and others.

The proponents of this concept also emphasised that Roma are a group with potential; they are active participants in social processes who contribute to the prosperity of the country and are not a burden on society.

While with respect to the assessment of the period before 1989 Roma activists have had certain disagreements, their vision about the future was almost unanimous. All activists consolidated around the position of equal participation of Roma in the new democratic society, through political representation, participation in government, and the freedom to develop Roma culture and language. “We hope that the new time will restore what had been taken away not only from us, but from all Bulgarian citizens, the fundamental human rights and freedoms that each respectable state guarantees for its citizens” stated Dora Decheva at the inaugural conference of the Democratic Union of Roma on 17 March 1990. Her statement epitomised the expectations of Roma activism at that time.⁷

The main political parties – the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the UDF – took an active part in the discussions on Roma issues, especially in the period before the parlia-

mentary elections in June 1990. Their views about the Roma and the position of Roma in society were mutually exclusive. Activists from the opposition UDF were the first to make statements on the issue in public. Their views were coherent with the concept of the total denial of the period before 1989. The opposition UDF saw the Roma mainly as victims of discrimination under Communist rule and emphasised the problems facing this community. Mihail Ivanov stated that “The problems of the Gypsies are ulcers not only in the body of the Gypsy ethnic community, they are ulcers of the entire Bulgarian people and we have to heal them. Moreover, the main principle in the healing process should be that the problems of the Gypsies should be decided with the participation of the Gypsies themselves.”⁸

Important for this analysis is the philosophy at the core of the statements about Roma by the opposition. They did not perceive Roma as a group that had been part of and, with its capacities and potential, would continue to take part in the development of the state; they perceived Roma not as a subject of societal change but as a problem-ridden group that has to be an object of special care. The parameters within which Roma were expected to act were outlined, albeit indirectly – these were issues concerning the Roma community rather than broader issues in Bulgarian society on its path to democratic development. The goal was minimalist – to include Roma in the solution of Roma problems, while active participation of Roma in mainstream developments was not at issue. As a whole, at this early stage the Roma issue was already separated from mainstream social issues.

Similarly to the views of the UDF, Bulgaria’s Western partners saw the Roma more as a problem-ridden group than as an agent of change. This position was reflected on the pages of the British newspaper *The Sunday Times*, in the article *Mercy for the Gypsies*, published in April 1990.⁹

5 According to data from a representative study on the Roma by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1980, which covered 4,943 persons, 88% of Roma men and 80% of Roma women of working age were employed. See D. Dimitrov, B. Chakalov, I. Gheorghieva. *Utvazhdavane na socialisticheskiya nachin na zhivot sred balgarskite grazhdani ot tsiganski proizhodb* (Affirmation of the Socialist Way of Life among Bulgarian Citizens of Gypsy Origin), (Sofia, 1980).

6 Newspaper *Roma*, Number 1, 1990 in Kolev, G. *Edin tsiganin v CK na BKP* (One Gypsy in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party) (Sofia, 2003).

7 *Ibid.*

8 Mihail Ivanov was a member of the team of the opposition leader Zhelyu Zhelev. A few months later in August 1990, Zhelev was elected President of the Republic of Bulgaria and Mihail Ivanov was appointed President’s Advisor on Ethnic Issues. The positions on the Roma issue espoused by Mihail Ivanov, Antonina Zhelyazkova, and Ilona Tomova were perceived as positions of the UDF’s leader Zhelev, i.e. as positions of the UDF itself. Newspaper *Roma*, Number 1, 1990, statement by Mihail Ivanov.

9 The article by Scott Smedley and Chris Steven was reprinted in *Duma Daily*, 26 April 1990.

The article portrayed Roma in line with the concept of the total denial of the past. Moreover, on the basis of old stereotypes, the authors described Roma only as a marginal group, despised by the macro society.

The position of the BSP¹⁰ on the Roma issue was presented publicly by Aleksander Mirchev, member of the party's governance organ, in his statement during the inaugural conference of the Democratic Union of Roma on 17 March 1990. He criticised the dominant until that moment concept of the ethnic homogeneity of the Bulgarian population as tragically misguided and leading to social deformations. The BSP declared its support for the efforts of the Democratic Union of Roma towards the full integration of Roma in society and underlined that this was a task for the entire nation. Mirchev said: "We consider that the Gypsy population will continue to be among the leading representatives of our nation, the Gypsy intelligentsia will find its place in the renewal of our country, just as throughout the history of Bulgaria the Gypsy population has been among the most progressive factors, part and parcel of the revolutionary movement in our country. This has happened with more than one generation."¹¹ The representative of the BSP acknowledged that the ethnic specifics and the cultural identity of the Roma were suppressed in the past and declared that the promotion of Roma identity and culture has to be embedded in the future democratisation of the country. He shared the expectation that the Democratic Union of Roma would contribute to the spiritual wealth of the Bulgarian people and to the development of the country.¹²

Unfortunately, the BSP gradually departed from the progressive views that were voiced in the beginning of the transition to democracy. After the National Roundtable, the oppositional UDF reached an agreement with Manush Romanov for his participation in the forthcoming parliamentary elections as a UDF candidate for the Grand National Assembly.

The extreme position of total denial of the past and the dogmatic view of Roma as victims and outcasts was considered by wide circles of Roma as being far from reality. Ibro Assov, a Roma intellectual from the town of Koinare in northern

Bulgaria, took part in the discussion on Manush Romanov's affiliation with the democratic opposition and on the assessment of the policies towards Roma during the Socialist period: "In the town of Koinare, there are approximately 1,500 Gypsies. Until 9 September 1944¹³ they were field servants or unemployed. They lived in hunger and misery... There were 47 shacks, each of them sheltering 10-12 persons. I took photos of the last remaining shack next to a newly-built house in 1958. Today, the Gypsies work in big numbers on the cattle farm, in the machine-building factory, in the crop-raising brigade. Their houses are really modern, spacious and well-furnished. Whoever does not trust my words, I invite you to Koinare and I recommend that you visit the houses of the children of the former field servants. (If you go to the neighbouring villages, you will see the same picture.) These people are educated as medical doctors, nurses, teachers, and two of them are Doctoral candidates. They work hard on the land and they earn the bread of the Bulgarian people. They do not have an inch of their own land, and they may once again, as happened in the past, be 'democratised' as field servants, they may fall victim to persecution."¹⁴

Manush Romanov led UDF's proportional list in Sliven and was also a majoritarian candidate in Sofia, in the district encompassing the biggest Roma neighbourhood in the capital. This act of political will on the part of a mainstream political party is unique for the entire period of the transition. At the general elections in June 1990 Manush Romanov became a member of the Grand National Assembly, elected from the proportional list in Sliven. Unfortunately, during the life of that parliament his attempts to raise the Roma issue were ignored both by the majority Socialist MPs and by the UDF, of which he was a member.

The weak electoral support for the UDF on the part of Bulgarian Roma demonstrated that wide circles of Roma did not accept the views of Roma espoused by the UDF. On the other hand, disappointed by the low electoral support from the Roma, the UDF practically forgot about the Roma issue for a long period. Manush Romanov did not have political backing from the UDF and remained alone in the fight for the Roma cause. Developments after the

10 In April 1990 the Bulgarian Communist Party changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

11 Newspaper *Roma*, Number 1, 1990, statement by Aleksander Mirchev.

12 *Ibid.*

13 9 September 1944 marks the beginning of the Socialist period in Bulgaria.

14 Ibro Assov, "Pomislete i za tyah, gospoda" (Think about them as well, gentlemen), *Duma daily*, 27 May 1990.

parliamentary elections in June 1990 made obvious the fact that the minority issue, and specifically the Roma issue, was merely an instrument to discredit political opponents and to win electoral support, rather than a theme for developing government policy. Disappointed by the indifferent and arrogant attitude towards Roma on the part of the UDF, Manush Romanov made two attempts to register a Roma political party which were rejected by the courts.¹⁵

The Roma issue also slipped down the agenda of the BSP. The BSP not only did not undertake any integration policies, but also distanced itself from its conceptual platform, which had been outlined at the conference of the Democratic Union of Roma in March 1990. The Presidency, and specifically, President Zhelev's advisory team, which emerged as an autonomous actor on minority issues, was the only state institution in the entire period from 1990 to 1997 which took part in discussions on the Roma issue, sought cooperation with other state institutions, and called for an active role for the state administration in solving Roma problems. It has to be noted, however, that ideologically the President's institution aligned with the concept of Roma as a marginal and problem-ridden community.

In the mainstream media the Roma theme was almost unnoticeable at the beginning of the transition period. This picture changed dramatically in the beginning of 1991 when the media filled up with police statistics referring to the ethnic background of criminal offenders who were Roma. The change in police policy with respect to revealing the ethnicity of offenders was not gradual. It happened overnight, and can be seen as a strategy rather than a spontaneous act triggered by a concrete event. The possible explanations for this change are obvious. On the one hand, there was an outburst of criminal activity in this period and the police were ill-prepared to deal with it; on the other hand, there was growing public discontent with the weakness of the police to fight criminality. Hence, one can logically conclude that it was in the interest of the police to divert at least part of this discontent. The Roma are an easy target for such action. They do not have a majority in a neighbouring country, such as ethnic Turks in Bulgaria; they are a big and visible minority group; and there are stereotypes associating them with criminality. This was the birth of the model of scapegoating Gypsies, which has made its way into the political elite and into state institutions, and has become a constant social stereotype today.

Most media frequently published police information that identified the Roma ethnicity of suspects and offenders. Moreover, bombastic headlines, sensational and inciting language, and media manipulation amplified the negative stereotypes of the Roma. For many media freedom of expression was realised in practice through the freedom to demonise the Roma. At the same time, the media ignored basic rules of professional ethics, such as refraining from mentioning the ethnic background of suspects or offenders when such information does not have a bearing on the criminal act, as well as allowing the other side to express their position. The unfavourable, often hostile media environment, remains until today a major factor that predetermines predominantly negative prejudices towards Roma, as well as the lack of political will for state policy on this issue.

After the elections in 1990, there was a tendency towards unification of Roma organisations. The unification attempts led to the formation of two major organisations - the United Roma Alliance and the Confederation of Roma in Bulgaria, which were established respectively in October 1992 and May 1993 in Sofia. The United Roma Alliance, led by Vassil Chaprazov, leaned towards the UDF, while the Confederation of Roma in Bulgaria was close to the BSP. Despite these differing political orientations, the reason for the lack of a real union of Roma organisations was not grounded in any serious ideological confrontation but in the leadership ambitions of their activists.

In the autumn of 1994, the BSP made an agreement with the Confederation of Roma as a result of which the leader of the organisation, Petar Gheorghiev, was elected MP and the BSP made commitments to policies on the Roma issue. The UDF also negotiated with Roma politicians but there was no agreement. Petar Gheorghiev was the only Roma MP who was elected to that parliament.

In the following years Bulgaria was swept up in numerous crises – economic, financial, and political. The social status of large numbers of people, including Roma, deteriorated. Unemployment increased exponentially and many Roma migrated to other countries in search of a livelihood. The Roma organisations, as well as the President's advisory team, called for the establishment of a state organ for Roma policies. Ongoing discussions on this issue resulted in the adoption by the Socialist government in January

¹⁵ “M. Romanov e nedovolen ot NKS na SDS” (M. Romanov is Dissatisfied with the National Coordination Committee of the Union of Democratic Forces), 24 *Chasna daily*, 28 September 1991.

1997 of the Programme for Solving Roma Problems. This document, however, remained “on paper” as several days following its adoption the Socialist government resigned.

A few specific features pertaining to Roma organisations and Roma activism in this period are important. The organisations worked voluntarily; they did not have paid staff, offices, or funds for travel costs and accommodation. In Sofia, for example, the meetings of the Confederation of Roma took place at a cafeteria owned by a Roma businessman. Travel costs for conferences and events were covered privately by the Roma activists themselves and accommodation was found at friends’ places in the respective cities. Many Roma activists at that time were intellectuals and educated people with various professions and occupations. They did not have sufficient political and organisational experience, like most of the new mainstream politicians at the time. Few of the Roma activists were good public speakers. All of them, however, had genuine aspirations to contribute to a better life for the Roma and for a more democratic and just society.

The Road to Europe: European Union Accession 1997-2007

This period marked significant changes in Bulgaria’s development. The country received clear signals that accession to Euro-Atlantic structures was forthcoming. Important changes also took place in the Roma movement. Firstly, the state took a more active stance in discussions on the Roma issue and in the development of integration policies. Secondly, external actors such as international organisations, foreign donors and NGOs, got involved in Roma issues. Finally, in the political field the first Roma parties were formed.

THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

The first NGOs in Bulgaria had already emerged in the beginning of the 1990s and this trend intensified with the prospect of European Union (EU) accession. Donors supported a wide range of activities in favour of Roma such as human rights, integration in education, entrepreneurship, access to social services, and others. Much of this work was based on models that were developed by the donors in their previous activities in other countries and regions of the world. The models were replicated in Eastern Europe and specifically in Bulgaria, without much consideration for local

conditions. There were projects about Roma that mechanically transferred models and practices for the integration of, for example, Afro-Americans in the USA or immigrant communities from Africa, Latin America or Asia in Western Europe. Such projects ignored the fact that Roma in Bulgaria are not immigrants and had lived for seven centuries on these lands; that Roma know the majority language; and that with their own culture, Roma have always been a part of the Bulgarian cultural space and a factor that has shaped this space. The responsibility for such inadequate and eventually failed activities also lies with Roma NGOs, among others, which rarely challenged the priorities of donors.

While the newly created Roma and pro-Roma NGOs enjoyed support from the donors for various activities, in most cases donors ignored the Roma organisations from the first years of the transition. The first Roma leaders and the organisations they established had experience and expertise on Roma issues which they had accumulated in the first decade of the transition period. They had established contacts and relations with state institutions at central and local levels as well as with political parties; they enjoyed a certain legitimacy among the Roma as well as among public institutions. Unfortunately, this capacity was mostly wasted and work on Roma issues began from scratch with the new NGOs.

This period is associated with the practice of pro-Roma NGOs acting as intermediaries between donors and Roma NGOs. Professional pro-Roma NGOs received funding from donors and then allocated the implementation of the activities to Roma NGOs. In demand were professionals rather than leaders. Most often the new NGOs engaged young Roma activists, educated, English-speaking and computer-literate, who were rarely placed in decision-making positions. Pro-Roma NGOs functioned quite differently compared to the Roma organisations that were active in the first years of the transition period. They had paid staff, their projects covered costs for offices, travel, conferences, etc. The traditional Roma organisations which did not have donor funding were unable to survive in this competitive environment and gradually lost their influence. As a result, external donor funding of Roma activities has had the effect of reordering the elites in Roma communities.

The newly-created and unsaturated NGO market attracted a lot of non-Roma with academic and other intellectual backgrounds – sociologists, philosophers, historians, physicists, journalists, and others. This phenomenon occurred

on the one hand due to the reduced financial support for academia on the part of the state after 1989 which prompted many scholars to leave academia, and on the other hand due to the fact that there were few Roma activists who had the language and professional skills to communicate with donors. Not all of the academics who joined the NGO sector were profit-oriented; among them were active citizens who wanted to contribute to the Roma cause. One such person is Dr Dimitrina Petrova, who founded the Human Rights Project (HRP), developed the organisation and contributed her rich experience; she then stepped down from the leadership position and supported a Roma person to take it. This case, however, is an exception to the rule.

Recalling the minimal goal for Roma participation in Roma issues, formulated by Mihail Ivanov as early as 1990, and analysing later developments up to today, it is obvious that even the achievement of this goal is questionable. How else to interpret the title of the conference *Nothing about Us without Us?* that took place in Budapest, in 2014?

Most of the projects about Roma in this period targeted marginal Roma communities. This fact indicated that the perception of Roma among donors had been dominated by the concept of a marginalised and problem-ridden group. Towards the end of the 1990s, the concept of Roma as a marginalised group dominated the field. Moreover, it shaped the rhetoric of some Roma activists, who spoke only about the problems of Roma.

In the area of education, for example, donor support flowed towards segregated and special remedial schools, and included such activities as buying snacks, clothes and shoes for the children, buying textbooks, cooperation of parents and teachers, etc. Although many Roma projects were classified as social empowerment projects, in essence they did not aim at empowerment understood as encouraging individuals to act and helping them to access equal opportunities. At best, such projects partially mitigated the suffering of the most impoverished part of the Roma population. At the same time, these projects cemented the perception of Roma as clients of services.¹⁶

NGOs working on Roma issues in theory had the opportunity to formulate their own priorities through their project proposals to donors. In practice, however, donors supported the priorities that they had identified themselves. NGOs

that had their own vision and formulated their own priorities were an exception to the rule, as were donors who were ready to support ideas “from the bottom”, not necessarily overlapping with their own. Most often, donors just sought an organisation that could implement their model projects. This situation, complemented by the fact that Roma in leadership positions in donor organisations were a rare phenomenon, leads to the conclusion that the predominant practice in this period was the development of projects for Roma rather than Roma projects, i.e. projects initiated by Roma. Having in mind the fact that NGOs reported to their donors, despite their mission to promote the public interest, many NGOs gradually lost connection with the public interest and found themselves in a paradoxical situation of being known only to their donor but not to the community for which they supposedly worked.

Despite the many defects of the NGO model for solving the problems of Roma, the NGO sector has enjoyed considerable accomplishments as well. NGO leaders took an active role in discussions on Roma issues, negotiated with governments and institutions, called for Roma policies, and defended the cause of the Roma. The HRP for example, initiated the Framework Programme for Equal Participation of Roma in Bulgarian Society in 1998 for governmental policies in key areas such as education, employment, healthcare, housing and others. After almost one year of negotiations between the HRP, the United Roma Alliance and the Confederation of Roma on the one hand, and the Bulgarian government on the other, the Framework Programme for Equal Participation of Roma in Bulgarian Society was adopted with a decision of the Council of Ministers on 22 April 1999. The adoption by the government of a policy programme initiated and elaborated by Roma was a unique accomplishment. Support on the part of the Roma communities as well as European institutions was crucial for its success. The most important message of the Framework Programme was that Roma do not accept being treated as a marginal and problem-ridden community and assert their right to equal participation in society.

The HRP also made great efforts to discuss the hostile coverage of Roma with the media and achieved at least a short-lived improvement in the tone of some media.

Another successful Roma project was school desegregation in 2000-2011, which was started by Roma NGOs with financial support from the Open Society Institute and the

¹⁶ T Tomova, *Romskata politika* (Roma Politics), (Sofia: 2006).

Roma Education Fund. In twelve years over 20,000 Roma children in eleven Bulgarian towns were integrated into mainstream schools. The successful integration of these children advanced the notion that Roma integration in all spheres is achievable, and encouraged the Decade for Roma Inclusion initiative as well as the establishment of the Roma Education Fund. The state machinery in Bulgaria started to move. Based on the successful school desegregation initiatives of Roma NGOs and as a result of their advocacy, the Ministry of Education adopted the Strategy for Educational Integration of Roma Children and Pupils, and the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities was established.

The International Centre for Minorities provided scholarships to Roma university students at the end of the 1990s. This practice was enlarged with the creation of the Roma Memorial Scholarship Programme at the Open Society Institute in 2001. With the support of this programme the Roma students' organisation Student Society for Interethnic Dialogue helped more than 3,000 Roma university students and doctoral candidates. Many of them have already graduated and are part of the Roma elite today.

STATE POLICIES

With the start of its mandate in 1997, the UDF government led by Prime Minister Ivan Kostov demonstrated a new approach to the Roma issue. It established the governmental National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues¹⁷ and in this way involved the state administration in discussions on the Roma issue. Nevertheless, with respect to the Roma issue, as with other public sectors, during the transition period the government followed the neo-liberal view of 'less government'. In practice, this position meant that the government took a passive role on the Roma issue and narrowed its function to coordination of already-operating NGO Roma projects. The National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues, as is obvious from its founding documents, did not have real power with regard to policy making. Its functions were limited to cooperation with and coordination of state institutions and NGOs.¹⁸

On the Roma issue, the Bulgarian government did not have a clear concept; it did not envisage the involvement

of institutional mechanisms for solving problems, and neither did it allocate budgetary resources for the implementation of integration policies. In all of these areas the government expected external assistance. With regard to the conceptual framework, the government adopted the ideas of external donors. For example, the projects developed by the government and funded from EU pre-accession funds did not pursue the priorities formulated by the Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society but mechanically transferred foreign models such as teaching assistants, the construction of new houses for Roma, and others. With regard to the implementation of Roma policies, the government did not engage its institutions but relied on the activities of the NGOs. Usually government reports on these issues described the work that had been done by NGOs. With regard to the funding of Roma policies, the main resources were secured from external sources, not from the national budget.

The adoption of the Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society was a very progressive act on the part of the Bulgarian government. Subsequently, however, it became evident that the political will for the implementation of the Programme was absent. Later on, the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities adopted by the Ministry of Education followed the same pattern. The establishment of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities was meant to secure financial support on the part of the state for the successful practices of school desegregation implemented by NGOs which had given the impetus for the creation of this institution. In practice, however, the Centre is an external structure to the Ministry of Education and relies mainly on external financial resources for the funding of its activities.

The leading NGOs which developed good practices were pushing the government to scale up these practices through the involvement of central and local institutions and the allocation of funds from the national budget. During the EU pre-accession period, through its participation in discussions on Roma issues and by the adoption of policy documents, the government created an appearance of political will to undertake integration policies. European organisations, especially the EU, played a positive role in motivating the

¹⁷ Council of Ministers Decree 449, from 4 December 1997.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

government to follow this path. Unfortunately government actions were exhausted with the adoption of policy documents and with promises for their implementation.

In the meantime, the situation of Roma progressively deteriorated. The economy of the country was in meltdown, unemployment was growing, and large numbers of the Bulgarian population, including Roma, saw their social conditions deteriorate. These processes were particularly harsh in the villages and small towns which were home to the larger part of the Roma population during the Socialist period. During the Socialist period, most of the Roma in these areas were relatively well-integrated in the macro society. After 1989, many of them lost their jobs and migrated towards the cities. In the cities Roma families moved to segregated Roma neighbourhoods and their children attended segregated Roma schools. The levels of school segregation have thus increased from around 50% in 1990 to 70% in 2003.¹⁹ According to estimates, approximately 200,000 Roma also immigrated to various European countries.²⁰ Most of them started working, primarily in low-skilled jobs, and provided for their families in Bulgaria.

In 2005, the political party Ataka was elected to parliament. The establishment of the party was stimulated by the political victories of Jörg Haider in Austria in 1999²¹ and of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France in 2002.²² The party gained electoral support through an aggressive anti-minority, especially anti-Roma, rhetoric, blaming minorities for all of the country's troubles. During this period Ataka's views were denounced by mainstream parties, the media and large layers of society.

A new element in the political field was the appearance of Roma political parties. Their entry into politics was caused by the political vacuum on the Roma issue at that time. While in the first seven years after 1989 attempts to ensure Roma participation were made within the mainstream parties and

Roma looked to mainstream parties to defend their interests, in the following years disillusionment with the approach of mainstream parties to the Roma as an easy electoral reservoir logically led to the formation of Roma parties.

This period is characterised by the growing public participation of representatives from the so-called Kalderash (Gypsy) group, which lives separately from the rest of the Roma and considers itself the only authentic Gypsy community. Its members were nomadic until the mid-1950s and after their sedentarisation they spread across the country.²³ In the first years after 1989, the Kalderash, with few exceptions, mainly concentrated on business and did not take part in politics on the Roma issue. The tough conditions for business development in the country pushed representatives of this community to seek political lobbies. In this respect, Kalderash businessmen are not different from other Bulgarian businessmen. Given this context, it is not surprising that while in the beginning of the transition to democracy the mainstream parties preferred relations with political leaders such as Manush Romanov (Democratic Union of Roma) and Petar Gheorghiev (Confederation of Roma), at a later stage they developed relationships with Roma businessmen.

The Roma parties had partial success, especially at local elections. In 1999, the party Free Bulgaria led by Kiril Rashkov, received 51,860 votes or 1.6% of all votes, and had 83 municipal councillors and two mayors. However, due to weak organisational capacity, the party did not manage to capitalise on this electoral achievement. The other Roma parties did not have comparable results. Most outstanding among them were the two parliamentary mandates of Toma Tomov (2001-2009), whose party Roma was a coalition partner of the BSP, and the parliamentary mandate of Aleksander Filipov (2001-2005) who was elected from the list of the National Movement Simeon II. These mandates, however, did not contribute to the advancement of state policies on the Roma issue.

19 The National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues, "Informacia za politikata na balgarskoto pravitelstvo za podobriavane na polozhenieto na romskoto naselenie v Balgaria" (Information about the Policy of the Bulgarian Government for Improving the Situation of the Roma Population in Bulgaria), 2003.

20 According to data from the Institute of Economics of the Bulgarian Academy of Science, cited by Bulgarian National Radio, the number of immigrants from Bulgaria is approximately 2,500,000. See T. Harizanova, "Bulgarian Immigrants are the Biggest Investor in Bulgaria", Bulgarian National Radio, 18 March 2014. There is no specific figure for the number of Roma immigrants; based on the fact that Roma comprise approximately 10% of the Bulgarian population, the author's hypothesis is that Roma immigrants account for approximately 10% of all immigrants from Bulgaria.

21 See V. Siderov, "Idva vreme za nacionalizam bez ugovorki" (The Time Has Come for nationalism without conditionalities) *Monitor Daily*, 25 October 1999.

22 See V. Siderov, "Zashto ni plashat s Lyo Pen a ne pokazhat programata mu" (Why are We Threatened by Le Pen instead of Looking at His Programme) *Monitor Daily*, 24 April 2002.

Despite the fact that Bulgaria experienced a very difficult transition period, EU accession gave hope to all citizens, including Roma, that the situation would improve and the country would take on a normal path of democratic development.

The Period after EU Accession: 2007-2014

This is a relatively short period which extends to today. An objective assessment of the events requires a certain distance in time. I will try to describe some of its major characteristics.

The first important characteristic is that after Bulgaria's accession to the EU international pressure for Roma integration policies gradually subsided. Our Western partners, who used to be active proponents of Roma rights and integration policies, reduced their interest in this theme. This conclusion is relevant for western governments as well as for European organisations, although to a lesser degree as far as the latter are concerned.

The second characteristic is that the predominant part of the donor community withdrew from the country after EU accession and redirected their financial aid to new market niches in Africa and Central Asia. Without political and financial support, the role of civil society organisations in public processes has seriously decreased.

The third characteristic is that almost everywhere in the old democracies there has been an increase in xenophobic and anti-immigrant populist movements that have been gaining ground since 1989. Although marginal in the beginning of their existence, the parties representing these movements gradually increased their influence in society, emerging as winners in the 2014 elections for the European Parliament in leading democracies such as France and the UK.

Among the most drastic acts of xenophobia targeting Roma specifically, the notorious campaign for the expulsion of Roma from France was launched in 2010 not by a marginal anti-immigrant formation but by the French President. A mainstream French politician took an example from xenophobic parties in order to win over part of their support at the upcoming elections.

These events in old democracies had strong repercussions in Bulgaria. They encouraged racist factors and gave them a new international legitimacy. Anti-minority movements and parties in Bulgaria multiplied. The notion that Roma are to blame for the disasters and troubles of the transition period enjoyed growing social support. In 2014, three parties with an anti-minority and anti-Roma orientation were elected to the Bulgarian parliament, and two of them are in the governing coalition as of 2015. Anti-Roma sentiment in the media has also been booming. In contrast to the beginning of the transition period, anti-minority and anti-Roma rhetoric has been sustained – directly or indirectly – by mainstream parties and media. The government seriously reduced its efforts regarding integration policies.

In 2011, Bulgarian authorities, with the active support of media, organised a brutal defamation campaign against Roma NGOs. Targeted NGOs were subjected to investigations by the police, security structures, and the prosecutor's office. Significant institutional resources were mobilised to investigate selected Roma NGOs on corruption allegations. After 18 months of unprecedented pressure on these Roma organisations, no evidence of corruption or illegal action on their part was found.²⁴

However, the media achieved what the institutional pressure had not manage to achieve. The brutal campaign against Roma and Roma NGOs in the media, although unfounded, seriously damaged their reputation. The NGOs which were attacked had been disheartened by the fact that international pro-Roma organisations in Budapest and Brussels, with the exception of the Roma Education Fund, remained silent during this campaign, although information about it had been circulated. Regardless of the fact that at that moment there were already many actors concerned with Roma issues, in this instance of massive political repression Roma were left alone in their struggle.

With the campaign against Roma NGOs, the authorities had two strategic goals. The first goal was to expand electoral support among an increasing number of people with anti-minority and anti-Roma attitudes by demonstrating an active anti-Roma position. The second goal was to assert the notion that the failure of integration

23 E. Marushiakova, V. Popov, *Tsiganite v Balgaria* (Gypsies in Bulgaria) (Sofia, 1993).

24 E. Kodinova, "Prokuraturata razsledva 18 meseca dali sa otradnati parite na Soros i ne otkri nishto" (The Prosecutor's office investigated whether Soros' funds were stolen for 18 months and did not find anything), *Sega daily*, 14 May 2012.

policies was not due to the lack of government action, but the lack of an integration attitude on the part of the Roma, complemented by the corrupt behaviour of Roma NGOs. The reason for the attack on NGOs could possibly have been the fact that they had growing legitimacy in the communities in which they worked. The tendency to blame Roma NGOs for lack of progress in Roma integration has not subsided to this day.

Conclusion

During the period of transition to democracy thousands of Roma activists from the first Roma organisations, the new Roma NGOs in the mid 1990s, and Roma and non-Roma political parties made efforts to improve the lives of the Roma. A number of activities undertaken by them were successful and had a positive effect not only on Roma communities but on broader society as well.

Overall, however, despite positive developments in some sectors, trends in the development of social and economic conditions in Bulgaria were unfavourable. The economy collapsed and the country was deindustrialised and demodernised in many respects. Over two million Bulgarian citizens, including Roma, left the country to seek a livelihood abroad. The development of important sectors such as education, healthcare and other social services dramatically regressed. As a result, the social status of the overwhelming majority of Bulgarian citizens deteriorated. EU accession was seen by many as the last hope that negative trends would be reversed. However, seven years after Bulgaria's accession to the EU hopes have dwindled as there have been no significant improvements in the economy and in the lives of many people. According to Eurostat data confirmed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 79% of Bulgarian families live below the income level per person that is needed for normal living. Moreover, around 50% of people in Bulgaria live below or near the poverty line.²⁵ Roma, like many other Bulgarian citizens, have been affected by these negative social and economic trends. Their situation, however, has been aggravated by the growing tendency among the political, economic, media, and even academic elites to blame Roma for the problems facing the country.

Meanwhile, after 25 years of onerous transition, with the progressive loss of social status, some parts of Roma communities - up to 10% according to estimates - have fallen into the category of a marginal and problem-ridden group, a category which had already been ascribed to them at the beginning of the transition period. Developments in Roma communities in later years took the course of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Also prophetic was the fear expressed by Mr Osztołykan from the Hungarian Gypsy organisation Fraternity, at the beginning of the transition, that Roma were faced with the threat of becoming a scapegoat for all of the mishaps of the transition period.²⁶

The hopes of the Roma intellectuals “that the new times will return what was taken away from us” voiced by Dora Decheva at the beginning of the transition period did not materialise. Reality showed that in many respects “the new times” took away from us achievements that had been taken for granted: full employment, free access to medical care and social services, full coverage of Roma children by the school system, and others.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Roma did not get the real chance that they had expected under the new democratic conditions. The Roma did not get the chance to integrate in the political establishment, although this fact is logical given that this same establishment neglected not only the interests of the Roma but also the interests of the majority population. More difficult to comprehend is the conduct of external actors – international organisations, donors, and Western governments. They supported programmes and projects for the Roma, and at least at the level of rhetoric they demanded the empowerment of the Roma. In practice, however, they followed their own models and visions, rarely accepted ideas from the Roma and rarely allowed Roma to take positions of power. Due to the reasons listed above, I consider that it is incorrect to assert that the implementation of Roma integration policies has failed; Roma integration policies had all the preconditions needed to be successful but they were never realised.

Throughout their centuries-old history, the Roma have survived much bigger hardship and continued their development. This fact gives us hope that in this difficult period, Roma will reflect on the hardship, take their lives in their own hands, and find their place in society.

25 “Nad 3, 4 miliona bulgari zhiveyat n araba na miseriyata” (Over 3.4 million Bulgarians live at the edge of misery), *Seга daily*, 12 May 2015.

26 From an article by Scott Smedley and Chris Steven, which was reprinted in *Duma Daily*, 26 April 1990.

Changing the Paradigm of Roma inclusion: From Gypsy industry to active citizenship

FLORIN NASTURE

Introduction

It is well known that historically Roma were classified after their professional occupations. We have *caldaras*, tinkers, bear leaders, *rudars*, *boldeni* (horse sellers), singers, ironsmiths, etc. It seems that this list is continuing to expand. Thanks to the Operational Programme for Human Resource Development,¹ there are new Roma groups. Somebody told me that an entire community was trained to be hairdressers. Why not? There are hundreds of projects that have trained Roma in many professions. Hence we have Roma groups of cooks, waiters, chambermaids, landscapers, caretakers etc. To some observers it might appear that Roma communities are flooded with projects that aim to train a number of vulnerable people and this in itself has spawned a new industry; the Gypsy industry! Which has proved to be a rather top-down, hierarchical and inefficient industry. This article seeks to provide insights into the growing belief that funds have been poorly used and even wasted. This article draws on my experiences as an activist and community organiser and seeks to map out a development model based on empowerment and social justice.

We are at the end of a period of European Union (EU) funding programmes and at the beginning of a new one regarding Roma inclusion. Some of the assessments regarding the previous programmatic period (2007 – 2014) evidence both achievements and failures of European or national policies. However the most relevant assessment, beyond the language of indicators, outcomes, outputs, objectives, etc., is what we see when we go to Roma communities. There the quality of life for many Roma remains lacking, with limited opportunities to access quality and non-discriminatory education, employment, healthcare and housing.

The development industry or Roma business

The stakeholders (state institutions, non-government organisations (NGOs), international organisations, donors) involved in the inclusion of Roma should also be key contributors to strong Roma communities, providing services and support in order to; help people enhance their participation in the community and influence decision-making; have control over resources; guard human rights and social justice; and ultimately improve their quality of life. Unfortunately the actors involved in Roma inclusion, although claiming to be acting on behalf of ‘the Roma’, often take actions that in fact promote the ‘*development industry*’ or contribute to establishing the ‘*Gypsy Industry*’.

In other words the organisations/state institutions present the image that they act on behalf of Roma when in fact they are really interested in their own survival.²

In the frame of the ‘Gypsy industry’ organisations and institutions develop missions and operating principles that they do not follow, and neither do their ‘beneficiaries’. The hidden agenda of those within the Gypsy industry is to mobilise around the acquisition of funds, and therefore the concern of these institutions is to create and maintain a positive commercial image. As a result the organisations/institutions are report-driven and focused on polished project results. Those who know how to produce these receive funds, even though these ‘experts’ go to the communities more like tourists than professionals with a job to do, take some photos, write some reports - then their work is done, and payment is received. Moreover, there are funded organisations that are completely alien to the Roma communities’ reality and whose approach is based on a mindset that views Roma as a ‘disadvantaged population’. This approach becomes in effect an act of assimilation, as

1 *Operational Programme for Human Resource Development*, available at: <http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/posdru-2007>.

2 Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London: Versus, 1993)

these projects are then without an ethnic dimension and knowledge of the local Roma context. In addition many of their directors/managers spend more time on generating relevant data and developing guidelines rather than on working with the people to improve their conditions.³

In order to benefit from all the opportunities available, the stakeholders involved in the Roma issue are not limited to a specific area of intervention and they are ready to offer interventions in multiple fields to raise funds. NGOs, state agencies and international organisations are more concerned with producing polished results and creating an image of reliable partners (donors, EU institutions) than investing in social partnership with their Roma policy recipients.

This is not merely a theory in the field of Roma inclusion but a recent reality. Many of these policy actors are concerned with their own political interest, power and profit in the name of Roma inclusion, rather than with being engaged in responsible action from which Roma communities can directly benefit. Nowadays stakeholders in the field of Roma inclusion are market oriented. Many of these organisations behave like corporations, concerned with their own survival and profit-maximisation in an ongoing competition with other organisations, rather than with the conditions of those who could benefit from work to improve inclusion.⁴

Social dependency versus empowerment

In the vocabulary of policy makers, Roma are frequently conceptualised as a ‘problem’ and never as a ‘solution’. Policy makers tend to emphasise the negative aspects and neglect to consider the positive strengths of Roma. Hence, policies are based on the understanding that Roma are vulnerable and in need of social assistance, rather than recognising them as a national minority.

This approach towards Roma and the Gypsy industry described above perpetuates the social dependency of Roma, and thus the circle of poverty. Therefore it is not surprising that in Romania for instance, after 20 years of inclusion policies and 250 million Euros of investment,⁵ little

has been achieved. More and more people involved in the Roma issue have started to speak openly about these taboo issues although they face the risk of being rejected by the system which perpetuates the Gypsy industry.

Policy makers and donors have also come to the understanding that there is a need to change the discourse and the paradigm of Roma inclusion. In fact the international organisations and donors involved in Roma inclusion (the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, the OSI, the Norwegian Fund, United Nations Development Programme) have lately started to develop their own policies and enforce the integrated, bottom-up approach. Even though it has been long known that this is ‘the way’ to Roma inclusion, the stakeholders have previously not taken it seriously. Nowadays it seems more than ever, however, that an approach in which community members and local authorities are empowered, made accountable and engaged is being attempted.

Donors and international organisations

At the level of donors and international organisations, coordination among programmes is simulated; in reality the experience of Roma suggest that coordination is hardly visible. A Romani neighbourhood can be approached by several programmes simultaneously, each with the same methods, with each donor claiming to have found the solution to Roma inclusion. Although officially they declare the intention to empower community members at the local level and increase community participation, this often fails to materialise. In other words, one can find very few Roma working in these institutions especially in decision-making positions. Those Roma you do find working for such institutions often have nothing to do with their local communities and may have become disconnected from them.

Local authorities

Local authorities do not give adequate consideration to how to bring about change for excluded Roma. Formally they

3 Andras Biro, Nicolae Gheorghe, Martin Kovats et al., in: *From Victimhood to Citizenship - The Path of Roma Integration*, ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kosuth Kiadó, 2013).

4 Ananta Kumar Giri, Philip Qarles Van Ufford, *A Moral Critique of Development: In Search of Global Responsibilities*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 29.

5 Presentation of the National Agency for Roma, 5 October 2009, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/83544?download=true>.

claim to want Roma inclusion but in truth they are interested mainly in the electoral capital and potential funds attached to Roma. As long as the Roma stay poor, and hence can be easily bought, why would they invest in the emancipation of the Roma? Many mayors are interested in the Roma only if they can use them to get some money into their municipality. A deputy mayor said to me, after I showed him a project proposal developed for Roma in his municipality, “Let’s hope this time you will really do something for the Roma”.

The local authorities also fail to work with those implementing programmes to ensure good communication so that their efforts are not being duplicated, leading to a waste of efforts and resources.

The NGO sector

Even Roma organisations and pro-Roma organisations do not have a single voice. We are kept busy with project-design, implementation and reporting. We care about Roma rights, but our material and organisational comfort comes first. We are service providers. We are not interested in a ‘common cause’, and shared civic responsibility is a concept alien to activists, experts, and organisation leaders.

Those of us who have certain connections and communication channels believe that we can influence policies but in reality, alone and apart, no matter how capable we seem, we are only ‘the Roma on duty’. We focus our energy and thoughts on the tensions and the competition among us. As long as we do not give up our egos and as long as we do not prioritise the common interest ahead of the personal, group or organisational interest, we will not produce policies to improve the quality of life of the Roma. That is a pity because if organisation leaders shared a common voice, they would be more effective in influencing policies for Roma, donors’ approaches and the indifference of public authorities.

Roma from communities – policy recipients

When I recently entered a Roma community the first thing they asked me was “what did you bring us?” The Roma from many of the communities where projects and programmes have reached, have developed a victim mentality.

They have become clients of the social service providers. Ever since the 1990s reports, research and studies have presented Roma as victims who need assistance, which has become a defining characteristic of the industry of Roma projects and policies. As Nicolae Gheorghe pointed out “Activists tend to think decision makers can only be made aware of the situation and stirred by dramatic images of Roma as victims of their societies.”⁶

At the same time, the Roma from the Roma communities have started to become aware of the social benefits they can access as a vulnerable population. Some of them have cottoned on to the idea and started to play the victim. For many this process has been an unconscious one. When everybody tells you that you lack skills, you lack education or you are a problem, you start to believe this and behave accordingly, becoming characterised by pervasive feelings of helplessness, dependency, marginality, and powerlessness. Consequently, the Roma, once again, embrace the culture of poverty. In the short term, it is a win-win situation: NGOs implement their projects and mobilise other funds; authorities continue to manipulate the Roma communities, particularly when there are election campaigns to be fought; and the Roma in the communities act as victims because it is easier for them if others provide them with social services and care.

However this is a short-sighted approach, trapping the Roma in a cycle of social dependency rather than ensuring they become partners and citizens. The price to be paid in years to come from this mismanagement will be much greater than the small gains currently being made by the few.

An Empowerment-based approach for Roma inclusion

EMPOWERMENT

Roma need policies that help them to overcome poverty. However, policies and projects that are not accompanied by measures to empower Roma will keep them in the trap of dependency, which undercuts their ability to shape their own development strategies. As long as the Roma condition remains the one described herein it will be useless to develop inclusion policies and strategies. The power holders will continue to prioritise their personal

⁶ Nicolae Gheorghe, „Choices to be Made and Prices to be Paid”, in: *From Victimhood to Citizenship: The Path of Roma Integration* (Biro, Gheorghe, Kovats et al), ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kossuth Publishing Corporation, 2013), 43.

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and/or organisational interests. In this context Roma are easily manipulated, their votes are easily bought, and the stereotype of their social parasitism will be perpetuated by extremist and populist politicians.

There is no alternative open to Roma other than mobilising communities to seek political and civil power. The change that needs to be generated is in the attitude of the people, namely shifting from being passive to active citizens who become masters of their own destiny. If they work together, they will be recognised by others as political entities and owners of some significant political and civic power at the local and central level.⁷

MORAL REFORM

The inclusion of Roma should be a moral pursuit. Hope, proper management and critical reflection are ingredients that, if connected in a moral framework, can bring real inclusion. The actors involved in the inclusion of Roma should understand development as a moral process relation and engage in it beyond our 'job description' or procedures and routines of development agencies, policies and programmers.

All the stakeholders are so involved in action and preoccupied with pleasing the mighty donor that they forget about reflecting on their actions. Therefore "the reinvigoration of Roma inclusion" requires efforts to reconnect the worlds of action and reflection, to build bridges and cross borders, "keeping pace with or even anticipating changes in the nature of criticism and reconstruction of development."⁸

The failures to socially include Roma are caused mainly because we have forgotten to look upon and participate in the field of development as a relationship and as a quest for a shared responsibility, which brings the self and the other together. Development is supposed to provide hope for better human opportunities but it has lately become a hegemonic application where there is a gap between developers and people that need development. The challenge that the practitioners face at this moment is to intervene, taking into account that the inclusion of Roma is a shared responsibility - a sharing which binds the agent and the recipients, the developed world and the developing one, in a bond of shared destiny.

According to Alasdair Macintyre, seeking internal satisfaction makes us feel more like human beings. The motivation of all those involved in Roma inclusion is "to help others" but what is interesting is that this motivation can be rooted in our very own sense of helplessness as we react to a needy, complex and often angry world. And that world is as much a part of who we are on the inside as it is a part of our environment. In other words, in most cases we seek internal satisfaction because we need to feel good about ourselves. Social development is a field oriented towards others for their benefit and this makes us special and gives us the internal satisfaction that make us "more human" than others.⁹

ROMA HUMAN RESOURCES

Years of policy development have also produced Roma with expertise in Roma inclusion. Some of them are working internationally, others in state institutions and many in the NGO sector. At the local level we have experts on Roma issues, health mediators, school mediators, facilitators, and teachers. These human resources can play an important role in the process of development. Although some will say that these experts have moved from communities into offices and that they are not in a decision-making position, they still represent human resources, which may be activated if the right opportunity presents itself.

ROMA AS A YOUNG POPULATION

According to the World Bank study *Achieving Roma Inclusion in Romania – What does it take?*, 40 % of the Roma population of Romania is under the age of 15, which is in stark contrast to the fast-ageing non-Roma Romanian population. This ageing population is a demographic problem not only in Romania but also in the rest of Europe. In this context policies that create opportunities for young Roma to access the labour market are not only moral but also a smart economic approach. In supporting this approach another study of the World Bank from 2008 noted that "equalizing labor market earnings in Romania for Roma could result in potential economic benefits ranging between 887 million Euro and 2.9 billion Euro annually, and fiscal benefits ranging between 202 million Euro and 675 million Euro annually".¹⁰

7 Biro See: Željko Jovanović, "Values, Leadership, Power" in: *From Victimhood to Citizenship: The Path of Roma Integration* (Biro, Gheorghe, Kovats et al), ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kossuth Publishing Corporation, 2013), 197-203.

8 Kumar Giri, Charles Van Ufford (eds.), *A Moral Critique of Development: in search of global responsibilities* (London: Routledge for Eidos, 2003), 3.

9 Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (United States: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 228.

10 Ramya Sundaram, Ulrich Hoerning, Natasha de Andrade Falcão, Natalia Millán, Carla Tokman, and Michele Zini, *Portraits of Labor Market Exclusion*, (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2015), 243.

REVIVALISM OF ROMANIPEN

Attempts for inclusion of the Roma without taking into consideration their socio-cultural background are doomed to fail. There are many projects aimed at the inclusion of Roma as a vulnerable population which contribute to the assimilation of Roma. These projects are run not only by *gadje* institutions or *gadje* NGOs but also by Roma NGOs. In order for the Roma to become full citizens they need first values and benchmarks that define them as human beings. It is true that Roma cultural values, generally known as *Romanipen* (the fundamental law of Roma identity), are less and less part of daily life but, as a Roma nation we need them, and therefore a revitalisation of them is required.

This is particularly important given the reality of stigma and social exclusion and its consequences, which leave many Roma with low self-esteem. How can inclusion take place if Roma have a problem with their identity? In this context Roma need to capitalise and revitalise Roma cultural values. As Nicolae Gheorghe pointed out “*Equal priority should be given to human rights activism and cultural preservation or better revivalism concentrating on Roma language, their heritage of traditional occupations or family structures*”.¹¹

As Nicolae Gheorghe said, the policies and projects addressing Roma issues should be connected to Roma values. For example in *Romanipen* there is the concept of *Phralipe* (brotherhood), which may be equivalent to solidarity in the civic world. Another example is *Pakiv* (trust), which can be identified as transparency. “*Understanding how Roma utilise social and cultural capital is crucial if there is an intention to reorient their use for inclusion into mainstream society*”.¹²

ROMA ARE SURVIVORS

Over centuries Roma have suffered exclusion, extermination, slavery and assimilation but they have always found survival techniques. Roma have for centuries used cultural capital to generate economic capital. They used their traditional occupations as a way of living, adapting their skills to what was required by the market. This proves the capacity of Roma to adapt to different contexts. Policy and project makers should make use of and encourage the capacity that many Roma have developed. Also, the entrepreneurs and

organisations can make use of the capital generated by kinship ties in implementing social entrepreneurship projects.

Conclusion

Over the last twenty years various opportunities have been created for Roma, which may continue in the future decade through the EU. This is an opportunity for Roma to find their way and take an active part in bringing about social change. Combating discrimination and concentrating on providing social services for Roma communities is not enough to achieve a viable solution. What we need is real moral reform. We need to work with responsibility, accountability and with genuine care for others.

Recently a trend has started that encourages empowerment and if realised, will lead to the redistribution of power, and democratisation of previous hierarchical relations. However “the social movements at the same time need to cultivate within themselves a self-critique of the telos of power so that a politics of empowerment does not become an end onto itself and does not degenerate into another system of exclusion and oppression”¹³ dynamics as well as scholarly reflections on social movements as harbingers of new beginnings in the world of Roma inclusion.

Moreover, in order for the Roma communities to be empowered, other stakeholders need to give up power. They will not give up power willingly so Roma will need to take it for themselves. In order to do so we need leaders with know-how and commitment towards their communities, ready to empower and mobilise others in the Roma community to participate as active citizens.

Reinvention of Roma values is not only a force for mobilising communities. The genuine cultural patterns, known as *Romanipen*, can serve as resources that will support adaptive strategies.

These are a few positive aspects that if used properly, will bring a change in Roma communities. There are many other issues specific to each Roma community but despite the diversity and plurality of Roma communities we should not lose our hope that things will change in the future.

11 Nicolae Gheorghe, „Choices to be Made and Prices to be Paid”, in: *From Victimhood to Citizenship: The Path of Roma Integration* (Biro, Gheorghe, Kovats *et al*), ed. Will Guy (Budapest: Kossuth Publishing Corporation, 2013), 81.

12 *Ibid.*, 62.

13 Ananta Kumar Giri, Philip Qarles Van Ufford, *A Moral Critique of Development: In Search of Global Responsibilities*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 15.

The Roma Spring: Knowledge Production and the Search for a New Humanity

MÁRIA BOGDÁN, ANDREW RYDER AND MARIUS TABA

The academic world is one partly characterised by complexity, factionalism and fault lines. In the post-communist system one line of division that emerged was the ascendancy of western sociology and expertise in the east of Europe. In societies in transition many social scientists were cowed and tamed. According to Szalai an exception was Roma research where researchers chronicled human and minority rights violations and charted how the Roma were amongst the greatest losers of the new neoliberal order. As the Roma issue became a cause of growing concern for policy makers, sociologists increasingly enjoyed the elevated status of adviser.¹ A key question is whether academia ever actually had, or has retained, a sense of vibrancy and relevance to the Roma issue. Has advice given to policy makers been insightful? Has advice been heeded?

The dichotomy between East and West is elaborated on by Marushiakova and Popov who describe the Roma as an “imagined community” in part reflecting the tendency of some scholars to direct their investigations towards the ‘others’, namely those who are considered as exotic peoples. “Even though Gypsies are largely European peoples, the romantic image in the public consciousness enables them to fit into the paradigm of Anglo-Saxon anthropology, and this scientific tradition still maintains its dominance globally. Imposing this Anglo-Saxon approach on Gypsies in Eastern Europe is inextricably interwoven with the context of changes in this region over the past 20 years.”²

With the passage of time and the fusion of east and west in the new Europe the precise geographic demarcations may be less pronounced but the fault lines of ideology and standpoint remain. One of the central aspects of the papers in this section of the journal, dealing with knowledge production, is the dividing line that exists on the central question of relationships between researchers and communities and whether researchers are working ‘with’ or ‘on’

the researched. On this question the past two years have witnessed a series of sharp and at times fractious debates within Romani Studies centred on issues such as objectivity, the roles of insider and outsider and the relationship between research, activism and transformative change (radical societal change based on notions of social justice).

The intensity of the debate may in part be due to the fact that terms such as empowerment and partnership have become popular buzzwords. However, the gap between rhetoric and practice in policy formulation and knowledge production has been a central factor in stoking some of the conflicts which have emerged, with a number of critical researchers asserting that emancipatory concepts are being subverted and/or tokenised. It is argued by some disgruntled activists that little has changed - in their opinion the Roma are still being consigned to marginal roles in ‘imagining’ their communities. How might the situation of the Roma change if the voice of communities at the margins is heard and empowered through inclusive forms of knowledge production?

The intensity of debate about power relations may also be prompted by the fact that a new cadre of Roma activist-researchers are emerging, often schooled and trained as community organisers/activists in Roma civil society. Such contributions to knowledge production have been described as “NGO-science”, and it is claimed the primary qualification of the authors for research is their Roma origin.³ However, a growing number of these activist-researchers have proceeded to venture into the realm of academia by studying for or gaining PhDs and attaining positions at prestigious universities and/or winning research contracts. For many of these Roma activist-researchers the late Nicolae Gheorghe was a mentor and intellectual leader. Gheorghe’s disillusionment and frustration with the failure of power elites to engage adequately with Roma communities and his equal

1 Júlia Szalai, “Disquieted Relations: West Meeting East in Contemporary Sociological Research Intersections”, *East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 1 (2) (2015): 12-37.

2 Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov, “Between Exoticization and Marginalization. Current Problems of Gypsy Studies”, *BEHEMOTH - A Journal on Civilisation*, Volume 4 Issue Number 1 (2011): 60.

3 *Ibid.*

frustration with the hierarchicalism of civil society is evident in the work of some of the new cadre of Romani leaders. Whether these activist-researchers can effectively carry the baton which Gheorghe passed to them remains to be seen, as a period of intense debate and contestation ensues.

This moment in time has been dubbed by some observers as the “Roma Spring”, a period of critical consciousness and a new militancy and assertiveness.⁴ Such a process of decolonisation has already occurred amongst other systematically marginalised communities. Be it amongst the Aboriginal People of Australia or First Nations of Canada and the USA, movements for self-determination have been pivotal in creating a new generation of leadership, new outlooks and a sense of confidence and pride in identity. Yet this assertiveness has also been accompanied by disappointments and forms of subversion, with some of the new and emerging community thinkers being subsumed into the academic and wider establishment. Will these processes appear in the Roma Spring? Will the Roma Spring permeate to the grassroots through inclusive approaches to research which can scale and dismantle the perceived aloof ivory towers of the traditional academic establishment? Or are the defenders of the status quo, namely positivist academic critics, correct in their assessment that these activist-researchers have succumbed to a post-colonialist fad and have *been reading too much Foucault*, instead of undertaking so-called ‘objective’ scientific research.

Claims of expertise and objectivity, and a corresponding disparagement of getting too close to the researched, have been termed as scientism. Those imbued with scientism have adopted set limits as to how much the researched should be invited to comment on the interpretations of the researcher or to have the opportunity to participate in the resulting analysis and knowledge production. The argument is that such a line needs to be drawn as the researcher can be shackled and chained into a form of accountability where the researched can somehow have too great a say in interpretation and thus research can become partisan and invalid.⁵ Conversely, it has been argued that such scientism

operates from assumptions based on unexamined biases of privilege.⁶ In addition, it is argued that science-based epistemologies are inherently anti-feminist. Indeed critics contend that such positivist thinking is deeply conservative, adopting quasi-scientific methods and conceptions of detachment, and that the pursuit of objective truth is delusional.⁷ What scientism labels as ‘the truth’ is highly contested and politicised. For power elites are able to permeate discourse, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’. Hence, knowledge and discourse are given the status of truth by those in power, which includes those who portray themselves as the ‘all-knowing expert’.

On the other hand difference and contestation might be the furnace needed to produce new knowledge. Different approaches to research prompt new lines of inquiry, and test and temper hypotheses. It could be argued that Romani Studies by virtue of its interest in marginalised communities should reflect and embrace a diversity of opinions (working dissensus), and even structures and networks. Basically qualitative and quantitative approaches can learn from each other, as can scientism and participatory approaches. It may not be a matter of academic hierarchies but instead a case of looking to the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

These were some of the thoughts and questions which prompted the organisation of the seminar *Nothing about us without us?* The following papers, which were presented at that event, provide important insights into the topic of where Roma are located in contemporary power relations, including in the realm of knowledge production.

Mirga-Kruszelnicka in her paper entitled *Romani Studies and emerging Romani scholarship* provides an overview of current debates within Romani Studies, as for instance reflected in the development of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies (EANRS), an academic network funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and centred on a mission statement which includes supporting efforts towards the social inclusion of Romani citizens in Europe, facilitating intercultural dialogue and raising the visibility of

4 An alternative term is ‘Roma Awakening’ see Thomas Acton, and Andrew Ryder, “From Clienthood to Critique - The role of Nicolae Gheorghe as Mediator and Catalyst in the Roma Awakening” in *Roma Rights 1* (2015) *In Search of a Contemporary Roma Identity: In Memoriam - Nicolae Gheorghe*.

5 Zoltan Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

6 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 17-20.

7 Maria Mies, “Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research”, in *Theories of Women’s Studies*, ed. G. Bowles and R. D. Klein, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

existing research outside the academic community in order to foster cooperation with policy makers and other stakeholders. However, in its initial election of a Scientific Committee the EANRS failed to elect any members of the Roma community.

It should be noted that further controversy was aroused when the Scientific Committee issued a statement which was critical of a proposed European Roma Institute. Critics of the proposal stated that the initiative was a mere legacy project and whim of the billionaire George Soros and that recognised higher education institutions should be the locus of academic engagement with Roma culture on account of established processes and procedures which make it possible to produce knowledge that can inform policy and public attitudes in a reliable and transparent manner.⁸ Such notions within the academy sacralise the power and practices of academia, upon which its authority rests. This form of cultural reproduction leads to ‘misrecognition’, where power relations are perceived not for what they are objectively but instead in a form which depicts them as legitimate in the eyes of the beholder.⁹ Foucault argued that modern rationality and institutions of knowledge are sources of domination; in other words, every production of knowledge is serving power.¹⁰ Thus education, research and knowledge production on Roma has at the end a political purpose, and consequently power games are played out by some academics in the hope of accruing or maintaining prestige, research contracts and influence.

With reference to the imbalance in power relations in ‘imagining’ Roma communities and knowledge production Mirga-Kruszelnicka and indeed other contributors to this journal such as Violeta Vajda, feel that the imbalance can be addressed through participatory and collaborative forms of research which give communities voice. Feminist and critical researchers contend that research should be situated (standpoint theory) in the concerns of marginalised people, and this can best be achieved through egalitarian research practices like participatory action research.¹¹ Such an approach brings the researcher closer to a more valid and meaningful form of knowledge and it is argued this

is more ethical for those being researched as forms of accountability are developed at all stages of the research including involvement in analysis and interpretation. Standpoint theory contends that scientism cannot detach itself from the class, culture and race of the researcher, though recognition of the impact of such attributes through reflexivity can minimise the influence of bias. Reflexivity leads to rejecting notions of the researcher being an impersonal machine and defies scientism/positivism by not sanitising the ‘I’ from the narrative.¹² Instead the researcher should acknowledge the impact of the different perspectives and life experiences they hold and determine how these have shaped their research by ‘situating’ the perspective of the researcher through reflexivity. In this process it is important to reflect on the variety of ‘selves’ or shades of identity the researcher brings into the research process.

The next two papers on knowledge production touch upon the practice of reflexivity, exploring issues such as critical whiteness and mixed heritage, gender and identity. Violeta Vajda in her contribution entitled *Towards ‘critical whiteness’ in Romani Studies* refers to the dominance of white researchers in the field of Romani Studies. Vajda outlines how in her view Romani emancipation will be impeded unless the concept of critical whiteness gains traction. It is argued that unless non-Romani people examine their own racialised identity and understanding of how stereotypes, othering and scapegoating are constructed, then significant progress will be impeded. Such a process involves examining the deeply held beliefs or even prejudices that non-Roma bring to practices or academic writing. In other words the non-Roma should question their own identities. The importance of such a venture is emphasised by Vajda who points out the dangers of a white identity increasingly being steered by the vagaries of the New Right and forms of nativism, which favour the rights of established inhabitants over migrants.

Vajda refers to *Bildung*, a certain maturity that allows one to question and remain open to new experiences, while at the same time grounding these in a thorough understanding

8 See *Statement of the EANRS Scientific Committee on the Council of Europe’s proposal for a European Roma Institute*, 30 April 2014, available at: <http://romanistudies.eu/documents/reports-on-the-scientific-committee-meetings/>.

9 Loic Wacquant, “Bourdieu: A Case Study in Scientific Consecration”, *Sociology* 47(1) (1993): 15–29

10 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1983).

11 Patricia Maguire, *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach* (Amherst: The Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, 1987).

12 Judith Okely and Helen Callaway, eds., *Anthropology and Autobiography* (London: Routledge 1992).

of the past. Another important term for Vajda is *hermeneutic dialogue* which can be described as a state of mind, an openness and continuous questioning, a robust form of inter-cultural dialogue which prompts reflection, two-way change and reorientation. Yet we live in an increasingly intolerant age, where hegemonic power seeks distractions and scapegoats for the perceived ills of society, which through a securitisation discourse often casts the Roma as a menace and threat to majoritarian society and values.¹³ Hence, the propensity for genuine dialogue and reflection is limited by forms of narrow monoculturalism and movement away from even liberal notions of multiculturalism. Challenges to the intolerance meted out towards outsider groups such as the Roma could do much to shatter this hegemony and bring about transformative change. However, to provide such an environment, forms of institutional change are warranted that can nurture deliberative forms of democracy which would encompass radical and more participatory forms of engagement. Critical researchers argue that inclusive approaches to research with the Roma have a part to play in this process.

References to forms of identity are evident in the paper by Ethel Brooks entitled *The Importance of Feminists and 'Halfies' in Romani Studies: New Epistemological Possibilities* which focuses discussion on people whose national or cultural identity is mixed and move between different worlds and cultural systems. For Brooks, Romani scholars who come from Romani backgrounds, families, and communities can also be considered as 'halfies,' moving between Romani and *gadje* worlds. The challenges for Romani scholars working within academia are compounded according to Brooks by the fact that Romani Studies is the inheritor and the legacy of the Gypsy Lore Society, as characterised by a hierarchical attitude to the researched and affiliation to established centres of power. Brooks calls for a commitment to reflexivity, a critique of our own positionality *vis-à-vis* the subject(s) of our research.

Marett Klahn in her contribution entitled *Knowing Differently: On Thinking and Doing 'Roma'* fuses discussion of identity with knowledge production. Klahn argues that discussions on knowledge production ought to take note of how the Roma are conceptualised as a static category, with their construction as 'the other' along racialised and

essentialist lines. This process accentuates division and polarisation between the Roma and majoritarian society, divisions which Klahn argues are reflected in established knowledge on the Roma. Klahn presents the case study of the Dr Ámbédkar School in Hungary and how it creates a space where Roma pupils can express identity but do so in an environment which recognises Roma identity and which is shifting and fluid. Hence within the school identity is critically explored rather than presented as a rigid phenomenon preserved in aspic. The pupils are also able to access a curriculum which makes reference not just to the Roma but to other marginalised groups, and provides insights into emancipatory struggles and leadership with potential lessons for the Roma, thus fulfilling what Freire considered as the basic requirement of education, namely liberation as opposed to domestication.¹⁴ It may be the case that the Dr Ámbédkar School presents a model which other schools can emulate by creating open and critical learning environments for Roma and non-Roma pupils.

School can be considered a mirror and shaper of the society in which we live but in a mass media society the power for good and/or harm of the media cannot be ignored in terms of knowledge production. As evidenced by the tidal wave of derogative media reporting which has played a key role in demonising Roma communities through sensationalist reporting, the media has stirred within the public imagination 'moral panics' or public furores in which outsider groups are cast as folk devils in opposition to what are considered the values and ideals of majoritarian society. Thus the media acts as an enforcer in castigating those perceived as outsiders to bolster forms of hegemonic power and create borders and divisions between those who are deemed to conform and those who don't fit in or fall outside the boundary of those who can be accepted and included.

Mária Bogdán in her contribution *Challenging Perspectives – The Role of Media Representation in Knowledge Production about Roma* explores these points and the concepts and meanings constructed through the media about Roma and the media's role of signifier, through their defining gaze. Conversely Bogdán argues that the media can be powerful agents helping to bring forth transformative change. Social media can be argued to have democratised knowledge pro-

13 Huub van Baar, *The European Roma: Minority Representation, Memory and the Limits of Transnational Governmentality* (Amsterdam: PhD thesis University of Amsterdam, 2011).

14 Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Press, 1990).

duction and have been a central tool in the work of radical social movements, as evidenced by the Occupy Movement and the rise of left-wing populist movements like Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain and more recently in the UK with the Labour Party leadership victory by the radical socialist Jeremy Corbyn. In the Arab Spring and overthrow of dictatorships social media were a central engine in driving and mobilising revolution. The Romani Movement has witnessed an explosion of Roma orientated Facebook groups, networks and chatrooms providing platforms and tools for mobilisation for a new generation of Romani activists. A key question is whether through such spaces of agitation we will see the triumph of a Roma Spring.

Who and what are the regimes of oppression which need to be overthrown in the Roma Spring? As touched upon in the papers outlined above, transformative change warrants genuine and not illusory partnerships between policy makers, knowledge producers and the Roma. It also requires institutional and societal change and redistribution, as well as critical reflexivity on the part of majority society and amongst the Roma and the movements that seek to represent them, rooting out and dispelling exclusionary notions and practices and building on a worldview premised on cosmopolitanism, intersectionality and social justice.

In a speech to the *Nothing about us without us?* conference, the Roma activist and art curator Timea Junghaus felt the Roma intellectual and cultural movement had at times lost

and wasted time and energy in seeking to identify the *a priori* essence of the Roma identity, only to come to the recognition – building on Black, African, Afro-European, and Jewish analogies - that the Roma diaspora is a process that involves practice and hard labour, which must be forged, constantly questioned and remade. As Junghaus noted ‘multiculturalism’ might be an appropriate concept to describe the basic reality of Roma people.¹⁵ In other words Roma identity coincides with Stuart Hall’s understanding of cultural identity, which is a “matter of becoming”.¹⁶ In her speech Junghaus proceeded to surmise the answer as to how to imagine the Roma as situated in an outlook which envisions a world of rich and complex individuals with multiple and shifting identifications, and not one static identity. It is an identity concept which presumes respect for other cultures and a desire to learn and exchange in order to complete and build our identities. It is a constructive and transformative model - in theory, art, and life. It inspires us to see the potential reconciliation of interrelations between non-Roma subjectivity and ‘Gypsy’ reality. The speech included a clarion call mirroring the aim of this edition of the Roma Rights Journal for artists, theorists, activists and researchers and above all communities to look for and devise strategies to confront and de-link from the colonial matrix of power, and achieve decoloniality.¹⁷ As Junghaus notes, with reference to Mignolo, the Roma movement is in search of a “new humanity”,¹⁸ a search for social liberation from all power organised and based upon inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and domination.¹⁹

15 Nicolae Gheorghe, “The Social Construction of Roma Identity” in *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, ed. Thomas Acton (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), 153–171.

16 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1994).

17 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011).

18 *Ibid.*, 52.

19 Anibal Quijano, *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality*, *Cultural Studies*, (2007) 21 (2-3).

Romani Studies and emerging Romani scholarship

ANNA MIRGA-KRUSZELNICKA

The Romani people have been an object of academic inquiry for centuries. The first scholars who applied scientific methods to studying the Roma can be traced back to the 17th century;¹ the Gypsy Lore Society was founded in 1888 and remains in operation to this day. As an object of academic inquiry, Romani people have seldom taken an active role in shaping academic knowledge about themselves. Numerous historical reasons explain why Roma have not ascended to ranks of academic relevance and have consequently been excluded from producing knowledge regarding themselves. Today, however, this situation is gradually shifting: the increasing numbers of Romani university students and Romani scholars pursuing academic careers is bound to provoke a deeper reflection regarding Romani Studies, challenging the existing relationship between the researcher and the researched in relation to Roma. This debate regarding the emancipation of Romani scholarship and its implications for Romani Studies as an academic discipline comes late – among other minority groups such as Indigenous communities, Aboriginal communities or Afro-Americans such discussions have already been taking place for some time. Post-colonial studies have also been influential in challenging dominant academic discourses, providing the “subaltern”² with their own voice. What do emerging scholars of Romani background mean for the development of Romani Studies?

Shifting discourses on Roma

Throughout the past two decades there has been an outstanding shift in policy approach towards the Roma issue,³

from a more general, human and minority-rights oriented approach, emphasising equality and non-discrimination, through explicitly targeting Roma and the more specific and targeted efforts of the current National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) to support the social inclusion of Roma (although within the broader European Union (EU) policy framework supporting the social inclusion of disadvantage people, including Roma). This shift can be seen through analysing the policy approaches of international and inter-governmental organisations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), and especially the EU towards Roma.⁴ Both contextual factors, and also Romani activism and lobbying, have contributed to this change. For the former, the post-transition period, EU enlargement and intra-Europe migrations were decisive. For the latter, lobbying by various groups of Roma civil society and Roma representatives, supported by non-Roma civil society and scholars, proved effective. Academia has also contributed to this process: research and data have provided much-needed evidence and supported Romani claims for a more focused Roma policy addressing key issues or areas. This shift in approach has been concomitant with a discursive shift towards the Roma, especially in EU Roma policy formulation, favouring a clearly targeted approach to Roma (although not ethnically exclusive, i.e., “allowing for participation of other persons in similar situations regardless of their ethnicity”⁵). However, this targeted approach is not without its possible dangers. Despite the calls of the European Commission to increasingly mainstream Roma issues in the framework of broader social inclusion policies, the Roma are commonly

1 Andrew Ryder, *Co-producing Knowledge with below the radar communities: Factionalism, Commodification or Partnership? A Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Case Study* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Third Sector Research Centre, January 2015), 4.

2 The term “subaltern” was coined by Antonio Gramsci. The concept has been developed further in the works of Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, among others.

3 Peter Vermeersch, “The European Union and the Roma: An Analysis of recent institutional and policy developments”, *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 9 (2013), 341-358; Márton Rövid, “Cosmopolitanism and Exclusion. On the limits transnational democracy in the light of the case of Roma”, Dissertation (Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations, 2011).

4 Balint-Abel Beremenyi and Anna Mirga, *Lost in action? Evaluating the 6 years of the Comprehensive Plan for the Gitano Population in Catalonia* (Barcelona: FAGIC-EMIGRA, October 2012).

5 Commission Staff Working Document: Non-discrimination and equal opportunities 2008 COM (2008) 420, 5. This principle was later on consecrated in the “10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion” document, available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf.

seen as a group *sui generis*⁶ which enjoys special benefits (often causing tension between local Roma and non-Roma communities and further fuelling anti-Roma sentiments). The very existence of special policies on Roma (NRIS) leads to *othering* of Roma, emphasising the perceived ethnic and citizen-status difference between Roma and non-Roma. The Roma ethnic identity acquired a political dimension, but a stigmatising one - associating ethnicity with marginalisation, poverty and discrimination. In consequence, Roma are treated, and often inexplicitly defined, as a socio-economically deprived group, identified by its vulnerability, social exclusion and marginalisation rather than as a viable and complex ethnic group. In extreme situations, such a discourse leads to the “securitization of the Roma issue” in state policies, evidence of which can be found in different European countries (Italy, France, Hungary, Slovakia).⁷

The role of academia

No doubt, academia has its say in shaping dominant discourses and policy approaches on Roma; after all, scholars and researchers are the ones who produce and build up the body of knowledge on Roma. This authoritative scholarship and expertise influences policy makers and society as a whole. Through specific research questions scholars frame the reality by defining groups, acknowledging social phenomena and problematising issues that are the object of academic inquiry.

But the way in which research frames social phenomena or specific groups carries with it an interpretation and implies meaning regarding what, in fact, is considered a problem.

As Mihai Surdu’s research suggests, for example, academic and expert writing on Roma has greatly contributed to shaping the negative image of Roma, concentrating on deficiencies, limitations and a panorama of socio-economic problems. Surdu, through in-depth analysis of the textual and visual content of the most influential (most cited) sources of knowledge on Roma (such as reports of the World Bank), accurately demonstrates how Roma have been classified through academic research and consequently that “Roma identity tends to be recognized by the strength of the stereotypes related to it”⁸.

Other studies also reflect Surdu’s hypothesis to some extent. The recently published study on Roma housing in Spain,⁹ for example, demonstrates how policy interventions targeting Roma, seconded by “diagnostic studies”, have inexplicitly framed the Roma population as deficient, gregarious subjects in need of protection. The language used in policy and academic inquiries results in a stereotypical portrayal of Roma; and “although the use of ethnonym is avoided, and a careful use is made of these expression that could be considered ‘racist’ or ‘discriminating’, the diagnose (*sic*) of the housing condition of the *gitano* in the selected territories is based on the

6 Some analysts have advocated mainstreaming approaches and, called for “de-ethnicising” Roma issues (for example: Martin Kovats, “*The Politics of Roma Identity: between Nationalism and Destitution*”, *Open Democracy*, 29 July 2003, available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/people-migrationeurope/article_1399.jsp), and reducing potential tensions caused by somehow “privileging Roma poor” over other disadvantaged categories of mainstream society (see for example: Andrey Ivanov, Jaroslav Kling and Justin Kagin, “Integrated household surveys among Roma populations: one possible approach to sampling used in the UNDP World Bank-EC Regional Roma Survey 2011”, *Roma Inclusion Working Papers* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2012). The colour-blind approach, however, ignores Roma ethnicity and its complex nature and leads to over-simplifications and/or generalisations. In both interpretations the very fact that Roma disadvantage has been caused by their ethnic belonging (the relevance of anti-Roma feelings and racial prejudice) was omitted or ignored. This approach has struggled with additional challenges when it comes to quantifying how Roma have benefited from available funding for Roma policy implementation or how many Roma were among the beneficiaries. On the other hand, establishing inclusive policies – ones which accommodate targeted/tailored needs and their corresponding policy responses into the mainstream policy frameworks – can embrace both, seemingly exclusive, approaches.

7 See for example: Huub van Baar, “The Securitization of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe: Context, Critique, Challenges” (Keynote speech delivered at New Scotland Yard, London, UK, 3 December 2014), in the context of the international seminar *Crime and Punishment: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the Criminal Justice System*, organised by IDRICS, Bucks New University and The University of Warwick. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/10862181/The_Securitization_of_Gypsies_Travellers_and_Roma_in_Europe_Context_Critique_Challenges_2014_; Horia Bărbulescu, “Constructing the Roma people as a societal threat: the Roma expulsions from France”, *European Journal of Science and Theology* 8.1 (2012): 279-289; Sergio Carrera, “The Framing of the Roma as Abnormal EU Citizens: assessing European politics on Roma evictions and expulsions in France” in *The Reconceptualization of European Union Citizenship*, ed. Elspeth Guild, Cristina Gortázar Rotaeche and Dora Kostakopoulou, (Boston: Brill Nijhoff, 2014), 33-63.

8 Mihai Surdu, “Who defines Roma?”, *Open Society Foundations Voices blog*, May 8 2014, available at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/who-defines-roma>.

9 Juan de Dios López López, Stefano Piemontese, Guiseppa Beluschi, Marc Ballester i Torrents, *WE: Wor(l)ds which exclude. National Report: Spain* (Seville: Taller de Antropología y Ciencias Sociales Aplicadas, 2014), available at: http://weproject.unice.fr/stream/2014-11/spain_nationalreportwe.pdf.

understanding of poverty as a specific ‘culture’.”¹⁰ The authors rightfully conclude that “the definition of the ‘problem’ is part of the problem”.¹¹

Providing evidence of Roma marginalisation or the appalling social conditions in which Roma live in many instances has been considered necessary to raise awareness among governments and build a sense of urgency to mobilise the authorities to act. This is a justification for many efforts in this area whether undertaken by international organisations, scholars from academia or Roma and non-Roma civil society. Unintentionally, however, producing and reproducing such images of a socially-deprived ethnic group rarely works towards diminishing prejudice or raising acceptance at the receiving end – that is, the majority society.

On the other hand, academic research tends to claim authority over other sources of knowledge or other fields of knowledge-production. Rigney writes: “The notion that science is ‘authoritative’, ‘neutral’ and ‘universal’ privileges science. It gives science the status of a standard measure against which all other ‘realities’ may be evaluated and judged to be either ‘rational’ or otherwise.”¹² Indeed, Ryder also writes about similar dilemmas with regard to Romani Studies, namely the fissure between scientism and critical research, when he recalls the controversial statement of the Scientific Committee of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies (EANRS) that “the academic engagement with Roma culture belongs within universities”.¹³ Ryder rightfully dismantles the notion of value-free and detached research. After all, “research is not an innocent distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions”.¹⁴ Academia is also inherently hierarchical (from within and also towards ‘the outside world’) and imposes the superiority of academic over other knowledge (local, non-academic etc.). The scholarly world may too reproduce

inequalities, and is a space of intricate power-relationships, especially during research. Recognising and understanding these power relations and existing hierarchies within academia in general and Romani Studies specifically may help open up the discipline to critical reflection regarding epistemologies, methodologies and scientific approaches.

Romani Studies and its limitations

From the point of view of an early career scholar, it seems that Romani Studies is somewhat limited – geographically, methodically, and paradigmatically – and lacking the necessary plurality of approaches, which is so enriching for the development of scientific disciplines. If we take as an example the Annual Gypsy Lore Society Conferences, arguably the most important annual academic event in Romani Studies, the picture becomes clear. The most recent Gypsy Lore Society Annual Conference in 2014 took place in Bratislava.¹⁵ Out of 103 papers presented during the conference, only five reached in their scope beyond continental Europe (papers on Roma in the US, Brazil, Brazil/Canada, Algeria/Iraq and Egypt). The vast majority of papers oscillated around classical themes of anthropology (rituals, identities, religions, music and other cultural expressions), linguistics or historical research. The other portion dealt with state policy on Roma, or within the area where public policy and academic research intersect. Eight papers were comparative (or quasi-comparative, including data gathered in more than 1 country). Five papers dealt with questions of gender-relations or women specifically. And out of all 100 plus speakers, fewer than 10 were of Romani background.

Despite the increasing popularity of Romani-related scientific inquiries,¹⁶ from this example, but also by analysing the vast body of literature on Roma, it seems that researchers tend to ask more of the same questions, typically related

10 *Ibid.*, 86.

11 *Palabras que excluyen. Recomendaciones. Guía práctica para mejorar la imagen de personas gitanas en los textos administrativos* (2014), available at: <http://we-project.unice.fr/publication/recommendations-palabras-que-excluyen-spain>.

12 Lester-Irabinna Rigney, “A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science: Framing Indigenous research towards Indigenous Australian intellectual sovereignty”, *Kaurua Higher Education Journal* 7 (2001): 1-13, 3.

13 Ryder, *Co-producing Knowledge with below the radar communities*, 19.

14 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (London: Zed books, 1999), 5.

15 Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society and Conference on Romani Studies 2014, Bratislava, Slovakia, *About the Conference*, available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/glsproceedings/home/about-the-conference>.

16 Among others, Andrew Ryder speaks of this “new popularity” of Romani Studies. Andrew Ryder, *Co-producing Knowledge with below the radar communities*, 5.

to Roma marginality, integration and inclusion strategies, discrimination, Romani dialects and cultures, or the ever-popular topic of defining who the Roma really are. Seldom do research questions on Roma focus on different aspects: why not conduct research on the historical contributions of Roma to local or national cultures?¹⁷ Or look into the participation of Roma in national independence struggles in their corresponding countries? After all, the Roma have also been part of the national histories of the different societies among which they live. And seldom do research questions on Roma relate to more general debates on inequalities, multiculturalism, the practice of citizen rights or the state of our democracies, linking Roma with other sectors of society.

Romani Studies, although represented by a variety of academic branches, is dominated by a few epistemologies and academic voices, has a limited nucleus of academic excellence, and lacks a comparative perspectives that would include different geographic areas, inter-ethnic contexts and relations, or which would tackle new avenues of research such as Roma and post-colonialism, critical race theory, feminism, intersectionality, inter-continental comparative perspectives etc. New scholarship on Roma timidly enters these new avenues but still remains marginal to the mainstream currents within Romani Studies.

Furthermore, some scholars are wary of scientism¹⁸ or indeed of scientific racism¹⁹ within Romani Studies, which increasingly signals the need for a critical revision of the body of knowledge produced on Roma or the very foundations on which Romani Studies as a discipline has been based. Such critical engagement with the legacy of Romani Studies can be provided, although not exclusively, by Romani scholars. From a historical perspective, it may be asserted that Romani Studies has been, for a variety of reasons, dominated by non-Romani voices. Not that Romani scholars may claim greater legitimacy over the knowledge produced on Roma. Nonetheless, Romani Studies lacks a critical perspective from within this community, which can

be provided by scholars of a Romani background. Can we imagine Women Studies dominated by men? Or Jewish Studies without Jewish contributors?

Today, with the increasing number of Romani scholars, there is a growing challenge to accommodate them within the existing panorama of Romani Studies. Nonetheless, scholars with a Romani background still remain a minority. The marginality of scholars of Romani background has been made evident most clearly with the establishment of EANRS. In the elections to the Scientific Committee of EANRS no Romani scholar has been elected, resulting in the resignation of Professor Thomas Acton (since then, two other Scientific Committee members have also resigned).²⁰

At the same time, Romani scholars have also been marginal in shaping dominant narratives on Roma in key nuclei of academic excellence with regards to Romani Studies. For example, the Central European University (CEU), which brings together a large number of Romani students thanks to its programmes (Roma Access Programmes and scholarships offered to Romani students), has been running a summer school on Roma since 1998. In these summer schools, distinguished scholars have been repeatedly invited as lecturers – among them only a handful of scholars of Romani background. The low number of students of Romani origin participating in these summer schools has also been a feature of these events. It wasn't until the 2015 CEU Summer School²¹ that the approach shifted to include a majority Romani faculty (9 out of 11 lecturers are Roma) under the leadership of a Romani course director, and with half of the students of Romani origin.

Emerging Romani scholars – “the outsiders within”²²

Heated debates on the status of Romani scholars, or more broadly, the relationship between ethnicity and academic

17 In the Gypsy Lore Society Annual Conference 2014, only one paper concentrated on the aspect of Roma participation in national histories, namely the paper of Eugenia Ivanova and Velco Krastev “The Gypsies in the Bulgarian Army during World War II (1939-1945)”.

18 Ryder, *Co-producing Knowledge with below the radar communities*.

19 Thomas Acton, “Scientific Racism, Popular Racism, and the Discourse of the Gypsy Lore Society” (Lecture during Gypsy Lore Society Annual Conference 2013 in Glasgow, Scotland: forthcoming).

20 Ryder, *Co-producing knowledge with below the radar communities*.

21 2015 CEU Summer School “Performing Romani Identities: Strategy and Critique”, available at: <http://summer.ceu.hu/romani-2015>.

22 “The outsider within” is a concept developed by Patricia Hill Collins.

performance, have recently been taking place. In this debate about the status of Romani scholars, too often ethnic background has been juxtaposed with academic merit, as if these too were mutually exclusive. Rather, these should be treated as complementary qualities, which are relevant to the researcher but not necessarily to the quality of the academic performance. The status of a Roma and a non-Roma scholar, especially when conducting research, is clearly different but shouldn't be put on a scale of 'more/less' or 'better/worse'. In this regard, ethnicity should be regarded as an added value in research, but should not overshadow the quality of academic production.

Debates regarding the importance which ethnic background bears on researchers have been taking place for some time among other minority or 'subaltern' groups across the world (for example, in the US, Canada, Australia and numerous countries of Latin America). The ascendance of Indigenous, Aboriginal or Afro-American individuals, to name a few, to ranks of academic distinction has provoked reflections regarding the relationship between the researcher and the researched and the importance of the voice 'from within'. Post-colonialist and feminist paradigms, among others, provide an adequate theoretical background for these reflections. Looking into the experiences of other minority groups and their participation in knowledge production may prove instructive for understanding the emerging Romani scholarship within Romani Studies and its importance for the discipline.

Indigenous scholarship emerged "as an alternative mode of engagement with knowledge to the dominant mode of Western research."²³ It sought to tell "the history of Western research through the eyes of the colonized."²⁴ In doing so, the researchers "must reflect indigenous, rather the Western, ontologies and epistemologies."²⁵ The development of an Indigenous academic agenda aimed to challenge and critically reflect on the knowledge produced about them by Western researchers or under Western scientific influence. Similar agendas are being or have been

developed by academics belonging to other minority or "colonised" groups and "the continuation of Indigenous scholars' engagement with the intellectual traditions of their cultures draws upon the emergence of a broader global intellectual movement through which the 'colonised' and the 'marginal' speak back to the 'centre'".²⁶

Furthermore, the development of 'subaltern' scholarship is not only a process in which the "the marginal speak back to the centre" but also in which scholars increasingly turn inwards, exploring their own ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge, for example, is increasingly becoming an academic field of inquiry, especially with regards to educational systems. According to Battiste:

The task for Indigenous academics has been to affirm and activate the holistic paradigm of Indigenous knowledge to reveal the wealth and richness of Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences, all of which have been systematically excluded from contemporary educational institutions and from Eurocentric knowledge systems.²⁷

The emergence of Indigenous scholarship as well as the acknowledgment of the existence of Indigenous knowledge are perceived as "acts of intellectual self-determination" through which Indigenous scholars develop "new analyses and methodologies to decolonize themselves, their communities and their institutions."²⁸ Similar processes of 'intellectual decolonization' are taking place among other 'subaltern' groups and may too become part of Romani scholars' agendas.

On the other hand, the status of a researcher who belongs to the 'subaltern' group is often ambivalent, complex and challenging but also full of potential. Such researchers often struggle for recognition of their credibility both as academics *and* as members of the group. Rigney, himself a Narungaa man, points out that: "we Indigenous scholars have always had to justify not only our humanness and our Aboriginality, but also the fact that our intellects are

23 Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, eds., *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 430.

24 Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2.

25 Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, eds., *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 430.

26 Rigney, "A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science", 7.

27 Marie Battiste, "Indigenous knowledge: Foundations for First Nations", *World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) Journal* (2005), 1.

28 *Ibid.*

‘rational’ and that we have a right to take our legitimate place in the academy of research.”²⁹ Similarly, such scholars frequently feel pressured to distance themselves from their communities in order to ensure “objectivity” and credibility. Patricia Hill Collins, an influential scholar of Black feminist thought, writes of her own experience of trying to dismantle this notion, seeing it as an added value:

Much of my formal academic training has been designed to show me that I must alienate myself from my communities, my family, and even my own self in order to produce credible intellectual work. Instead of viewing the everyday as a negative influence on my theorizing, I tried to see how the everyday actions and ideas of the Black women in my life reflected the theoretical issues I claimed were so important to them.³⁰

The status of such researchers is often ambiguous - combining an insider/outsider perspective and fluidity. Numerous researchers have pointed out this dual perspective. On the one hand, such researchers are insiders within a particular paradigm or research model, and at the same time they are perceived as outsiders because of their ‘subaltern’ background. On the other hand, they work as insiders within their community but at the same time they are outsiders to it because of their educational background or because they often work across clan, linguistic, age or gender boundaries.³¹ Patricia Hill Collins refers to the “outsider within” status of such scholars.³² The struggle to maintain a healthy balance may be challenging to such researchers. But at the same time, such an “outsider within” perspective is of incomparable value for research itself and for the development of academic scholarship as such. “Outsiders within” possess tools, knowledge and critical training to be able to re-examine their own personal and cultural experiences, and at the same time to illuminate some of the existing academic anomalies, shortcomings and gaps.³³ They also gain access and an entrance to first-hand information more easily. Such scholars have the academic legitimacy to

tackle the distortions between their own experiences and the way the same phenomena are described in academic literature. Their “outsider within” status may help to identify patterns, dynamics and phenomena which may be difficult to perceive by others trained in academic inquiry. Furthermore, those “barriers” which typically for other scholars may be considered as difficulties (such as values, beliefs, or cultural practices a researcher needs to be sensitive to while in the field) are not an issue for the “outsiders within”: they “tend to approach cultural protocols, values and beliefs as integral part of methodology.”³⁴ Arguably, many scholars of Romani background face some of these ambivalences themselves and have learned to approach their dual status as an added value in their academic production.

The emergence of such scholarship, promoted by scholars who have typically been treated as objects of study, does not necessarily have to be confrontational. Rather, dialogue between exogenous and endogenous voices helps to refine methodologies, establish synergies of approaches, and contribute to the development of academic discipline by establishing a body of knowledge based on complementarity and a plurality of voices. Regarding these development in Indigenous Studies, Rigney writes:

The development of contemporary Indigenist research approaches, whilst in its infancy, has contributed to a quiet methodological revolution. [...] In seeking progressive approaches to knowledge production, Indigenist critiques of social science seek to locate tensions, conflicts and contradictions within investigative methods. This will help to overcome the ‘epistemic violence’ forced upon Indigenous peoples. [...] These new approaches by Indigenous scholars provide alternative conceptual and analytical strategies for contemporary Indigenous Studies.³⁵

That may be the case for Romani Studies as well with the progressive development of Romani scholars, the

29 Rigney, “A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science”, 5.

30 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), VIII.

31 Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 5.

32 Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological significance of black feminist thought”, *Social Problems* Vol. 33 No. 6 (1986): 14-32.

33 *Ibid.*, 17.

34 Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 15.

35 Rigney, “A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science”, 7.

inclusion of their voices in the mainstream currents of scientific debates, and their critical engagement with the legacy of Romani Studies as it has developed over the years. The opening up of Romani Studies to new, alternative discourses may help to establish approaches for Romani intellectuals to write and speak about each other, combining their outsider and insider status and founded on principles of academic rigour and quality.

A way forward

In recent years there has been an increasing demand for participation and the direct involvement of Roma, in accordance with the principle “For Roma, with Roma”,³⁶ not only in policy making and implementation but also within academia. Consequently, scholars were obliged to alter their protocols to include Roma informants in different stages of research. The popular keywords of the past decade – participation and empowerment – have entered academic jargon too, making these two elements necessary in research (especially if looking for funding). But often these terms have been used and applied superficially, serving more to legitimise the academic knowledge produced, rather than engaging in meaningful partnerships between the researcher and the researched. In this regard, Roma participation in the academic production process becomes tokenistic and symbolic (“rituals of participation”) and in the best case, is expressed in paternalism.

The emergence of Romani scholarship certainly presents an opportunity for the development of Romani Studies as a discipline. Until now, with limited exceptions, Romani Studies lacked voices from within which would position Romani individuals in equality to their non-Roma counterparts in knowledge production. The absence of Romani scholarship has been a major weakness of Romani Studies as a scientific discipline because it lacked the much-needed plurality of perspectives and voices, and a constructive dialogue between them. Today, as we witness the emancipation of Romani scholarship as an academic strand in its own right, Romani Studies will necessarily have to open up and accommodate this diversity and plurality.

This heterogeneity of voices should result in a dialogue based on equality and complementarity of knowledge,

approaches and methodologies. Romani scholars cannot claim greater legitimacy over the knowledge they produce on Roma, but neither can their non-Romani colleagues. This artificial dichotomy should be overcome as both Romani and non-Romani scholars are, in fact, legitimate voices. To realise this, there is an increasing need for creating spaces for scholarly debate and exchange, based on mutual respect and equality of opinions.

Nonetheless, it is also important to acknowledge the marginality of Romani scholars, the tensions arising from their “outsiders within” status and often the lack of self-esteem which some Romani scholars may experience. Mentoring and support of early-career scholars of Romani background is a priority. The experiences of emerging ‘subaltern’ voices among other groups in the academic world can become a useful guideline for finding effective ways to foster and promote Romani scholarship.

The development of minority scholarship, as in the case of Indigenous or Black Scholarship, in many cases is illustrative of the challenges and opportunities of emerging Romani scholarship. The tensions arising from this dichotomy based on ethnic background, and the perceived ambivalent status of Romani scholars as well as their marginality within Romani Studies, are arguably part of a process of accommodating Romani voices within the academic realm. Similar challenges can be traced in the development of other ‘subaltern’ studies. Native, Indigenous, First Nations or Afro-American Studies have experienced similar transformations and were able, at least to some extent, to overcome some of these difficulties. Today, in the US and Canada, for example, First Nations Studies are well established, as reflected by the numerous departments located within universities; First Nations scholars, too, have ascended to the ranks of academic importance as professors and faculty members. With the increasing number of scholars of Romani background and their gradual inclusion in academic mainstream currents, this may also be the path of development of Romani Studies.

The ascendance of authoritative Romani voices within scientific debates will help to unravel internal tensions, gaps and incongruences within Romani Studies. On the other hand, it will also open up Romani Studies to new approaches, different inquiries and innovative avenues

36 “For Roma, with Roma” became a motto of the OSCE’s Action Plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE. Later on this principle became a guiding principle for subsequent policies targeting Roma, both nationally and internationally.

of research, in accordance with the ethical guidelines necessary for inclusive and respectful research with Roma communities. With the growing popularity of ‘the Roma issue’ in the academic world, it is increasingly necessary to develop such ethical guidelines and adequate research protocols in Romani Studies. Furthermore, as Romani scholars, but also increasingly their non-Roma colleagues, confront the legacy of Romani Studies developed over the decades, we observe a gradual revision

of the body of knowledge developed on Roma, exposing its limitations, incongruences and, occasionally, scientific racism.³⁷ This critical engagement with Romani Studies and increasing use of post-colonialist or feminist approaches, among many others, may indeed lead to the crystallisation of Critical Romani Studies as a separate academic strand of its own.³⁸ These developments should be perceived as an opportunity and an added value to the discipline.

37 Thomas Acton, “Scientific Racism, Popular Racism, and the Discourse of the Gypsy Lore Society”, (in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2015, 2- 18), available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01419870.2015.1105988>.

38 A similar process can be witnessed in the evolution of Indigenous, Afro-American or Latino Studies leading to the establishment of Critical Indigenous Studies, Critical Latino Studies or Critical Black Studies.

Towards 'Critical Whiteness' in Romani Studies

VIOLETA VAJDA

Introduction

Recently there has been a call emerging from Romani activists and academics for knowledge production related to Romani people to increasingly take into account the views of those that are the subject of research and policy development. Romani activists are asking for a shift away from outsiders speaking about matters relating to Roma as if they were a 'target group' and towards an approach of greater integrity and usefulness that would allow Romani Studies to move forward.¹ This reflects the frustration felt by many with the fact that the level of racism endemic in European society is not acknowledged by the majority population and is explained away through considerations of economics and social welfare.

There is a perception that Romani Studies has been disproportionately focused on Roma as the object of study, with countless anthropological and ethnographic studies, surveys, policies, recommendations and strategies written about them. While very valuable, these² do not engage with analyses or ways of working with the majority, non-Romani population. In this context, the Council of Europe's youth strategies and manuals for anti-racist education³ are the exception that proves the rule.

Yet, while there is growing concern internationally with the rise of anti-Gypsyism, seen as the "root cause of Roma marginalisation",⁴ there is as yet little theoretical

and practical understanding of how to address the prejudice. This kind of insight seems even more precious and urgent in a context where some non-Roma are lurching towards more extremist views. While this pressure seems to require immediate action of the kind that stops racism from happening, I would like to argue that "coming to understanding and resolving exploitation are linked"⁵ and even that deeper understanding of the root causes of anti-Gypsyism should be prioritised over problem solving.

One possible avenue to achieve a deeper comprehension of the everyday lives and aspirations of Roma and by extension perhaps also of how they are affected by anti-Gypsyism is to give "greater emphasis [...] to research 'for' and 'with' Roma communities through community-based and participatory research".⁶ Participatory research – meaning research with and in the best of circumstances, by the people who are its focus – is held up as a way of allowing marginal communities to become more central in development projects, in political processes, or even in academia, in the hope that this would allow them to set the agenda. However, people don't operate in an ideal world but one where power struggles have resulted in unequal relationships of oppression based on people's identities.⁷ It is difficult to create a situation in which participation as defined above gives real influence to excluded communities such as the Roma, without engaging with wider philosophical and political issues of identity and power.

1 Roma Research and Empowerment Network collective, *Workshop Reflections: 'Nothing about us without us?'*, European Roma Rights Centre Blog, 16 December 2014, available at: <http://www.errc.org/blog/workshop-reflections-nothing-about-us-without-us/45>.

2 Michael Stewart and Márton Rövid, eds, *Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Romani Studies* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011).

3 Ellie Keen et al., *Mirrors – Manual on Combating Antigypsyism through Human Rights Education* (Council of Europe Roma Youth Action Plan, 2015), available at: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/2015_MIRRORS_combat_antigypsyism_thru_HRE.pdf.

4 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "UN Expert urges Political Action to fight 'Anti-Gypsyism' as a root cause of Roma Marginalisation", 8 April 2015, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15807&LangID=E>.

5 Patta Scott-Villiers, "A Question of Understanding: Hermeneutics and the play of history, distance and dialogue in development practice in East Africa", *Doctoral dissertation*, (Bath: University of Bath, 2009).

6 Roma Research and Empowerment Network, "Roma participation in policy-making and knowledge production", *Roma Empowerment Blog* 2014, available at: <http://romaempowerment.wordpress.com/>.

7 Yvonna S Lincoln, Susan A Lynham and Egon G Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited" in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 97-102.

Thus it is important when setting into motion participatory processes that the assumptions and beliefs of those who hold the power in any given relationship are challenged and examined, alongside or even before embarking on research or development projects involving those who hold less power. From this perspective, I explore how and why the little understood role played by non-Roma in promoting or holding back research, activism, community development and politics focused on Roma is key to successful Romani involvement in all these areas.

On a wider political and theoretical level, this paper seeks to show that the project of Romani emancipation will have difficulty moving forward until the concept of critical whiteness is incorporated into it, both theoretically and practically. I contend that until such time that non-Romani people are willing and able to examine their own racialised identity, even those non-Roma who are committed to dismantling the discrimination experienced by Romani communities will be unable to play a powerful role in this process; whereas those non-Roma who are indifferent, resentful of or actively hostile to Roma could be persuaded to budge from their positions through a deeper understanding of the history of their own identities and how these are formed and performed in the present.

The task I propose therefore, is to reach for an understanding of what non-Romani identities mean, how they have emerged in Eastern Europe but also more widely, and how they could move from an ossified and unwitting set of assumptions towards a live, progressive and positive driver that can ultimately underpin the emancipatory efforts of the Romani movement. To do this, I use a theoretical model based on participatory approaches to research and development, philosophical hermeneutics, critical race theory and critical whiteness pedagogy. I take each of these in turn to explain their potential for Romani Studies. I also

point to a possible model of processing the historical legacy and contemporary experience of non-Romani identity that may be able to move forward towards a better understanding of that identity.

In doing so, I acknowledge that Romani people all over the world have been engaged in a process of re-claiming their Romani identity and that, while they may find the insights in this paper useful, it is not the place of a non-Romani researcher such as myself to seek to guide that parallel movement.

Who participates? The meaning and practice of participation

Participatory action research has deep and wide roots⁸ in the field of liberation pedagogy and has in fact underpinned movements against oppression especially but not exclusively in Latin America. The meaning of participation itself has changed over the years in response to top-down approaches to development,⁹ from the involvement of local people in projects and programmes designed for them, mainly in rural contexts; through participation explicitly linked to cycles of learning and action not only for those who are disempowered, but also for those who are in control;¹⁰ to a more recent focus on how participatory approaches can support active citizenship and structural change.¹¹

In the context of Romani Studies, participatory research is particularly pertinent, given the centuries during which outsiders have spoken for and represented Romani people. In the UK, there has been work using participatory approaches with Gypsy, Romani and Traveller communities,¹² but in general, most of the research ‘on’ Romani people has not included them.¹³ Meanwhile, there is a stated intention to arrive at national and EU development strategies that are more appropriate for and respectful of

8 Mary Brydon-Miller et al., “Jazz and the Banyan Tree: Roots and riffs on Participatory Action Research” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 387-400.

9 Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the last first* (London: Longman, 1983).

10 Robert Chambers, *Whose Reality Counts?: Putting the first last* (London: Intermediate Technology, 1997).

11 John Gaventa and Gregory Barrett, *So what difference does it make? Mapping the outcomes of citizen engagement*, IDS Working Paper 347 (University of Sussex: Institute of Development Studies, 2010)

12 Margaret Greenfields and Andrew R. Ryder, “Research with and for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: combining policy, practice and community in action research” in *Gypsies and Travellers: Empowerment and Inclusion in British Society*, ed. Joanna Richardson and Andrew R. Ryder (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2012).

13 Annabel Tremlett and Aidan McGarry, “Challenges facing Researchers on Roma Minorities in Contemporary Europe: Notes towards a research program”, *European Centre for Minority Issues, Working Paper Number 62*, (January 2013), available at: http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_lfpubdb/Working_Paper_62_Final.pdf.

the choices of Romani people and civil society,¹⁴ so clearly more work is needed in this respect.

However, as is often the case when working with hitherto excluded communities, the devil is in the detail, and there are many possible pitfalls as to who participates, how they participate and for what purpose. It is clearly difficult to create a situation in which participation actually gives real power to a community; big questions arise over who sets the agenda and whether research is truly inclusive of everyone or just tokenistic. The critics of participation go as far as to say that the approach has been hijacked by an instrumentalist ethos that at best “hides and at the same time perpetuates certain sets of power relations”¹⁵ while at worst participation can be downright destructive and have negative consequences.

However, even its critics recognise that participation is a valid concept when it is applied to political activism and challenges oppression. To achieve its broader and some would say, primary potential, participation needs to overtly challenge power relationships and also needs a solid philosophical basis, lest it ends up favouring form over substance.¹⁶

All this brings forth the question of whether those of us who hold the power *vis-à-vis* Romani people are willing and able to undergo a double process of applying participatory inquiry to our practices and examining the deeply held beliefs or even prejudices that we bring to our work practices or academic writing. In other words, do non-Roma have the tools and knowledge that would allow them to question their own identities and how they have come to be ‘the majority’ that contributes to ‘Roma exclusion’ – terms that suggest non-Roma are in the societal driving seat and have more influence than Roma do over their own affairs.

Here, more fundamental approaches to human understanding such as hermeneutics and a deeper critique of

power relations such as critical race theory can be helpful. To these I now turn to explore what they can bring to Romani Studies.

What can we learn from the Other? Hermeneutics, identities and Romani Studies

Philosophical hermeneutics as an ontological discipline was developed by Hans Georg Gadamer.¹⁷ Through Gadamer’s work, hermeneutics transcended its early roots to engage with the nature of human understanding. Hermeneutics is thus understood as a challenge to the “self-certainty and decidedness”¹⁸ that (because of the profound influence of modern science) we bring to knowledge and to our ways of knowing. It opens the door to another way of seeing the world, one that seeks truth in an approach that is less predefined and more to do with a state of mind than with a particular method. It also leaves that door wide open to points of view that jar with one’s worldview and even overturn it.

Gadamer argues that we all have deeply but often not wittingly held beliefs determined by our “hermeneutic situation – i.e. the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition we are trying to understand”¹⁹ In this context, situation means both context and historical horizon or placement, and is created by not only our individual personal history, but the history that has brought each of us to where we are now, e.g. our family history, the history of our people, our class or ethnic group or our nation. As such our understanding of everything that surrounds us is inflected by this tradition, or *effective history*. We each have our effective history - the starting point for our future understanding of the world. Whenever we attempt to grasp anything, we come up against that starting point. Thus, when we come into contact with another person, culture or identity different from our own, Gadamer suggests that, even if we are not aware of it,

14 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework”, Brussels, 21 June 2012, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/com2012_226_en.pdf.

15 Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, *Participation: The new tyranny?* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 11.

16 Orlando Fals Borda, “Participatory (action) research in social theory: Origins and challenges” in *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice*, 1st ed., ed. Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, (London: SAGE, 2001), 33-34.

17 Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), xxiv.

18 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*, 106.

19 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

that contact is limited and circumscribed by our respective effective histories, creating a horizon of understanding or “range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point”.²⁰

For Gadamer, the way to live consciously and correctly in the world is to expand our vision by engaging in an intentional “circular movement of understanding” that allows us to integrate more and more fresh elements into the picture of reality that we have constructed about a given phenomenon,²¹ while at the same time acting upon that phenomenon to change it.

To do this, it helps to engage with awareness of what has been called the hermeneutic dialogue whenever we encounter the Other – that thing which is different, or that person who is different from us and with whom we seek understanding but with whom we often experience misunderstanding. What’s more, “the basic posture of anyone in the hermeneutical situation has profound implications for ethics and politics, inasmuch as this posture requires that one always be prepared that the other may be right.”²²

To prepare us for the other being right, hermeneutics rescues the notion of *prejudice* from its “current pejorative connotation [acquired] with the ideas of the Enlightenment, when European scientists, philosophers and historians sought freedom from any prejudgment through the application of precise methods.”²³ Thus prejudice in the social sciences is no longer considered an obstacle - instead it becomes simply the starting point of any dialogue, something freely acknowledged and eagerly challenged through the art of questioning and remaining open to new insights.

To do this well, we need what Gadamer has called *Bildung*.²⁴ The concept has sometimes been translated from the original German as ‘culture’ or ‘cultivation’ but encompasses a much wider notion. *Bildung* has been described by Davey²⁵

as including a “process of self-formation”. According to Davey, *Bildung* is also a practical “capacity to act” but without a definite end-goal (“it has no goal outside of itself”) and is concerned with the process of acquiring a certain maturity that allows one to question and remain open to new experiences, while at the same time grounding these in a thorough understanding of the past. Thus, the preconditions to useful dialogue become: acknowledging one’s historically constructed prejudices and engaging in a lifelong and continuous process of *Bildung* related to the topic that one seeks to understand.

Thus equipped with the capacity to see our own prejudices and a profound attitude of openness, we become ready to accept the *provocation of the Other*²⁶ – a situation or experience that we cannot make sense of within our own reality, but that is understood quite differently if seen from the point of view of our interlocutor.

Working through the provocation (which may require additional learning, a great deal of dialogue and relationship building) can eventually bring people to a *fusion of horizons*, which admittedly is always partial but brings with it a new level of understanding from which we can move forward in new and almost certainly unexpected ways. This fusion is not necessarily as harmonious as the word may suggest. It can give rise to either understanding or misunderstanding, to friction or strife, as well as creativity or constructive debate. Of course, the new understanding gained in this zone of ‘fusion’ is different for each party and, while it can be shared, it is also possible that it leads to completely separate world views.

Academics such as Georgia Warnke have used the concept of the *hermeneutic circle* to explore how our identities too, are historically constructed and bound by tradition,²⁷ and how we need to bring rigour and insight to the question of identities, without becoming slaves to a particular method.

20 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

21 *Ibid.*, 292.

22 Robert J. Dostal, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32.

23 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*, 33.

24 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 8-16.

25 Nicholas Davey, “Philosophical Hermeneutics: An Education for all seasons?” in *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield (London, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 46.

26 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*, 65.

27 Georgia Warnke, *After Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Warnke links hermeneutics to racial identity, exploring the contexts under which racial identity is meaningful. Although she believes that racial identities may in the future lose their significance, she explains that at this historical moment in time a racial understanding of identity is historically necessary precisely because humanity has not processed the history that resulted in racial discourses and there is still a need to correct mistakes of the past that have led to centuries of racial oppression.²⁸

She uses an example from the writing of W.E.B. Du Bois²⁹ to explain how people who have historically been seen in racial terms, and have been the targets of scientific racism, are forced to take on a racial identity even if they are reluctant to. Importantly, Warnke concludes that even those of us who were not forced to take on a racial identity because of being racially oppressed are nevertheless called upon to reconfigure our understanding of ourselves when confronted with the ‘effective history’ of how racial identities were created. In other words, she invites everyone to acknowledge the prejudice embedded in our own racial identities and to accept the provocations that this brings into our lives.

In this sense, Paul Gilroy’s thinking is particularly apt to show the way towards a complex understanding of the historical processes involved in the development of a racial identity. Gilroy is particularly insistent that we need to “re-construct the history of ‘race’ in modernity.”³⁰

History, Gilroy says, can teach us not only to understand where racism comes from but also how different concepts of race coexist and interact with each other in the present, and how it is possible that attitudes that were thought to have died in the “bloody penumbra of the Third Reich”

are layered below and among “the culturalist, anthropologically-minded race-thinking of the 1950s”.³¹

However, history in itself does not automatically teach anything. It is in the encounter with the position of another who may have a different view of history that we are provoked to wonder whether there is a reason why what we have always thought to be true is not so in someone else’s view “so that when we find contradictions we question them and make adjustments to our understanding”.³² In this case it is helpful, when encountering someone who has been seen as racially different to ourselves, to question where that difference originated, how it developed and where it has left each of us.

It is helpful to turn also to Homi Bhabha whose argument is that racism is not an anomaly, but “part of the historical traditions of civic and liberal humanism”.³³ In this sense, we can say that there is a generalised effective history of racism in society, but this is in addition to each party in the encounter having their own effective history.

Focus on ‘black’ and ‘white’ – lessons from critical race thinking

Commentators on the work of W.E.B. Du Bois have come to a similar conclusion, namely that all the “various peoples... exist within the veil of blackness”³⁴ – and in Du Bois’ interpretation this definitely includes white people who are “tethered by a fable of the past”, meaning their own white, unprocessed identity.³⁵ It’s important to note that neither black nor white are immovable constructs – blacks can be both oppressors and victims, while whites can transcend their prejudices.³⁶ However, they all operate within the structures of a racialised reality.

28 *Ibid.*, 119.

29 *Ibid.*, 170.

30 Paul Gilroy, “After the great white error... the great black mirage”, *Transformation* Number 47 (2001), available at: <http://transformation.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/transformation/article/viewFile/840/655>.

31 *Ibid.*, 31.

32 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*.

33 Homi K. Bhabha, “Race’, time and the revision of modernity” in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, ed. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 366.

34 Anne Marie Hancock, “Du Bois, Race and Diversity” in *The Cambridge Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois*, ed. Shamooin Zamir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 93.

35 William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk”, in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1920), 29.

36 Hancock, *Du Bois, Race and Diversity*, 97.

Hancock also reminds us that we owe to Du Bois' internationalism the insight that the veil of blackness extends to other peoples and races,³⁷ not just Black Africans who were the focus of his scholarship. This paves the way for the application of the concept to Romani Studies. For although the thinkers above talk about racism in general, or perhaps in particular about the experience of being black in the USA or the UK, their observations are just as pertinent to the racialised realities surrounding Roma and non-Roma identities.

For a sense of the 'multiple genealogies' of the racialised understanding of Romani people, it is useful to think back to how medieval notions and realities of oppression and slavery aimed at Roma played out in Eastern Europe. According to Ian Hancock³⁸ "*institutionalised antigypsyism in Europe [that] began in the fourteenth century with slavery and continues to this day*", with the sources of this virulent prejudice starting with religious intolerance and the mistaken association of Gypsies with Islam in the times of the Crusades, and continuing with the general equation of Romani people's skin colour with blackness and evil in the European mind. However, Hancock also points to a more recent "parallel, created 'gypsy' image"³⁹ and to the phenomenon of scapegoating that feeds on earlier prejudices and continues to fan the flames of anti-Gypsyism.

This account of the development of anti-Roma racism is backed up by extensive historical research using data from contemporary records, for example those originating in the Romanian Principalities (currently roughly the territory covered by Southern and Eastern Romania) at the time of the abolition of Gypsy slavery (the term is used in its historical context).⁴⁰ They show that not only

did the enslavement of Gypsies in the Romanian Principalities last for centuries, but also that it developed into an institution with long-lasting effects.⁴¹

Other scholars have traced the way in which these early instances of oppression have laid the groundwork for the virulent forms of prejudice that resulted in the Romani Holocaust during the Nazi era.^{42, 43} The same racial discourses continue to underpin seemingly more liberal yet profoundly oppressive attitudes that still survive in the modern era of European integration. One example is viciously racist jokes on social media that, even when publicly challenged by prominent Romani activists, are met with a backlash rather than understanding or apologies from the perpetrators.⁴⁴

Returning to hermeneutics, a history that includes centuries of racialised views of Romani people means that not only they but also non-Romani people are equally bound to 'read' their identities through the lens of race and racism.⁴⁵ In other words, not only Roma but also non-Roma are 'racialised', or have developed a racial identity. Non-Romani people are equally born into and develop a set of identities that can no more avoid being perceived in a racial context than can look away or escape from the role of racial oppressor that has been played by the ancestors of those non-Roma since the early Middle Ages. Of course, neither Romani nor non-Romani are immovable constructs and there are many possible permutations of those identities. However, all operate within the structures of a racialised reality extending beyond the confines of individual countries or cultures. Thus it is just as helpful for the project of understanding anti-Gypsyism to see Romani people as politically affiliated to a 'black' identity, as it is to see non-Romani people as 'white'.

37 Hancock, *Du Bois, Race and Diversity*, 98.

38 Ian Hancock, *We Are the Romani People (Ame Sam E Rromane Džene)*, (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002), 54.

39 *Ibid.*, 61.

40 Viorel Achim, *The Gypsies in the Romanian Principalities: The Emancipation Laws, 1831-1856* (Bucharest: Grupul de Cercetare pentru Istoria Minoritatilor, Institutul de Istorie "Nicolae Iorga", 2004), available at: http://www.iini-minorities.ro/resurse/Achim-Viorel_The-Gypsies-in-the-Romanian-Principalities_2004.pdf.

41 *Ibid.*, 109.

42 Gerhard Baumgartner, *A History of the Roma Genocide* (London: Centre for Holocaust Education, UCL), available at: <http://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/teacher-resources/subject-knowledge/history-roma-genocide/>.

43 Michael Stewart, "Remembering without Commemoration: the mnemonics and politics of Holocaust memories among European Roma", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 10 (3) (2004), 569.

44 Michael Bird and Stefan Candea, "Anti-Roma views rampant across all Romanian political parties", *EU Observer*, 29 April 2014, available at: <http://euobserver.com/euelections/123907>.

45 Warnke, *After Identity*, 105.

Taking a radical feminist approach,⁴⁶ Angela Kóczé applies just such a lens of critical race theory to understand how the experiences of Romani women are different from those of both white males and white females in Hungary, and encourages a dialogue between Romani women and the “sisterhood of women of colour” who have challenged the “totalizing norms of the broader feminist movement”.⁴⁷ Thus, Kóczé articulates a basis from which Romani women can fight their own specific battles against oppression, even going as far as suggesting that “critical studies of whiteness” could be a useful next step for the Romani movement.⁴⁸ In the next section I will unpack the theoretical and emancipatory reasoning for this attention to whiteness.

The challenge of critical whiteness

In the contemporary world, “whiteness, as a global formation, is alienating to its subjects and objects”⁴⁹ and has a lot to answer for when it comes to the exclusion of non-white subjects such as Romani people. Leonardo shows how “global studies in whiteness” when added to the insights of critical race theory can lead to a new model of knowledge production, one that acknowledges the distinct white racial identities of the majority of those currently producing that knowledge. Critical whiteness seeks to go beyond denial to embrace that identity and work with it, noticing in particular its content of white supremacy and white privilege.

The message from critical white theorists is that to dismantle the ways in which some people are kept in a subordinate position because of racism, it is imperative that those affected by whiteness – that is all of us whose identity is non-black – learn to engage with the concept in theory and praxis, and apply it to our individual circumstances. Extrapolating to the

situation of Roma, I argue that for those of us whose identity is non-Romani and who have not been directly targeted by racism, there is no way to understand or affect race oppression unless we process our own (for want of a better word) ‘white non-Romani’ identity.⁵⁰ Going back to the theory and practice of participation (in politics, development projects or knowledge production), not only do we all have to acknowledge our respective positions in the constellation of power created by anti-Gypsyism, but for participation to be real and effective, we all need to participate. At present, non-Roma (as well as many Roma) fail to participate in dismantling the construct of anti-Gypsyism, by allowing a racialised reality to claim their minds and dictate their actions.

As for the methods to approach the project of exploring non-Romani white identities, embracing critical whiteness pedagogy⁵¹ is one way in which those of us who were raised with that identity can make sense of our racial experience and move forward to form a new vantage point, one that more fully engages with our own history by seeing it through the eyes of Romani people and communities. Critical whiteness pedagogy has the potential to lift people whose identity has been constructed as ‘white’ out of a defensive position, or one that remains stuck on grievances around political correctness. It offers another way of understanding white (or non-Romani) identity, one that can fill a previous ‘identity vacuum’ with a positive, empowering anti-racist energy.⁵² Such a transformation has been very aptly called “one of the ultimate acts of humanity: race treason”,⁵³ designed to dismantle white supremacy while at the same time enriching the lives of those of us who are engaged in it.

Feminist scholars such as Ruth Frankenberg⁵⁴ have done considerable work examining the effect of whiteness on individual women’s lives, starting from the premise that a

46 Angela Kóczé, *Gender, Ethnicity and Class: Romani women’s political activism and social struggles* (Budapest: Central European University, 2011), 64.

47 *Ibid.*, 65.

48 *Ibid.*, 70.

49 Zeus Leonardo, “The Souls of White folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse”, *Race, ethnicity and education* number 5 (1) (2002), 45.

50 There is of course a question of how people who are not Roma but have been targeted by racism relate to this (by necessity) incomplete binary model, but that is not a discussion to be addressed in the current paper.

51 Dana Nichols, “Teaching Critical Whiteness Theory: What college and university teachers need to know”, *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege*, Volume 1 Number 1 (2010).

52 *Ibid.*, 6.

53 Leonardo, *The Souls of White Folk*, 46.

54 Ruth Frankenberg, “White Women, Race Matters”, in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, ed. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 447-461.

profound and personal understanding of how ‘whiteness’ operates for each of us is necessary to move forward and away from racism. Indeed, feminist perspectives have been at the forefront of engaging with critical white pedagogy, inspired by theorists and activists such as bell hooks⁵⁵ who insist on the need to embody and practically apply an understanding of racism in everyday relationships and particularly when it comes to political activism. hooks demands that feminism as a theory takes on the concept of race and points out that for a period feminist activism failed to thrive precisely because it lacked an analysis of racism.⁵⁶

The project of critical white pedagogy has moved forward and has been enriched by many scholars writing in particular about racism in the USA (such as Barbara Love or Dana Nichols) and some of them propose detailed blueprints for processing white identities, based on their practical experience as anti-racism educators. All these may be useful to study for those of us who seek to process our non-Romani white identities.

Moving forward in our understanding – a possible approach informed by hermeneutics

However, I want to return to the practical lessons that hermeneutics can teach us in this respect. For beyond its theory of understanding, hermeneutic philosophy proposes ways in which anyone can acquire what has been called “hermeneutic consciousness”.⁵⁷ As indicated above, hermeneutics uses that consciousness to reach a deeper understanding of the world, including people and their identities.

Hermeneutic understanding is a three-fold process: in order to understand a thing (*Sache*), including people and their identity, one must be able to intellectually ‘grasp’ that thing;⁵⁸ one must be able to operate with it, in the same way as an artisan operates with or wields the tools

of her trade; and one must find a way to articulate it so that the thing becomes illuminated by language, a fundamental dimension of hermeneutics.⁵⁹

Importantly, hermeneutic dialogue is an iterative process and does not stop once a new understanding is reached – rather, it creates new prejudices, new starting points from which we can move forward towards the other, always knowing that there is no such thing as a perfect fusion of horizons.

I have tried to argue that non-Romani people and communities might want to reach back into history to gain an understanding of their own *prejudices*, engage in a process of *Bildung* designed to open them up to the possibility of new insights into their own and Romani identity and be ready to seek out and genuinely accept the *provocation* (or learning experience) held up by Romani people and communities that they encounter. The possibility thus opens up *a fusion of horizons* that can bring new insights into the lives of both parties. This may seem a simplistic process but is nothing of the sort. It requires a long-term commitment to reinventing our own racialised understandings of ourselves and may happen suddenly (as in those intuitive Eureka moments that people sometimes have) but only as a result of long years of learning and focus. Furthermore, hermeneutic dialogue is a continuous process that keeps unfolding and bringing us to new insights. It owes a lot to attention, listening and the building of clarity between people and does not have an ultimate agenda.⁶⁰ At the same time, hermeneutics is not method, but a state of mind, an openness and continuous questioning, “*a posture [requiring] that one always be prepared that the other may be right.*”⁶¹ In this sense, hermeneutic understanding seeks to inform and guide method, such as inter-cultural dialogue, aiming to rescue it from being blithe, superficial, over-eager to reach agreement and ignoring the gulf between the self and the Other. Indeed, Derrida, one of hermeneutics’ critics, has argued that there is always that which cannot be understood, and

55 bell hooks, “Racism and Feminism, the issue of accountability” in *Theories of race and racism: A Reader*, ed. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 373-388.

56 *Ibid.*, 388.

57 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*.

58 Jean Grondin, “Gadamer’s basic understanding of understanding” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36-51.

59 *Ibid.*

60 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*, 179.

61 Dostal, *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 32.

that the hermeneutic fusion of horizons glosses over many of the “heterogeneities and abysses that confront us”.⁶²

Hermeneutics, then, is one philosophy that can contribute to the effort required to undo a history of discrimination, “a way of being and behaving, which changes with experience and attention”.⁶³ This effort that has much more to do with confrontation than a comfortable fusion of “lifeworlds”,⁶⁴ goes beyond superficial engagement or political correctness to personal engagement with the deeper meanings and truths of people separated by the “gulfs of effective history”.⁶⁵ Hermeneutics can lead to a deep, politically engaged and long-term process where identities of participants are examined, deconstructed and perhaps reconstructed in a way that expands the understanding of those involved.

It can be a process fraught with many pitfalls and potential conflicts, since even the words ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ or ‘identity’ immediately conjure up deeply held emotional beliefs and any group of people engaged in examining their Romani or non-Romani identity would have to be skilfully led towards greater openness rather than greater entrenchment or resentment.⁶⁶ Examples abound of people setting out on a journey to emancipation only to end up in blind alleys and accused of “erasing the identities of those who cannot choose”, as recently happened in the much-publicised case of Rachel Dolezal.⁶⁷

One way of mitigating the dangers is to make an agreement with others on the same journey as oneself to look out for each other, discuss, make manifest and challenge each other’s prejudices in an atmosphere of safety and respect, where all those present agree that their field of vision is limited by societal prejudices and where the inevitable conflicts are seen as so many opportunities for learning rather than immutable differences of opinion. Such a group would have to engage with and debate boundaries

of identity, different conceptions of how it is constructed and if not necessarily reaching a consensus on all matters, agree to disagree enough so that dialogue remains possible and can move forward. Beyond such a group of fellow learners, for such an endeavour to succeed, it would be useful for the wider Romani Studies community to work towards achieving an environment where debate and disagreement are valued – but that is a much wider discussion.

Conclusion

As already noted, I acknowledge that individuals, groups and communities who see themselves as part of the Romani movement (including many contributors to this journal) are already engaged in a highly productive process of re-claiming, processing and re-inventing their racial identities. The challenge is to extend this work to a group of people who can equally productively understand, operate with and articulate their non-Romani identity. Thus, while this paper sets out to articulate the theoretical basis of such an endeavour, it is at the same time an invitation to non-Roma to join in a journey of discovery of our own identities, as well as an invitation to Roma to guide and/or engage critically with such an undertaking.

The vision held out by this paper is to seek to transform non-Romani identity from one that is ‘preserved in aspic’, unaware and ultimately detrimental to both Romani and non-Romani people, into one that is engaged with and questioning its own historical roots and prejudices and seeks to actively overcome these through thoughtful and deliberate action. As mentioned at the very beginning of this article, Romani activists and academics have indicated repeatedly that they would welcome a dialogue with non-Roma who are willing to move beyond the exclusions that have been foisted upon them by a history of oppression.⁶⁸

62 Richard J. Bernstein, “The Constellation of Hermeneutics, Critical Theory and Deconstruction”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

63 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*, 25.

64 *Ibid.*, 118.

65 Patta Scott-Villiers, “This Research does not Influence Policy”, *IDS Bulletin* 43.5 (Institute of Development Studies, 2012): 25-30.

66 Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe, Pat Griffin and Barbara Love, “Racism Curriculum Design” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*, ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 1-3.

67 Syreeta McFadden, “Rachel Dolezal’s definition of ‘transracial’ isn’t just wrong, it’s destructive”, *The Guardian*, 16 June 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentsfree/2015/jun/16/transracial-definition-destructive-rachel-dolezal-spokane-naacp>.

68 Kóczé, *Gender, ethnicity and class*, 70.

Beyond academic and activist circles, the practical implications of developing the theory and practice of critical whiteness as it relates to non-Romani people and communities could help solve a lot of the intractable issues connected to Roma exclusion. One such obstacle is that white culture has been more and more monopolised by the New Right and has come to be equated with conservative notions of ethnicity which lead to more insular and hierarchical ways of seeing and operating in the world, rather than striving towards more openness. It's useful to remember that most of us are not determined to discriminate against Roma, but often fall prey to divisive discourses when we don't have the choice of a better alternative.

For example, encouraging a critically white attitude and a mindset of alliance⁶⁹ in non-Romani parents could begin to disentangle the difficulties with parental attitudes “which push segregation in classes and white flight.”⁷⁰

Or it could serve as an inspiration for training aimed at non-Romani staff working for human rights and other NGOs working for Romani communities, thus ensuring that they

avoid contributing to experiences of subalternity and exploitation for Romani activists involved in the field.⁷¹

A critical whiteness approach could also encourage student of white non-Romani privilege to gain an “understanding [of] the connection between all forms of injustice”⁷² and therefore educate or involve themselves in movements that challenge injustice more widely. This would back up and strengthen similar efforts by Romani activists who are seeking out and building solid alliances with feminist and LGBT groups, and perhaps lead to a more intersectional approach to Romani Studies, where researchers and activists alike weigh up and acknowledge not only the influence of their race, but also that of their class, gender, disability or sexuality upon their work.

However, while the practical applications of the theoretical approach described above are multiple and may have a demonstrable effect on policy, “once a consciousness is in operation it seems [that] it begins to have an active effect on understanding”⁷³ that transcends its original goals. That is perhaps its most precious gift - that a journey of understanding once embarked on, can have a transformative effect beyond the immediate and time-bound.

69 Wijeyesinghe, Griffin and Love, *Racism Curriculum Design*.

70 Francois-Havier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University, *Strategies to Combat Segregation of Romani Children in schools: Case studies in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, and Romania*, Research Report Digest, (Francois-Havier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, 2015), available at: <http://fxb.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/02/Romani-Segregation-2015-brief-version-final.pdf>.

71 Angela Kóczé and Nidhi Trehan, “Postcolonial Racism and Social Justice: The Struggle for the Soul of the Romani Civil Rights Movement in the ‘New Europe’” in *Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe*, ed. Graham Huggan and Ian Law (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 50-77.

72 Wijeyesinghe, Griffin and Love, *Racism Curriculum Design*, 5-6.

73 Scott-Villiers, *A Question of Understanding*, 40.

The Importance of Feminists and ‘Halfies’ in Romani Studies: New Epistemological Possibilities

ETHEL BROOKS

Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject. ...Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy, and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has ‘no geo-political determinations.’ The much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject. —*Gayatri Spivak*¹

At the beginning of *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Gayatri Spivak points to the “interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject” as the impetus for much of the radical critique coming out of the West in the 1980s. What we understand as the field of Romani Studies in its current formation continues to conserve the West as Subject through its reliance on the “expertise” of its most prominent scholars, which is often juxtaposed against the silence of, or inexpert status of the subjects of that expertise — Romani subjects, Romani communities, Romani knowledge and its production. What happens when we reconsider Romani Studies by taking seriously Romani expertise and Romani knowledge production? I want us to consider the troubling of the insider/outsider split that is presented to us in the form of Romani knowledge producers, on the one hand, and a careful attention to power, on the other. Epistemologically, what does the practice of “nothing about us without us” with regard to Romani Studies mean for the “subject of the West, or the West as Subject”?

Against Culture

In *Writing Against Culture*, anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod argues for the importance of two critical groups “whose situations neatly expose and challenge the most basic of [anthropological] premises: feminists and ‘halfies’ — people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage.” Abu-Lughod goes on to say, “The importance of these groups lies not in any superior moral claim or advantage they may have in doing anthropology, but in the special dilemmas they face,

dilemmas that reveal starkly the problems with cultural anthropology’s assumption of a fundamental distinction between self and other.”² Romani scholars — scholars who come from Romani backgrounds, families, and communities — are quintessential ‘halfies,’ moving between Romani and *gadje* worlds through processes of migration, education and parentage. The dilemmas faced by Romani academic, artists and cultural producers call into question notions of authenticity, on the one hand, and a pure space of culture, on the other. Romani communities stretch across Europe, into the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia and have been marked by migration, deportation and slavery, as well as by mixing and intermarriage, cultural shifts and adaptation, along with preservation of language, cultural practices and identity formations across centuries of migration and settlement. The richness and diversity of Romani cultural practice and knowledge production opens up new epistemological possibilities and new ways of understanding not only with regard to Romani histories and experiences, but also on the enduring narratives of “law, political economy and ideology” cited by Spivak.

Whether operating in the fields of history, sociology, linguistics, or, indeed, anthropology, the field of Romani Studies often echoes anthropology’s focus on “culture” as the starting premise of its analysis. As Abu-Lughod suggests, this focus on culture — on difference as the basis of analysis — implicitly assumes a hierarchy. While Max Weber argued that the avoidance of value judgments in social scientific inquiry is fundamentally untenable, he pushed for a kind of scientific objectivity where, once the research questions have been delineated, the researcher must put aside her/his value

1 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271-272.

2 Lila Abu-Lughod, “Writing Against Culture,” in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1991), 137.

judgments in pursuit of “scientific truth.” Weber argues: “For scientific truth is precisely what is valid for all who seek the truth.”³ What, however, do feminists and ‘halfies’ do for the principle of scientific truth? In short, precisely because of “the dilemmas [we face] that reveal starkly the problems with...[the] assumption of a fundamental distinction between self and other,” we expose the workings of power that produce the very concept of objectivity; in the case of Romani Studies, the bounding of the field by culture produces hierarchies that are called into question once power is brought into the field of analysis.

As we know, Romani Studies owes much - if not all - of its existence to Gypsylorism: Romani Studies is both the inheritor and the legacy of the Gypsy Lore Society. In fact, the relation of the re-named *Romani Studies* journal to the present-day Gypsy Lore Society calls into question any temporal shifts or sea changes in Romani Studies as a field of inquiry. Perhaps it is more precise to say that, despite any changes in name, Romani Studies as we know it is not just the inheritor and legacy of Gypsylorism, but, rather, continues to be indistinguishable from it in much of its practice, its assumptions and its starting points. It is precisely these assumptions and starting points that need to be central to the kind of scientific inquiry that we should pursue, grounded both in a sense of ethical commitment but also in a commitment to analysing the workings of power in the production of a post-Gypsylorist Romani Studies. This involves a commitment to reflexivity, to understanding our own investments in truth production and in scholarly output, and in a deep critique of our own positionality *vis-à-vis* the subject(s) of our research.

What would a ‘feminist’ or ‘halfie’ Romani Studies look like? Perhaps it is one that not only writes “against culture,” as Abu-Lughod suggests, but one that also contains within it an analysis of its own production and a critique of its own grounds for expertise.⁴ If we are to salvage Romani

Studies from its Gypsylorist origins, it is crucial that we take on the hierarchies that are implicit when Romani “culture” is seen as bounded, and outside of, the subject of the West, and when Romani subjects are only seen as objects and subjects of analysis, rather than as producers of knowledge – about Roma and about non-Roma alike. As feminists, as ‘halfies,’ as engaged scholars, we can produce a Romani Studies that is at once critical of its own production and that works toward dismantling the “West as Subject,” thus opening a more radical critique of the workings of “law, political economy and ideology” that place Roma at the bottom of epistemological and material hierarchies both within and outside of Europe.

The Grains of the Archive

Thomas Acton has argued that the designation of a song, poem, story, painting or other literary, musical or artistic piece as folklore renders these products of (someone’s) intellectual and artistic labour “authorless *objets trouvés*.”⁵ Acton maintained that this is especially true when a piece is designated as (*trad.*), or traditional, rather than as the product of a specific author. British Romani artist Daniel Baker argues that “folk art” is defined by its history and context, rather than the meaning of the object itself or the intent of its producer: “A preoccupation with contextual clarification belies the art museum’s possible mistrust of the folk art object and its own ability to engage and generate meaning.”⁶ The “folk art,” or “primitive,” piece displayed in a museum is another way of denying its authorship – its context takes precedence over everything else. The rendering of an intellectual product, be it a song, a piece of theatre, a painting, story or decorated object, as *authorless* at once inaugurates and continually reinscribes a Subject: the (non-Romani) expert, whose knowledge production and authorship rest upon the appellation “*trad.*” or the rendering of Romani intellectual work, products and labour as folklore.

3 Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949), 84.

4 For a critique of expertise and the production of the expert-working-on-nature divide, see Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

5 Thomas Acton, “Romani Films and Visual Cultures,” (lecture at the CEU Summer School in Romani Studies, *Performing Romani Identities*, 9 July 2015). See also Thomas Acton, “Modernity, Culture and ‘Gypsies’: Is there a Meta-Scientific Method for Understanding the Representation of ‘Gypsies’? And do the Dutch really Exist?” in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of ‘Gypsies’/Romanies in European Cultures*, ed., Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 98-116.

6 Daniel Baker, “Gypsy Visuality: Gell’s Art Nexus and its potential for artists,” PhD Thesis, (Royal College of Art, 2011). Available at: <http://danielbaker2.webspace.virginmedia.com/Gypsy%20Visuality%20by%20Daniel%20Baker%20RCA%202011%20double%20sided%20web%20version%20june%2009%202011.pdf>.

The rendering of Romani knowledge production as folklore, and of Romani cultural production as folk art, opens up the question of the Romani *objet trouvé* and its relation to (subaltern, impossible) bodies of knowledge, artistic and intellectual production, and material cultures. The heterogeneous, disorderly archive of Romani knowledge production – written as *trad.*, rendered authorless – has served (and not only for Gypsyloists and their successors) as the constitutive outside of knowledge production, of art and of “the subject of the West, or the West as Subject.” Romani intellectual production is at once a blind spot and an object of fascination for Western academic and popular culture alike. There has been an obstinate insistence on the impossibility of Romani knowledge production as something that may exist in conversation with, in contestation to, or even perhaps outside of non-Romani knowledge production about Romani people, culture, language and history. The treatment of the Romani subject and the subject of Roma in Western scholarship parallels that of the colonial subject in remarkable ways.

Subaltern Studies Collective founder Ranajit Guha points to the absence of notions of consciousness or reason in the colonial and post-colonial literature on peasant rebellion – where, he argues, “...insurgency is regarded as *external* to the peasant’s consciousness and Cause is made to stand in as a phantom surrogate for Reason, the logic of that consciousness.”⁷ I would argue that, in the case of Romani Studies, folklore or tradition – culture – stands in as the phantom surrogate for knowledge production and its logics. Ranajit Guha asked in his seminal piece, *The Prose of Counter-Insurgency*, “How did historiography come to acquire this particular blind spot and never find a cure?” This question is one that resonates with Romani Studies: the Romani archive is continually rendered absent, invisible or impossible, effaced in the name of folklore and *trad.*, or tradition, while at the same time hyper-visible in popular culture, fashion, music and dance in ways that become easily appropriable and exploitable.

Constituting Elements

Guha’s answer to his question regarding blind spots points us to a methodology for reading the archive through a careful attention to the way it is constituted, shaped and stitched together, on the one hand, and the material it is made of, on the other:

For an answer one could start by having a close look at its constituting elements and examine those cuts, seams and stitches – those cobbling marks – which tell us about the material it is made of and the manner of its absorption into the fabric of writing.⁸

For one, Romani Studies assumes an archive that is without individual authors; tradition, folklore or the primitive stand in for the author, the knowledge producer or the cultural agent. Daniel Baker, not only in his writing, but also in his curatorial and artistic practice, reads the archive of Romani artistic practice, like Spivak “[f]rom within and against the grain” and works to bring to light the multiple forms of practice, collaboration and authorship that would otherwise fall under the category of ‘Folk Art.’ This practice was clear in the catalogue cover of the 2007 London exhibition co-curated by Baker and Paul Ryan, *No Gorgios*, where the artistic practice, authorship and intellectual production of the artists in the exhibition was made visible through a number of strategies: the title was a pencil drawing by Jim Hayward that was designed as a preliminary sketch or blueprint for a wooden sign, with the marks and plans of the artist clearly delineated, along with the signature and date of the artist. The image below the title, of two catapults made by Simon Lee, in mixed media, at once grant authorship and acknowledged artistry in work that has often been both unattributed and relegated to the realm of primitivism or folk art. The *No Gorgios* exhibition, and Baker’s larger body of artistic and scholarly work, point to the artistry, aesthetic claims and authorship in Romani artistic practice that is left out of the dominant Romani Studies archive.

This larger body of artistic, aesthetic and critical work is often marked by methods of knowledge production and practice that call into question recognised (non-Romani/*gadjekeane*/Western) modes of expertise. A prime example is the idea of family practice: that members of an extended family or community pass down knowledge through kin networks, and that knowledge production and artistic practice can be carried out by and through kin groups, or by and through the larger community. Such community - or family-based cultural and knowledge production is visible across the Romani Diaspora, in multiple artistic and narrative genres. In contemporary art, we see it in the family practice of Romani artists Delaine Le Bas, Damian Le Bas and Damian

7 Ranajit Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,” in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed., Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 47.

8 *Ibid.*, 47.

James Le Bas. Delaine and Damian, who met in art school and married, are professional artists trained in the finest art schools in the UK; their son Damian James holds a BA from Oxford University – and Damian James is married to Romani actress Candice Nergaard, with whom he has performed and worked in radio and theatre. All members of the Le Bas family have individual artistic practices, and are recognised across the UK and internationally for their work in multiple genres, while at the same time they work together, either as a group, in pairs or in threes, on projects ranging from performance to visual arts installations to film, including *Safe European Home* (2013) and *Grace in Thy Sight* (2014), as well as collaborating on *Witch Hunt* (2011) and *To Gypsyland* (2014) – bringing together images, texts and translation, film and performance through their collective practice.

Such community-based and family-based knowledge production belies the idea of the ‘token’ or the anomaly – the community member who ‘escapes’ or succeeds despite the community, or against the community. In fact, ‘success stories’ almost never happen without family or community – and the narrative of the (deracinated) exception as heroic individual struggling against community is, at the core, an impossibility that simply serves to reinforce liberal, capitalist, and fundamentally classist and racist, conceptions of expertise, knowledge production and class mobility. It is also sexist and patriarchal, allowing the myth of the (male, individual, liberal) hero/expert to be pitted against community, family and that which is learned from our mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters.⁹ Over and over again, the myth of the individual – as expert, as hero, as anomaly, as token – is one that serves to deny community support, engagement and interest in knowledge production, and in the Romani artistic and cultural archive. As we can see from the work of the Le Bas family, once we focus on the ongoing collective practice, family practice, and show the relation of such practice to individual success, we can open up new forms of understanding and new forms of knowledge production. In short, we

can provide an archival reading that is at once within and against the grain – but also, as Ann Stoler maintains,¹⁰ *along its grain* to better understand the way it is built, constituted and its authority, thus providing a new understanding of its constitution, possibilities and absolute limits.

Re-inscription as Strategy

Such new forms of understanding and new forms of knowledge production involve processes of reinscription – of authorship, of cultural production and epistemology, of expertise, of the archive. Here, I return to Gayatri Spivak’s discussion of the Subaltern Studies project, where she provides both a critique and a possible opening for its work:

... I read *Subaltern Studies* against the grain and suggest that its own subalternity in claiming a *positive* subject-position for the subaltern might be reinscribed as a strategy for our times.

What good does such a re-inscription do? It acknowledges that the arena of the subaltern’s persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogeneous to the efforts of the disciplinary historian. The historian must persist in *his* efforts in this awareness, that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic.¹¹

What might this “strategy for our times” mean for Romani knowledge production, on the one hand, and a larger critique of the narratives of Western authorship, on the other? Spivak goes on to argue, “Theoretical descriptions cannot produce universals. They can only ever produce provisional generalizations, even as the theorist realizes the crucial importance of their persistent production.”¹²

Collective practice – and the very idea, perhaps, of epistemology as collective practice – is one way to honour the

9 Elsewhere, I have written about the accusation I received from a white feminist, saying that one can’t be feminist and Romani at the same time – that the patriarchy of the (Romani) community goes against the claims of feminism, and therefore we must renounce one or the other (See Ethel Brooks, “The Possibilities of Romani Feminism,” *Signs* 38:1, Autumn 2012). This denies all that I learned about how to be a feminist from my mother, my aunts, my grandmother, my father and uncles, from my cousins and sisters. The myth of the individual against community – and of the possibility of individual success against community – reinforces capitalist, racist and liberal myths that serve power. Our job is to dismantle it.

10 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

11 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed., Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 16.

12 *Ibid.*, 17.

provisionality and persistent production of knowledge, of the archive, and of narrative. We see this in the acknowledgement of collective practice in the work of the Le Bas family and in that of Daniel Baker, who works to “honour her [his mother’s] practice”¹³ in contemporary art form. Celia Baker, Daniel’s mother, took up her knitting practice therapeutically and has produced oversized scarf-like blankets featuring multi-coloured squares and stripes. Daniel, in turn, has created the Blanket Series – *Surveillance Blanket* (2008), *Security Curtain* (2013), *Survival Blanket* (2013) and *Canopy* (2015) – that draws from the notions of protection, care and safety that can be seen as a reflection of his mother’s artistic and maternal presence. The ties of love, family, community and productivity are clear in the collective practice – and they work not only to shed light on the “persistent production” of the theoretical, but also the limits of that production – the disruption of liberal notions of authorship, ownership and individuality through collective practice, collective epistemologies – that shift, whose genealogies are often unarchivable and are grounded in everyday life, labour and love. Taking collective, community, familial groundings seriously as producers of subjectivity and of knowledge, rather than simply as context, history, or impediments to knowledge production, opens up the subjective heterogeneity that is “the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic.”

Epistemological Reconfigurations: Feminists and ‘Halfies’

“Feminists and halfies” at once disrupt the subject of the West and call into question the West as Subject. They help us to read the archive both “with and against the grain,” and “along the grain” and to open up new modes of knowledge production. By reclaiming authorship in its diversity and opening up space for multiple forms of productivity, authorship and epistemology, “feminists and halfies” also trouble dominant liberal notions of authorship, culture and the hierarchy embedded in the archive – thus opening up space for the contingency, creativity and knowledge production of everyday life. I want to argue that this is the strategic reinscription that is necessary in the current moment; for, even as there is a growing movement calling for a halt to knowledge production about Roma without Roma – “Nothing About Us Without Us” – Romani people across Europe and beyond are continually subject to

denial of subjectivity and epistemological erasure, along with forced evictions, state-sponsored violence and racist attacks by their erstwhile neighbours.

The current moment, marked as it is by epistemological invisibility and embodied violence, already shows the limits of the Cartesian mind-body split. Through a reconfiguration of authorship and the acknowledgement that knowledge production is a collective project, we open up a new engagement with scholarly practice, one that takes seriously Romani knowledge, productivity and the possibility of decolonisation. For me, this is where encampment becomes the archive – in fact, the anti-*archive* – of possibility.¹⁴

Here I have drawn upon postcolonial feminist scholarship to present new possibilities in knowledge production by, for and about Roma. However, I want to make an epistemological intervention that would go beyond placing Romani Studies – Romani knowledge production – within the arena of postcolonial studies. Instead, I wish to take up Spivak’s critique of Foucault to provide a critique of my own. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak argues, “The clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university, seem screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism.” Perhaps it is the role of the feminist and the ‘halfie’ to point out the limitations of Spivak’s own argument; even as the West was being continually produced by its imperial reach and by what Spivak calls “the topographic reinscription of imperialism,” Romani people across Europe, who, through slavery, migration, deportation and attempted genocide, have a Diaspora that reaches into the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia, have been produced as outside of history, without an archive, and subject to a crisis of representation that points to the limits of the topographic and geographic boundedness of Europe. Roma in this way have been the constitutive outside of not just Europe and Empire, but also of “law, political economy and ideology” and the logic of the nation-state. What would it mean for us to take up the disruptions and heterogeneity of the constitutive outside? The impossibility of subject position and archive alike? Just as postcolonial critique has allowed for a reconfiguration of the archive of Europe, Romani critique – the work of ‘feminists and halfies’ in Romani Studies – can allow for a reconfiguration of postcolonial epistemology that goes beyond the nation-state and the empire and takes seriously the limits of the archive.

13 Daniel Baker, telephone conversation with Ethel Brooks, 20 July 2015.

14 For my preliminary theorisation of encampment as archive, see Ethel Brooks, “Reclaiming: The Camp and the Avant-Garde,” in *We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, ed., Daniel Baker and Maria Hlavajova (Utrecht: BAK/basis voor actuele kunst, 2013).

Knowing Differently: On Thinking and Doing 'Roma'

MARETT KATALIN KLAHN

Discussions on knowledge production *on/about, by, for* or *with* 'Roma' ought to take cognisance of the discursively and socially marginalised and minoritised context in which 'Roma' are conceptualised as a static category. Their construction as 'the other' along racialised and essentialist lines serves the cause of reinforcing prevailing social divisions into the categories of those who belong to the 'we' (mainly nationalist) and those who do not. These divisions are starkly mirrored in the existing 'knowledge' on 'Roma' and the nature of the institutional culture behind its production. The construction and preservation of Romani persons as a homogenous category of the internal 'other' is one of the basic pillars of the normative and hegemonic discourses that render equal access and representation for Romani persons, in all their individual and collective diversity, impossible. Using a constructivist approach to the question of knowledge production, one must see the difference (but also the entanglement) between 'Roma' as a *category*, holding a certain systemic function and serving as the tool for the 'self-reassurance' of the dominant group on the one hand, and Romani *persons* on the other. These dichotomising categories, in spite of being epistemic in nature, nonetheless result in the very lived, real and visible invisibility and domination of the Romani people and in turn, also fundamentally influence their self-perceptions and everyday lives.

Part one of this article broadly presents the theoretical sensitising framework to the systemic dimension of the theme. Part two introduces the readers to the case study of the Dr Ámbédkar School in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén/Hungary to exemplify the multidimensional

modes of (re-)action to the complex thematic of knowledge production on Roma.

Thinking 'Roma' in epistemic and systemic terms

The field of knowledge production is immediately related to social power structures and the distribution of resources. Hence, one has to look at the conditions of political and collectively negotiated processes that produce certain social realities and the therein resulting knowledge(s) linked to them. These processes are represented in the struggles on socially contested categories of belonging like gender, nationality and ethnicity¹ and the access to "symbolic power" that fundamentally affects the construction of reality.² It is a crucial fact that the resources to participate in these struggles are distributed in a highly unequal way. Thus, the outcomes of these struggles for representation also reflect that very asymmetry.³ In the prevailing social conditions, hegemonising definitions of "reality" and "truth" come into existence that legitimise social hierarchies, the distribution of privileges and the social division of people into minorities and majorities⁴ and their access to what Bourdieu calls "symbolic power". The knowledge underpinning these dominant discourses thus requires to be considered as "positioned, situated and not absolute"⁵ as it not only reflects their constructedness but also that they articulate certain power relations.⁶ Under such hegemonising circumstances, Romani persons have hardly any chance to become visible in their diversity – as individuals and as groups. It leaves little space for visibility which is

1 Ines Busch, "Das Spektakel vom 'Zigeuner': Visuelle Repräsentation und Antiziganismus", in *Antiziganistische Zustände. Zur Kritik eines allgegenwärtigen Ressentiments*, ed. Markus End, Kathrin Herold, Yvonne Robel (Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2009), 160.

2 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 166, 221.

3 *Ibid.*, 169, 223; Wolf-Dietrich Bukow, *Feindbild Minderheit – Ethnisierung und ihre Ziele* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1996), 66.

4 'Minority' and 'majority' are not meant to be understood as absolute or solely demographic categories but as expressions of and conditions produced in an asymmetric power relationship. 'Minoritised' also intends to express the constructedness of such a condition of persons/groups as a result of a process of exclusion and denial of equal participation. Bourdieu, *Symbolic Power*, 221; Ljudomir Bratić, "Herrschaftsmechanismen und Selbstorganisation", *Dokumentation, Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe* (Conference, 25/26 November 2011, Vienna: IG Kultur Österreich, 2012), 28.

5 Johanna Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit. Über die visuellen Strukturen der Anerkennung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), 17.

6 Busch, *Antiziganismus*, 160.

independent of a hegemonic canon of imaginations and putative knowledge on a “group” that is constructed by means of homogenising stigma.⁷ The result is a widely spread knowledge on “the” Roma or what Adichie calls a “single story”. This implies the manifestation of a single, one-sided and allegedly true story that creates stereotypes. “[A]nd the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”⁸ By making the ambiguity of stories, identities and knowledge invisible in an essentialist manner, this single story contributes to the manifestation and the “strategies of perpetuation”⁹ of ‘the other’.

The “complicity”¹⁰ of all groups belonging to the particular system constitutes and feeds the sustainment of the asymmetry of power relations and their ensuing systems of knowledge production. Symbolic power can only be exercised because of a “consensus” among those dominating and those being dominated.¹¹ This entails a reciprocal imagination and agreement on the unequal values and positions of each group and their relationship to each other.¹² As a consequence, the belonging *and* not belonging of the dominated group is established simultaneously. On the one hand, the dominated group is a constitutive part of the larger social order but, on the other, its affiliation to that very social order is denied in that it serves the dominant group as ‘the other’, or becomes the static counterweight against and from which the dominant group demarcates itself.¹³

Ha outlines two opposing “strategies of survival” employed by dominated groups, which are a reaction to the

denial of belonging and an attempt to be equally acknowledged, namely, “assimilation and self-ethnicisation”.¹⁴ The former aspires to a “consubstantial conformity with the racialised subject”.¹⁵ This leads to the denial of the self and the specificities of the self, therein resulting in self-denigration. Given that racism and racialised structures always depend on differences that are fabricated and produced, this strategy of aspired assimilation with the dominant group can never be achieved.¹⁶ The very attempt to “assimilate” presumes the seemingly unalterable nature of one’s “otherness”. Crucial to this internalisation of “being different” – resulting from decades, or centuries, of maltreatment, trauma and exclusion embedded in mental, physical and institutional violence – is that the members of the dominated groups themselves therein contribute to their own domination.¹⁷ Their ‘otherness’ can become one of their central arguments for self-assertion as, within the prevailing patterns of perception and communication, this tends to be the only vocabulary that has a realistic chance of acknowledgement. This is what Ha, among others, describes as “self-ethnicisation”, often considered a counter-reaction to a failed attempt to assimilate. This self-ethnicisation tries to establish a historical continuity and group specificities for the purpose of self-affirmation by sticking to one’s own origins and it “reassesses the ethnic identity from a symbol of commonness and inferiority to an identity-establishing privilege”.¹⁸ What is common to both these mechanisms is that they eventually stabilise the prevailing epistemic dichotomies as they affirm the existence of ‘the’ dominant as well as of ‘the’ dominated in a reductionist and stigmatising way. Both assimilation as well as self-ethnicisation need to be seen as mechanisms to cope with the symptoms

7 *Ibid.*, 166.

8 Chimamanda Adichie, “The danger of a single story”, *TED – Ideas worth spreading* (October 2009), available at: http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html.

9 Bratić, *Herrschaftsmechanismen*, 31.

10 Bourdieu, *Symbolic Power*, 164.

11 *Ibid.*, 166, 170.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Bukow, *Ethnisierung*, 66; Toni Morrison, *Im Dunkeln Spielen. Weiße Kultur und literarische Imagination (Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination)*, translated by Helga Pfetsch/Barbara von Bechtolsheim (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1994), 66, 74.

14 Kien Nghi Ha, “Ethnizität, Differenz und Hybridität in der Migration: Eine postkoloniale Perspektive“, *PROKLA. Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft*, Heft 120 – 30 (2000), Nr. 3, 378-82.

15 *Ibid.*, 378.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Bratić, *Herrschaftsmechanismen*, 27; Bukow, *Ethnisierung*, 66, 140.

18 Ha, *Hybridität*, 379.

of racism.¹⁹ They do not tackle the systemic and historical roots of it mainly because it is a one-sided attempt to move out of the predominant social situation. But as described above, this exercised domination is always an expression of a relationship which cannot be transformed only by one of the two engaging sides alone.

Many self-organised collectives of people who experience discrimination claim more representation in, and access to, the field of knowledge production for the purpose of equal acknowledgement and visibility. They also emphasise the peculiarity of their situation as a particular “group”, viewing practices of not-noticing and rendering their group invisible as effective instruments of domination.²⁰ In both cases, Schaffer offers cutting-edge thoughts: The high risk of only asking for more representation is to be satisfied only with visibility *alone* whereas in effect the aesthetic and epistemic forms of representation are reproduced and affirmed according to the dominant order.²¹ When, in this case, Roma become visible as musicians or dancers, for example, or as researchers, it mostly remains coupled with the ethnicised ‘Roma’ attribute, which both the Roma themselves as well as the audience/readers strongly stick to with reference to authenticity and truth. This leads to the homogenising perpetuation of the existing stereotypes as the assumed (‘ethnic’) expertise or asset constructed is only based on *one* of the numerous defining characteristics of the (Romani) person. End calls attention to the fact that it does not matter whether the stereotype has a ‘positive’ – as in the case of music or dance – or ‘negative’ content – like the assumed unwillingness to integrate into social norms – as in both cases it is a reductionist perspective used for the purpose of creating differences.²² Schaffer refers to this practice of making persons visible within a certain prejudiced framework as “conditional acknowledgement” because it shows that only a regulated visibility of the marginalised persons

is accepted and economically utilisable in producing the essentialist category of ‘the’ Roma.²³ A researcher of Romani origin is most often obliged to meet the expectation of being an ‘expert’ on Roma related topics. At the same time, she*he would probably *feel* obliged to be the carrier of such expertise. Both reflect the conditioning which underlies the production of knowledge *on* and *by* Romani persons.

Morrison states that within racialised social structures it is rather impossible to escape “racially inflected language” and knowledge because it is the only available tool for all members to become heard and visible within the prevailing dominant discourse.²⁴ It is also the only possible means through which images, stories and meanings can be taken up by hegemonic and majoritarian knowledge.²⁵ As a consequence, for both Roma and non-Roma it turns out to be more profitable to apply the dominant sets of categories and to stick to ethnic ‘branding’ for the purpose of serving the economic functionality of the images and meanings.²⁶ Similar to the implied ‘complicity’, there is a commonly experienced applicability of racialised knowledge that makes escape and emancipation from hegemonic practices of imagination, thought and (inter-)action extremely difficult.

The emphasis on the peculiarity of a group as a legitimisation strategy to claim for more representation reproduces a false impression: that the problems the group suffers from are the group’s problems only. It (re)constructs a homogenous, static group which serves the imagination of the unconditional, decontextualised ‘other’. Schaffer makes an appeal for not only seeing the problematic representations but also for observing the underlying structures, processes and effects of becoming visible, being perceived and acknowledged. She calls for making the dominating and excluding patterns of domination visible. If our critique thereby focuses on the structural and discursive conditions

19 *Ibid.*, 380.

20 Morrison, *Weißer Kultur*, 30.

21 Johanna Schaffer, “Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit: Zum Verhältnis von Sichtbarkeit und politischer Handlungsfähigkeit“, in *Medien — Politik — Geschlecht. Feministische Befunde zur politischen Kommunikationsforschung*, ed. Johanna Dorer, Brigitte Geiger, Regina Köpl (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 234.

22 Markus End, “Bilder und Sinnstruktur des Antiziganismus“, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 22-23/2011, available at: <http://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/33269/sinti-und-roma>.

23 Schaffer, *Handlungsfähigkeit*, 239.

24 Morrison, *Weißer Kultur*, 34.

25 Busch, *Antiziganismus*, 175.

26 *Ibid.*, 171.

of becoming visible and of social participation we distance ourselves from the logics referring to certain static and exclusivist identities and from playing off one marginalisation and discrimination against the other.²⁷

All the above-mentioned aspects point to the importance of giving due regard to the complexity of knowledge production in the case of Roma. They also indicate the lack of representation of Romani persons, their relegation into being a merely systemic category, and how their grievances are looked upon as being solely a group-specific issue. This calls for attention not only to quantitative indicators of participation and visibility but also to qualitative aspects such as new forms of perceiving and producing knowledge that emancipate in a more fundamental way from the hegemonising structures.

(Un-)Doing 'Roma': transforming the conditions of knowledge production

The Dr Ámbédkar School (DAS) in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén/Hungary is an extraordinary example of attempts to create a space where renegotiation of identities, imagination(s) and knowledge occurs in an extremely emancipative way.²⁸ The school works, in a groundbreaking way, on strengthening Romani young people and on abandoning the reciprocal 'othering' between Roma and non-Roma persons, encouraging mutual understanding and empathy. The school associates itself with the Ambedkarian Dalit movement in India, as well as with other groups which have histories of experienced exclusion and humiliation. This is, however, not for the purpose of producing collective victimisation nor for constructing

nationalist, exclusivist identities. Through their transgrouping approach, with a global perspective, they transform the understanding of the prevailing problems of Roma to historical, systemic and structural ones and thus do not fall into the trap of ethnicising either the problems or the possible claims made as a reaction to the problems. They explicitly consider the transformation of the social conditions under which Romani persons suffer as a task for society as a whole. This means that both Romani as well as non-Roma persons need to emancipate themselves from their previous ways of knowing, seeing and handling 'the (respective) other'. This first of all necessitates that both 'groups' share a space where they have the same resources to participate in negotiating collective issues, in the above-mentioned "processes that produce certain social realities and knowledge". This sameness is pursued by the feminist' and Buddhist guiding principles of the school, strongly influenced by the Dr Ambedkar example.²⁹ The school puts a strong emphasis on mediating between different attitudes and perceptions, which is essential for not tabooing certain prejudices and, at the same time, not allowing them to influence reality in the 'usual' way. In 'usual' circumstances this would mean that non-Roma (and) teachers would have a fundamental influence on the assessment of the competences of their Romani students very often based on racist stereotypes. In the DAS, both Roma and non-Roma are made to work on emancipation from the reciprocal prejudiced 'knowledge' and the reductionist (self-)perception which keeps the social hierarchies stable and the domination unquestionable.³⁰

Another important aspect is that in the DAS Romani persons hold positions as teachers and decision-makers. This not only creates the fundamental basis for equal participation but also

27 Schaffer, *Handlungsfähigkeit*, 234, 240.

28 The author got to know the school within the context of an exchange programme between Roma and non-Roma young people from Hungary and Germany. She then decided to make the school's work the theme of her thesis. During a week-long fieldwork several interviews were conducted mainly with the school leadership. The interviews as well as the paper in question are mainly about conceptual, institutional and political ideas, actions and aspirations of the school's direction and are less representative for the experiences of the majority of the pupils. Regarding actual information about the school's work, please look at the homepage <http://www.ambedkar.hu/>.

29 The school makes use of various emancipative, transcultural approaches that aim at more equality and deconstructing prevalent power structures. Orsós narrated in a personal interview that one crucial moment for him and his drawing on Buddhism as a guiding principle was when he went to India and saw all that was done *for* and *by* Dalits themselves, with reference to Buddhism. "And Buddhism is that I am responsible for my fate [...]. And there is only one way to go: Learning. A diploma. And then we will pay our rents and become citizens. If you call all that 'Buddhism', I also want to join this Buddhism." János Orsós, Director of the Dr Ámbédkar School and chairman of the Jai Bhim society, personal interview, 13 April 2013.

Schaffer places the topics of visibility and knowledge in the interface of theories and politics of minoritised contexts in general – meaning feminist, black, anti-racist, queer and gay/lesbian – that try to overcome and undo normative and dominant definitions and representations of reality in which "minoritisation" is produced. Schaffer, *Handlungsfähigkeit*, 233, 239, 244.

30 This is of course a vision and a constant process of awareness raising and negotiation. Tibor Derdák talks about the challenge of making the non-Roma (and) teachers believe that the Roma pupils are as capable and eligible for learning and succeeding as non-Roma. "This is why our students do not learn everything they would need to learn. And this is also connected to the school being a segregated place. This is a trap we have to get out of." Tibor Derdák, Director of the Dr Ámbédkar School, personal interview, 09 April 2013.

serves the very important purpose of making Roma visible in leading positions and thereby demonstrating their agency and expertise independent of their ethnic origin and associated (in-)capabilities.³¹ At the same time they also become urgently needed idols for the pupils, a majority of whom are Roma and have failed in other schools because of the above-mentioned interrelated exclusivist structures. János Orsós, one of the directors of the DAS, said in a personal interview: “I asked my teacher: Madame, why do I actually never get a mark better than C? – What would you need it for? In any case you will not continue studying. [...] In seventh grade I gave up the fight. By that time I was quite adolescent and not in the mood for studying. And anyway the teacher had said I would not be capable and eligible. As a teacher had said it I believed her. After all nobody from our settlement had continued studying after primary school and so the teacher must have had knowledge that I could not grasp yet.”³² This excerpt points out the different psychological and structural dimensions of racialised knowledge, which is (re-)produced in core social areas like schools and has a tremendous effect on the self-confidence and capability of Roma students. The outcome, true for many cases including the Orsós one, is that students become school dropouts. This in turn feeds stereotypes about Roma as “unwilling to learn” or “less capable because of their ethnic origin”. As Steel describes it, this not only leads to the stabilisation of the teacher’s authority – as a teacher *and*, in this context, as non-Roma – but additionally to the immobilising fear of fulfilling that negative ascription that can increasingly become the self-perception, a “stereotype threat”.³³

As mentioned earlier, the fact that certain Romani persons are visible and have access to certain positions is not enough and cannot be viewed as a fundamental change in the quality of the conditions in which participation happens. What is remarkable about the school and its handling of ‘Romani identity’ is that they manage a balancing

act which neither collectively victimises the students nor constructs or enforces a “counter-nationalist attitude”³⁴ among them, which would again produce a static ‘we’ and ‘other’, either below or above them. Both extremes would prevent an understanding of identity in a pluralistic, fluid way where every person holds different identities, or rather, is constantly in a process of identification that is never definite or permanent. The way in which knowledge is imparted and the kind of knowledge produced and selected contributes enormously to the acceptance of one’s own diversity as well as that of the others. ‘Being Roma’ plays a role in nearly every subject taught at the school because the majority of students are of Romani origin but it is decisive that it is not (mis)used for the purpose of stigmatising or excluding the students. It is simply present in a very ‘normal’ way in the sense that if students choose a Roma-related topic – i.e. traditions in their families – in an essay or homework, they can do so without the risk that they would either be reduced to it or discriminated against because of it. The more important aspect, however, is that students can also choose any other topic. The teachers think and are called upon to think that the students are capable of working on any topic in any subject independent of their ethnicity or gender.³⁵ As previously mentioned, this initiates a sensitisation process for some of the teachers.

Not only does the curriculum contain Romani language, but in every subject persons of Roma origin are present in their historical contexts and roles unlike in other school contexts where, in spite of being present, they have been rendered invisible and ‘unknowable’, in continuity with the prevalent hegemonic structures of historiography and knowledge production. These are of course historically connected to a social practice of domination and exclusion so that there is of course also a ‘real’ or rather externally ‘induced’ lack of Romani persons in certain power

31 The exclusion on racist grounds and by means of constructed inferiorities makes ‘ethnicity’ matter though. As people do experience that very exclusion because of a putative ‘ethnicity’ it’s also essential to include them along ethnic lines and make their potential visible. The distinctiveness of the DAS approach is that they let the people ‘step out’ of an impermeable category and thereby make an emancipative way of representation possible.

32 János Orsós, Director of the Dr Ámbédkar School and chairman of the Jai Bhim society, personal interview, 13 April 2013.

33 Claude M. Steele, “How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance,” *American Psychologist*, 52/6, (1997), 613-629, available at: http://users.nber.org/~sewp/events/2005.01.14/Bios+Links/Krieger-rec5-Steele_Threat-in-the-Air.pdf.

34 Ha, *Hybridität*, 379, 385.

35 These very peculiar features of course hold the risk of creating conditions that are very different to those in most of Hungary’s and Europe’s public institutions. There is a danger that pupils graduating from DAS are confronted with racism and biases they could circumvent at DAS. The conviction of the directors is, however, that during their time at DAS the students gain a lot of knowledge and confidence to face those possible struggles. The school also works a lot on building alliances and possibilities for exchange among their students and those of other schools – mainly non-Roma – from Budapest for example. “We build such a network”, Derdák says, “that should show that our students are just the same as all the others in this world.” Tibor Derdák, Director of the Dr Ámbédkar School, personal interview, 09 April 2013

positions. Another important dimension is that members of other excluded groups are also shown and put into context, i.e. Dr Ambedkar or Dr Martin Luther King. This is how their “shadeless participation in the dominant cultural body”³⁶ is counteracted by inscribing formerly marginalised narratives, stories and biographies into the curriculum in an equal way, therein making that knowledge approachable and visible. There are two praiseworthy aspects to this: Firstly, there is no counter-nationalist overvaluing of ‘other’ inscribed (hi)stories for the purpose of producing another exclusivist knowledge that would only intend to turn power relations upside-down but would fail to theoretically tackle the problem of inequality. Secondly, the differentiated and inclusive knowledge – about Roma and non-Roma – thwarts the ‘single story’ about Roma. By making the historicity of Roma’s social participation visible, it breaks from the “strategies of perpetuation”³⁷ which produce ‘the other’ as the object of self-reassurance for those dominant in society.

Furthermore, diversity consciousness plays an important role with regard to plurality among and within Romani persons and Roma groups. The students learn about the different Roma groups, their languages and origins and also about prejudices and the reasons for exclusion and discrimination. One of the students shared with me the perception that knowledge of the diversity of Roma groups would also foster acceptance among Roma themselves, therein resolving conflicts which would otherwise often occur owing to lack of knowledge.³⁸ Though this is not a representative statement, in my perception the way in which knowledge is imparted and how the students, as Roma, feel included in that knowledge production is an essential aspect of renegotiating individual and collective belonging in all its multifacetedness, whether regarding differences or commonalities. Such differentiated knowledge also prevents cleavages, which can easily result from struggles for resources and acknowledgement and become a means for domination among and within Roma groups.³⁹ Neither the over-emphasised diverse Roma identities nor the misleading ideas of being a homogenous, marginalised group are played off against each other.

36 Morrison, *Weißer Kultur*, 31.

37 Bratić, “Herrschaftsmechanismen”, 31.

38 Student of the DAS, personal interview, 12 April 2013.

39 Ha, *Hybridität*, 382.

40 Busch, *Antiziganismus*, 171.

Concluding thoughts: towards different knowledge(s)

The DAS offers the students and the staff a space as well as intellectual and emotional tools for sustainable emancipation from hegemonic knowledge production and a reciprocal relationship of domination and inequality. As the given examples have shown, the way of producing, selecting and imparting knowledge is a strong determinant for how social interaction, empathy and negotiation can happen, even between persons acting in different capacities, like students and teachers. The commitment to the diversity of every person and of groups in the teaching and interaction within the DAS’s curriculum, as well as in its functioning, creates a consciousness and shapes the attitudes of both Roma and non-Roma in a way that prevents essentialised and ethnicised knowledge as a guideline for social practice. At the same time, this knowledge can only become ‘knowable’ and utilisable if systemic transformations are undertaken and institutional cultures are changed with the result that diversification, ambiguity and the contextuality of knowledge become their core values. The prevailing understanding of knowledge and learning processes in the DAS is self-reflexive and inclusive and fundamentally differs from the otherwise prevalent claims of objectivity, universal validity and permanence. The production of such hegemonic guiding principles, and their reinforcement of reductionist, unambiguous and normative categories of knowledge for groups like ‘the’ Roma serves a profitable and promising economic functionality.⁴⁰ This violently-constructed and sustained homogeneity serves marginalising regimes of representation, as analysed above, by defining a static counterweight to the dominant ‘we’.

In the case of the DAS, one can speak about an alternative ‘complicity’ to the one described in the first part of this article: a complicity in the commitment to diversity and constructivism. This, however, is not to reinforce existing master narratives and to exaggerate difference through reciprocal ‘othering’, but rather to induce an environment of empathy. In the DAS there is no need for either assimilation or self-ethnicisation. The article has highlighted that both reactions

are mechanisms to cope with the symptoms of racism. However, as racist structures and knowledge production are fundamental themes which are constantly engaged with at the DAS, the necessity for utilising such mechanisms is diminished or highly reduced. Besides, one could even state that assimilation or adaptation, which occurs and is intended at the school, encompasses institutional structures and patterns of mutual perception and treatment. The primary objective is to make the ambiguity of stories, identities and knowledge visible, 'knowable' and thereby a determinant in the production of reality. At the DAS, Romani persons belong to the 'we', not as 'the (internal) other' but as an equal member with equal rights, as this 'we' is not defined in nationalist terms

but through a shared attitude. All members of DAS, especially Roma students and teachers, have the freedom to live, explore and develop their pluralistic individual and collective identifications which are mirrored and promoted by the character and the content of the knowledge put *into action*. This knowledge is adaptable to the complexity and constant diversification of reality and thereby allows individuals to situationally and contextually *stay in* or *leave* their categories of belonging. Here, *staying* does not contain the risk of getting caught but also *leaving* does not imply being uprooted. The Dr Ámbédkar School thus presents a vanguard of engaging with the themes of diversity, mutual understanding and the transformation of knowledge(s) and imaginations.

Challenging Perspectives – The Role of Media Representation in Knowledge Production about Roma

MARIA BOGDAN

In 2013 the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights declared that “demonising a group of people through the media can lead to nefarious political and societal consequences. It is necessary that the media use their power of forging public opinion more responsibly when it comes to portraying minorities in general and the Roma in particular.”¹ This article focuses on the relations between media representation and knowledge production about the Roma in Hungary and is based on my doctoral research. It seeks to provide insights into the role of the media in constructing or strengthening prejudices and racism against Roma and also seeks to posit means by which the power of the media can be challenged and transformed into a tool of emancipation.

Media representation and society

There are many theories about how the media works and all agree on one common idea – that the media has a profound effect on society. According to Stuart Hall and the media representation theory, the media influences the formation of values and identities through a process called representation. Representation is a way of giving meaning to things which are depicted (coding) through images, or words. It is important to see that there are no fixed meanings, but meanings which depend on what people (the audience) make of the image (through decoding) and this depends on how it is represented.²

Above all, if we want to understand representation it is always essential to regard it as a power game – since communication (what is communicated and how it is communicated) is always decided by interest groups. So in this respect we can understand the constitutive nature of representation – when through representation something starts to exist, it starts to have a meaning.

So the purpose of examining media representation is to reveal this concept, to show the gap between the object as it is seen in a certain environment and the way it is represented.

Through examining media representation we can show how a social group exists in a society, and what the different concepts according to which it is regarded and treated are. Gaining such an overview can help us understand the discriminative situation of a social group, in this instance the predicament of the Roma. By understanding this we can find the means to eradicate and dispel the stereotypes and prejudices against them.

In order to understand the importance of the image – the visual representation in this question - there is another dimension of this problem that needs to be discussed. Richard Dyer emphasises the role of visual representation in respect of the problem of different social groups’ visibility. He approaches this topic from the aspect of whiteness and claims that whiteness must be problematised in order to change the position of the other/subaltern/marginalised people who are racialised and thus can never get into positions in society in the way that white people do. “As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. There is no more powerful position than that of being ‘just’ human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity.”³

Dyer considers visual representation as a reflection of society since “[t]he study of representation is more limited than the study of reality and yet it is also the study of one of the prime means by which we have any knowledge of reality.”⁴ In other words, knowledge production can be regarded as concepts and meanings constructed by media representation.

1 Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights: “Irresponsible media reporting on Roma propagates negative myths”, *Council of Europe*, 24 October 2013, available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/irresponsible-media-reporting-on-roma-propagates-negative-myths?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fcommissioner%2Fnews-2013>.

2 Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

3 Richard Dyer, *White*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 17-18.

4 *Ibid.*, 13.

Media representation of the Roma – The stranger

There have been only a few comprehensive research studies carried out on how the media represents Roma in Hungary. According to the results of recent research, it can be stated that a true and accurate reflection of the Roma is basically missing from the Hungarian media, since depictions reflect mainly negative stereotypes that society has in connection with this group. This means that news related to the Roma is mainly about crimes and conflicts.⁵ Although there has been a proliferation in the number and type of television and radio stations and journals since the 1990s in Hungary and the tabloid media covers the Roma topic on a frequent basis, the message that we get about the Roma still hasn't changed much. In this respect the picture is homogenous. Roma always constitute a negative discourse even if the image tries to be positive – it can never be told without any negative meaning (shameful, unfortunate, unreliable etc.). Roma are always talked about or depicted but they almost never appear as independent or individual experts – if they are asked to participate then it is usually related to one of the stereotypical Roma topics. This means of representation creates the concept of the stranger/outsider about the Roma in society. The discourse of the stranger in society becomes the discourse of the Roma. The position of the stranger is a type of relationship – the one in the position of the stranger is regarded as someone who doesn't *speak* the language of the group he tries to relate to - therefore he can never be part of the group, but remains always a stranger.⁶ The group is closed, and remains closed and doesn't give him the means to speak. According to Derrida in *Monolingualism of the Other*: “I have but one language - yet that language is not mine.”⁷

The picture we have of society is often deficient because of the marginalisation of Roma communities and their demonization in media depictions of the world in which we live. The lack of diversity in the representation of Roma shows the lack of diversity in the way of thinking in Hungarian society and

this phenomenon proves the presence of modern racism in the media as well as in wider society.

Modern racism and the media

In my discussion, the term modern racism refers to biases – stereotyping, prejudices, and discrimination⁸ - being presented in a symbolic, subtle way. Biases cannot disappear from societies. They are a constant part of it because most of the time they act as a quick mental prompt in situations not experienced previously, when an immediate reaction is needed. In such a situation we react automatically and such reactions have their roots in the biases we are brought up with. But the situation is different if it is about a certain social group and draws upon issues such as how that group is regarded and treated in society and what reactions this group faces from society in general.

Since the second half of the 20th century – due to influential historical changes like the Second World War, the end of the colonial era, and the Civil Rights Movement in the USA – belief in equality has become one of the main organising concepts, emphasising the idea of creating open societies where diversity is regarded as a basic phenomenon of society, or in theoretical terms where binary opposition is no longer a fundamental organiser of human culture and language.

In spite of this concept, biases towards different social groups have survived in subtle forms. Subtle biases have an ambivalent, indirect and ambiguous nature. People who maintain this way of thinking most of the time blame a certain group (the outgroup) – in other words, a marginalised group experiences scapegoating. They emphasise cultural differences and regard the outgroup as a homogenous one, in which all the members have the same features. They might also think that this particular group has different sexual or religious habits than their own and they often only emphasise problems when thinking about how to help this group.⁹

5 Gábor Bernáth and Vera Messing, “Vágóképként, csak némában” – Romák a magyarországi médiában / “Roma mute and in the background” - Roma in the Hungarian Media (Budapest: Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Hivatal, 1998); Gábor Bernáth and Vera Messing, “Szélre tolvá./ Pushed to the edge” - Research Report on the Representation of Roma Communities in the Hungarian Majority Media in 2011”, *Médiakutató*, Number 1 (2012): 71-84.

6 Jacques Derrida, “Az idegen kérdése: az idegentől jött” in *Az idegen*, ed. Biczó Gábor (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004), 11-29. See also Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida, *De l'hospitalité* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1997), 11-69.

7 Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

8 Susan T Fiske, *Social Beings. A Core Motives Approach to Social Psychology* (New Jersey: Wiley Inc., 2004).

9 *Ibid.*

An example of subtle bias is a social phenomenon called ‘colourism’, which seems to have gained more attention recently as a field researched by social scientists in the USA. Colourism is a visible response to the hidden values of society which have emerged as a form of modern racism. It is a social term describing the phenomenon whereby being black or white is no longer the issue but the emphasis is rather on the importance of the shades of skin colour as a (believed) indicator and key to better life (social) conditions, or power. Indeed recent research in this field proves that people with lighter skin colours are shown to have economic advantages. In 2007 research was undertaken in the USA measuring the wages of African-Americans and whites. The result showed that among African-Americans wages differ according to their skin colour. The lighter they were, the higher wage they got and the closer this wage was to the wages of people with a white skin colour. The research focused on people with the same age, grades and occupation.¹⁰

Regarding the situation of Roma something similar to colourism exists – arising from the constant question of how to define the Roma people (who is Roma?) which has emerged since democratic changes took place in Hungary. In this case the question is about making judgments according to appearance – and appearance means the body, and the values related to it in our society. It can be stated that modern racism is a *way of thinking* which can characterise people in a society or even the attitude of a whole society. In addition, in the case of racism we are talking about not only society itself but also about how democracy could develop in that society. Being a way of thinking, it is hard to examine modern racism, but its abstractness can be caught and indicated by the way communication (media representation) exists in connection with a certain social group. This is why the media is a field where modern racism can be examined in an effective way.

How media representation is connected to knowledge production

It is also important to understand knowledge production about Roma as concepts and meanings constructed

through the media. As we can see, images constantly construct us, they produce identification and knowledge (stereotypes), and thus the media defines our values and shapes our identity. But media regulation is also a constant issue mainly with regard to hate speech and freedom of speech. Hungarian media law mostly claims that a certain kind of ethics needs to be respected in the case of public media – its regulation is detailed in that law.

Public media has education and information-dissemination as some of its manifest functions. But in order to understand the social status of Roma in society it is necessary to regard the subtle but pervasive functions of the media, such as collective remembrance. The media has an effect on collective remembrance, since its reports and documentaries form an archive of the reality of the society in which we live in. It creates documents of the era we live in and this act gives the media a normative nature. The reflected images, the spoken discourses, shape the values of generations and thus public media in theory has a great role in shaping societies. This is why it is constantly examined and criticised, especially during recent years when the media law changed negatively in Hungary in terms of freedom of speech and censorship. This has allowed public media to become influenced to an unprecedented degree by the governing party and consequently sometimes violate the basic journalistic code of ethics.

To illustrate this point I will briefly refer to a documentary film titled *A cigány-magyar együttélés* in translation: *The Gypsy-Hungarian Coexistence*, made by a well-known Hungarian documentary film director László Pesty.¹¹ In summary this film makes racist statements about Roma in an explicit way – its main message is that Roma are basically, and by nature, criminals, and therefore they are a threat to the Hungarian people. The way of questioning Roma people in the film is accusatory and asks for explanations from Roma people living in rural areas in Hungary, without questioning the veracity of any of the racist statements made in the documentary. For instance biased and leading questions are posed such as why in the opinion of the interviewer Gypsies have a lot of children, are prone to crime and have different sexual habits. By the end of

10 Arthur H. Goldsmith, Darrick Hamilton, and William Darity Jr., “From Dark to Light: Skin color and wages among African-Americans”, *The Journal of Human Resources*, Volume 62, Number 4 (2007).

11 László Pesty, *A cigány-magyar együttélés/The Gypsy-Hungarian Coexistence*, first broadcasted on Hungarian Public Television (Channel M1) on 7 March 2012. The documentary is available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdSk0pAaIDU&index=1&list=PLeA6ff7YUPxAdIMdqLf50VyyiPAIp3KR>.

the film these statements and their power to stereotype are strengthened. A huge debate followed the film among civil society and intellectuals, blaming the director for making such a prejudiced film. However, I think that the main responsibility did not lie with the director and producer of the film but with Hungarian Public Television which broadcasted it without any consideration of the fact that it contained explicit hate speech against Roma in Hungary. Because it is racist, this film cannot be rightly regarded as a documentary.

Deconstructing images – shaping knowledge production

On the other hand, there are examples from online media which illustrate how media representation, and thus all of society, can be criticised and shaped in a fruitful way with reference to the Roma. This way of media representation reflects the solution that Stuart Hall suggests when talking about the politics of the image. Hall refers to deconstruction as a strategy to change stereotypical or racist representations and thus change the knowledge production of a social group, which may result in a positive change for the whole of society. This means going inside the image (the stereotypical image) and exposing it from inside, instead of creating positive representations. Although there is never a fixed meaning in representation, this strategy may result in opening up stereotypes and making them uninhabitable. This also challenges the position of whiteness, since this might offer white people the possibility to define themselves as they are and not against a stereotypical image

(Roma) – and also gives the chances to Roma people to step outside stereotypes and construct their own identity. A good example of this is the short films of the Hungarian Roma News Production group. They are young Roma university students who with humour and irony subvert the view of the defining gazes and simultaneously present alternative viewpoints which in general tend to be sidelined (in subaltern positions). The films are available on YouTube on such topics as the Hungarian public labour programme (which affects mostly Roma people in Hungary), Roma politicians, the Hungarian Roma education policy, and prejudices against Roma.

Changing perspectives – The key to understanding the message

It is the task of the new generation of Roma academics to challenge continuously the meanings and perceptions nurtured by the media in our society, in order to understand and make others understand the way the media functions. With the spread of online media and community pages the media and knowledge production scenes have expanded. Social media seems to be a strong forum mainly because it responds directly to the interests of users and the ideals and moral values they espouse. There are no countries and borders in the biggest social media pages and it is interesting to see how offline concepts appear online. Social media offers us a chance to challenge our perspectives and to be open to changing meanings. With this we give ourselves the freedom to know things in our world, where hopefully the Roma as the concept of the stranger will soon cease to exist.

LGBTQIA, Feminism and Romani Studies

JEKATYERINA DUNAJEVA, ANGÉLA KÓCZÉ AND SARAH CEMLYN

During the *Nothing about us without us?* conference there was a special section dedicated to the discussion of the Roma LGBTQIA¹ community – a segment of the population that rarely receives adequate attention – and theories of feminism that might strengthen the already underway Roma empowerment movement. The workshop provided crucial space to express frustrations, goals, concerns, and individual struggles.

Alliance building was one contentious issue: while some saw a clear opportunity in LGBTQIA, feminist and Roma communities joining forces in their struggle for equality, others were wary that the very idea of premature alliance would dilute the Roma cause. The standpoint of some attendees was that defining the Roma cause, carving out political space for Roma and strengthening the Roma identity should be the precondition of any alliance building, and thus we need to lay the foundation first. Another recurring concern that emerged was the dividing force of the various movements: do Roma women, for instance, have to choose between their gendered and ethnic identities, thus distancing themselves from both (feminist and Roma Movements) or either of the movements. This statement was contested immediately: Romani identity should be reconsidered to include the feminist perspective, rather than replace it. Learning from or joining with other movements remained an issue without consensus, but it was critical for these arguments to emerge, and at times clash and settle.

“Radical respect for difference” was a key statement during the discussion – respecting and celebrating gender, ethnic, and all other differences should be the overarching goal, which

could lead to more open, accepting societies. The truly enriching comments came from audience members who affiliate with several groups: “LGBTQIA often share the same emotions as we [Roma] do” and thus they could be natural allies.

These themes and others are present in the previous academic and activist literature on Romani feminist activism and LGBTQIA activism within Roma communities, but undoubtedly received a heightened impetus during the conference. In order to contextualise and understand these issues more fully, it is worth reflecting briefly on this background.

The lack of intersectional analysis has been a pervasive issue for Romani feminists. They have highlighted the intense marginalisation of Romani women and the oppression they experience both from the dominant society and within communities, including domestic violence, alongside their absence within mainstream feminist and anti-racist discourse and the programmes of non-governmental organisations.² They have faced assertions that being a feminist and a Romani are contradictory or incompatible,^{3,4,5} as Nicoleta Bitu also found when she declared herself a Romani feminist in an event at the European Parliament in 2005.⁶ The work of Romani women activists is obscured and often rendered invisible, as are the lives of Romani women generally, compared to the recognition accorded to male leaders of the Roma Movement.

Invisibility is also an issue for Roma who identify as LGBTQIA. Daniel Baker’s MA study⁷ highlighted the conflict experienced between being Gay and a Romani, with the

1 LGBTQIA stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual – we use this all-inclusive umbrella term in the introduction to refer to and include the community as a whole. We would like to note that not all authors describe all members of the community, and in their articles each author uses the acronym that reflects the scope of their paper.

2 Alexandra Oprea, “Re-envisioning Social Justice from the Ground Up: Including the Experiences of Romani Women”, *Essex Human Rights Review*, Vol. 1 Number 1 (2005): 29-39.

3 Ethel Brooks, “The Possibilities of Romani Feminism”, *Signs*, Vol. 38, Number 1 (2012): 1-11.

4 Petra Gelbert, “Either Sing or Go Get the Beer: Contradictions of (Romani) Female Power in Central Europe”, *Signs*, Vol. 38, Number 1, (2012): 22-29.

5 Angéla Kóczé, *Missing Intersectionality. Race/ Ethnicity, Gender and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe* (Budapest: CEU Center for Policy Studies, 2009).

6 Debra Schultz, “Translating Intersectionality Theory into Practice: A Tale of Romani-Gadze Feminist Alliance”, *Signs*, Vol. 38, Number 1, (2012): 37-43.

7 Daniel Baker, *The Queer Gypsy: an examination of the dual invisibility of Gay Travellers*, MA Thesis in Gender and Ethnic Studies (undated).

resulting loss of connection through having to choose between one or other aspect of identity, or else ‘passing’ and submerging one aspect. Vera Kurtić documented the multiple oppressions of Romani lesbians both by majority Serbian society and the minority Romani community.⁸

As a result of restricted views of what being a Romani involves, these and other commentators point not only to the failure to address the rights of Romani women and sexual minorities, but also to the losses to the wider Roma rights movement since many voices may be silenced and lives rendered invisible.

Lack of recognition of intersectionality within the Roma Movement is at odds with the activity of Romani women all over Europe, fighting against gender oppression and racism (though not all activists will describe themselves as feminists). The involvement of Roma in Gay Pride marches and conferences proclaiming and publicly celebrating LGBTQIA identity represent a highly significant political act in itself given the invisibility surrounding them.

One factor that has been seen as an influence on the silencing of Romani feminism is the urgency of defending the communities against the rampant media, public and political racism facing all Romani communities across Europe⁹ and resulting arguments that multiple perspectives within Roma politics might be seen to dilute its focus on challenging injustice. This latter view prompted energetic debate within the conference and in this volume, generating optimism that a critical moment might be reached enabling broader recognition that the focus of Roma rights would be strengthened by a more inclusive movement.

While discussion of intersectionality in the Romani feminist and LGBTQIA literature has referred to a range of dimensions of oppression, the most prominent are ethnicity, gender and sexuality. There are other dimensions reflecting other Romani lives that will hopefully be further explored through both activism and theory, including disability, age and transgender. Disability receives rare mention, although

the health disadvantages experienced by Roma communities indicate that it may be an important issue. Age is discussed sometimes in terms of generations, for example the greater level of involvement of young Romani women and the challenge they have generated toward the ‘virginity cult’¹⁰ in Macedonia and other countries. A contrasting example from the UK, where young women are also active, is that some leading women activists, who do not necessarily describe themselves as feminists, have noted that being older can provide an easier platform for women’s activism within the community in the face of cultural gender expectations.¹¹ The extent to which feminism is an organic as well as academic perspective within the range of women’s grassroots activism is one of several theoretical and practical questions that have arisen in this field. More research about how Romani women without a high level of formal education conceptualise their daily struggles against oppression and the mutually enriching connections that can be made with Romani feminist theorising could be valuable. This requires more collaborative work from feminist scholars to work together with local Romani women, who do not necessarily identify themselves as feminists, and to theorise together their gendered social and political struggles.

Research in relation to LGBTQIA issues for Roma and the achievements of LGBTQIA activists remains thin. The groundbreaking studies by Baker and Kurtić will hopefully inspire much more work in this field. These two studies focus respectively on Gay men and Lesbians; intersectionality could extend to exploring further the parallels and divergences within and between the experiences of different sexual minorities and the development of support systems and campaigns.

The building of alliances was a strong theme in theory and practice at the conference. The literature demonstrates how policy advocacy and the building of networks within national and pan-European organisations has led to a greater focus on Romani women in policy and some programmes, though without leading to fundamental change. Building on these networks, feminists have argued for affirmative action¹²

8 Vera Kurtić, *Džunjarke – Roma Lesbian Existence* (Niš: Ženski Prostor, 2014).

9 Alexandra Oprea, “The Arranged Marriage of Ana Maria Cioaba, Intra-Community Oppression and Feminist Ideals, Transcending the ‘Primitive Culture’ Argument”, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, Vol. 12 Number 2, (2005): 133-148.

10 Schultz, “Translating Intersectionality Theory into Practice”.

11 Sarah Cemlyn, Maggie Smith-Bendell, Siobhan Spencer and Sally Woodbury, “Gender and Community Activism” in *Hearing the Voices of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: inclusive community development*, ed. Andrew Ryder, Sarah Cemlyn, and Thomas Acton (Bristol: Policy Press, 2014), 155-176.

12 Oprea, “The Arranged Marriage of Ana Maria Cioaba”.

or specific policies for Romani women¹³ that incorporate the intersectional disadvantages of gender, poverty and ethnicity. Alliances between Romani women and *Gadje* have been explored in the literature, emphasising the centrality for *Gadje* of reflection on privilege and of engagement in learning from Romani perspectives,^{14,15} and this holds true across all Roma/non-Roma alliances. Some argue that alliances within and between social movements are also central to the promotion of social justice. The work of black feminist scholars has been a crucial inspiration for Romani feminists, yet anti-racist campaigns have often excluded Roma. We may be at a point where a fully inclusive European Roma Movement could take the lead in developing a cross-cutting social justice movement.

Theorising intersectionality within Romani Studies is undoubtedly a challenging, yet much-needed direction to explore further for academics. In this section, a group of excellent scholars is unpacking this very question.

Jelena Jovanovic and Anna Daróczy underline the critical relevance of feminist ideologies in the struggle for Roma rights. Reflecting on the conference, the authors powerfully claim that “the Romani movement must incorporate intersectional approach to a higher extent in order to avoid a narrow Romani identity politics that assume national

identity as having exclusive relevance to experiences of Romani people at any given.” Daniel Baker, in his insightful and engaging piece based on his MA thesis, notes the critical absence of published literature on the topic of LGBTQIA Roma, and thus Baker’s article provides a unique insight into the lives of Gay Gypsies in the UK. In a similarly distinctive, blunt and thought-provoking article by Dezső Máté, based on fifteen personal narrative interviews with LGBTQIA Roma, the author cogently presents Gay Roma identities and the surrounding sets of discourses. Finally Angéla Kóczé’s invaluable article draws our attention to the role of power in the construction of truth and knowledge within Roma-related academic discourse, and the role feminist theory plays in that process. She applies feminist theory to expose the racist and masculine nature of the dominant knowledge-making process.

The conference *Nothing about us without us?* and also this section in the Roma Rights Journal encourage development of and support for feminist research and theorisation. Our vision is to produce a more inclusive knowledge on Roma without being trapped in the reproduction of patriarchal dominant knowledge-making processes. We hope that this section is read as a call for more reflection on various privileges and for the production of more feminist knowledge.

13 Kóczé, *Missing Intersectionality*.

14 Oprea, “Re-envisioning Social Justice from the Ground Up”.

15 Schultz, “Translating Intersectionality Theory into Practice”.

Still Missing Intersectionality: The relevance of feminist methodologies in the struggle for the rights of Roma

JELENA JOVANOVIĆ AND ANNA CSILLA DARÓCZI

The relationship between feminist ideologies and the political discourse of Romani people was recognised as important at the Budapest conference we participated in in October 2014. *Nothing about us without us? Roma participation in knowledge production and policymaking* was a “unique three-day gathering of Roma activists and thinkers”, as defined by the organisers. We agree. It was a unique gathering. We cannot think of another space created for Romani feminist and LGBT-QIA¹ scholars and activists to come together and share their knowledge and ideas. Yet the conference also turned out to be rather predictable: there was a lack of understanding that the complexity of Romani people’s identities needs to be recognised within Romani political discourses.

In this paper, we argue that the Romani movement must incorporate intersectional approaches to a greater extent in order to avoid a narrow Romani identity politics that assumes national identity as having exclusive relevance to the experiences of Romani people at any given time. At the above-mentioned conference we were strongly affected by those voices we strive to challenge, those who recreated misconceptions that “feminism produces separatism within the Romani movement” and that “we [Romani political actors] are concerned only with national or ethnic identity”. We believe that these misconceptions are based on the lack of understanding and/or the lack of acknowledgment of our feminism and intersectionality as the main approach originating in the feminist scholarship we strive to incorporate into the movement. Angéla Kóczé has already argued for intersectionality as a tool to bring more inclusive discourses into the Romani movement and she rightly noted “[t]he meeting of feminism and Romani politics has already transformed internal discourses within the Roma movements”.² However, our experiences show that intersectionality should be incorporated to a greater extent in order to make the discourses within the Romani movement more inclusive.

We will argue for including intersectional approaches to a higher extent into the Romani movement’s discourse by:

1. Explaining the concept of intersectionality and why it is relevant in the context of the movement;
2. Emphasising the relevance of intersectionality in the discourse so as to push for the recognition of intersectionality as a methodology that helps to identify and expose disadvantages faced by Romani boys and men as well as women;
3. Pointing out the ways intersectionality goes against the elitism of the movement’s discourses by denying both isolation and hierarchy of social categories;
4. Explaining the need for the creation of a safer place for suppressed people, for example, Romani lesbians and;
5. Touching upon the idea of intersectional methodology (making alliances) as a strategy which can strengthen the movement itself.

Intersectionality is one of the feminist theories and methodologies that might help more people become reflective to the hybrid structures of inequalities that Roma face. The main idea is based on experiences of “women of colour”. Advocates of intersectionality argue that categories of difference (such as gender, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality) work together to create specific experiences for people in the complexity of power relations. It has been a long time since Kimberlé Crenshaw noted that feminist efforts to place women’s experiences on the political agenda and anti-racist efforts to place experiences of people of colour on the political agenda have frequently appeared as these experiences occur in isolation from each other. She notes “[a]lthough racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and anti-racist practices”.³ One of her conclusions is that “when the practices expound identity as ‘woman’ or ‘person of color’ as an *either/or* proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location

1 ‘LGBT’ is a well-known umbrella term used to refer to *lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender*. We use ‘LGBTQIA’ to intentionally include and visualize *queer, intersex and asexual*.

2 Angéla Kóczé, *Missing Intersectionality: Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe*, Center for Policy Studies Working Papers, (Budapest: CEU Center for Policy Studies, 2009).

3 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review*, Volume 43:6, (1991): 1241-1299.

that resists telling.”⁴ We also emphasise the importance of the mentioned conclusion because of the introduction of one of us as someone who “shifted from the Romani to the feminist movement”. This expounded our identities as an either/or proposition, which further implied that one can fight *either* for Romani *or* for women’s rights. We could even argue that this resulted in a discursive creation of us as outsiders in relation to the Romani movement.

Angéla Kóczé, following influential black feminist critiques, has written extensively on the situations of Romani women and argued for the need for specific measures to address intersectional discrimination faced by Romani women all over Europe. “The development of intersectional approaches and methods”, she stated, “might bring a new transformational politics in Europe, which will recognize and address Romani women’s issue and social position [because] [d]ominant anti-discrimination policies are not sufficient to address various forms of intersecting inequalities in social policies.”⁵ We would not disagree with Kóczé, but would like to add the relevance of intersectional approaches in also identifying and revealing disadvantages that Romani boys and men face in different contexts.

Feminists are most frequently understood as those fighting only for women’s rights. This may be true for many, but not for all. Feminism helps us understand that Romani men’s experiences are also intersectional. Many Romani men are positioned in “a location that resists telling”. Applying the relationship between intersectionality and relevance of the context may lead to a better understanding of the unprivileged positions of Romani boys and men in certain situations. For example, the dominance of understanding Romani women as facing “double” (based on their gender and ethnic origin) or “multiple” discrimination (sometimes *class* and rarely *sexuality* are added to the picture) ignores contexts in which Romani boys are almost exclusively vulnerable to specific forms of trafficking in human beings, such as in the case of street children in Belgrade. The ignorance of the political and policy discourse towards Romani boys (the failure to examine *gender relations* rather than *gender identity*, their socioeconomic position, ethnic belonging, age, sexuality) and

towards the context results in a lack of prevention, assistance and protection measures for Romani boys.⁶

Importantly, Romani men and women do not have an equal share of experiences of sexism, anti-Gypsyism, classism, heterosexism, islamophobia, ageism and many other scourges of our culture. Family background, socioeconomic status, place of residence and many other factors help build power structures within the group. Statements implying that “we are concerned with national or ethnic identity” in the struggle for the rights of Roma assume that all Roma are in the same power-position in each context and disregard all other dimensions of our identities as those of high political relevance. What we would like to emphasise is that this statement is elitist and that the leaders of the Romani movement often seem not to consider elitism when conceptualising their ideas. Being an activist within the Romani movement seems to require considerable privilege, which is not available to individuals who understand their own identities as more complex and fluid. We believe that the voices which promote feminism as a tool for separatism must better understand and reflect on their own power-positions within.

The elitism of the political movement is reflected in the unrealistic expectations of the members of the group, and not only of activists. In order to start practicing intersectionality we need to become curious about alternatives and silences. This is another important lesson we have learned from feminists. We found that alternative and missing narratives are exactly the narratives which point to the specific power-positions of Roma, both within Romani communities and in relation to ‘others’. For example, even though many Romani activists strongly promote the free expression of ‘Romani identity’, a woman activist from Macedonia challenges this elitist discourse by saying that she would not expect this from a woman who would rather hide her Romani origin in order to get a job and feed her children.⁷ In sum, statements implying that “we are concerned only with national or ethnic identity” suggest that national or ethnic dimensions of our identities somehow exist isolated from other dimensions, as referred to

4 Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins”.

5 Kóczé, *Missing Intersectionality*.

6 Jelena Jovanovic, “‘Vulnerability of Roma’ in Policy Discourse on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings in Serbia: Perspectives of the National Policy Actors”, Center for Policy Studies Working Papers, (Budapest: CEU Center for Policy Studies, 2015).

7 Enisa Eminovska’s video message, part of the *I’m a Roma Woman* campaign, is available at: <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=256>.

by Crenshaw. Secondly, they imply that nationality or ethnicity is of higher relevance compared to other dimensions. This isolation and hierarchy exist, but exclusively on a discursive level, not in people's everyday realities. Intersectionality clearly denies both isolation and hierarchy of social categories. Intersectionality is therefore very much still of relevance in rethinking Romani politics.

Putting intersectionality into practice can make our Romani movement less fragmented, by accepting those who are rejected. Romani women, for example, often make alliances with non-Romani women, on the ground of common dimensions of identity, such as suppressed gender identity and sexuality. The main value embodied in these processes is *solidarity*. Some Romani lesbians in Serbia, like Tamara, find their safe place in lesbian activist groups where they do not feel rejected because of their sexual identity.⁸ However, some other Romani lesbians in Serbia experience the lack of a friendly environment among mainstream LGBTQIA movements while at the same time facing rejection from Roma. If Romani political actors employed a stronger and more inclusive discourse on intersectionality (not only including *gender* and *ethnicity* in the story), this could perhaps create a safer space for people within Romani political arenas.

Alliances within and between social movements attract the attention of many scholars. This growing interest has been reflected in many works of leading experts on equality activism in the areas of gender, LGBTQIA, race and ethnicity, education, and anti-poverty. The interests of these scholars lead them to reveal different conditions for mobilisation in different parts of the world and the role of institutions in relation to intersectional activism, which is a rich source that argues for the necessity of building stronger coalitions. For example, one of the strong arguments for making alliances is related to the fact that the European Union strives to move towards policies that address multiple inequalities. Including intersectionality as a methodological tool for the Romani movement could

help us understand the ways policies are set up and developed on a supranational level.⁹ Secondly, creating alliances with other social justice movements encourages solidarity around wider social justice interests.¹⁰ Studying alliances within and between social movements is outside the scope of this paper, but it is important to be grappled with in the future so that we could also argue for the concrete strategic opportunities of joint political actions. However, we are aware of the challenges of these processes as well, as it has been clearly stated that “[i]n these fragmented times [...] it is both very difficult to build these alliances and never more important to do so”.¹¹

In this paper, we intended to confront statements such as “feminism produces separatism within the Romani movement” or “we are concerned only with ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ identity”. Because of our understanding of these statements as misconceptions related to the lack of understanding of our feminism and intersectionality, we partly explained what we mean by feminism in relation to the Romani movement and why we think that the movement still misses and still needs intersectionality. We argued that ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ identities do not have exclusive relevance to the experiences of Romani people at any given time and that this is why the Romani movement must strive to make its discourse intersectional. The complexity of Romani people's identities needs to be firstly recognised and secondly acknowledged as politically relevant in order to make discourses within the Romani movement more inclusive.

We repeated what some Romani feminists and LGBTQIA and women's activists argued for two decades, but we also hope to add some important points. One of these points is very practically oriented - that an intersectional approach is also relevant in identifying and revealing disadvantages that Romani boys and men face in different contexts. Secondly, we want people to pay more attention to alternative and missing narratives because these are the narratives which point to the specific power relations within. We wanted to

8 Tamara Mitić's video message, part of the campaign *Month of Romani Women's Activism* is available in Serbian and Romani at: <https://vimeo.com/123207307>.

9 For a critical analysis of the EU multiple inequalities agenda see: Mieke Verloo, “Multiple Inequalities, Intersectionality and the European Union”, *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Volume 13 (3), (2006): 211-228.

10 Jane Parker, “The TUC and Civil Alliance Building: Towards social movement unionism?”, (Paper presented at the AIRAANZ (Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand) conference, Melbourne, February 2008), available at: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/research/irru/publications/recentconf/jp__airaanz_paper.doc.pdf.

11 Cited in Lyndi Hewitt, “Framing across Differences, Building Solidarities: Lessons from women's rights activism in transnational spaces”, in *A Journal for and about Social Movements*, Volume 3 (2), (2011), 65-99.

point out that intersectionality denies isolation and hierarchy of social categories, such as gender, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality. Thirdly, and maybe one of the most important points, fighting for more inclusive discourses could help intersectional methodologies enter into practice in terms of involving now suppressed and excluded Romani identities in the mass we are striving to make critical. Finally, a better understanding of the concept of intersectionality might make the movement itself more inclusive to Romani feminist and LGBTQAI people/activists, which is a mobilisation strategy that has already proven efficient within women's movements, for example, but which seems to have its ups and downs when it comes to the Romani movement.

The Romani movement needs a higher level of solidarity among Roma themselves to be able to fight its own

limits. If we fight for equality but suppress voices within, we praise nothing but hypocrisy and leave so many voices unheard. Therefore, the struggle for Romani rights must be a struggle for and with all Roma. We still need intersectionality to shape political discourses and conduct. If the Romani movement does not do this, it will further expose power relations and help preserve or even increase its own vulnerabilities. Romani feminist and LGBTQAI scholars and activists are often understood as those who fight for some "other rights" if they do not make the national or ethnic dimension of their identities central to their politics. If Romani political actors do not employ a stronger and more inclusive discourse on intersectionality (and not only including *gender* and *ethnicity* in the story), Romani political discourse is in danger of continuing to produce misunderstandings among people who in fact have the same goals.

Speaking from the Margins

ANGÉLA KÓCZÉ

The development of the women's movement in the 1960s and 70s fundamentally challenged the traditional epistemology and methods of social science. One of the main questions raised by feminist scholars has been the dominant understanding of the genealogy of knowledge and knowledge production. The work of the French postmodern critical theorist Michel Foucault on power and knowledge provided a solid foundation for feminist theorists to develop further their theoretical and empirical understanding of social science. Foucault uses the term "power/knowledge" in his work to articulate the view that power is created and recreated through accepted forms of knowledge.¹ In his work he refers to "*scientific truth*" as a knowledge which is produced based on consensus by multiple forms of constraint. This short article will be published in the Roma Right Journal, which is more of an applied Human Rights Journal than a scientific one. However it is still considered as a source of knowledge-making on Roma from a human rights point of view. Also, human rights as an applied field of knowledge has been shaped greatly by various 'truth regimes' or theoretical perspectives such as the 'rights-based approach' which has been evident in the last two decades in various Roma-related policies.

So, one of the main claims by critical feminists is that "truth" can be explained and defined from various positions and eventually that specific knowledge is thus political.² Feminist theorists claim that knowledge is never detached, but is rather embedded in a specific social, political and historical context. Black feminist and sociologist Patricia Hill Collins succinctly explains: "what to believe and why something is true are not benign academic issues. Instead, these concerns tap the fundamental question of which versions of truth will prevail and shape thought and action."³ So, regarding Roma-related academic discourses, one of the main questions was which version is the most dominant in social and political discourses? I argue, in accordance with feminist theorists, that it always depends on the prevailing power

and the validation of the academic community. Who has greater credentials in the academic community? Who has the power to delegitimise knowledge experiences or views that produce from a different position and epistemological perspective? These are the concerns that need to be problematised in connection with power and knowledge, and they might ultimately reveal some invisible privilege that profoundly shapes the legitimacy of knowledge.

Romani Studies is a developing interdisciplinary academic field that has been created mainly by non-Roma scholars. I argue that discourses on Roma, as with other socially constructed knowledge, are not separated from the influence of racial epistemologies. Drawing on the literature of feminist methodology and epistemology, I will expose how the infusion of hidden racism and power relations in Romani Studies and discourses on Roma can urge us to practice the act of critical reflexivity that creates a new, inclusive and critical perspective.

Despite feminist and critical theorists' extensive work on the dynamic of knowledge and power, Roma-related studies still have not reflected on and do not problematise the unambiguous positions and powers which shape the very nature of Roma-related knowledge. At this time, as we witness the emergence of a thin, insecure and fragile section of Romani intellectuals, one of the contested issues raised by them is the theme of Roma in knowledge production. If we take this to the next step then the following question can be posed: what does the significance of that issue reveal about this contentious field?

In the last couple of years there have been a variety of questions that have emerged from Roma scholars' discussions and debates with other members of the academy and beyond. For instance questions such as the following: Who benefits from the knowledge which has been produced on Roma? Whose knowledge is recognised and validated? In other words, who has the epistemic authority and privilege

1 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

2 Linda Martín Alcoff, *Real Knowing: New Versions of Coherence Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

3 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

in Roma-related knowledge production? These are major issues that need to be discussed in a sincere way. The denial and banality of these questions in academia leads to disguising the fact that the system is structurally unfair and maintains a systemic disadvantage for the Roma.

However, it is important to differentiate between epistemic authority and epistemic privilege, which are connected but are not the same. Maria Janack noted “epistemic authority is conferred ... as a result of other people’s judgment of our sincerity, reliability, trustworthiness, and ‘objectivity’; certain people are in a better position to ‘see’ the world than are other people.”⁴ Contrary to this, epistemic privilege is socially more complex and tied to opportunities which are structured by gender, race, class, sexuality, citizenship, social network, even institutional belonging, and so on. Eventually, for those who have opportunities to speak to the centre, they can do that either from their own subject position, or they were promoted by others who have power and created an opportunity for those whose voices are silenced in a mainstream academic context. Epistemic privilege is rather a flexible, temporal and spatial position. Regarding knowledge-making on Roma, the epistemic authority is usually by default controlled by non-Roma scholars and policy makers. However, currently there are some Roma who are involved in knowledge-making processes, and while they have a certain configuration or specific space for some epistemic privilege, they still lack epistemic authority.

Concerning the validation of Roma-related studies, there is a tacit consensus that non-Roma are in a better position to provide a more reliable and objective account of the situation of Roma. This assumption is based on the premise of ‘objectivity’ which has been challenged by feminist theorists. However, as I mentioned above, the epistemic privilege in a certain position can also be possessed by Roma, depending on their gender, class and even their geopolitical position. For example, a Romani person educated and placed in a ‘western’

academic setting may be considered to be in a higher position than someone else who is coming from so-called ‘eastern’ academia. Furthermore, a Romani person working in a powerful institution may carry more institutional weight and credentials than anyone else who is working in a less powerful institution, regardless of their personal academic achievement.

Many postcolonial and feminist theorists also refer to the geopolitical structures of dominance and control which provide more epistemic privilege for those who are located in a dominant geography.⁵ In Roma-related knowledge-making process, Roma and non-Roma experts and scholars who are from a ‘western’ geopolitical location, particularly from an English-speaking country, still usually maintain language and knowledge hierarchies and asymmetrical power relations. A significant number of Roma intellectuals from Central and South-Eastern Europe thus have limited access to English resources and their work and efforts remain invisible.

The various privileges will become clearer when we apply them to a particular example and context. For instance, the current discussion about the forthcoming European Roma Institute (ERI) illustrates how Roma presence and voice in an academic context is still not validated. In fact, it can be disqualified, questioned and violently contested by non-Roma/white scholars.⁶ It is somewhat uncomfortable even to react to such critiques of the ERI as were raised publicly by the European Academic Network on Romani Studies (EANRS) and Yaron Matras, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Manchester and also a member of the Scientific Committee of EANRS.⁷ His critique was driven by the joint statement of Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and George Soros, founder and chairman of Open Society Foundations, announcing the creation of a European Roma Institute. Matras’ main concern was that the ERI was initiated by Soros and the Council of Europe rather than Roma themselves.⁸

4 Marianne Janack, “Standpoint Epistemology Without the ‘Standpoint’? An Examination of Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Authority”, *Hypatia* Number 12 (1997): 125-139.

5 See Ramón Grosfoguel, “Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality”, 4 July 2008, available at: http://www.humandee.org/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=111.

6 The European Academic Network on Romani Studies issued a highly critical statement of the European Roma Institute. They argue that knowledge production on the Roma should be located in universities and steered by academic principles and scholars of repute. The statement is available at: http://romanistudies.eu/.../RAN_paper_on_ERI_30April2014/.

7 Yaron Matras, “Why plans for a European Roma Institute might be a setback for Europe’s Roma”, London School of Economics, EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/04/16/why-plans-for-a-european-roma-institute-might-be-a-setback-for-europes-roma/>.

8 George Soros & Thorbjørn Jagland, “Why We Are Setting Up a European Roma Institute”, Open Society Foundations Voices Blog, (an article which originally appeared in *European Voice* on March 26, 2015), available at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/why-we-are-setting-european-roma-institute>.

There were some direct and indirect public reactions to the critique of the ERI from the EANRS and Yaron Matras. For instance, Andrew Ryder facilitated a public discussion on critical knowledge-making with his working paper, as an indirect reaction to the statement by the EANRS.⁹ In 2012, Thomas Acton's resignation from the Scientific Committee¹⁰ was a protest against the approach of the EANRS towards Roma in knowledge-making, an approach which was uncovered in their statement against the ERI. Acton started his resignation letter with the following statement:

“[...] I feel compelled to offer my resignation to the Scientific Committee of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies. At a recent meeting of the Brentwood Gypsy Support Group, of which I am secretary, our Chair, Bernadette Reilly articulated the policy to which everyone assented, “Nothing about us, without us”. I cannot honourably remain secretary of the Brentwood Gypsy Support Group and at the same time be part of an all-gajo/buffer committee which purports to represent adequately scholarship in Romani Studies without any participation of Roma/Gypsies/Travellers.”¹¹

Furthermore, in response to the EANRS statement on the ERI there was substantial argument and criticism articulated by a number of critical scholars, coordinated by Anna Mirga who called for the resignation of the Committee and the holding of a new election. However, at the 7th Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the EANRS in Paris on 7 November 2014, the Committee decided to vote down the request to organise a new election.

Matras' critical statement (in his personal capacity) on the ERI reinvigorated the official statement of the EANRS.¹² I use this statement as an example of how epistemic authority has been claimed and manifested as an exclusive power of non-Roma scholars, to maintain

hegemony over Roma-related knowledge production. Furthermore, I would like to discuss how Roma intellectuals who have epistemic privilege in the development of the ERI are positioned by Matras as controllers and dominant figures in Romani Studies, and identity ‘traders’ who are marketing their identities to gain recognition based clearly on their ethnic identity. Matras' remarks illustrate the colonial hierarchy in which Romani scholars are located either at the very bottom of academia or are not accepted at all as scholars. He described the group of Romani intellectuals as follows: “The group seemed to come from nowhere: They had no track record of local leadership, no experience in cultural management, and no academic publications to their names. But they claimed a connection to Romani ancestry and appeared to have powerful friends.”¹³ Later in the text he refers again to these Romani intellectuals as a group of Roma who are “guided by the philosophy that self-ascribed ancestry should override formal qualification”.

Without going into the academic and professional backgrounds of the Roma proponents of the ERI initiative, a group which does in fact include PhD holders and established researchers with extensive track records of publication, this kind of language is not just aggressive but also very intimidating for many Roma who want to work in any academic context. It is similar in fact to the larger phenomenon described as silencing black scholars in a white academic space by postcolonial theorist Grada Kilomba.¹⁴ I am not surprised that such a position of marginality also evokes pain and stigmatises Romani scholars, in an academic context which is predominantly white. Grada Kilomba theorises the academic space as an oppressive institution with regard to the representation of Black people:

“This is a white space where Black people have been denied the privilege to speak. Historically, this is a space

9 See Andrew Ryder, *Co-producing Knowledge with below the radar communities: Factionalism, Commodification or Partnership? A Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Case Study* (University of Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre Working Paper, 2015). Available at: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/documents/tsrc/discussion-papers/2015/gtr-discussion-paper-g-ryder-28janfinal.pdf>.

10 European Academic Network on Romani Studies, “The Election for the Scientific Committee (February-March 2012)”, available at: <http://romanistudies.eu/news/the-election-for-the-scientific-committee/>.

11 Thomas Acton. Resignation from the Scientific Committee of the EANRS, 10 July 2012, available at: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/roma_files/HZHYbPRRuOY.

12 Matras, “Why plans for a European Roma Institute might be a setback for Europe's Roma” (LSE blog, 16 April 2015) available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/04/16/why-plans-for-a-european-roma-institute-might-be-a-setback-for-europes-roma/>.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Grada Kilomba, *Africans in Academia – Diversity in Adversity*, available at: <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/miscellanies/netzwerk/mira-38541/299/PDF/299.pdf>. This essay is part of the author's book: see Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, (Münster: Unrast, 2008).

where we have been voiceless and where white scholars have developed theoretical discourses which officially constructed us as the inferior ‘Other’ – placing Africans in complete subordination to the white subject. Here, we were made inferior, our bodies described, classified, dehumanized, primitivized, brutalized and even killed. We are therefore, in a space which has a very problematic relationship to Blackness. Here, we were made the objects, but we have rarely been the subjects.”¹⁵

Romani scholars, in contrast to Black intellectuals, have only recently arrived to the stage when they have to confront and challenge the academic establishment. Right now Romani intellectuals are in a historical moment when they use their epistemic privilege to ‘speak back’ to the dominant cluster of scholars who created discourses and knowledge systems about Roma that objectify them. This ‘position of objecthood’ is inevitably challenged by Romani scholars with the proposition to create a Romani-led institution such as the ERI that will ultimately claim some space and authority in academia. The arrogant reaction of Matras to describe Romani scholars, as noted above, as a group of ‘self-ascribed’ Roma who in his words had no

track record of local leadership, no experience in cultural management, and no academic publications to their names is part of the larger institutional racism and hegemonic masculinity that systematically disqualifies and invalidates the knowledge of black/coloured/feminist scholars. Even though some of his points are relevant and would merit some discussion, these have been diminished by the violent, tone of the statement.

One of the possible strategies could be to ignore these kinds of flawed arguments and keep the pain as a private matter. However, this strategy would keep Romani scholars silenced and we would never start to deconstruct the knowledge production at the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality (just to mention a few sensitive categories). Now it is time for Romani intellectuals to use their epistemic privilege, what has been created by the process of institutional change, such as the establishment of the ERI, not to mirror and reproduce dominant masculine power games and hegemony but rather to create and foster reflection, dialogue and cooperation between Roma and non-Roma in order to emancipate the subjugated knowledge.

15 *Ibid.*

The Queer Gypsy

DANIEL BAKER

This paper summarises the dissertation submitted in completion of my MA in Gender and Ethnic Studies at the University of Greenwich, London in 2002. The research examined how ‘out’ Gay Romanies reconcile disparate and/or conflicting identity positions within their familial and cultural milieux. In-depth interview data was analysed in the light of contemporary identity theory in order to uncover narratives that convey what it means for some to be both Gay and Romani.

The scarcity of published material relating to the subject of this research at the time necessitated the gathering of primary data via four sixty-minute interviews during which questions were asked to gain insight into the life trajectory of four Gay Gypsies living in the UK whom I named Alex (22), Ben (29), Chris (30) and Dean (37). These men replied to an advertisement placed by myself in the classified sections of a number of free national Gay publications. The advertisement was worded thus; “Gay Gypsy would like to meet other Gay Gypsies”, myself being the singular “Gay Gypsy”. During interviews each subject was asked about their early life experience, coming out and its repercussions, recognition of others and their strategies for negotiating their Gypsy and their Gay identities.

Early attempts to publish my findings within the Romani Studies field soon after completion of my MA proved fruitless. Several re-workings at peer review request failed to convince of the relevance of the research despite initial claims of interest in printing the study. I decided not to follow further requests to prove the significance of the paper, instead using my findings as a starting point from which to examine broader questions of Roma visibility within my PhD research into Gypsy aesthetics.

Recent publications on the subject of alternative Roma sexualities such as Vera Kurtić’s *Džuvljanke – Roma Lesbian*

*Existance*¹ and *Gypsy Boy*² published under the pseudonym Mikey Walsh suggest that the wider bearing of the subject matter of this paper may now be emerging. This desire for discursive expression from the Romani perspective reflects wider moves within Roma discourse toward the dissemination of new knowledge by our own experts and academics rather than of a long-established elite.

The terms Gypsy, Roma and Romani are intended as interchangeable throughout the text.

Identities

The main thrust of modern sociological debate concerning identity has been to challenge earlier essentialist understandings of the concept. These earlier versions assume a unique and fixed core to individual identity, one that is virtually constant throughout life. Contrasting these ideas are the more recent sociological and psychoanalytic theories that explore the concept of identity as constructed.

“Identifications are never fully or finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted, and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshaled, consolidated, retrenched, contested and, on occasion, compelled to give away.”³

Here Butler suggests that identity is not fixed but fluid, open to continual negotiation and influence – that we locate our sense of self in relation to the circumstances around us. One of the concerns of this paper is how we as individuals develop multiple facets of our identity and how we then combine and manage these elements. Ideas of identity as fluid, changeable and open to influence are explored in the work of Hall⁴ and Gilroy⁵ and

1 Vera Kurtić, *Džuvljanke – Roma Lesbian Existance* (Niš: Ženski Prostor, 2014).

2 Mikey Walsh, *Gypsy Boy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009).

3 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), 105.

4 Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who needs ‘Identity’?”, in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Routledge, 1996).

5 Paul Gilroy, “Diaspora and the detours of identity”, in *Identity and Difference*, ed. Kathryn Woodward (London: Sage, 1997).

foregrounded by the writings of Michel Foucault,⁶ whose emphasis on the multiplicity of identity has become central to many recent accounts of the subject.

Foucault suggests that as individuals we are capable of inhabiting multiple identities, and that as such we may offer divergent and contradictory versions of the self depending on our perceived location within any particular discourse. His work focuses on the development of individuality in all its modern forms within a web of power relations. As well as indicating that as individuals we are addressed by a range of possible versions of ourselves, he suggests that the multiple identities inhabited by us in relation to various social practices are themselves linked to larger structures of identity – structures such as class, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality, all of which continually interact with each other throughout our lives. The contingent nature of identity allows fundamental aspects of identity to be concealed (or revealed) at will. Patterns of concealment (passing) and revelation (coming out) are well practiced amongst the two groups examined in this paper and are examined in more detail below.

The construction of sexual identities and ethnic identities differ in fundamental ways. Sexual identification (sexuality) describes behaviours and their associations with a set of desires, whereas ethnic identity is determined at birth through parentage and location. One is seemingly predetermined and the other ‘acquired’. As discussed earlier, all aspects of our identity are open to change and re-invention but certain elements, such as skin colour or birthplace, are fixed. Although the constructions of ethnic and sexual identities differ fundamentally, there remain parallels within the construction of Gay and Gypsy identities. Both are informed by oppressive external definition, and both groups possess a heightened facility to manipulate identity owing to the relative absence of distinguishing physical signifiers.

Passing

The term ‘passing’ is used in the context of this research to describe the way in which a person may choose to conceal

aspects of their identity in order to pass as a member of a group other than their own. “The question of what can and cannot be spoken, what can and cannot be publicly exposed, is raised throughout the text, and it is linked with the larger question of the dangers of public exposure of both colour and desire.”

Here Butler⁷ describes the 1929 novella *Passing* by the black author Nella Larsen in which the author deals with the processes and implications of a black woman passing as white – a mechanism that clearly requires sufficient ambiguity of appearance or behaviour to pass. Ian Hancock writes: “I know of very few Roma who weren’t warned as children to keep their ethnicity to themselves outside of the community”.⁸ Both Gays and Gypsies have historically been well placed to employ strategic ‘passing’, with self-protection or ease of passage determining when and where to pass as straight or non-Gypsy. Here ethnicity and sexuality mirror each other within cycles of concealment and revelation. Similar concurrency is explored in relation to the Gay Jewish community in the book *Twice Blessed; on being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish*: “like Jews who assimilate, we learn to ‘pass’ as heterosexual – dressing the part, omitting a lover’s gender from conversation, or refraining from public displays of affection. Passing not only hurts ourselves but also the communities in which we live, which don’t reap the benefits of our authentic participation.”⁹

Although passing can “hurt” all involved, its instrumentality cannot be underestimated. This is not to suggest that passing is ever an easy option. Just as the process of passing can offer safety from attack, it also carries with it the constant anxiety of ‘being seen’.

Diaspora identities

“[Diaspora] introduces the possibility of an historical rift between the location of residence and the location of belonging. Diaspora demands the recognition of inter-culture.”¹⁰

The inter-cultural terms Gypsy and Queer are both used to describe globally linked collectivities of identity rather than

6 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (London: Allen Lane, 1979).

7 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 268.

8 Ian Hancock, “The Struggle for the Control of Identity”, *Roma Participation Program Reporter* 1 (1) (1998): 3.

9 Christie Balka and Andy Rose, *Twice Blessed: on being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 4.

10 Paul Gilroy, “Between Camps: Race and Culture in Postmodernity. An Inaugural lecture”, *Economy and Society*, Volume 28, Number 2 (1999): 190.

fixed identity positions. This ‘un-fixity’ relates not only to the range of possibilities within each identity position but also to the persistence of community and cultural values independent of geographical territory. Both are in essence stateless collectives, one established through a ‘blood’ network, and the other through a network of identification and recognition.

Collective identities are generally created through recognition of commonality – shared origin, common goals or characteristics. Without disregarding the importance of this mirroring process, Stuart Hall stresses the overriding influence of difference in our construction of identity. He suggests that identities are “more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity”.¹¹ In other words commonalities are important – but identities are also defined and constructed through contrast. These ideas are echoed in the work of Paul Gilroy in which he examines the construction of diaspora identities in relation to host societies. He suggests that concepts of collective identity are generally promoted and perceived as natural (or mythic), concealing the fact that they have, at some time, been socially constructed. Gilroy uses the concept of diaspora to examine cross-national workings of identity formation, questioning the relevance of identity as fixed and unchanging. Where diaspora challenges the idea of identity as essential and absolute, it also disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity: “[diaspora] stages the dynamic processes of identity formation in a specific manner, accentuating the power that people enjoy to create themselves and their distinctive cultures where this cannot be openly acknowledged.”¹²

Gilroy’s work focuses on race and the cultural crossings thereof yet it is clear that the ideas as expressed above have resonance beyond the realm of ethnicity – the workings of cultural identity management in the face of discrimination are pertinent to many groups. In her article *Evaluating ‘Diaspora’: Beyond Ethnicity*,¹³ Anthias challenges the stark absence of gender concerns in discussions of diaspora identities. Equally absent from the debate are issues relating to sexual orientation and the increased possibilities for hybridity that they introduce. Concerns regarding belonging and displacement are not exclusive to racial and ethnic groupings, but are transferable to many collectivities.

Sexuality often produces forced migration from family and community. Border crossings and settlements need not be geographic in order to construct a diasporic identity. The traversal of cultural and emotional territory can produce a similar sensibility. This is evident in the experience of Gay Gypsies in their parallel negotiations of sexuality, ethnicity and belonging in the light of multiple prejudices.

Analysis

During the interviews questions were asked in order to gain insight into the accommodations and adaptations that Gay Romanies make *vis-à-vis* their families and community. All those interviewed were ‘out’ men, it should therefore be made clear that this sample group cannot be wholly indicative of the attitudes and experience of Gay Gypsies in general. The nature of research suggests that those who have experienced difficulty in their lives may be more willing to speak to researchers than those who have not. It is therefore possible that the life experiences of some of those interviewed here may have prompted a greater desire to tell their story. This, however, does not make any testimony more or less valid than another.

Detachment

The interview data showed that all four men have experienced both emotional and physical detachment from their families and communities. This detachment seems to have increased after coming out, suggesting a general unwillingness to remain attached to a community that is unwilling to fully embrace them. Even though all seem essentially proud of their Gypsy roots, all make it clear that their detachment occurred mainly through a difficulty in combining Gayness and Gypsiness. This suggests that in order to live as openly Gay these men compromised their Gypsy identity along with integration within the Gypsy community; a sacrifice that has repercussions both for the individual as well as the families and communities involved. An alternative to this would be to ‘pass’ as non-Gay in the Gypsy community, a device which is much more common than being ‘out’ according to the interview data – but this solution is no less problematic

11 Hall, “Introduction: Who needs ‘Identity?’”, 4.

12 Gilroy, “Diaspora and the detours of identity”, 341.

13 Floya Anthias, “Evaluating ‘Diaspora’: Beyond Ethnicity”, *Sociology*, Volume 32, Number 3.

as Balka and Rose suggest; “Passing not only hurts ourselves but also the communities in which we live, which don’t reap the benefits of our authentic participation”.¹⁴ The interview data suggests that *not* passing also deprives all parties from “*authentic participation*”. If being ‘out’ and being ‘closeted’ both result in dislocation within the Gypsy community, it is clear that any attempts to integrate Gay and Gypsy aspects of identity will be problematic until core attitudes towards Gayness within the Gypsy communities change.

Invisibility

All four men reported very little contact with other Gay Gypsies. It seems that they have become conditioned by the absence of models of diverse sexuality within their communities – not expecting to see, and so not seeing others like themselves. This suggests that the reported lack of mirroring throughout life has led to a fragmented sense of self – a lack of internal vocabulary with which to construct an inclusive self that enables one to see oneself reflected in others. A similar fragmentation is apparent in the way that Gypsies are portrayed and perceived by wider society. Van de Port writes of the role of the Gypsy in the popular Serbian imagination: “the figure of the Gypsy functioned as a repository for all kinds of other shapes and guises”.¹⁵ As well as referring to the Gypsy’s historic associations with camouflage and identity manipulation Van de Port’s words highlight the ambiguity and confusion in the way that Gypsies are seen. I suggest that Gypsy communities have internalised this uncertainty over time, making for a marked dislocation between identity and self-perception – a position that has made it difficult for Gypsies to fully see themselves in the world and therefore claim their space in it. This dislocation informs the Gay Gypsy’s inability to see themselves clearly – both as Gypsies in the non-Gypsy world and as Gays in the Gypsy world – an identity doubly obscured, invisible all round. Each of us inhabits multiple identities and uses external reference points to compare, contrast and reflect particular aspects of ourselves. The invisibility of Gypsies within society along with the invisibility of Gays in the Gypsy world means that key reference points are missing for Gay

Gypsies; an absence that promotes the invisibility of Gay Gypsies to themselves and to others.

Stigma

My data suggests that those interviewed see non-Gypsy perceptions of Gypsies as similar to Gypsies’ perceptions of Gays, that is, unclean, problematic, threatening and unwelcome. These parallel views have historical resonance in patterns of discrimination experienced by the homosexual and the Gypsy, beginning with shared associations with sorcery in the Middle Ages through to legislation from the 16th century onwards. Perceptions changed to some degree in the 19th century with the growth in attempts at understanding and categorising these two groups from a more scientific point of view resulting in the medicalisation and classification of sexual deviance by Havelock Ellis and the growth of anthropological explorations of Gypsies with the introduction of Gypsyism. The exoticisation of Gays and Gypsies has endured, continuing to associate both the imagined sodomite and the imagined Gypsy with primitive aspects of the human psyche.

The attitudes above suggest that Gay Gypsies experience a similar range of prejudice in whichever environment they might find themselves – unwelcome in either milieu. This doubling of historic negative perceptions inevitably compounds the Gay Gypsy’s outsider sensibility. It also illustrates the performative function of naming, or classification, by deeming those not belonging to the outsider group (Gay and/or Gypsy in this case) as non-deviant and clean.¹⁶ Gay Gypsies face prejudice on both fronts for different aspects of their identity – a scissor hold of intolerance which negates visibility.

Passing

Visibility can also be a matter of choice – environment and circumstance determine when and where respondents reveal their ethnicity, indicating a well-practiced facility for ambiguity. This facility has been drawn upon throughout Romani history and is well documented in literature on Romani identity.¹⁷ The same facility appears to be

14 Balka and Rose, *Twice Blessed: on being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish*, 4.

15 Mattijs van de Port, *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 205.

16 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*. Mary McIntosh, “The homosexual role”, *Social Problems* Volume 16 (1968).

17 Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

employed in relation to the sexual identities of the interviewees, suggesting that the experience of managing their Gypsy identity in early life has informed the eventual management of their Gay identity. Each reported that they usually kept their ethnicity to themselves in order to avoid being pigeonholed and/or having to educate others, but also for self protection. The latter echoes Hancock's recollection of warnings to Roma children to keep their ethnicity hidden and Balka and Rose's reports of Gay Jews passing as heterosexual – of passing as a member of a privileged group in order to avoid being perceived as inferior.¹⁸

The ambiguity involved in ethnic passing is mirrored in that of sexuality. The patterns of management employed for sexual and ethnic representation combine to facilitate the Gay Gypsy's ability to remain invisible in multiple sites. These mechanisms make for a free-floating approach to identity – a facility that allows adaptation at will, but at the cost of constructive community building within this doubly alienated group.

Conclusions

Lack of visibility has been a key issue throughout my analysis. A double invisibility exists for the subjects of this research – invisibility of the Gypsy in society, and the invisibility of Gays in the Gypsy world. The management of Gypsiness in the light of prejudice and misunderstanding afforded by wider society seems to inform the management of Gayness within Gypsy communities. It seems that the way in which one experiences one's Gypsy identity in relation to non-Gypsy society from an early age gives models of process and adaptation that are directly transferable to the management of one's Gay identity in non-Gay environments, suggesting a direct relationship between how Gays position themselves within Romani communities, and how the Romani community positions itself in relation to other groups in society i.e. not truly seen but signified by an array of archetypes that serve to obscure authentic representation and connection. It appears that this learnt behaviour (of 'not being seen') has become difficult for the Gay Gypsy to avoid – a phenomenon reflected in their inability to recognise each other. As the data suggests, seeing Gypsiness in the Gay

space is as alien to our interviewees as seeing Gayness in the Gypsy space – the former negating constructive connection and community building between Gay Gypsies and the latter leading to detachment from family and community, in effect dismantling community.

All those interviewed experienced physical and emotional detachment from their Gypsy communities. These migrations of body and mind have both personal and community resonance for those involved. The term diaspora suggests identification within a "relational network, characteristically produced by forced movement through dispersal and reluctant scattering"¹⁹ and so it seems that 'out' Gay Gypsies are compelled to compound the diaspora narrative by continuing to cross geographic, cultural and behavioural boundaries in their pursuit of acceptance.

All four men reported isolation from other Gays. Meeting another Gay Gypsy (in the interviewer) seems to have presented a rare but welcome opportunity to spend time with someone that they could identify with, or as importantly, identify with them. This suggests an appetite for networks of affiliation and recognition that at present seem absent from Gay Gypsy life – the development of which is dependent upon how openly sexuality is expressed. Several of the respondents to my advertisement were not willing to be interviewed as they were not out to their families and communities but were willing to talk briefly over the telephone about their involvement with other Gay Gypsies. They spoke of networks of Gay Gypsy friends whose sexual identity is kept hidden. The callers revealed an alternative to the detachment experienced by the four recorded interviewees, albeit at the price of open exchange. Their reports along with those of the four men interviewed suggest that in order to maintain full integration into Gypsy communities one has to sacrifice the open expression of sexual identity, and conversely that in order to explore an openly Gay identity one's integration within the Gypsy community is compromised to a significant degree.

The situation outlined above has no winners. More understanding and acceptance of alternative sexualities within Gypsy communities could benefit all. The migration of Gay people from their home environment is not unique

18 Sara Ahmed, "She'll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She's Turned into a Nigger": Passing Through Hybridity", in *Performativity and Belonging*, ed. Vicky Bell (London: Sage Publication, 1999).

19 Gilroy, "Diaspora and the detours of identity", 318.

to Gypsy communities. Gays and Lesbians of any ethnicity, if faced with hostility in their own community will inevitably seek a place of acceptance and understanding in which to conduct their lives. The impact of migrations of Gays and Lesbians from Gypsy groups is perhaps more significant than for other minority groups because of their relatively small populations and their more extreme marginalisation. Greater understanding and acceptance of Gay Gypsies by their own Gypsy communities can only benefit all, both personally and politically. Although the gulf between Gayness and Gypsiness is yet to be bridged by affirmational visible models, I am optimistic that this situation can change: As Gilroy suggests, in reference to

trans-cultural patterns of hybridity in diaspora communities; “inter-mixture is something more than the loss and betrayal that we were always told it must be”.²⁰ Although focusing on the ethno-geographic, these words have resonance for “inter-mixture” between sexuality and ethnicity. The “loss and betrayal” that Gilroy refers to is echoed in the words of those interviewed during my research – but the “*something more*” is yet to be reified. Given time and space an emergence is likely - after all, communities formed by other Gay ethnic minorities flourish, so why not Gay Gypsies. Increased visibility can only create greater confidence and community cohesion amongst Gay Gypsies – a situation that will benefit all.

20 Gilroy, “Between Camps: Race and Culture in Postmodernity”, 195.

Faced with Multiple 'Values' - From the Perspective of the Roma LGBTQ Community

DEZSÓ MÁTÉ

My paper is based on fifteen LGBTQ Roma persons' interviews.¹ I would like to express my gratitude to them for sharing their inner feelings and thoughts about being Roma and an LGBTQ person with me.

The inside-outsider intersection

In what I hope is a thought-provoking article I would like to offer an invigorating view, which is present in everyday life but deeply obscured by controversy, stereotyping and even prejudice.

In this paper I would like to address the issue of the Roma LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer - community and discuss their identity and development stages from the stage of recognition (being multiply 'valued') until the stage of pride. First of all I would like to clarify briefly the meaning of multiple 'values', as used in my title.

The Roma LGBTQ community suffers from multiple discrimination from both the heteronormative majority society and from their own minorities (ethnic and sexual). They face xenophobia in their everyday life because they are Roma² and they struggle with homophobia because of being LGBTQ.³ These two categories lead them to daily actions which are used to hide and mask their real identity. The pressure to maintain this mask is tremendous. It is not enough to be a 'good' Roma, they must be extremely good Roma, outstanding with their study and with their work, they must be well-dressed and in good shape and of course must not show the 'typical Gypsy' stereotypical labels such as being dirty, a thief, vulgar and so on. The other sections of their mask are based on the heteronormative majority - to be a 'macho Gypsy bull' or 'the best traditional Roma housewife', and live what is perceived as a 'normal' life.

For example, from the heteronormative majority point of view the normal (Roma) person has an opposite-sex marriage, has their own children, and has a fixed workplace. From the point of view of the heteronormative minority (Roma) community it is (not obligatory, but) strongly recommended to have a wife who takes the 'traditional housewife position', who is always standing next to her husband and obeys him in every situation, brings up the children, cooks, and stays next to the fireplace. For a heteronormative Roma woman it is also extremely important to have a husband who can protect the family and who can demonstrate to other Roma families the conformity to heteronormative rules.

Roma LGBTQ discourse and representation has only just started to emerge on the scene. Although there is extensive academic literature as well as public discussion about the Roma and about LGBTQ people,⁴ the particular subgroup of LGBTQ Roma is often surrounded by a lack of awareness, taboo, and thus invisibility. If we look deeply and critically at the representations of Roma people we can easily reach some main conclusions. The definition of the identity of the social group is composed of pieces of external knowledge that often include elements which can be interpreted as unfavourable.

This paper will provide an overview of intersections of marginalised identities and will discuss the particular workings of oppression and identity-forming by Roma LGBTQ people.

Let us suppose the topic arises in a heteronormative conversation – the discussion has a high likelihood of

1 These results are based on the Hungarian Roma LGBTQ context; during my research I have not acquired data on the intersex individuals.

2 The European Roma Rights Centre, *The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children: A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia* (Budapest: 2007), available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/02/36/m00000236.pdf>.

3 Lucie Fremlova, Mara Georgescu, Gábor Hera, Laura-Greta Marin, Goran Miletic, *Barabaripen: Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination*, Youth Department of the Council of Europe (2014).

4 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1976) 53-73.

centring on a number of derogatory words and viewpoints. In the non-heteronormative discussion, the direction can be a bit different and does not necessarily reflect biased views; rather, LGBTQ Roma are framed in exoticised terms, which are often connected to sexuality and sexual desire. For instance, such images emerge such as ‘winnable prey’ at the ‘meat market’; common names are ‘fresh Gypsy meat’ or ‘wild meat’.

This can create an “exotic savage” phenomenon which can offer new (mysterious) desires from the Roma LGBTQ community to the non-Roma LGBTQ community.⁵

“...then he asked me if my chest is hairy or not ... what I like... It is really true that Roma guys’ blood is much more heated than the Hungarians’? ... (he told me) ... My dream was always to make love with one beautiful Roma person like you.”

(LGBT Roma man, 25 years old)

Different faces of oppression

If we describe the current situation of Roma LGBTQ it is important to take a look at Iris Marion Young’s framework, the Five Faces of Oppression.⁶ The Roma LGBTQ identity has to offer resistance to and deal with the challenges connected to issues of race, gender and class.

“Exploitation. Exploitation has to do with the difference between the wealth that workers create through their labor power and the actual wages that workers get paid. Exploitation is built into the market economy; bosses want to increase profits by lowering wages. The wage and wealth gap between the wealthy owners and managers, on the one hand, and the masses of working people, on the other, is an indication of the degree of exploitation that exists in a society.

Marginalization. This refers to being left out of the labor market. Those who are unable to get and keep steady employment – because of disabilities, education levels, age, historic

discrimination, lack of jobs in neighborhoods, the conditions of poverty, etc. – are experiencing marginalization.

Powerlessness. In this particular context, ‘powerlessness’ refers to the way in which workers are divided and segmented into jobs with autonomy and authority and jobs with little or no autonomy and authority. Workers in lower-status jobs experience more powerlessness (both on the job and in the sphere of politics) than workers with professional jobs. At the same time, giving some workers a little bit of autonomy on the job can undermine a sense of solidarity that they might otherwise feel towards all workers.

Cultural Dominance. This refers to the way that one group’s experiences, cultural expressions and history are defined as superior to all other groups’ experiences and histories. It is not necessary for anyone to say: “my group’s culture is superior;” it simply has to be treated as universal – representing the best in all of humanity. It is considered ‘normal,’ which means that all others are either ‘strange,’ or ‘invisible’ or both.

Violence. Our nation’s history is full of examples where violence has been used to keep a group ‘in its place.’ State-sanctioned violence has been used to enforce racial segregation, to keep workers from organizing and to break up strikes. Everyday violence also reminds social groups of what happens when they resist oppressive conditions: Black youths straying into a white neighborhood, gay men harassed and beaten outside of bars and clubs, women in the military being harassed and sometimes raped -- these are examples of the brutality of everyday life for so many of us. And the ways in which violent crimes are dealt with often reflects social and cultural biases; crime is ‘contained’ within neighborhoods that law enforcement has written off.⁷

Roma LGBTQ identity development - recognition and defence

In my opinion if we are working with LGBTQ Roma minorities we have to look carefully into the following factors which define the development of their identities. These social elements are the most frequently occurring and determining of

5 Judit Takács, *Queering Budapest*, in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945*, ed. Jennifer V. Evans and Matt Cook (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

6 Five Faces of Oppression is taken from Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

7 This is taken from Sandra Hinson, quoting Iris Marion Young. See “Faces of Oppression”, available at: <http://www.strategicpractice.org/commentary/faces-oppression>.

the lives of marginalised people, who face them on a daily basis. Many earlier studies have tried to explain the wide variety of reasons and differences (deviation) between the mentioned minority and majority groups. Some rather prominent views try to argue that the Roma minority group's appreciable deviance is genetically coded into them, as with LGBTQ people's supposed sexual (deviation) orientation.⁸ Other⁹ researchers contend that the outcomes and differences between the minorities and majorities in identity development are affected by their socioeconomic status, language barriers, cultural differences, and special styles of learning, all of which determine their background and status.

"We virtually don't see ourselves in positive or neutral images. We always see ourselves reflected in negative images. This, I think, on the one hand, leads to self-hatred, and another result of it is that we don't have enough self-confidence. We never see ourselves reflected in a positive way, we only ever see these social documentary pictures at which I am personally very angry. This yields a lot more negative things than positive."

(LGBT Roma man - 29 years old)

The Roma LGBTQ person has multiple defences, because of sexual orientation and ethnic origin. We can divide their identity (pride) development into two lines, which are parallel with each other and which also show their defence processes.

In the first, the person meets with their ethnicity self-development barriers at an early age. The fact that they were born as a Roma defined and determined the person's life with a negative connotation. In their case, the first point at which they questioned their identity was when starting elementary school. The intensified pressure to 'prove' that they are good enough is present at every educational level from elementary school to university. The first time they met with a negatively-constructed difference was at the age of 6-7, when they entered the formal education system. The second line of the person's identity self-development and defence process was at the age of 14-15 when they started to hide their sexual orientation. However their first physical relations took place in their young adult years, at the age of 19 or 20.

Based on my interview experiences, usually the first same-sex desires in their life happened after a spatial change, after they moved to high school. The first option for defence could be the expectations of the Roma community, which are in some examples based on 'closed Roma tradition'. In these cases tradition expects a heterosexual relationship, because the community does not want to face exclusion and shame from other families. Secondly, the community forces their children to make their own 'normal family' which is, in their vision, a relationship between one male and one female. According to religious Roma families, homosexuality comes from the devil. If the person experiences same-sex desire, then *'their way is straight to hell'*. Such people are also characterised by independence achieved early in their life, and 'loneliness'.

"I told her that I like boys, I don't like girls."

- She asked me: What kind of Roma man you are? Roma men cannot be gay!

- I answered: I don't care about this Roma tradition gender stuff, you know... Actually I identify myself as a Chinese female. And what...?

- She answered: I think that you are not normal.

I answered: Okay, that is your opinion, I don't care, but I still like boys..."

(Conversation between one Roma 26-year-old Roma female and one 31-year-old Roma LGBTQ male)

"I have two brothers and one sister. I felt that I had to tell them that I am gay. First I told my sister that I am gay, and she answered: - 'You don't surprise me. I have known from the beginning.' After, I told my older brother. His reaction was: 'Now I have one other sister, or what?' - No sorry I am still male... and? Finally I told my youngest brother that I have a boyfriend. His answer was to punch me in the face. - 'If you don't give me 100,000 forints I will tell everybody that you are a (swear word) gay!'"

(LGBTQ Roma man, 30 years old).

"I recall the first day and the seating in the school... and that they wanted to seat me in the last row in the class. I did not understand why I could not sit in the first row. Only now I recognise that the seating was based on me being Roma. By the way, the other Roma student who was sitting next to me later on was transferred to a school for special needs children."

(LGBTQ Roma man, 23 years old).

8 Endre Czeizel "A balul sikerült szexuális orientáció", *Magyar Nemzet*, 22 August 1995.

9 See for example "Bayer's anti-Roma rant draws fire", *The Hungarian Media Monitor*, 17 January 2013, available at: <http://mediamonitor.ceu.hu/2013/01/bayers-anti-roma-rant-draws-fire/>.

The Identity-development stages

- shame/shock
- anger/denial
- proof
- reconciliation
- pride

The main differences between Roma identity and Roma LGBTQ identity are based on approaches to the level of the pride. The starting points for both communities are the same.

Both communities are faced with harm (false portrayals, harassment and discrimination) and try to ward off the negative impacts of this. This is an independent and defensive emotional mechanism in their personal development. After recognising their own vulnerability, the individual experiences wrath, anger and self-hatred.

Basically the first step on the pride development stage is the level of shame and shock. The person does not accept his or her identity, blaming himself/herself, and trying to refuse every outsider idea which could make self-identification stronger. At this level the feeling of shame is strong, and the person tries to turn in a ‘different direction’, towards the ‘white’, middle (or upper middle) class heteronormative ‘male’ perspective.

The second stage is the level of denial. Here the person repudiates and refuses every emotional LGBTQ desire which they experience. During this time the dominant feelings are disenchantment, anger and turmoil, which are often part of a defence mechanism, and are projected onto the wider surroundings. This stage, in the case of multiply-marginalised groups, is a turning point, as it can result in serious harm – injuring others or even self-harm (suicide, in the worst cases).¹⁰ This is one of the main turning points in individual identity-development, because the person starts their own self-expression. This is one of the ways how the hurt and vulnerability becomes public and visual. The process of expending energy on denying and minimising feelings has negative consequences for overall emotional health.

The third stage is bargaining. In this period the individual has stronger emotional strength, s/he feels that s/he is also

a valuable part of society. The individual wants approval from both their immediate as well as their wider environment. This stage is one characterised by overcompensation and striving to prove something in order to win approval from everyone, everywhere. Often they don’t notice that they have overachieved as they feel that they must constantly accomplish more than others due to their marginalised position and their desire to be accepted. The person thinks that the invested efforts are not enough for the majority society. Usually in this period Roma LGBTQ people can begin to aspire to a same-sex relationship for the first time.

The fourth stage in identity development is reconciliation and depression. Here the person starts to accept his or her sexuality and is ready to overcome the hurt, labelling and inhuman treatment that came his or her way. So it is important to have at this point an outsider who can listen and at the same time strengthen the individual. Support for and collaboration with the individual is extremely important, otherwise the person’s identity development can be broken. If they cannot receive this, then in the most extreme cases the person may be pushed over the edge and fall into despair; there are some who have resorted to violence or suicide.

The fifth and final stage is the level of pride. This is the level of self-acceptance. The person is proud of his/her achievements and what s/he has fought for. All the values which were hidden in their personality are expressed. All the things which were confused now become clear and bright in the individual’s mind. The person will critically question and take a stand against majority prejudices and homophobic and xenophobic discourse. Preconceptions about gender, sexuality and ethnicity will be re-evaluated. The Roma LGBTQ person will achieve a feeling of pride in relation to both ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Relationships and choice of partner

With regard to my interviewees, all of these people now have a serious same-sex relationship. Before they chose their LGBTQ partner almost everybody had a long-term relationship with a heterosexual partner. Basically from their point of view the expectations of informal (Roma) and formal (non-Roma) societies defined their earlier relationships. They had to follow

¹⁰ Judit Takács, Tamás Dombos–, György Mészáros and Tamás P.Tóth “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Bother: Homophobia and the Heteronorm in Hungary” in *Confronting Homophobia in Europe. Social and Legal Perspectives*, ed. L Trappolin, A Gasparini and R Wintemute (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2012), and available at: http://www.policy.hu/takacs/pdf-lib/dont_ask_dont_tell_dont_bother.pdf.

both cultural and ideological ideas regarding ‘normal’ life. One of the interesting results in their partner choice is that they usually do not have a Roma partner. (Only one person out of fifteen mentioned that he currently has a partner who is Roma as well). More interesting is the fact that they also exclude the majority Hungarians. They strongly asserted that they do not want either Roma or Hungarian partners.¹¹ The Roma LGBTQ individuals’ partners are (in twelve cases out of fifteen) foreigners who belong to the majority society.

“I am so confident in my relationship right now. My girlfriend is from abroad, so I feel that I am free. When I am in her family home I feel her parents’ love and respect. I think that they do not have any problem that their little girl has a Roma girlfriend. They totally accept me as a Roma person, maybe they have some questions about being LGBTQ.”
(LGBT Roma woman, 28 years old)

Conclusions

The process of categorisation and determination by other people can result in unbalanced self-definition for Roma LGBTQ persons. Some sources have argued that the inherent ‘deviance’ of these two minorities is genetically coded. Others believe that socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and ‘lifestyle’ elements are what separate these groups from the majority. This presentation looks at the topic through the lens of multiple (or intersectional) discrimination and argues that Roma LGBTQ people are subject to particular

forms of oppression at the intersection of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia.

My study provides a special overview, with Roma LGBTQ people describing their own identity development, and barriers and challenges. My aim is not to present a list of previous research which could interlink to Roma LGBTQ; rather I seek to show one possible perspective of the community. Of course this study cannot be a representative one, because my interviewees cannot represent the whole Roma LGBTQ community. I did not go deeper into the question of the community’s ethnic dispersion, because my aim was to raise the issue of the Roma LGBTQ community in the context of their broader situation.

In October 2014 LGBTQ issues formed part of a panel discussion at the *Nothing about us without us?* seminar and conference, on which this journal is based. In August 2015 the first ever Roma LGBTQ conference took place in Prague, bringing together academics, NGO representatives, and activists working in the field. The two-day event contributed to describing the experiences of Roma LGBTQ people. One month later the discussion continued at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Minority Studies with the event titled¹² *Faced with Multiple ‘Values’ - from the Perspective of the Roma LGBTQ Community*.¹³ Progress is clearly being made and in the process perhaps a more open and inclusive conception of Roma identity is being fashioned.

11 Interestingly German Sinti LGBTQ members prefer same-sex partners within their own Roma communities, in line with the preferences of the majority Roma Sinti community.

12 This event was co-sponsored by the Hungarian LGBT Alliance.

13 A recording of this conference is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KO91FQE7OhU>.

“They become stigmatised in their own family” - Interview with a Roma LGBTQ activist David Tišer

David Tišer is Director of the non-profit organisation ARA ART, and he is the author of the first comprehensive study on Roma LGBTQ in the Czech Republic called Homosexuality in the Romani Community. He graduated in Romani Studies from Charles University, Prague.

ERRC: You are leading ARA ART, the only organisation in the Czech Republic devoted to the rights of the Roma LGBTQ. Why do you think Czech Roma need an organisation like yours?

David Tišer: I think the world cares about people being oppressed either within the LGBTQ or in the Roma community, but there isn't any kind of research or study that would provide enough information about the Roma-LGBTQ minority. When there is a debate in a given country around LGBTQ issues, that debate is mainly focused on LGBTQ people within the majority society and their integration. But LGBTQ people in the Roma minority suffer from multiple cases of discrimination - they are subject to discrimination because of being Roma and being not heterosexual. It is completely depressing for those who are affected.

They have huge difficulties even in the Roma community, which clings to traditional family patterns and rejects homosexuality. It is very hard being a Roma and belonging to the LGBTQ group - people from the Roma-LGBTQ community do not even contact each other in person, only for example through the Internet.

You mentioned during the roundtable discussion that you have been fighting for Roma LGBTQ rights for 8 years now. Unfortunately you couldn't get in touch with Roma communities concerning this issue for over 4 years. Why?

It wasn't easy to gain trust in the Roma community with LGBTQ issues. It took 4 years until they started to trust me. The field research I did in 2014 can partly explain this. The decision to admit that someone is a homosexual is affected by fear of the reaction of the rest of the community. In Roma communities, the family is the most important thing, partly because of discrimination from the majority society. The home is the only safe place. Except for LGBTQ people: they usually lose this safety as soon as they come out. They become stigmatised in their own family.

Can you give me an example for this?

There is a shocking and interesting story of a transgender man who participated in my survey. The person underwent surgery and is now male. After the operation, his family said that their son had become really healthy because SHE wasn't a lesbian anymore, now HE is straight. It shows clearly the confusion and misunderstanding around this issue.

In your research you tried to find out whether there are any improvements between the Roma community and LGBTQ people in the Czech Republic. What did you find?

I interviewed several LGBTQ people. It seems that being gay is a very shameful thing in most Roma families. To come out is always difficult, but in Roma communities people often face excommunication from the family or even from the whole community. But there is a difference between generations: young Roma do not primarily perceive homosexuality as a problem anymore. Also, the situation and positive approach to homosexuality in the Czech Republic has been a huge help for Roma as well.

Are there any interesting characteristics of Roma LGBTQ people?

I think the education of the Roma-LGBTQ minority is quite interesting. Although Roma in the Czech Republic usually attend Roma-only schools or classes and so gain worse education than people belonging to the majority society, the number of educated individuals among LGBTQ Roma is enormously high. We can assume that among homosexual Roma the education level is higher than among heterosexual Roma. If Roma society keeps on discriminating against its own LGBTQ community and punishing homosexuals for being homosexuals, they cannot expect these educated members of their society to deal with the Roma question and therefore help to improve the way the

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Roma minority is perceived by the majority society. The situation is changing: today we don't only have young, but also elderly Roma homosexuals in our organisation, who are really active and willing to change our society, especially the Roma community.

Do you think that something else may have changed in the past few years concerning Roma LGBTQ communities generally in Europe. Do you regard Roma as more active now?

In my opinion we will be even more active and more visible in the future. Recently, we organised a conference on Roma LGBTQ issues this year in Prague. 28 Roma people coming from 12 different countries attended the conference. Slowly, Roma communities have started to consider the LGBTQ issue more seriously. People in the Czech Republic still believe that you only find gay or lesbian people among the majority society. We want to make people aware of the fact that there is an LGBTQ scene in our community as well.

Of course the whole society must improve the rights of gay people: the huge LGBTQ scene needs support.

What do you think about the future of LGBTQ Roma? When will it be easier to be Roma and gay at the same time?

Well, I think we're visible now but it will take some decades to achieve real and relevant change. The reason is that it's

a really personal and challenging topic so it will need some time. Nevertheless, I'm convinced that Roma LGBTQ rights in general will improve in countries like the Czech Republic or Hungary.

Do you believe that young LGBTQ people can change the restricted view of their parents and the elderly?

Yes, take me as an example. I'm accepted by my family and my family is accepted as well. Therefore other families will be accepted too. I mean, parents will love you, whether you are gay or not. If people have personal experience and get in touch with this topic, they accept it. Parents who are 'affected' should enter into a common dialogue with each other. So my mother talked with other families and made them aware of the situation and she explained how it is to have a gay son.

You've mentioned that one of your goals is to specify intersex discrimination and Roma LGBTQ discrimination in national laws of countries. Do you think that you can achieve more through a legal struggle or by building up a movement and giving information to the communities?

I think both have to work. First of all, we need a European Roma LGBTQ platform which we have already established at the first Roma LGBTQ conference. We are in the European Union, so if EU organisations start to change their attitudes towards LGBTQ people, our national governments might change too.

Appendix: Nothing About Us Without Us? – Programme of the Workshop held 11-13 October 2014 in Budapest

Overview of the Three-Day-Long Event 11-13 October 2014, Budapest

The three day event sought to explore the institutional and systemic obstacles to the substantive participation of Romani organizations, researchers, and concerned citizens in policies and representations affecting their lives.

Despite the increasing attention of international organizations and national governments to the plight of citizens of Romani origin, their social status has not improved significantly. It appears that neither Romani citizens, nor ‘the majority society’ are aware of and identify with the noble principles underlying such efforts. External pressure has not been coupled with dynamic social movements demanding the emancipation of Roma, the strengthening of democratic solidarity, and a culture of equality and diversity. On the contrary: nationalist and racist movements are on the rise, liberal approaches are openly negated by leading politicians throughout Europe, Roma are increasingly the targets of expulsion, marginalization, and segregation.

At a critical point in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and with the imminent appointment of a new European Commission, the event sought to take stock of current developments in policy, academia, civil society, and asked what directions should be taken in the struggle for social justice for Roma. The event comprised a workshop and a conference.

The conference on the 13th of October brought together high level policy-makers, and prominent Romani scholars and activists to reflect critically on the lessons of the first three years of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

The workshop on the 11th and 12th of October brought together a limited number of scholars and activists to reflect critically on (i) the state and future Romani activism; (ii) recent developments in the struggle for Romani self-determination in media and academic knowledge production; (iii) the lessons and potentials of cooperation with anti-poverty, feminist, worker, LGBT movements.

Organizers: Maria Bogdan, Jekatyerina Dunajeva, Timea Junghaus, Iulius Rostas, Marton Rovid, Andrew Ryder, Marek Szilvasi, Marius Taba

Supporting organisations: Corvinus University of Budapest, University of Bristol, Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat, Gallery 8, European Roma Rights Centre, Roma Education Fund, Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Program of the Open Society Foundations, Roma Virtual Network, Romedia Foundation

11 OCTOBER 2014: WORKSHOP DAY 1 12.30pm-2.30pm Tour of Budapest’s 8th district

The 8th district (Nyócker) is the Harlem of Budapest. This is the area of the city, which is mostly populated by Roma inhabitants. For a long time in the past it was demonized as the nightmare of tourists (and Hungarians as well). The area was said to be dangerous, slummy and strongly advised to avoid. Today the 8th district is the site of rapid development and gentrification, it is now the center of Roma community development, and many civil- and intercultural initiatives. The tour visits the secret 19th century sculpture garden, the main NGOs of the Magdolna Quarter, the Hungarian Roma Parliament, (which served as the Roma Cultural Center of Budapest for over 3 decades before in 2012 the local government closed it down), and it will extend to Gallery8 – Roma Contemporary Art Space.

Organized by UCCU Association and Gallery8.

3.00pm-5.30pm Roma civil society: lessons from the past, challenges in the present

We reviewed, compared, and critically assessed the achievements of ‘Roma civil societies’ in the last 25 years both in Eastern and Western Europe.

Key questions: What were the trends in the development of Roma civil society? What ideas were behind the founding Roma organizations? Who were the major players? What strategies have these institutions used to advance the cause of

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US?

the Roma? What leads to donor driven development (NGO-isation) and under what conditions could autonomous membership based associations develop? To what extent and under what conditions could Roma organizations influence larger political and economic processes affecting the lives of Roma?

Invited debate starters: Thomas Acton, Nicoleta Bitu, Agnes Daroczi, Zeljko Jovanovic, Andrzej Mirga, Rumyan Russinov

Moderator: Iulius Rostas

12 OCTOBER 2014: WORKSHOP DAY 2

10.00-12.30 Coalition building and transforming the Romani movement: feminism, LGBT rights, trade unions

We discussed the way the Romani movement relates to other social movements and how feminist and LGBT perspectives could be incorporated to the Romani movement. The women's rights movement could be an inspiration for Roma movement as regards success in policy design and implementation and its discourse on specific gender issues. LGBT communities are also employing a rights discourse to dismantle the taboos of the mainstream society towards sexual orientations. Trade unions should be regarded as a natural ally of Roma in their fight for social justice.

Key questions: What could Romani organizations learn from other movements to attract support from a broader constituency? How could feminist and LGBT perspectives be incorporated to the Romani movement? How can the discourse of rights be developed in the Romani movement? How can we communicate a „stigmatized identity” to mainstream society? How can we build support outside of the Roma communities? How could trade unions promote an inclusive discourse on Roma?

Invited debate starters: Anna Daroczi, Jelena Jovanovic, Martin Kovats, Marton Joci, Vera Kurtic, Dezso Mate, David Tiser, Eniko Vincze

Moderator: Marius Taba

13.30-15.00 Knowledge production and Roma representation

We discussed the role of scientific and expert knowledge production in the oppression and/or empowerment of

Romani communities. We will explore various forms of relationship between the *researcher* and the *researched*. The role of scientific bodies such as the European Academic Network for Romani Studies will be debated.

Key questions: What is the relevance of the ethnicity of the researcher? What is the relation between scientific knowledge production and the struggle for (self-) representation? Under what conditions can participatory research empower Romani communities? On what grounds can various institutions producing knowledge on Roma gain legitimacy?

Invited debate starters: Ethel Brooks, Timea Junghaus, Anna Mirga, Peter Molnar, Andrew Ryder, Mihai Surdu

Moderator: Maria Bogdan

16.30-18.00 Discussing the plan of the European Roma Institute

Invited discussants: Aurora Ailincai, Ethel Brooks, Agnes Daroczi, Zeljko Jovanovic

Moderator: Timea Junghaus

19.00-20.30 Introducing the Buvero Roma Women program of Romedia Foundation

Buvero is a two-week residential summer camp program for young Romani women, based on the principle that today's digital media is the most powerful tool for communication and social change. First implemented in 2013, so far it has provided intensive theoretical and practical media training to 60 young Romani women from Hungary, Serbia and Germany. Buvero works to build a sustainable, international network of Romani activists empowered to create meaningful social change by addressing the root causes of Roma exclusion, through digital media. The word BUVERO means “shell” in the Romani language and evokes positive communication and the power of womanhood.

Screening of short movies directed by program participants to be followed by a discussion of the directors

Session introduced and moderated by Kata Barsony

13 OCTOBER 2014: CONFERENCE

‘Nothing About Us Without Us?’

Roma Participation in Policy Making and Knowledge Production

9.30-10.00 Opening

- Welcome by Zoltán Szántó, Vice Rector of Corvinus University Budapest
- Opening remarks by Andrew Ryder, Corvinus University Budapest

10.00-11.30 What is happening on the ground? Assessing the impact of policies towards Roma and the potentials of transformative policies. Lessons from France, Hungary, and the UK

- Saimir Mile, La Voix des Roms, France
- Gábor Daróczi, Romaversitas, Hungary
- Sarah Cemlyn, University of Bristol, United Kingdom
- chair: Márton Rövid, Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation

12.00-13.30 The lessons and potentials of the European Union’s involvement in the social inclusion of Roma

- László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- William Billa, Member of the board of Roma Education Fund
- Nicoleta Bitu, Director of Center for Roma Studies, National School of Political Science and Public Administration, Bucharest
- Zeljko Jovanovic, Director of the Open Society Foundation’s Roma Initiatives Office
- Soraya Post, Member of the European Parliament, Feminist Initiative Party
- chair: Iulius Rostas, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj

14.30-16.00 How to produce social change with EU funds?

- Costel Bercus, CMC Project Team Consulting, Romania
- Dan Doghi, Roma Education Fund
- Deyan Kolev, Center Amalipe, Bulgaria
- Violetta Zentai, Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Program, Open Society Foundations
- Nadir Redzepi, Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Program, Open Society Foundations
- Chair: Marius Tabă, Roma Education Fund

16.30-18.00 Knowledge production and the representation of Roma

- Ethel Brooks, Associate Professor, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers University
- Ágnes Daróczi, Romano Instituto, Hungary
- Sheena Keller, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
- Mihai Surdu, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin
- Enikő Vincze, Faculty of European Studies, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj
- chair: Tímea Junghaus, European Roma Cultural Foundation

18.00-19.00 Book launch and drinks reception

Hearing the Voices of Gypsies, Roma and Traveller communities: Inclusive Community Development

Introduced by the editors: Thomas Acton, Sarah Cemlyn, and Andrew Ryder

Comments by: András Újlaky, Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Centre

Closing remarks by Malay Mishra – Indian Ambassador to Hungary

EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma. The approach of the ERRC involves strategic litigation, international advocacy, research and policy development and training of Romani activists. The ERRC has consultative status with the Council of Europe, as well as with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The ERRC has been the recipient of numerous awards for its efforts to advance human rights respect of Roma: The 2013 PL Foundation Freedom Prize; the 2012 Stockholm Human Rights Award, awarded jointly to the ERRC and Thomas Hammarberg; in 2010, the Silver Rose Award of SOLIDAR; in 2009, the Justice Prize of the Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation; in 2007, the Max van der Stoep Award given by the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Dutch Foreign Ministry; and in 2001, the Geuzenpenning Award (the Geuzen medal of honour) by Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of the Netherlands;

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