



Critical Romani Studies



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Critical Romani Studies is an international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal providing a forum for activist-scholars to critically examine racial oppressions, different forms of exclusion, inequalities, and human rights abuses of Roma. Without compromising academic standards of evidence collection and analysis, the Journal seeks to create a platform to critically engage with academic knowledge production, and generate critical academic and policy knowledge targeting – amongst others – scholars, activists, and policymakers.

Scholarly expertise is a tool, rather than the end, for critical analysis of social phenomena affecting Roma, contributing to the fight for social justice. The Journal especially welcomes the cross-fertilization of Romani studies with the fields of critical race studies, gender and sexuality studies, critical policy studies, diaspora studies, colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and studies of decolonization.

The Journal actively solicits papers from critically-minded young Romani scholars who have historically experienced significant barriers in engaging with academic knowledge production. The Journal considers only previously unpublished manuscripts which present original, high-quality research. The Journal is committed to the principle of open access, so articles are available free of charge. All published articles undergo rigorous peer review, based on initial editorial screening and refereeing by at least two anonymous scholars. The Journal provides a modest but fair remuneration for authors, editors, and reviewers.

The Journal has grown out of the informal Roma Research and Empowerment Network, and it is founded by the Romani Studies Program of Central European University and the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. The Romani Studies Program at CEU organizes conferences annually where draft papers are presented and discussed before selecting them for peer review.

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Foreword

Critical Romani Studies is an international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal providing a forum for activist-scholars to critically examine racial oppressions, different forms of exclusion, inequalities, and human rights abuses of Roma. The [Introduction](#) of the first issue discusses the origins, rationale, and main features of the new journal.

We are delighted to see that the first issues' articles presenting critical views on the production of academic and policy knowledge on Romani people have contributed to open and inclusive debates. In particular, we would like to highlight the annual conference [Critical Approaches to Romani Studies](#) held in May 2018 that brought together over 40 activist-scholars who presented original papers on topics of knowledge production, *gadjology*, antigypsyism, Romani feminism, resistance and mobilization, and representation in art – just to name a few. Furthermore, in November 2018 an important roundtable discussion was held on [Knowledge Production, Representation, and the Role of Academia](#) that provided an inclusive forum for scholars of Romani, Jewish, and Gender Studies to discuss the role of scientific and expert knowledge production in the oppression and/or empowerment of underrepresented groups in academia.

Critical Romani Studies remains an inclusive space in which scholars and activists can reflect critically on the key questions of the struggle for Romani self-determination and emancipation. The new journal is one of several means by which the Romani Studies Program (RSP) at Central European University aims to engage scholars, policymakers, and activists in interdisciplinary knowledge production through an ongoing debate on Roma identity and the Roma movement, antigypsyism, social justice and policymaking, gender politics, and structural inequality. RSP provides advanced research fellowships; engages in pan-European innovations; cooperates with other universities in strengthening Romani Studies; organizes workshops, seminars, and conferences – including the annual [Critical Approaches to Romani Studies](#) conferences – and organizes summer schools on Romani Studies to bring together young scholars, activists, and practitioners; provides scholarships to Romani graduate students to pursue MA and PhD studies at top universities in the world; and supports their transition to the labor market with internship opportunities in different institutions.

We invite all critically-minded scholars, activists, and policymakers to join us, submit their papers, and actively participate in our events. We seek to promote research on various forms of social oppression, openly standing up against injustice while promoting diversity, equality, defense of human rights, respect for Roma communities, open dialogue, and respect for dissent.

This second issue of *Critical Romani Studies* contains four critical papers on policymaking. *Marko Stenroos* presents an original analysis of why inclusion policies targeting Finnish Kale fail. *Jonathan McCombs* demonstrates how racism has become infused in neoliberal policymaking by studying the redevelopment of Budapest's Eighth District. By studying EU policy documents, *Silvia Cittadini* reveals how a restrictive interpretation of "adequate housing" reinforces paternalistic inclusion policies. *Solvor Mjøberg Lauritzen's* analysis shows that knowledge production on Roma and education has established an essentializing discourse where it is legitimate to use nomadism to explain Roma disadvantage in education.

Furthermore, the second issue contains three pioneering articles in which non-Romani scholars – *Carol Silverman*, *Lucie Fremlova*, and *Jekatyerina Dunajeva* – reflect on their own position, privilege, and responsibility, thus making a crucial contribution to the reflexive and critical turn in Romani Studies. *Sarah Carmona's* article on decolonizing the arts is a unique and groundbreaking study on the genealogy of Romani stereotypes in the Louvre and Prado collections. *Katarzyna Pabijanek* reviews the play *Roma Armee* by situating it in the Romani decolonial movement. *Angéla Kóczé* reviews Giovanni Picker's recent book, *Racial Cities: Governance and the Segregation of Romani People in Urban Europe*, while *Miklós Hadas* reviews Andrew Ryder's *Sites of Resistance. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in School, Community and the Academy*.

Iulius Rostas, Editor-in-chief
Márton Rövid, Managing editor



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Power and Hierarchy among Finnish Kaale Roma: Insights on Integration and Inclusion Processes

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Abstract

Despite the vast research on Roma in Europe and beyond, little has been written about Roma agency from a perspective that focuses on manifold dynamics of power. Having worked for two years on the Finnish Roma Inclusion Project in a dual role as ethnographer and project worker has inspired me to rethink concepts of power and to create an alternative narrative of the experience of marginalized and discriminated Finnish Kaale Roma. Encouraged by the current paradigm shift in Romani Studies (which increasingly focuses on Roma agency instead of objectifying the population), this paper explores Kaale power dynamics as part of the social order and empirically demonstrates two parallel and antagonist systems of power exercised by Roma: one that stems from the population's traditional cultural customs and the other from Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity, a growing trend among the Finnish Kaale. The purpose of this article is to underline Roma agency within the frame of national Roma policy practices in Finland.

Keywords

- Kaale Roma
- Power
- Policy
- Inclusion
- Integration
- Finland

Introduction: A Finnish Roma Project¹

Failing Roma inclusion projects are unfortunately abundant throughout Europe. According to a report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (Friedman 2015), the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 did not reach its objectives (see also Jovanović 2015). Similar to the Decade of Roma Inclusion, preliminary findings from the Roma civil monitoring project suggests that the current National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) has also failed in many European member states (Hojsík et al. 2018; Rorke 2018). In this paper I elaborate on some factors that I consider significant in regard to the Finnish Kaale Roma in order to explain why these policy attempts at inclusion have not reached their full potential and why inclusion projects are not often trusted by most “ordinary” Kaale. The assertion of this article is twofold: Roma agency in Roma policy papers is often downplayed; and the narratives therein, of discriminated and marginalized Roma, are unidimensional and objectifying. This paper is based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in a Roma inclusion project in Helsinki, Finland. I argue that inclusion projects typically fail to recognize or value the ways in which Roma communities organize their social order and social structures. By devaluing and failing to recognize these existing systems, inclusion projects end up contributing to processes of marginalization. Finnish national policy on Roma also neglects the existing Roma systems of social organization and order and consequently promotes social change for “normal ways of living.”

Finland has a Kaale Roma population of approximately 10,000 persons. In the European context, Finnish Kaale Roma are considered to be relatively well integrated in Finnish society, for example, benefitting from public services equally to the majority Finnish population. Consequently, Roma issues in Finland mostly have been overlooked in the broader context of European Roma politics. The minimal amount of resources that have been directed toward Roma inclusion practices in Finland by the European Union reflects this position. In this article, I will begin by setting the Finnish national policy on Roma into the European context. Then I will scrutinize the concept and practice of power among Kaale as it appeared during my fieldwork, and I will also elaborate on the importance of power relations within the Kaale community in the process of implementing Roma policy. I will conclude this paper by raising questions about social ontology and recognition of Finnish Kaale Roma in Finnish society.

In 2011, the European Commission launched an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) and called on its member states to create a national Roma strategy (European Commission 2011). The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health had already published “Strategies of the Policy on Roma” in 1999 (Suonoja and Lindberg 1999). As the Finnish governmental authorities and ministries had expressed their eagerness to be forerunners in Europe regarding Roma affairs (ROMPO 2009), this relatively early initiative for developing a Roma-specific policy can be considered good practice in comparison to other European inclusion projects. Nevertheless, there are still challenges with the implementation of Finnish policies. In this paper, I focus on the challenges and issues as framed by the Finnish National Roma Policy

¹ The article is based on a research funded by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland, project ALL-YOUTH (Decision No. 312689).

for the years 2010–2017. The fieldwork material was collected from the consortium project (described below), which was in line with and justified by the Finnish National Roma Policy.

The consortium project consisted of 16 different project partners, including Finland's Diaconia University of Applied Sciences as the administrator of the project. Partners were from the different districts and cities in Finland; ostensibly it was a nationwide project although many partners were from the capital region. The project partners were from Roma associations, municipalities, and educational institutions and also included an institution of health-related issues. The project workers were both Roma and non-Roma (21 out of 30 project workers were Roma), and the wide network that emerged around this large-scale consortium consisted of both Roma and non-Roma actors. This consortium belonged to two different European Social Fund programs: one focused on the promotion of education, skills, and lifelong learning, and the other one on the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. Financially, this consortium was the largest one that Finland ever has had on Roma affairs specifically, with a budget of approximately three million euros.

The participatory practices of this project were already applied at the planning stage, using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as its participatory tool. The LFA is an instrument for logical analysis and structured thinking in project planning (Örtengren 2004). Undoubtedly, this method was selected due to the fact that the LFA is “an instrument to create participation, accountability and ownership” for those the project was designed for (*ibid.* 6). However, the LFA method was not remarkably successful as those who participated in the planning sessions already were involved with Roma politics and therefore represented only a small segment of the Roma community, that is, so-called “ordinary” Roma were absent from the process.

As I observed from the planning phase, the mainstream perception of the Roma community ignores the extent to which the extended family forms a basic unit in the Kaale community. As a result, the non-Roma participants in this project, like the project administrators in the planning phase, often understood the Roma population as one single, coherent community. Consequently, the Finnish Roma project faced the same problem that we find throughout the rest of Europe regarding Roma projects: misunderstandings of the “Roma community.” Outsiders to Roma communities might assume that Roma ethnicity implies one shared history and the “same culture,” thereby indicating the existence of a tightly knit Roma community.^[2] If there is one representative from the community, it is thought to be enough to facilitate the objectives of the projects among Roma (see Clavé-Mercier and Olivera 2018, 157). In their study on Roma migrants in two separate French cities, Clavé-Mercier and Olivera (2018) show that although they witnessed solidarity between some Roma individuals and families, they did not detect a large-scale form of collective solidarity among the various Roma migrants (157). The same applies to Finnish Kaale: collective solidarity can be found situationally and contextually, but it is not a general principle of Roma

2 According to Symonds (1998), “The concept of ‘community’ occupies two parallel realities. One is the ‘social lived reality’ within which we work and live, that of localities which to some degree have a recognizable value system or culture which consists of ‘knowing’ the various people, the deviant and the conforming, the sets of rules of behavior which govern everyday life within a specific space and time. But there is another reality too, the ‘dream’ world of community life. This world is a structural part of our everyday mental framework” (12).

communities. Said otherwise, a person's ethnicity alone does not grant them the legitimacy of being representative *for* and *of* the Roma.

McGarry (2014) adequately summarizes the problem of Roma representation in relation to their social inclusion: "Societal and politico-legal representations have been constructed by the majority and Roma elite with little input from ordinary Roma. Some representations may appear to offer solutions or may seem benign but can be detrimental to the community in the long-term" (758). As mentioned, the LFA method was not successful, despite the participation of some Roma individuals. This is because those Roma *specifically* being targeted by the policies and projects were absent. Consequently, it is not enough to insist on Roma involvement in project planning: we must also be aware of the problems of the narrow representation of some Roma in the process.

As we can see from the scale of this particular Finnish Roma project and from the number of project workers with Roma background involved, this project was rewarding from an ethnographic perspective and also in the context of the anthropology of policy. Ethnographic studies on Roma policy have been mainly conducted in Central and Eastern Europe but this study is one of the first to engage with such topics in a Nordic context.

1. Method

I had a double role in the Finnish Roma project. I was both an ethnographer doing fieldwork and a project worker with a Roma background. My research plan was included in the consortium's project plan, and I presented my research topic several times throughout the duration of the project. From an ethical point of view, I made sure that those working on and involved in the project knew that I was collecting data as we worked together.

During the two years of the project I primarily collected data from my communications with other project workers. I kept notes during my work days, I saved all the memos and minutes of the meetings, and I also wrote a field diary at the end of every workday. I observed the dynamics and challenges workers had while confronting their duties as paid workers. I also did work directly with the target group in my sub-project and thus, my collected materials consist of a combination of what I observed with other workers and with the other people involved. I also conducted a few interviews but quickly realized that the interviewees made assumptions about what I wanted to hear and tended to tell me those things. Participant observation was thus the richest source of my data. For example, in the diary I kept of my work days, I would note what happened during the day and what kinds of issues came up. I mostly focused on the processes, dynamics of relations between different participants, and different occurring phenomena as I was already familiar with Roma culture. Although my fieldwork was based on a nationwide project, my observations are restricted to a certain area of Finland and to the specific people I worked with on the project. This inevitably influenced my analysis and conclusions.

As a result of my double role, I was able to make note of several important issues, which I discuss in the remainder of this article. These issues were relevant for the processes of inclusion and affected the

implementation of policy practices. However, these issues are rarely found in official documents despite their significant impact on the processes at hand.

2. Rethinking Power

Recognition of different modes of power is an ontological issue. The challenges concerning Roma people's access to various kinds of power are that the significance of this for the Roma remains unrecognized by the wider public and by governmental authorities dealing with Roma issues:

Why are the European Roma so discriminated against? I argue that discrimination against the Roma is largely a function of power differentials between the Roma and the non-Roma. Ever since Roma's arrival in Europe, the non-Roma majority has held a considerable amount of political, economic and social power over the Roma. Being entirely excluded from European power structures, the Roma in Europe constitute what is called the Outsiders (Thornton 2014, 107).

What Thornton is describing here is actually an ultimate goal of Roma policies: for Roma to become part of the power structures so that they can engage in decision-making processes concerning their own issues. It is what "nothing about us without us" stands for: being part of (political) processes in local, national, and European level decision-making. What is often forgotten, at least in the case of Kaale Roma in Finland, is that Roma already have formed their own social organizations, social orders, and power hierarchies. Entering into the mainstream domain of power is a required shift from one social reality to another and includes the expectation of Roma "becoming like them"; these are assumptions typically embedded in the majority of Roma policy agendas. One major problem is that not much attention is paid to how a community is to move from one domain of power to another. Shifting toward European power structures would require fundamental changes in ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Moreover, entering a new domain of power would also prerequisite access to equal opportunities and possibilities in society – conditions that are not often available for Roma. To that end, Roma inclusion often is expected to take place in one direction only, as Rorke (2014) argues.

As with the meaning of power in general, not all Kaale Roma rely on the same definition of power. The degree of power that a Roma person is affected by depends, among other things, on one's commitment to being part of Roma social networks. The concept of power became relevant in our project while we were thinking about whom we were reaching out to in our projects, who were our target groups, and who were the key persons to approach. As we worked with our target groups, we had to pay serious attention to how to justify our goals and objectives.

Integration and inclusion of Roma people requires active participation outside the Roma community,^[3] that is, with people from the majority population as well. However, respect among Roma depends on

³ My definition of Roma community refers to persons closely linked to each other by family ties or friendship, not the whole Roma population.

one's involvement within Roma social circles, sharing interests such as those having to do with family-related issues, and being aware of what is happening among Roma friends or acquaintances. This means you have to be present and actively share the stories of what is happening with different Roma people. To my understanding, storytelling is a central part of Roma experiences. Social and economic class, education level, family reputation, and whether a person was "living in the Roma culture 24/7" became the core of our discussions regarding target groups. The concept of "24/7 in the culture," offered to us by a young Roma activist in our working group, is revealing as it portrays a person's commitment to following cultural norms and moralities. It is also an indication of the involvement within Roma social networks and circles, social organizations and practices. In the project there was a clear division of those "24/7 Roma" and those Roma having a foot outside of the community, too. Consequently, we can recognize two main forces that are part of integration processes: integration and inclusion policies expect you to participate actively outside of Roma social networks, but your position within a Roma community depends on your involvement with other Roma. Too much involvement with non-Roma can cause an individual to receive a label of being *Kaaje*-like (non-Roma), not a goal that most "ordinary" Roma aim for.

While arranging club meetings for Roma youth – one of the mandates of our project – I noticed that their social networks mainly consisted of other Roma youth. Those Roma I worked with in the project did not mention the words integration or inclusion even once – or anything that referred to that condition in fact. I only heard those words in speeches by Roma activists and Roma project workers. What I often heard and realized was that being called *Kaaje*-like by another Roma person was pejorative and an insult. There is a historical reasoning as to why ordinary Kaale Roma people tend to differentiate between Kaale and *Kaaje*. The history of cultural coexistence is part of Roma Kaale identity development and as such, differentiating between Kaale and *Kaaje* cannot be changed or erased easily by Roma or non-Roma people.

Often non-Roma think of Roma people in Finland as one coherent group, but in fact there are many Roma communities made up of extended family lines and connections. In this article Roma community does not mean the whole Roma Kaale population in Finland but refers instead to those Roma people who have close relations with each other. A community can be thought of as a kind of social construction, whose existence depends on particular perspectives, contexts, and situations. Based on my field observations, the diversity of agency that different Roma people may possess is not often recognized by non-Roma actors or by Roma policy. From the Roma policy perspective, it is important to break down the idea of one Roma community as one single unit because, in reality, there is no one coherent group. Thus, it is misleading to talk about the "Roma project" when the target group does not consist of the whole Roma population.

During the LFA processes discussed above, project workers did not pay enough attention to the definition of the target group, apart from describing the target group simply as "Roma." As this project was in line with the National Policy on Roma and followed the same strategies, it consequently also faced the same pitfall as the National Policy on Roma, that is, it did not recognize the diversity among the Kaale population. Both the project plan and the National Policy on Roma were culturally objectifying the population and, as a result, strengthened the categorical thinking about and stereotyping of Roma.

Roma policy tends to represent, probably unintentionally, an image of the ethnic group that is institutionally constructed, homogenous, and often racialized. It is uncertain whether Roma policies

promote equality and recognition or whether they instead maintain and repeat victimizing narratives and thus, the marginalized position of the people involved (see, e.g., Alghasi et al. 2009). Hence, I do agree with Clavé-Mercier and Olivera's (2018) assertion that inclusion and exclusion policies are two sides of the same coin; both are based on the same conceptual framework of Roma and function in practically the same way of being motivated by stereotypical perceptions of "the Roma." Unfortunately, this also applies to Finland, where the same narrative of victimhood and oppression is maintained and reproduced. Unarguably, Roma are discriminated in Finland as well, but the question is whether it is better to emphasize this marginalized and discriminated position as opposed to focusing on Roma agency instead. I argued that from the perspective of recognition, it would be better to put more value on the agency of Roma people in different social spheres. Or, at the very least, to find ways of balancing between these two approaches.

As a diverse group and, as stated earlier in the text, since Roma power mechanisms do not influence every Roma person in the same way, for some Roma the effects of these power mechanisms are either not especially meaningful or they occur randomly. To some, these mechanisms of power regulate their everyday lives. I use the concept of "a world within a world" to describe the distinctive power systems and the social conditions that Roma experience as part of social reality. Most of all, this concept is meant to emphasize that the Roma power system is located within the larger structural system of Finnish society and is thus, at least in part, influenced by it. This *world within a world* is not the same for each Roma person, but there are components and elements that apply to most Roma, like dealing with prejudices, for example.

To clarify, these mechanisms of power are parts of the construction of the social ontology of the Kaale Roma. Equally important, but beyond the scope of this paper, are outsiders' perceptions and the way Roma interact with non-Roma. Discrimination and antigypsyism significantly matter in this construction of a *world within a world*.

Based on Marx's social theory, Gould (1978) defines social ontology as "the nature of the individuals, institutions and processes that compose society." Gould emphasizes Marx's thinking on individuals' relation to their community (*ibid.* xii). This view of individual-community relations is relevant to the Roma policy context as it is important to navigate the complexity of individual Roma rights versus collective ethnic-cultural rights. Roma policies tend to support categorical thinking of Roma. I argue that categorical thinking is valid only when we are talking about the equal rights of groups that are vulnerable in society, but even so we should not forget the diversity within the group. Ontological conditions change as the society around people, cultures, and relations change. Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2011, 2), following Gould's view, divide social ontology into three parts: starting with persons and then moving to groups, communities, and societies, and lastly institutions or institutional structures (systems of norms). My perception is that Roma policy should consider more of these different levels and layers of what it means to be Roma, specifically following the ideas of ontological thinking.

The social ontological approach is applied here as a methodological and analytical tool. This ontological approach was inspired by negotiations between *saming and othering*; some Roma that I interact with in the project emphasized similarities with Finnish non-Roma, while others emphasized the ethnic and

cultural differences between themselves and majority society. These negotiations were, however, very much political in nature as the underlying understanding of integration and recognition were seen differently by the various participants who took part in this dispute.

There is no simple answer for the paradoxes of individual recognition versus collective cultural rights. I would argue that both approaches are simultaneously needed, but individual recognition seems to often end up in the background in the case of Roma policy. Also, if Roma want to be part of European power structures it would require a shift from one social reality to another, and for this shift there are no tools provided, neither by society nor by Roma policy. Roma power, social organizations, and orders thus amount to something that I call the social ontology of Roma, a *world within a world*.

In the following section, I will discuss the power-related issues that directly influence Roma integration processes. I also consider how the Roma power system is a crucial part of constructing an imagined social ontology of Kaale people.

3. Pentecostal Roma Activism and the Frontiers of Roma Politics

A Roma activist who has been actively involved with Roma politics since 1960s reflects on the changes in Roma politics: “In the 1960s and 1970s Roma activists were involved with the social issues much more than they are nowadays. Now most of the associations and activists are religiously active but the social dimension of activism is missing. I noticed Pentecostalism started to enter the arena in the mid-1980s or so. Before that nobody talked about religion, although Roma have always been believers” (Interview with anonymous Roma activist, April 5, 2017).

Today most of the Roma associations in Finland have a religious mission in their agendas. This is the case at least with the major influential associations like the umbrella organization of the Roma associations *Romanifoorumi*, established in 2007. Although a religious mission is not necessarily explicitly mentioned in the objectives of the associations, it is easily observable through the values that many associations promote. This scenario has created a political arena that is grounded in Pentecostalism; a network of religious unity and solidarity has emerged among Roma activists. The current political frontiers of the Roma movement in Finland therefore can be described as having a strong Pentecostal orientation.

The polarization of the Finnish Kaale in the context of religion appears in a statement made by a young Roma I worked with, who was wondering about mixing up secular Roma songs and religious songs: “Can a religious person sing secular traditional Roma songs? Those songs are taking us back to the old sentiments before becoming a believer. There is a different place for traditional songs?” This distinction also had implications for the consortium project: those who are not believers do not participate in activities that have a strong religious orientation such as praying sessions. Similarly, a believer does not want to go to places where secular activities are practiced.

How determining is the relationship between faith and Roma activism? When I asked a Roma activist with several years experience in the field and who is himself a believer and a participant in the Roma project if all Roma actors are Pentecostal and active in the congregations, the answer I received was: “it is not like a requirement, but it just happens to be so. Those who are Pentecostal tend to educate themselves, so they can also manage better within a *Kaaje* (non-Roma) world.” Although there are signs of exclusion of the non-believers in the political sphere, faith has an empowering influence on ordinary Roma as well by supporting social inclusion, education, and participation as those elements have become underlying goals in religious preaching. Those activities, education, and inclusion are depicted as religious values and hence appreciated. As some activists explained, Roma policy strategies and the Kaale Pentecostal movement intersect with mutual values and moralities, and both can be promoted at the same time.

However, despite the intersection with religious views and a common set of values, the biggest challenge of implementing inclusionary practices designed by the project workers (often in-faith) was to get people involved and to participate in the project. As one of the project workers (non-Roma) said: “it is a wrong presumption that people are just eager to participate in those projects provided for them, they are just not that interested.” Although there were various activities and measures to improve on and to support Roma inclusion, it was difficult to motivate people. A great deal of marketing had to be done even if the community’s key people were involved. While religiously oriented Roma shared the same Evangelical basis of faith, that was not enough to boost interest from ordinary Roma to participate. Clavé-Mercier and Olivera (2018) describe a similar kind of phenomenon as a “non-resistant resistance.” It was often also acknowledged in our project that “Roma vote with their feet”; you do not reach them. The “non-resistant resistance” refers to the realm of conflicting ontological differences between political will and the everyday practices of ordinary Roma. In other words, agendas for inclusion and integration were set outside of ordinary Roma, and consequently it was difficult to get them involved as they were not invested in the ideas and practices that had been developed by the others.

The consortium project from the administrator’s side was affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. There were two project managers who coordinated the processes and were responsible for the project administration. One of the managers was a Roma with a religion-related profession and other one was a non-Roma. During the period of two years, the non-Roma manager changed twice so there were three different managers altogether. The administrator of the project also involved Roma for the recruitment of the project managers. Those Roma involved with the recruitment were Roma activists from different associations and from the Pentecostal churches. The set of religious networks in this context was obvious, but the agenda-making above this level of decision-making was unclear (see Toivanen 2015). These networks reflect a relatively new version of power mechanisms and structures. It exists parallel to the power mechanism that evolves from more traditional customs and secular culture.

It is helpful to look at the structures and actors behind this large-scale consortium. As the empirical data in this paper is from the Roma project that supports the objectives of the National Roma Policy (ROMPO 2009), it is crucial to scrutinize the different connections on a personal level that lie behind it. These connections actually reveal the collaborative nature between the Pentecostal movement and Roma activism, that is, the nexus between Roma politics and faith.

The Romani way of influencing policies and strategies often takes place through what Friman-Korpela (2014) calls “the expert bodies” (45). In Finland, that expert body is the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. The Advisory Board is appointed by the government and half of its members must have a Roma background. Roma representatives on the Advisory Board are from the country’s different Roma associations, which consequently forms an elite group that is relatively small but that has influence both in the spheres of Roma politics and in the Pentecostal movement. Colloquially, the people with these positions are called “cream” by the ordinary Roma as a way of indicating their higher position or status among the Roma population.

A path from leadership in the association leads to an influential position in governmental structures. According to a follow-up report from the Advisory Board (2014), Roma policy is mainstreamed in different ministries and governmental institutions. This means that different ministries have adopted a National Roma Policy as part of their strategies. The problem is the implementation of these policies and the resources available at the local level (especially in employment and education). While policy is typically agreed upon in governmental spheres, in practice it does not come down to the level of local authorities or local Roma. Thus, such a top-down approach is not effective for practices of Roma policy implementation. To validate Roma policy at the grass-roots level, a more horizontal approach is needed, that is, one that would account for empowerment from below.

The question of agenda-making remains, regardless of Roma representation on the Advisory Board. To this end, in Finland, Roma representativeness is, as it appears to be in many European countries, developed mainly outside of the arena of official and electoral politics (see Vermeersch 2006, 123). Nordberg (2007) assesses that the problem is not that Roma representatives in governmental structures constitute a small group of elites [Romani Advisory Board], but the problem is the absence of a political field outside of the elite (86–87). According to Nordberg (2007), only participation in the public sphere, in a broad sense, would enhance the recognition of Roma (87).

Participating in Roma associations has enabled many Roma to participate in decision-making processes in governmental structures. It appears the same Roma persons are also active in the Pentecostal movement and hence they have influential positions both in official Finnish structures and in the religious Roma community. This religious movement, Pentecostalism, has gained a base among ordinary Roma as well, and it has changed the lives of many Roma in Finland. Faith is strengthening a sense of belonging (Thurfjell 2013; Thurfjell and Marsh 2014; Roman 2016), and thus influencing the overall well-being of Roma Kaale in a social context. While Pentecostalism is common among Roma, there is still an ontological conflict between policy agendas and lived experiences. Although Roma activism from previous decades (1960s and 1970s) has enabled Roma representatives to become a part of decision-making processes in regards to Roma issues, there is still no remarkable social change in the recognition of the Roma (culture) in Finland despite the relatively early start for Roma policy practices in the country. To this end, Roma are part of the decision-making processes on Roma issues, but recognition and participation are limited to the narrow space where Roma policy is created. Therefore, there is a lot of room for improvement on the local level and in everyday life participation and recognition.

4. Avoidance and Moving Permit As Mechanisms of Power

In the previous decades Roma avoidance systems (of conflicting Roma families) and feuding were sensitive topics. The system of avoidance has previously been discussed, for example, in a study about Finnish Kaale blood feuding in the 1970s (Grönfors 1976) and more recently, the *Romani Studies* journal published an article about avoiding systems (Berlin 2015). The Finnish Ministry of the Environment also published a study about Roma housing, indicating problems of avoidance as a violation of individual rights (Törmä and Huotari 2018). A knowledge about this mechanism has increased among local authorities, and as a result they have started to tackle the custom as a problem that has no place in Finnish society. Among many Roma this custom is also considered as a backward remnant of the past. However, the impact of avoiding systems is still remarkable and effect many, if not most, Roma in Finland.

Berlin (2015) describes Finnish Kaale's internal control system by saying that, "The Finnish Roma operate an internal control system that prevents further conflicts between feuding families. This system is based on avoidance of inappropriate behavior, people and places, and as such, define the everyday lives of Finnish Roma" (151). The avoidance system is a way of showing respect to those that have been offended. For the Roma people it is important to know which family one belongs to so that inappropriate encounters can be avoided. For example, if your family member had a violent encounter with my family member, your responsibility is to avoid places and situations where encountering my family members might take place. This is a Roma practice that shows respect and seeks to avoid further conflicts. Blood feuding is not that common anymore, but this custom still appears occasionally and is an extreme form of family conflict. The internal control system is also a reflection of family reputation, and consequently one is never only an individual but also a representative of one's own family. This communally-oriented understanding of family with a concept of family honor are typical of collective cultures (Lidman 2015). The avoiding system also shows that it is indeed misleading to consider the Kaale population in Finland as a coherent community.

These systems of control and power within Finnish Roma communities are deemed illegitimate in the eyes of the majority Finns and also considered to be harmful traditions by Human Rights actors (Human Rights League Finland 2016). The impact of avoidance, moving permit, and feuding, however, should be made relevant when implementing Roma policy practices. But, because these practices are still contentious and deemed illegitimate, such phenomena often are left outside of the official policy documents. There is an unavoidable impact in the implementation processes as a result: if there are people or places that one must avoid, it would be challenging for that person to work for a Roma project and to have to approach some Roma. This was indeed an unsurmountable problem in several cases that I witnessed, specifically when having to recruit certain Roma to certain projects.

Linked to avoidance is the moving permit system. They both have different characteristics in smaller cities and towns where usually a few elders of the families that have inhabited the place the longest, decide who can move to the area. This custom prevents possible future conflicts and is justified in this way according to Roma social ontology. It is such that there is a group of men deciding who can move to the area; this group can consist of several family lines.

In the capital Helsinki this practice is slightly different, although it does follow similar principles. In Helsinki, certain people and families divide the city into neighborhoods that they occupy. For example, the network for Roma youth work in the capital region arranges special celebrations for young Roma once a year. After two years we had to change the location because the permit for the Roma event was denied by certain elderly Roma. These kinds of social arrangements are familiar to anthropologists. L'Estoile (2005), for example, argues that people living outside or at the margins of state power create their own system of control and justice. He draws these conclusions from his study of the native policy in French-ruled Africa and gives the blood feud system of Moroccan Berbers as an example.

The system of avoidance among Kaale Roma is partly an outcome of the prejudices and the problems of representation they have experienced historically. To illustrate the situation, imagine that there is a Roma family living in a small town. Then Roma living outside of this town are passing by and have some sort of undesirable and negative encounter with the local people. A Roma living in that town will be the one who is addressed for the incident. As a member of the minority group, although wrongly, you will face the consequences of misbehavior of other Roma, even without having anything to do with that particular incident. An individual Roma is in this sense responsible *for* and representative *of* the whole Roma community in the eyes of the non-Roma. This is the reason why there is a strong territorial consciousness among Roma.

To summarize, the moving permit system and avoidance influence all spheres of Roma life: education, employment, social inclusion, and integration. If one is not welcome in the city where his/her college or university would be, he/she cannot move there. If your work would include working with people you have to avoid, you cannot take the job. This Roma social order is typically seen negatively by non-Roma and rarely can be understood as an important system. As an anthropologist and as a Roma, I do not value one system over the other. It is meaningful that different systems and different social arrangements exist, and it is my contention that they both have to be taken into account. It is part of a process of recognition of minority groups.

5. The Parallel Existence of Power Systems

When I meet a new Roma person in the Roma project, they usually ask me three questions: Who are you? Which family do you belong to? Are you involved with congregation activities? With these three questions, it would be possible to do a “social framing” of the situation. The first two questions would help the interlocutor to determine whether there were issues of avoidance between us, and the third question would help them to decide whether possible avoidance issues could be erased by shared religious involvement. Disobeying the moving permit system by people in faith was justified according to the principle that, “God owns the land and everything on it.” However, there is a clear contradiction between these two systems as well.

In many cases, a believer removes the practices of avoidance and the expectation to react to previous conflicts. However, this is not entirely straightforward as it is not a matter of individual involvement alone but family business; you are part of your family in good times and in bad. This antagonist existence

of secular cultural tradition and theologically oriented praxis is currently being negotiated among the Finnish Kaale. A recent bachelor thesis on the subject of avoidance in Roma congregations (Schwartz 2016) describes a situation in which the Christian family members of the person who assaulted the member of another family had to be denied access to the congregation and other religious events that were located in the territory of the assaulted family. According to Schwartz (2016), the avoidance custom violates religious doctrines and should not be tolerated in the context of congregational life (3). The relation of secular Roma customs to practices from the Evangelical movement is therefore an antagonistic one.

The parallel power systems of Kaale Roma are micro phenomena that are shaped by larger (mainstream) societal structures. The Pentecostal network of solidarity consists of power that is centralized to the Roma elite. The small group of elites simultaneously operates in and influences Roma politics and different congregations in the whole country. This culture-based practice of power is more territorially shared and comprises more people and families than the religion-oriented system of power. Toward this end, I argue that the religious version of the Roma power system is more centralized compared to the secular power system that entails avoidance and moving permit practices.

Is it therefore correct to say that Roma are powerless? But the entry point to the issue is incorrect; it is wrong to assume that Roma entail one single category that can be labeled as powerless. In addition, Western (Euro-American) power often is understood as a chain of commands, and if some values are attached to the concept of power, those values are most likely implicit (Iteanu 2009, 337). Power is given to people who represent formal institutions, for example, police officers who thus have structural legitimation. In the case of Western ideas of power, power often has a political foundation. In other societies, hierarchies can be more dominant than political powers, and values (that form the hierarchy) are more explicit in the status system.

“In the Roma community, you are part of the community no matter whether you have an education or profession. Your status in the community is based on how you act WITH the Kaale, not based on your education or position in the labor market.” This statement was made in one of our project meetings. Based on the ideas of Dumont, Iteanu (2009) argues that the notion of power in the Western context is not directly compatible with power in societies where hierarchies are more dominant (336). Therefore, the comparison should be between power and hierarchy instead of power and power. The comparison between hierarchy and power in this paper is meant to underline an ontological difference; moving permit, avoidance system and one’s position in “the Roma community” are based on values, not on a chain of commands. These values include respect, shame, commitment to Roma norms, and a territorial understanding of space. With Pentecostalism we see a mixture of two different ways of understanding social orders. Pentecostal Roma activists mingle with the “Western social order,” and that is what creates a tension between Roma activists, Roma policy practices, and the ordinary Roma population. However, this tension is a sign of negotiations and social change and should therefore be regarded as a positive sign. These negotiations might lead to the balance of integration and recognition.

My argument is that in the context of majority-minority relations, there is a clear stratification taking place: if we look at the Kaale Roma from the perspective of Western understandings of power, we can

conclude that Roma seem powerless in societal structures and institutions. If, on the other hand, we look at the inner group Roma power system from a hierarchical perspective, a different conclusion emerges. Following ideas from Iteanu (2013), the first type of hierarchy is created by power (Euro-American), but the second type of hierarchy renders a worldview that includes ontological distinctions of values that might or might not include power (hierarchical societies) (156). This means that social institutions among Kaale work in a different way from majority society, and Kaale social institutions and social orders formulate their own fabric of social ontology. I argue that ignorance of this fabric of social ontology is the cause for the failing of “integration and inclusion (projects).” Roma policy papers are documents guided by outsiders’ agenda-making, which typically ignore alternative realities. One system does not apply to all Roma in Europe.

Conclusions: Social Ontology and Recognition

In this paper, I have introduced two sets of power arrangements among Kaale Roma: one stemming from Pentecostalism and the other stemming from secular and traditional Roma customs. I have argued that these two systems differ and are antagonist in nature since the one based on faith is more centered in the hands of fewer people, while the traditional system is more regionally divided and shared. I have also demonstrated the importance of power structures for Roma policy practices, and I have introduced Kaale Roma power as an embodiment of Roma agency. Because Roma often have been regarded as a powerless group, I have taken a different viewpoint in order to show that there are different social orders and power hierarchies among Kaale, and thus seeing Roma as powerless is only one perspective. In light of Roma social arrangements, I also revealed that Roma policy agendas have an ideological foundation set outside Roma communities and this basis is rarely questioned but instead taken for granted by most Roma activists. Toward that end, I argue that policy documents lack a realistic portrayal of Roma agency, thereby objectifying Roma people in the process.

There was a clear lack of interest in inclusion projects among the Roma that I worked with and researched. This lack of interest comes in part from the fundamental social ontological contradictions underlying the different expectations of ordinary Roma and those responsible for designing inclusion projects and Roma policies. The underlying philosophies of integration and inclusion seem to clash with Roma expectations.

Roma policy practices expect Roma to shift from one imagined social reality to another. This requirement fails to explain what this transformation would require from Roma and also from the rest of society. This means that the real recognition of Roma experiences and expectations has not been the basis of agenda-making, and consequently this might have caused the commonly acknowledged failing of different inclusion projects. Rorke (2014) has summarized this contradiction aptly: “Roma integration in Europe has shifted to a right-wing definition of integration where the onus is being placed on the minorities to make the adjustments and accommodations deemed necessary for social cohesion.”

Practices of integration are therefore rejected by the population in question as they are typically understood as processes of assimilation instead (see Rorke 2014). This does not mean that Kaale Roma

do not want to be part of mainstream Finnish society but rather that Roma are expecting recognition in Finnish society that entails full social and cultural citizenship as well as equal opportunities for maintaining their own culture.

In order to attain equal opportunities, “we must take additional steps, not only allowing space but also making space. This is about the will to meet Other, which requires the ability to make space or step aside. This step is inevitable move in creating common shared space between cultures” (Alghasi et al. 2009, 9).

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The Class-to-Race Cascade: Interrogating Racial Neoliberalism in Romani Studies and Urban Policy in Budapest's Eighth District

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Abstract

This paper explores neoliberal discourse as a racial discourse in relation to how Roma are conceived by academics and policymakers. I develop the concept of the class-to-race cascade as a way to describe the phenomenon, whereby the marginalization of racialized minorities is attributed entirely to their class position. The cascade flows as follows: neoliberal policies slash benefits to low-income people, low-income people are disproportionately racially marginalized, thus neoliberal policies affect different racialized minorities, perpetuating racism. I trace the lineage of the class-to-race cascade to the concept of the “underclass” as it was developed in the U.S. particularly through the work of William Julius Wilson after the neoliberal turn. I then critique the work of Iván Szelényi and János Ladányi who adapted the “underclass” thesis to Roma, using the class-to-race cascade. Finally, I apply the concept to urban policy discourse in Budapest’s Eighth District, where a large Roma community has lived for nearly a century. I show in this paper that the class-to-race cascade is a prominent discursive feature of both policy and academic concepts of Roma.

Keywords

- Racial neoliberalism
- Urban studies
- Hungary

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore neoliberal discourse as a racial discourse in relation to how Roma people are conceived of by academics and policymakers. Neoliberalism is best understood as an ideology of governance that extends privileges to markets and emphasizes logics of economic competitiveness (Peck and Tickell 2002). The emphasis on markets and competitiveness has produced a wide-ranging literature across the social sciences and humanities that grapples with the effects of market-oriented policies. Building on these insights, there is an emerging body of literature that has sought to understand neoliberalism as constitutive of not only economic relations but also racial hierarchies (Goldberg 2009; Roberts and Mahtani 2010; Lentin and Titley 2011; Kapoor 2013). The relationship between logics of racial neoliberalism and Roma is only beginning to receive attention by critical Romani scholars and constitutes an important field of inquiry with urgent political implications (see Kóczé 2017). I aim to contribute to that discussion by highlighting a central contention. I hold that policy and much of the scholarly attention given to Roma has not addressed meaningfully racism as equally constitutive of neoliberal logics as class.

To understand this, I recount the history of the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the U.S., arguing that neoliberalism emerged in part as a response to the Civil Rights movement, and furthermore as a way for white elites to maintain racial hierarchies. A class-based logic of governance emerged in the post-Civil Rights era in the U.S. that capitalized on the historic exclusion of African-Americans, who had been and continue to be in a disadvantageous social position owing to forced enslavement and segregation in the Jim Crow era and thereafter. This historic disposition was instrumental in the success of class-based, “color-blind” logics of racial hierarchies, where *longue-durée* processes of economic dispossession and social marginalization continue unabated (see Omi and Winant 2014). This paper aims to expand our understanding of race as a central logic of racial neoliberalism in academic and policy discourse by proposing and developing the concept of “the class-to-race-cascade.” I define this concept as a discourse where the catalyst for a person’s supposed racial marginalization is their relative class position. This paper will serve as a means of reconceptualizing this mode of theorizing, raising race to its proper position as a structure on equal footing with class.

Within the literature on U.S. racism, the urban is a crucial mechanism for understanding racial dispossession, and there is an emerging body of literature in Romani Studies that highlights that the same is true for racism against Roma (Filcak and Steger 2014; Ivancheva 2015; Picker 2017). This literature has highlighted that the state plays a substantial role in producing discourse that perpetuates racism against Roma; the urban fabric, in part an outcome of state planning regimes, both shapes and has been shaped by racism. While this paper is limited in its ability to provide conclusions about the role of discourse in reproducing racism, I show that there is a continuity between urban policy discourse in Central and Eastern Europe and scholarship that has not meaningfully addressed the class-to-race cascade as important in the reproduction and maintenance of racial inequality. Empirically, I focus my attention on Budapest’s Eighth District, where a large Roma community has lived for well over a century and has also been undergoing massive urban change since the neoliberal turn at the beginning of the 1990s. I argue that the class-to-race cascade has been carried over into policy discourse from the academy, finding its origins in the concept of the “underclass” as propagated in the U.S. in the work of William Julius Wilson, and subsequently in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe by Iván Szelényi and János Ladányi.

The concept of the class-to-race cascade hinges on the concept of the underclass, and it is important to investigate the context from which this concept emerged.

This paper unfolds as follows. It begins with an outline of the role of race in the shift to neoliberalism in the U.S. The central argument in this section is that neoliberalism emerged in the U.S. in part to maintain white racial dominance in the post-Civil Rights era. The second section provides a brief overview of the literature on the role of neoliberalism and race in the European Union (EU). I then follow up with a section detailing the “class-to-race” cascade as it has manifested in both the work of Wilson and Szelényi and Ladányi through the notion of the “underclass.” This section illustrates that there is a conceptual connectivity between the emergence of a neoliberal racial discourse in both the U.S. and Hungarian context. I outline three components in the class-to-race cascade: (1) the discursive construction of social difference; (2) removing agency from in-group members based upon structural factors; (3) populating categories of economic difference with signifiers and markers of social difference. Finally, I apply the insights gained from this section to the texts produced by Rév8, the Eighth District local government’s planning and urban development arm, that I argue integrated a “class-to-race” cascade into their analysis. This paper ends with a brief discussion of the limitations of this article and of ways of rethinking “class-to-race” so as to not succumb to the same logics propagated by racist neoliberal discourses.

1. Racial Origins of Neoliberalism: Bridging the Gap between the U.S. and Central Europe

In this section I detail the history of neoliberalism in the U.S. context as it arose in large part due to the internal racial contradiction of the post-Civil Rights era, and that this has implications for the way that urban governance has been enacted on a global scale. In this context the urban has been crucial site in the enactment of both neoliberalism and racial politics. Most historical accounts of neoliberalism emphasize that economic contradictions were the main catalysts of the shift away from a Fordist-Keynesian model of governance. As this section of the literature review will demonstrate, the shift to neoliberalism also ushered in a shift in racial governance in the U.S. context. If we accept that the U.S. and associated transnational economic institutions have played a substantial role in structuring urban governance on a global scale (Brenner and Theodore 2002), then there is reason to speculate that this shift also carries a kernel of racial governance embedded within those logics. This is crucially important because the racial aspects of postwar U.S. urban governance can be traced to the neoliberal logics of urban governance in the post-socialist context.

Embedded within the Bretton Woods system, which encouraged capital circulation on a national scale, Fordist-Keynesian-era urban development projects were focused on “spreading” capital evenly across the nation-state (Brenner 2004). Their purpose was to secure sustainable economic growth by stimulating collective consumption through continuous automobile-driven real estate production in the suburbs, the expansion of the U.S. military and its associated industries, and through a heavily unionized manufacturing sector (Hackworth 2007). Immediately following the Second World War both Europe and the U.S. invested heavily in the housing sector. For example, at its height, the council housing project in the United Kingdom housed nearly 80 percent of the population, exceeding socialist Hungary’s public-owned housing stock by

nearly 20 percent (Hegedűs et al. 1996). In the U.S., the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) provided low-interest mortgages to millions of future homeowners. While the specific strategies in Western Europe and the U.S. often differed, the *logic* of both programs was to help spread wealth throughout each respective nation-state via large-scale investment facilitated by centralized governments.

Within the U.S. context, however, the even “spread” of capital across the nation-state was marred by institutional and structural racism. This is exemplified by the practice of “redlining,” which impeded mortgage lending to the vast majority of African-Americans in the postwar era. In the midst of the Great Depression, the U.S. established the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) as a way to inject capital into the low-performing economy. The purpose of the HOLC was to grant mortgages to new homeowners in order to provide assets and help build wealth among the populace (Jackson 1985). Still beholden to the dynamics of a capitalist real estate system, the HOLC devised a series of maps to assess the lending risks, dividing different neighborhoods into color coded A, B, C, and D categories, where A was relatively lowrisk and D was incredibly high risk. Consequently, maps that were marked D were in areas with large populations of African-American residents (*ibid.*). These maps provided the blueprint for discriminatory lending practices that effectively allowed for a large transfer of wealth-generating assets (homes) to whites via federally-backed mortgage lending programs that *de jure* and *de facto* excluded African-Americans. The racial disparities in wealth in the U.S. can be attributed in part to these programs (Lipsitz 1998).

The Civil Rights era of the 1960s within the U.S. can be viewed in part as a movement to allow African-Americans and other minorities to gain access to the same benefits of the Fordist-Keynesian welfare state as whites. The movement to desegregate public spaces, like public pools, golf courses, public schools, and public transport was aimed primarily at this tension over the racialized distribution of public resources. As Kruse (2005) details, the response among the conservative wings of the U.S. was to adopt neoliberal policies that demonized the state and called for the privatization of public resources and the hollowing out of the state. Similarly, Inwood (2013) documents how the Southern Strategy, future President Nixon’s campaign in the wake of the Civil Rights era, favored privatization strategies that saw the liquidation of public resources. In short, the response to the demands of Civil Rights leaders in the late 1960s and early 1970s to gain access to the fruits of the welfare state was to destroy it.

While it would be too much to say that the push for civil rights was the sole cause of the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the U.S., from the perspective of white elites in the U.S., it was one of the many contradictions that privatization of the welfare state could fix. Because neoliberalism in the U.S. has been crucial for the maintenance of racial hierarchies, Roberts and Mahtani (2010) have pointed out that it is important to understand neoliberalism not only as an economic discourse but also a racial discourse. However, with the advent of neoliberalism, “racelessness” (Goldberg 2002), “color-blind racism” (Omi and Winant 2014), or a deafening “silence” of race (Lentin 2008) have come to assume the predominant racial rationality of the state. This allows for the state to manage racialized minorities and the respective hegemonic population without invoking the language of race, and as such relying on the economic dispossession of racialized minorities as the primary catalyst for the maintenance of racial hierarchies. Class supplants race as the predominant cause of inequality. As such, these authors critique neoliberal discourse for subordinating racial concerns to economic ones, and instead propose that neoliberalism be understood as promoting both classist and racist meanings.

There has been an emergence of scholarship that suggests such a conceptualization regarding Roma within Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is possible. Imre (2005) has posited that whiteness experienced a resurgence of importance following the transition from state-socialist to neoliberal capitalism. She argues that the post-socialist transition was not only economic but also nationalist as the region's elites tried to maintain power by using nationalist sentiments. The system change worked to reformulate whiteness into a new norm: its newfound progressive character situated whiteness vis-à-vis “the Gypsy” who was considered “backward” and immune to progress. Through this lens, race is constitutive of neoliberalism's historical legacy within Hungary.

With accession into the EU, the racial landscape shifted as the Hungarian state and the rest of EU CEE countries adopted the discourse of cosmopolitanism in line with neoliberal narratives of economic development. Concepts of neoliberalism, especially within the context of the EU, propagate policies and discourses of cosmopolitanism, which highlight multiplicities of ethnicities as being fundamentally equal. As Lentin (2008) has argued, by supplanting concepts of ethnicity with race, European nation-states have enabled a “silence of race” that allows for racial inequalities to continue. While some have argued that color should not be the foundation for understanding racism within Europe (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992), EU-propagated cosmopolitan discourse should be understood as an iteration of “colorblindness.” For Roma, the types of social programs that these policies produce deploy a rights-based narrative of Romani “inclusion” (Kóczé 2009; Trehan 2009; Kóczé and Rövid 2012; Vrabiescu 2014), which have eluded a structural critique of racism within the European context.

As Mawani (2012) argues, rights-based, inclusion-oriented, cosmopolitan discourses center on and preserve racial hierarchies, doing nothing to solve the systemic inequalities that produce structural racism in the first place. Melamed (2006) argues that the immediate postwar era saw a shift to anti-racism being constructed as a social value; this proved to be integral for the U.S.-led charge of liberalism. However, as has been well-documented, this charge of racial liberalism did little to change the U.S. racial landscape. As neoliberalism emerged in the early 1970s, this value system became globalized. The effect of the globalization of this value system, however, was that it had to be augmented to suit different contexts. What emerged was the preservation of existing social structures, whereby a “multi-cultural/ monocultural” binary emerged. Those who were able to join the class of global elites, i.e., the elites of any given nationality, and assume those values of multiculturalism were accepted into the club; those at the bottom are branded as “monocultural,” beholden to “cultures of poverty” and all of the negative associations that this entails. While not exclusive to whites, the given relationships of racial domination historically within the European context mean that Roma and other European minorities *de facto* are excluded from decision-making. Cosmopolitanism, rather than ameliorating racism, merely augments the patterns and formations of already existing structural racism.

2. The Class-to-Race Cascade in Romani Studies Scholarship

Within Romani Studies, I understand much of the arguments that try and unpack the complex intersections of race and class under the neoliberal order as the “class-to-race cascade.” The cascade

flows as follows: neoliberal policies slash benefits to low-income people, low-income people are disproportionately racially marginalized, thus neoliberal policies affect different racialized minorities more than others, and are, as such, racist. Implicit within the class-to-race cascade is a hierarchy that subordinates class to race, making race always a function of class. Given the widespread associations of race with poverty, especially in the context of Roma in Europe, the discourse that neoliberal policies draw upon must also simultaneously be connected to racialized discourses. The purpose of this critique is to elevate the role of structural racism to the same level as the differential access to economic opportunities as a major factor in the reproduction of Roma marginalization. Rather than suggest that racism is affected through political economy, I argue that we can view neoliberal discourses as perpetuating a racialized normative framework that establishes a white European norm that other groups, particularly Roma, become constructed in relationship to.

The foundations of the class-to-race cascade in Romani Studies can be traced to the lineage of William Julius Wilson's work on the Chicago ghetto in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly through his usage of the underclass concept (Wilson 1978; Wilson 1987). Wilson adopts the concept of the "underclass" to describe the conditions of African-Americans that arose from the massive deindustrialization that took place in the industrial belt of the U.S. after the neoliberal turn. For Wilson, rather than a system of racial inequality, class has become the determining factor in ostensible racial discrimination. The argument proceeds as follows. Economic restructuring and a lack of meaningful investment in the inner cities have produced a class of mostly African-American inner-city residents who are chronically unemployed and prone to criminal activity as a way of survival. This creates a "culture of poverty," the attributes of which he details extensively in chapter two of *The Truly Disadvantaged* under a section titled "The Tangle of Pathology in the Inner City," such as high criminal activity, destruction of the family, and welfare dependency (Wilson 1987, 21–29). In Wilson's view, however, the causal mechanism that produces these pathologies is not the historical legacy of continued disinvestment in African-American communities at the neoliberal turn (see above) but the unfortunate consequence of industrial restructuring. As such, the class-to-race cascade is endemic to the analysis of the underclass.

The class-to-race cascade is no more apparent than in the research of János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi as they extended a theory of the underclass developed in the U.S. context (Wilson 1978; Wilson 1987) in their book *Patterns of Exclusion: Constructing Gypsy Ethnicity in the Making of an Underclass in Transitional Societies of Europe* (Ladányi and Szelényi 2006). The authors begin the work by undergoing an extensive debate on how to classify Roma in the wake of the post-socialist transition. While acknowledging that the structural position of Roma changed throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the neoliberal turn created an underclass of Roma as a consequence of the structural changes wrought by the shift from state-socialism to neoliberal capitalism. The substantial welfare state disappeared, and major industries became privatized to the detriment of Roma across Central and Eastern Europe. For these authors, it is changes to their class position which inform subsequent racialization (*ibid.* 10).

A large section of their research is on the small, impoverished community of Csenyete, Hungary, which has a large Roma population. While their work in researching the history of Roma in this village is empirically rigorous, the conclusions that they derive via their analysis not only erase the role of structural racism within Europe against Romani people but also reproduce racist tropes against the community itself. They center their analysis on "the controversial *culture of poverty* thesis" (*ibid.* 78). They claim that:

Gypsies in Csenyete tried to find ways to respond adequately to the challenges they faced as a result of their deepening poverty. The [sic] developed certain norms, values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior – a particular *habitus*, if you will – that allowed them to cope with deteriorating conditions. Following Oscar Lewis, we refer to these coping strategies – or *habitués* – as a culture of poverty. The Gypsies of Csenyete became intensely committed to egalitarian values. They also began to focus on the present rather than the past or the future; thus, they developed a short-term perspective or outlook. These cultural practices were responses to their structural conditions; nevertheless, once they were in place, they contributed to the reproduction of poverty in the village (*ibid.*).

The structural conditions that created the *culture of poverty* for Roma arose from the economic disruption of the privatization of state assets like housing and industry following the transition to neoliberal capitalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this conceptualization, there exists an independent “Romani culture” entirely separate from the rest of society that is susceptible to changes in the structural conditions of the political economy (*ibid.*). The culture of poverty forms as a result of these changes. As such, the catalyst for Romani marginalization is primarily class, and the challenges to upward mobility that Roma face is a result of their attendant “culture.”

Their discussion of the cycles of assimilation and segregation, for example, incorporates race into the framing of the problem, rather than critiquing it from the outset. There is little discussion, for example, of why Roma are considered separate in the first place, instead focusing on the ways in which Roma experienced a Polanyi-esque double movement of assimilation and segregation hinging upon the concept of “prestige.” In this way, the autonomy of Roma as a separate social group is reinforced, always tethered to the rest of society, but distant enough to leave white Hungarian culture free of Romani influence. For example, Roma in the nineteenth century are analyzed as being lower-class because “they experienced relatively modest levels of social exclusion; a substantial proportion lived in homes rented from peasants within the community. They lived next door to poor peasants and Jews. We even discovered a case of interethnic marriage between a peasant and Gypsy” (*ibid.* 73). The use of the word “even” in this sentence connotes surprise that interethnic marriage is a possibility; this reinforces an idea that Roma are constructed as separate from the rest of the community, instead of being undifferentiated members of it. The authors believe the subsequent shift in “prestige” in the early twentieth century laid the conditions for Roma genocide and their classification as an under-caste, owing to the notion that all Roma people in this era were treated the same regardless of their class position (*ibid.* 73–74). In the socialist era, state-led assimilationist policies improved the overall condition of Roma to “lower-class” status. For these authors, Romani racialization in the neoliberal era emerges from their structural position as members of the underclass; they attribute this newly formed racism as emerging from the larger trend of the *racialization of poverty* (*ibid.* 10). It is important to note that at no point do these authors attribute the causes of these shifts to a dominant system of white supremacy, most shockingly in their analysis of the case of Roma genocide, instead giving whites a free pass; they allude only to Roma’s “prestige” – in this context, a disembodied signifier for the white population’s acceptance or denial of Roma people as being worthy of life – as the crucial variable which made mass murder possible.

Later in the book, the authors describe their desire and attempt to “help” Roma who live in the village of Csenyéte. For these authors, this process confirms that Roma indeed are living in a culture of poverty.

In a section titled “The Culture of Poverty at Work: Failed Economic Initiatives” (*ibid.* 95), the authors discuss multiple development initiatives that, along with a variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), helped to spearhead an attempt within the community to help fix the underlying conditions for Roma. Some of these initiatives include the production of artisanal commodities (i.e., basket weaving), farm and land development initiatives, and clothing distribution programs. For Ladányi and Szelényi, however, the Roma’s inability to help themselves demonstrated how Roma had become stuck in a *culture of poverty*. They discuss three key values that were indicative of this: (1) egalitarianism; (2) deficit in trust and authority; and (3) a short-term horizon/worldview (*ibid.* 112–116). From their perspective, these qualities inhibit Roma from emerging from their impoverished conditions. Following the work of Wilson, these “social pathologies” emerged from massive structural changes and went on to produce a new culture that limits the upward social mobility of Roma.

The logic of their entire argument is premised upon the notion that Roma are already a well-bounded social category, whereby their overall life chances are tethered to structural changes within the rest of society. These logics and rationalities are situated within a neoliberal conception of race, e.g., it follows the logic of the class-to-race cascade. In the neoliberal era elucidated in the text, the logic proceeds as follows: (1) Roma, who held a lower-class position during the socialist era, were badly affected by the structural changes of the system change; (2) they were subsequently thrown into extreme poverty; (3) these structural conditions created a *culture of poverty* that meant increased social distance of the poorest Roma from the rest of society; (4) the behaviors that Roma began to exhibit became the foundation of their racialization. Not only does this treatment hold Romani agency captive to the tyranny of *structural forces*, it reproduces racist ideas of Roma as a group far outside the mainstream. Culture becomes the notion through which racism is reproduced. As noted by others, cultural racism is the predominant form of racism within contemporary European society (Sardelic 2014; Vrabiescu 2014). Through the class-to-race cascade, Ladányi and Szelényi work to reproduce Roma racism within their scholarship.

It should be noted that there exists a body of scholarship that calls for a deeper investigation of the roles that the state, civil society, and white subjectivities play in perpetuating racism against Roma (Hancock 1987; McGarry 2017; Yildiz and de Genova 2017). Such investigations and theoretical interventions have examined race as a logic irreducible to concepts like class. However, other work in Critical Romani Studies follows the cascade model, but do not reproduce racism like Ladányi and Szelényi. For example, Vincze (2015), in her insightful article “Precarization of Working Class Roma through Spatial Deprivation, Labor, Destitution, and Racialization,” theorizes Roma racialization as part of their integration into the class structure during state-socialism, which created a schism within the Roma population in Romania: some becoming precarious workers and others “assimilating.” For Vincze (2015), Roma “poverty is ‘explained’ or ‘justified’ via their racialization; i.e. they are associated with an inferior category of persons conceived of as sub-human, or lesser, and are then easily placed into the universal category of ‘Roma,’ and are racialized [as] part of a larger ethnic group” (*ibid.* 67). In this example, Vincze articulates Roma racialization through a class paradigm – it is through their poverty that their racialization is constituted. Similarly, van Baar’s (2012) article “Socio-Economic Mobility and Neo-Liberal Governmentality in Post-Socialist Europe” describes work “activation” policies as a neoliberal governance technology with racialized effects – the purpose of the program was to force unemployed people to work, but given their relative disadvantage and marginalization, Roma were more often than not the subject of these programs

which in turn helped to feed racial stereotypes. Again, the mechanism which produces Roma racialization is a function of Roma poverty. The state forces impoverished unemployed Roma to take part in workfare programs, and their participation in these programs is what augments and perpetuates their racialization. While these authors have made important contributions to critical Romani scholarship, their analysis in these articles could go farther in elaborating racism as endemic to neoliberal logics, rather than strictly an outcome of it.

From this analysis, I would like to establish a blueprint for using the class-to-race cascade as a tool for critique. Ladányi and Szelényi's work is premised uncritically upon the notion that Roma already constitute a separate social group. While it is one thing to discuss difference in terms of the conditions that foreground its possibility, it is another to use *a priori* categories of difference as the cornerstone of analysis. As such, Ladányi and Szelényi reinforce existing social categories and use their authority to reinscribe those categories as a legitimate mode of difference. They then go on to remove agency from members of the category they describe by only discussing a one-way relationship between larger structural changes and in-group outcomes. Finally, they then populate that social category with a series of qualities that in part explain the lower structural position that was initiated by the structural changes. Going forward, I identify the following as indicative of that cascade:

- the discursive construction of social difference,
- removing agency from in-group members based upon structural factors, and
- populating that discursive construction with qualities that differentiate that group from other members of the same social class.

3. Class-to-Race Cascade in the Gentrification of the Eighth District

I will examine an urban development project in Budapest's Eighth District, which has historically been home to a large Roma community. For well over a decade the Eighth District government has undertaken a series of projects to "socially and physically rehabilitate" the district, which has long been stigmatized as a place of crime and dereliction. The area has historically been one of the poorest districts in the inner city (Ladányi 1991; Czirfusz et al. 2015). This section will explore these themes using this case study in light of the preceding analysis of the class-to-race cascade.

At the beginning of the state-socialist transition within the Eighth District, there emerged a small cohort of planners, known as Rév8, who sought to "rehabilitate" the district. As the urban planning and development arm of both the Eighth District government and the Municipality of Budapest, Rév8 began a series of interventions into the built environment. The goal of these planners was to conduct "socially responsible" gentrification of the district that would minimize displacement. Upon Hungary joining the EU, the Eighth District local government and Rév8 facilitated a large-scale displacement project in a section of the district where it owned the vast majority of the housing stock. Demolition began in 2005, destroying over a 1,000 housing units and evicting an estimated 3,000 people from a one

square kilometer area. The Eighth District government justified the project by designating it as a slum and then subsequently bulldozing it. Immediately following this demolition, the land was turned over to the private real estate firm Futureal. By now this space hosts a new glitzy mixed use development boasting a shopping mall, housing, office spaces, and an organic garden. This process of demolition and displacement was aided by a narrative that was informed by the class-to-race cascade.

In the 1980s, and by the time of the transition, a discourse about the Eighth District had emerged and solidified. The area was viewed as a ghetto where drugs, crime, and prostitution had become rampant. Rév8 and the social science community had contributed to the notion that the district had become impoverished and derelict. One way in which this had been constructed was to conflate the social and physical nature of the district as exemplified by the following excerpt from Rév8's first published document titled "Józsefváros [Eighth District] Urban Renewal Program 1998":

On one hand [sic], as a result of city development, on the other, as that of the processes of destruction [sic] in the various historical periods, the formation of slums has accelerated. Studying the processes, it can be concluded that in the period after 1990 the physical, technical deterioration of the houses in large slum areas coincided with social desorganizational [sic] processes. The present condition of Jozsefvaros reflects this duality [sic] directly (Rév8 1998, 4).

This selection helps to construct a small section of the district as socially different from other parts of the district. It attributes some qualities to that section of the district as being socially disorganized. It simultaneously constructs two separate classes in this process, helping to establish the residents of the district as being socially distinct from a presumably more "organized" population.

While this massive demolition project was underway, another more insidious project was undertaken at the same time: *The Magdolna Project*. The documents outlining this initiative frame their aims in the following clumsy way.

Due to the permanent worsening of the physical state and the downward moving social spiral the quarter of the city, being a quarter for the poor, is steadily detaching from the rest of the district. There is still a thin middle class group in the quarter that did not want or was unable to move from the part of the city and could be more easily be mobilized than the people of the poorest families. The key task of this program is to retain and strengthen this thin group as much as possible (Alföldi et al. 2007, 5).

This section differentiates two groups in the district along class lines: those in "a downward moving social spiral," which are slowly becoming more alienated from mainstream social life in the district, and a "thin middle class" that are to be mobilized to support the aims of "social rehabilitation." This suggests that the developers themselves conceive of these social rehabilitation projects in terms of promoting a middle class. This works to separate intervention along class lines. This is an important component in the discursive construction of the class-to-race cascade in the district. The same poorly translated text draws on tropes of Romani criminality as a way in which to evoke a crisis in the district, while not mentioning Roma explicitly.

The number of criminal acts is high in spite of the improving security. Another serious problem is the use of and trading with drugs as well as the prostitution having considerable historical heritage even if it has practically ceased to exist in public areas. The local community provides a more ‘acceptant’ medium for the people disabled due to their physical on [sic] mental state or disqualified due to their ethnic relations as well as for the Hungarian and non-Hungarian immigrants (*ibid.*).

The Magdolna Project’s documents further the stigmatization of the residents of the Eighth District. They suggest that it has a disproportionate number of criminals and prostitutes, and those not engaged in such activities at the very least contribute to a culture where these activities are acceptable. The placing of the word “ethnic relations” implies Roma within the district without mentioning them explicitly, especially as they are differentiated from Hungarian and non-Hungarian immigrants. This means that many in the district help to produce a “monoculture” of criminality, in part due to their poverty but also due to their physical, mental, and “ethnic” dispositions. In this way, they reproduce the same “monocultural” concepts of the modern racial regime. Roma in this instance are *a priori* defined as criminals and as such need to be managed through their supposed “racial characteristics.” Furthermore, the excerpt also implies that the poorer populations of the district lack the agency to be able to improve their condition. This is implied particularly by noting their “historical heritage,” which ultimately produces a culture where deviant behaviors are rendered “acceptable.” In this case, the external force that produces these conditions is the groups’ heritage – again implying but not explicitly mentioning Roma.

The consequences of this discourse are seen concretely in the implementation of Magdolna Project which began in 2005. The state renovated public parks, the facades of some municipal-owned flats, established community laundry centers, and renovated an old market hall. The purpose of these projects was to promote “community” by creating spaces like parks for people to congregate, laundry centers in order to promote a sense of entrepreneurialism and cleanliness, and the renovation of facades and the market in order to make the built environment more palatable to wealthier elites. However, when it comes to displacement, the purpose of these values becomes considerably more insidious. This excerpt describes these values in the displacement of the residents themselves:

The most extreme conflict arose in a municipal building which was inhabited by families involved in crimes, squatters and families in deep poverty. The conflict between the tenants and the construction workers developed so severe[ly] that the workers left the building and declared that they were not [going to] continue the renovation. Rév8 decided that the community of the building was absolutely unsustainable as there was [sic] severe tensions among the tenants. In the end the families were moved to different apartments in the district and the building was turned to social housing for the local police force (Horváth and Teller 2012).

Rév8 deemed the existing community unfit for dwelling in that particular area and they were relocated as part of the rehabilitation initiative. In framing this episode, the authors describe the tenants as being part of the targeted problem population. This suggests that their displacement from their original dwelling

was done based upon their inability to adhere to the same value system as that which Rév8 was trying to establish in the Eighth District. It was because of their behaviors and values associated with their class position (i.e., their “deep poverty”) that prompted their displacement.

In an excerpt from 2013 which summarized the project, the developers clearly state that the middle class is posited in relationship “to a large number of Roma people,” who make up at least a third of the district.

It is one of the most deprived areas in the city. Social segregation is constantly on the increase, fed by the continuous influx of disadvantaged people. The quarter is also home to a large number of Roma people, who are estimated to make up 30 percent of its population of 12,000. The area’s main problems are high unemployment, low education levels, dilapidated housing, a poor living environment, low public safety and high criminality, including drug abuse and trafficking (Alföldi et al. 2013, 4–5).

The authors attribute the increasing social segregation of the district to the migration of disadvantaged people, many of whom are Roma and are helping to further the concentration of unemployment. This helps to propagate cultural racist tropes explicitly attributed to Roma people. In this way, the authors of the study have populated the socially disadvantaged group with particular characteristics: they are criminals and drug users, mostly Roma, poor, uneducated, unemployed, and living in substandard housing. This reproduces racism against Romani people because it stigmatizes large groups of Roma as being outside the norm of Hungarian society.

Conclusion

In this article I have explored the role of neoliberal discourse in perpetuating racial stereotypes endemic to academic and policy discourse against Roma through the concept of the class-to-race cascade. I have used this lens on documents taken from a particular historical period from 1998 to 2013 and focusing on the redevelopment of the Eighth District to understand how racism becomes infused in neoliberal policymaking discourse. I understand the class-to-race cascade to be a mode of theorizing racism in the neoliberal era. It proceeds as follows: (1) capitalist restructuring, usually in the form of budget cuts, negatively affects the poorest residents, who are disproportionately Roma in Central and Eastern European societies; (2) removes agency from in-group members based upon structural factors; (3) these behaviors retroactively inform the racialization of Roma. For this to occur, social difference must be uncritically assumed within a given study, discursively solidifying the boundaries around a given group; economic changes must be given preference to understanding change; and typically, there must be a series of qualities that become fundamental to the status of the group.

The goal of the class-to-race cascade is to provide the foundation of a critique to further study about the role of race in structuring academic expertise, especially as it carries over into policy. Logics of neoliberal governance have historically privileged class-based explanations for inequality, if they are acknowledged at all. These logics in part have their root in the contradictions of the Fordist-Keynesian system as it was implemented in the U.S. Neoliberalism was as much an attempt to keep African-

Americans from gaining access to state services and public spaces, allowing for meaningful upward social mobility, as it was an attempt to absolve the contradictions inherent to the Fordist-Keynesian welfare state. Scholars have outlined a theoretical approach that takes seriously the neoliberal agenda in maintaining white supremacy on a global scale. This article aims to contribute to that scholarship and extend it into the field of Romani Studies, where more attention needs to be paid to the state's role in structuring racial inequality.

This paper contributes to debates about the role of race in neoliberal urban governance in Central and Eastern Europe, where race as constitutive of urbanization has so far been undertheorized. This paper does not seek to address the ontology of race and class and its intersections, nor does it address race and class as part of a person's identity construction. Rather, the focus on race and class in this paper is to understand how it has been propagated by academics and policy analysts. It aims to trace how race and class are co-constitutive in neoliberal policy discourse writ large.

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Roma, Adequate Housing, and the Home: Construction and Impact of a Narrative in EU Policy Documents

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Abstract

This article presents a critical discourse analysis of European Union documents released between 2008 and 2016 on the right to housing and on the inclusion of the Romani minority. The objective is to analyze the definition of adequate housing and its impact on the representation of the Roma and on the consequent housing strategies. The article highlights how a restrictive interpretation of the term “adequate housing,” understood exclusively as a series of physical parameters, associates the Roma with “inadequate” and “substandard” accommodation. This interpretation supports the persistent representation of the Roma as a vulnerable homogeneous group, “Other” from “mainstream society,” informing paternalistic policies that prevent the meaningful participation of Romani individuals in decision-making. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge the immaterial factors affecting the subjective understanding of the house and its relationship with the identity of the individual, hindering the empowering potential of home-making practices. Following this analysis, the article claims the necessity of recognizing the impact of affective and immaterial factors such as the creation of a socially supportive environment and the possibility of personalizing domestic space in the development of housing policies aimed at supporting the identity and well-being of the individual.

Keywords

- Roma integration
- Housing
- Home
- Identity
- European Union
- Discourse analysis

Introduction

Housing is a key area of intervention of the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. The purpose of the EU Framework is to ensure equal access to adequate housing for all Romani individuals in order to address their socio-economic exclusion and to ensure the protection of their rights. Nevertheless, it is not the first time that housing is at the center of policies concerning Roma. Since the Modern Age, housing policies have affected Romani communities in Europe, often with questionable purposes and outcomes. For instance, housing policies frequently were used in order to assimilate the Central and Eastern European Roma, first during the Empire of Maria Theresa Habsburg and later under the Communist regimes (Barany 2002; Trehan and Kóczé 2009; McGarry 2017). With a completely different purpose, Italian authorities created nomad camps that were ostensibly meant to protect the “nomadic way of life of Roma” but, in fact, were based on a strongly bounded and essentialized understanding of “Romani culture” and resulted in forms of institutional segregation (Sigona 2005; Picker 2013). These examples show the need for a careful analysis of the significance and meaning of the house for the individual and of its relations with identity and cultural background. Notwithstanding, the meaning and significance of the term “adequate housing,” around which housing policies are currently developed, have not been investigated or questioned, but rather left acknowledged as an objective and unproblematic standard.

The objective of this article is to investigate how adequate housing is defined by European Union (EU) policy documents and how this definition informs the representation of Roma and the consequent housing strategies. The analysis of the documents starts in 2008 when the first Roma Summit was held in Brussels, and which marked the beginning of a new phase in the engagement of EU institutions in the inclusion of the Romani minority (Guy 2009). The critical discourse analysis aims, on one side, to assess whether the interpretation of the term “adequate housing” is open enough to encompass different understandings of housing and, on the other side, to investigate how it affects the representation of Roma. The analysis is conducted by acknowledging the role of discourse in the creation and maintenance of unchallenged assumptions, which risk reinforcing and reproducing forms of cultural hegemony and therefore of justifying relations of power and domination (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 9).

The first section presents the different definitions of the term “adequate housing” used by EU policy documents in order to identify the characteristics that a house must have in order to be considered adequate. In the analysis of these definitions, particular attention is given to the tension between the goal of providing a shelter that meets a series of physical parameters and the necessity of respecting different housing needs and preferences. This section of the article refers to a scholarly debate on the significance of the house for the reproduction of socio-cultural values of a society (Bourdieu 1977; Munro and Madigan 1999) and for the maintenance and manifestation of individual identity (Relph 1976; Massey 1995; Rose 1995; Sack 1997; Casey 2001).

The second section presents an analysis of how the understanding of “adequate housing” and the identified adequacy parameters inform the representation of Roma and housing policy recommendations. This analysis adopts the theoretical lens of post-colonial studies, intending to unveil the hidden patterns

through which classification and representation contribute to the persistence of relations of power, in particular in the case of Roma (Gay y Blasco 2003; Richardson 2006; Simhandl 2009; Trehan and Kóczé 2009; Vitale 2009; Boschetti and Vitale 2011; McGarry and Drake 2013; Piasere, Solimano, and Tosi Cambini 2014; Rodríguez Maeso 2014; Kostka 2015; Marushiakova and Popov 2015).

The last section comments on the importance of immaterial factors in the creation of a welcoming and familiar space and on the relevance of the concept of home-making, departing from the essay of Martin Heidegger on dwelling (Heidegger 1971). It consequently proposes a reflection on potential ways forward with an interpretation of the right to housing that acknowledges and supports home-making practices. With this in mind, the relevant literature includes a wide range of disciplines, which have analyzed the impact of home-making on an individual's inclusion and well-being from different perspectives (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kamino 1983; hooks 1990; Marcus 1995; Young 2005; Brun 2015; Évenot 2015; Boccagni and Mubi Brighenti 2017; Cancellieri 2017).

1. 'Adequate Housing' in International Law and EU Policy Documents

The concept of "adequate housing" first appeared in legislation in the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in Article 11. It stated that, "States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing" (UN General Assembly, 1966). The Covenant does not provide a clear definition of "adequate housing," a gap filled later by the General Comment No. 4 to ICESCR. This text specifies that this right has to be interpreted as "the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" and provides a list of criteria that housing has to meet in order to be considered "adequate": security of tenure, intended as a degree of "legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats"; availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure, such as safe drinking water, energy for cooking, sanitation, heating and lighting; affordability – housing costs should be contained; habitability, understood as adequate space and protection "from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors"; accessibility – it should be accessible to vulnerable groups; location – it has to allow access to employment, education, and social services and it has to be away from polluting sources; and cultural adequacy – "The way housing is constructed [...] must appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing" (United Nations Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights 1991).

This definition of the right to housing already presents some challenges and jeopardizes minority and indigenous people (Hohmann 2013). On one side, the physical parameters of adequacy can be used to justify forced resettlement or to impose permanent housing on groups unused to such accommodation. The housing policies imposed on indigenous Inuit populations in Canada provide an example. In the case of the Inuinnait group, igloos and summer tents were replaced with matchbox houses, which nominally may have satisfied the adequacy parameters of habitability and availability of services (heating, lighting, sanitation, and so on) but deprived the individuals of important cultural references (Collignon 2001). On

the other side, an essentialist interpretation of cultural adequacy risks justifying policies that reinforce housing inadequacy and marginalization. The creation of nomad camps in Italy is representative, as it was meant to meet the housing needs of a part of the population practicing nomadism but resulted in the isolation of an entire community, the majority of which is sedentary (Sigona 2005; Picker 2013). These examples demonstrate that the social and cultural implications of the house require special attention, as the term “adequate housing” can be used to impose housing solutions that do not meet the actual housing needs of the individuals.

At the European level, the concept of adequate housing is mentioned in Article 31 of the European Social Charter where the promotion of the access to housing of adequate standards is included among the measures the parties engage to undertake (Council of Europe 1996). In the area of policy, the terms adequate/inadequate housing are used widely by European documents dealing both with housing in general and with the social inclusion of Romani individuals. Despite the fact that all these documents mention “adequate housing,” no common definition of this term is provided, and different understandings of this term sometimes clash, especially regarding the use and interpretation of the cultural adequacy parameter. The European Commission’s report *Discrimination in Housing* embraces fully the ICESCR definition and recognizes the relevance of the cultural adequacy parameter. In accordance with the definition, it calls for the respect of the “traditional way of life of Travellers,” acknowledging that “housing available on the public and private market can also be unsuitable for a population for cultural reasons” (EC 2013b, 37). Two recent documents on housing, the European Commission’s working document *Confronting Homeless in European Union* (2013a) and the Eurofound’s *Inadequate Housing in Europe* (2016), other than mentioning the ICESCR parameters, refer to the *European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion* developed by the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) in 2006. This document does not provide a list of parameters that housing has to meet in order to be adequate, but it divides housing inadequacies into four categories – roofless, houseless, insecure, inadequate – and provides for each an operational definition and a list of housing solutions that would fall into the category. The most striking aspect of this categorization is the inclusion of mobile homes and in general of all “non-standard structures” within the inadequate housing category (FEANTSA 2006). Although the European Commission working document specifies that by inadequate the document means “caravans without access to public utilities such as water, electricity or gas” (2013a, 4), the explicit inclusion of the term mobile home within the “inadequate” category conveys the message that the housing typology itself represents an adequacy risk. Furthermore, it reinforces the association between adequate housing and “conventional dwelling” and inadequate housing and “non-conventional dwelling,” which is present within the Eurofound report.

How inadequacy in housing is understood and conveyed by the EU documents analyzed here can also be traced in the characteristics used to assess housing across the Member States. In the report *Inadequate Housing in Europe*, the identified features of housing inadequacy are basic facilities (lack of indoor flush toilet, lack of bath or shower), affordability (rent or mortgage arrears, utility arrears), structural problems (damp or leaks, rot, insufficient heating or insulation), and lack of space (lack of space to sit outside, shortage of space) (Eurofound 2016). These parameters are widely used with minimal changes and also within other reports concerning housing and specifically targeting Roma (Eurofound 2012; FRA and UNDP 2012). Beyond the fact that cultural adequacy is not included, the methodology used in assessing

housing is exclusively quantitative, with no attempt to investigate the subjective and emotional side. Furthermore, the analysis is included within a narrative constructed around an economic language and perspective. Indeed, the argumentation over the necessity of tackling housing inadequacy is based on a balance between benefits and costs.

A narrative exclusively constructed around the physical features of the house does not take into account the subjective understanding of this space, which is connected to a person's identity and socio-cultural background. Numerous scholars, especially from the discipline of critical geography, have stressed the role of the house in defining and manifesting the identity of the individual (Relph 1976; Massey 1995; Rose 1995; Sack 1997; Casey 2001). Furthermore, Pierre Bourdieu (1977) has emphasized the role of the physical design of the house in the reproduction of the cultural values and beliefs of the surrounding society: this reproduction passes through the socialization of the child, who familiarizes with the values of the society also through contact with the spatial organization of the house. Gender roles, relations with the family and with the exterior, understanding of privacy, eating habits, and so on are all materialized within the physical space of the house, which therefore becomes a mirror of the socio-cultural context in which we live.

Notwithstanding, an acknowledgement of the relation between house and identity should not lead to the idea that housing needs and preferences are fully determined by the socio-cultural context. First, the individual remains free to interpret and manipulate the values and beliefs of the surrounding society and, consequently, also the space of the house (Bourdieu 1977). Second, both house and identity are fluid and subject to change and therefore cannot be represented as features of bounded and monolithic cultures (Massey 1995; Rose 1995). Finally, although the concept of the house is socially constructed, the way in which the individual interprets it is strictly personal, as the factors intervening in its definition are numerous and intersect with each other (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In conclusion, the relation between house and personal identity emphasizes the intimate nature of the relationship with which the individual engages with this space. Moreover, it highlights how the classification of determined housing solutions as "inadequate" can lead to the misrecognition of identity itself.

2. Representation of Roma and Housing within EU Policy Documents

The representation of Roma through political and media discourses is gaining attention among scholars who are analyzing the policies aimed at fostering the inclusion of this group. Indeed, such representations inform the policies addressing the individuals deemed to belong to this group and are therefore particularly relevant in policy analysis. With this purpose, post-colonial studies represent a useful lens of analysis. The two main aspects that can be traced in this perspective are the trend of representing the Roma as the essential "Other" and the *infantilization* of Romani individuals, which lead to the development of paternalistic policies (Simhandl 2009; Trehan and Kóczé 2009; McGarry 2014; Piasere, Solimano and Cambini 2014; Kostka 2015). This section of the paper is going to show the persistence of these two trends in representing Roma within EU policy documents and their relationship with the definition and

use of the term “adequate housing.” The analysis is conducted on policy documents and reports released by EU institutions between 2008 and 2016, in particular by the European Commission, the European Council, and the Fundamental Rights Agency.

The main criticism of the EU Framework and related documents lies in the representation of Roma as a homogeneous group, which would fail to acknowledge the great diversity both in cultural and social terms and the risks of creating a label under which Romani individuality disappears (Simhandl 2009; Piasere, Solimano and Cambini 2014). Despite the efforts of EU institutions to adopt a language meant to recognize this diversity – such as the use of the term Travellers along with Roma (EC 2008; FRA 2010), or the explicit specification of the use of Roma as an umbrella term (Council of the European Union 2013) – its widespread use as a policy target continues to reify a group and its supposed characteristics.¹¹ An example is the Council Recommendation of 2013, where the use of Roma as an umbrella term is justified by supposed “similar cultural characteristics” shared by the different groups included in this category. As Marushiakova and Popov (2015), among others, have noticed, these supposed “similar cultural characteristics” are used to define a group of people who share little or nothing among each other.

Furthermore, Roma is used widely as an adjective to identify other elements, such as “Roma culture” (EC 2008, 2010, 2011b, 2012), “Roma needs” (EC 2008, 2011a), and “Roma issues” (EC 2008, 2010b, 2012). The use of these terms reinforces the idea that Romani individuals share common features that differentiate them from the rest of the population, especially when these are juxtaposed to a supposed mainstream. An example is the promotion of the intercultural approach within *The 10 Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion – Vademecum*. Here, the intercultural approach is meant to provide the majority population “with tools and competences to help them to understand the Roma culture, and the Roma are provided with tool and competences to understand mainstream culture” (EC 2010a). Consequently, instead of breaking the constructed borders dividing two supposedly homogenous groups (“the Roma” and “the mainstream”), the narrative used by these documents continues to reinforce this divide.

Housing in connection with Roma also is affected by homogenization as European documents fail to meaningfully recognize diversity within this sector, apart from dividing sedentary Roma from non-sedentary. On one side, the housing conditions of the sedentary Roma are unanimously described as disadvantaged (EC 2010a, 2010b), to be developed (EC 2008), isolated (EC 2010a, 2010b, 2012), poor (EC 2008, 2011a), substandard (FRA 2009, 2010), inadequate (FRA 2010, EC 2012), and segregated (EC 2010a, 2010b, 2011b, 2012; FRA 2010). On the other side, nomadism is presented as a practice that needs to be preserved but, at the same time, is part of an ancestral “Romani culture” that poses a problem for public authorities (EC 2012).

The characterization of the housing conditions of Roma is greatly informed by the statistics conducted in this sector. All these studies use the housing standards mentioned in the first section in order to assess

1. The term “reification” refers to a process through which social and political constructions, instead of being treated as such and therefore open to change/negotiation/manipulation, are presented as powerful realities with clear and crystalized characteristics (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000).

the quality of the houses of Roma compared to non-Roma. The results stress the huge gap in terms of housing adequacy between Roma and the majority of the population (Eurofound 2012; FRA and UNDP 2012). Although it is not the intention of this paper to deny the difficulties that many Romani individuals encounter in accessing housing-related services, these data risk reinforcing the representation of the Roma as intrinsically and indiscriminately poor and vulnerable.

A representative example is the document *What Works for Roma Inclusion in the EU*, meant to support policymakers in the development of the National Strategies and published by the European Commission. This document draws from a subdivision of Roma already reported by a previous Communication (EC 2010b) and based on supposed socio-economic differences and living conditions of Roma. After having stated that Roma are not a homogeneous group, it divides them into five groups according to the place in which they live and the level of integration. Although this division is meant to unveil the differences among Roma, all the groups are presented as a social issue, and housing conditions have a significant role in this characterization. The houses of those living in segregated urban or rural area are associated with “low quality,” “makeshift shacks,” “houses self-made using inappropriate materials,” “slums,” and “lack of urban planning and chaotic expansion”. Furthermore, the document links this situation with supposed features of Roma such as high birth rates and early marriages, which, together with the tendency of living together, would contribute to the expansion of the so-called “slums” (EC 2012).

This depiction not only dangerously links the poor housing conditions with supposed “Romani behaviours,” but also fails to recognize the important differences within these groups and the presence of houses belonging to Roma not reflecting the housing conditions depicted. Furthermore, the condition of the Roma belonging to these groups is opposed to those living in “integrated urban and suburban neighbourhoods,” identified as the one who “have already taken significant steps towards social integration” and “tend to be less visible because they are less concentrated or simply because their living habits are similar to those of the rest of their neighbours” (EC 2012).

This narrative presents a unilateral understanding of the integration process and the consequent idea that in order to be integrated and have access to adequate housing it is necessary to abandon some “Romani habits.” As highlighted by other authors, this understanding of the integration process is the product of a narrative that constructs the Roma as an uncivilized and passive mass that needs to be integrated into the democratic and developed mainstream society (Carrara Sutour et al. 2014; Rostas, Rovid and Szilvasi 2015). While integration is meant to be a two-way process in which different groups adapt to the values and needs of the others, within this narrative integration remains unilateral, as the only ones who are supposed to adapt are the Roma, while the values of the hegemonic culture remain unchallenged (Samers 1998, Phillips 2010).

What Works for Roma Inclusion in the EU is not an isolated case. The housing conditions of the Roma are indiscriminately depicted in negative terms and this risks reifying the association between Roma and inadequate housing. An example is a Fundamental Rights Agency report where “Roma and Traveller housing/accommodation” becomes an entity for itself, conveying the message that such “Roma and Traveller housing” is something clearly definable and different from that which supposedly is “mainstream housing.” Furthermore, “Roma and Traveller housing/accommodation” is associated

with the failure to conform to adequacy requirements: “there is ample evidence that the quality and location of Roma and Traveller housing frequently fails to conform to these requirements [adequacy parameters]” (FRA 2010, 6). It is even stated that its characteristics have a disproportionate impact on those who are facing multiple discrimination: “Two of the characteristics of Roma and Traveller accommodation, low quality and lack of infrastructure, have a disproportionate impact on those facing these challenges” (FRA 2010, 14).

The risks of such reification are multiple. First, it indiscriminately attributes negative characteristics to an entire group of individuals, denying both the diversity within this group and the agency of the single individual in improving housing conditions. Second, it reinforces the association between Roma and poverty, which gives the idea that Roma alone are unable to adapt to the system or that this condition is due to their choice (McGarry 2014). Furthermore, this reification is strictly linked to the process of objectification, through which the group “Roma” is presented and treated as an object that, beyond not taking part in policy planning, can be moved and used by policymakers according to their interests (Vitale 2009).

In the housing sector, the reified association between Roma and “inadequate housing” can result in a misrecognition of “Romani identity” itself: because of the importance of the house as an identity marker (Relph 1976, Rose 1995), its denigration is reflected in the identity of Romani individuals and reinforces their *otherness*. Kligman, for instance, has shown how the house is used in the creation of a distinction between the “uncivilised Roma,” who maintain a “Romani way of living,” and the “civilised one,” who live in “proper houses” (2001). Consequently, the association between Roma and forms of housing deemed “unconventional” (in the case of Travellers) or “inadequate” (in the case of settled Roma), can reinforce the understanding of the Roma as a “backward” group “to be developed” and unable to adapt to contemporary society. This narrative may provoke racism and the development of policies based on a paternalistic approach (Piasere, Solimano and Cambini 2014; Kostka 2015).

At the policy level, this translates into practices that do not recognize fully the agency of Romani individuals but rather treat them as children. In this regard, Trehan and Kóczé (2009) use a term coined by the post-colonial scholar Frantz Fanon – *infantilization*. A narrative constructing Roma as unable to improve their own condition alone leads to the development of policies based on the idea that Romani individuals need to go through a formative process before being ready to become meaningful participants in decision-making. They therefore are treated as children: their participation remains solely symbolic and becomes part of a formative process aimed at educating them on how to become good citizens (Trehan and Kóczé 2009). As other scholars have emphasized, the practice of indiscriminately considering all Roma too immature to represent themselves and taking part in decision-making is widespread not only among policymakers and authorities, but also within organizations aimed at supporting the Roma in their fight against marginalization and exclusion. It is indeed part of a system, which, in a vicious circle, continues reproducing stereotypes that cannot be contested without a meaningful involvement of Roma, which is, in turn, prevented because of the same stereotypes (Gay y Blasco 2003; Boschetti and Vitale 2011).

The paternalistic approach resulting from the construction of a narrative that reproduces stereotypes is already traceable in the policy recommendations and in the presentation of “good practices.” The first issue

that emerges is the participation of the individuals concerned. Although all the policy documents call for a further involvement of the Romani population in the design and implementation of inclusion policies, in most of the practical cases, this participation remains symbolic. An example is the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) report *Improving Roma Housing and Eliminating Slums* on two housing projects implemented in Spain. The projects are presented as a success potentially replicable in other contexts, despite the fact that, as explicitly admitted, the involvement of Roma was minimal and always mediated by non-Romani NGOs (FRA 2009, 13).

Furthermore, the project required the respect of a series of criteria in the selection of new flats (size, price, and location) that restricted housing choice and obliged many families to move to more isolated areas and away from their relatives (FRA 2009, 14). This example shows how paying attention exclusively to a set of physical parameters may neglect other immaterial housing needs – affective or social – that are not immediately observable through statistics and could better emerge with the proper involvement of the individuals concerned. Nevertheless, the involvement necessary in order to meet the singular housing needs and preferences is often neglected also because of the persistent stereotype that Roma tend to create ghettos themselves. In one case, the objective of avoiding the creation of new ghettos resulted in the recommendation of adopting appropriate rules for the relocation of the Romani families as “practices such as permitting the free selection of the flat, housing together the biggest families, etc. will tend towards Roma concentration” (EC 2012, 23).

Another recurrent practice is conditioning the entitlement of the right to adequate housing with the fulfillment of “certain obligations, for example, attending relevant employment trainings, sending children to school and looking after their health” (FRA 2011, 11) or even the adoption of a vague “adequate behaviour” (EC 2012, 44). This practice is the result of a narrative constructed around prejudices (Roma do not want to send their children to school, they do not look after their health, etc.) and that treats Romani individuals as immature. For this reason, emphasis is given to the necessity of following closely each Romani family closely through a process aimed at changing this supposedly childish behavior.

This is the case of the last Eurofound report on inadequate housing, which presents a housing inclusion project addressing Roma and implemented in a small village in Slovakia as a “success story.” The project was implemented between 2013 and 2014 as a pilot self-building project by a local NGO and it was meant to address the poor conditions of the selected families “by upgrading them from passive bystanders to active participants in their home construction” (Szüdi and Kováčová 2016, 431). The Eurofound report praises the project for tackling a series of other issues supposedly connected to the problem of housing inadequacy such as “bad hygiene,” “financial illiteracy,” and “non-working habits.” It explains how the housing project aimed at tackling the above-mentioned issues by training the community and involving the Romani beneficiaries in the construction of the new accommodations, all under the supervision of NGO professionals. It finally praises the fact that Roma demonstrated the ability to be collaborative and to “obey the rules” (Eurofound 2016, 82–84). By emphasizing the fact that Roma involved in the project obeyed the rules, the report implicitly conveys the message that Roma usually do not obey. It furthermore reproduces a colonial approach that treats Romani individuals as children that have to be constantly supervised, whose cooperation does not go beyond following the instructions given by others, and who have to be praised in case they do follow these

instructions and demonstrate an ability to be collaborative. Looking at this narrative, the path towards recognizing the agency of Romani individuals and their meaningful involvement in inclusion projects seems still very long indeed.

3. How the House Can Become a Home: Reflections on Home-making and Housing Policies

Along with reproducing policies based on a paternalistic approach, the persistence of stereotypes affecting the Roma and the indiscriminate labeling of their houses as “inadequate,” present the risk of rendering home-making practices invisible and, in some cases, even hindering these practices altogether. Home-making refers to a process through which persons develop a sense of home within the place in which they live (Brun and Fábos 2015; Cancellieri 2017). Home is a term that refers to a feeling rather than a specific physical place. For this reason, it can be associated to different places – the community, the neighborhood, the nation – and not forcibly to the physical space of the house, which can be an alienating or unsafe space not associated with positive feelings (Munro and Madigan 1999; Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Notwithstanding, numerous studies have stressed the importance of home-making processes for the empowerment of marginalized groups and the central role of the house in this sense. These studies have shown how the possibility of creating home within the domestic space enables individuals to create a space where they feel welcome and where they can express their identity and personality. The direct involvement of individuals in this process thus creates an attachment to the broader context that enables them to engage within the broader community (Brun 2015; Cancellieri 2017). Contemporary works within the field of sociology stress the link between the creation of bonds within the familiar private space and the level of engagement within the communal and public spheres (Thévenot 2015; Boccagni and Brighenti 2017). Furthermore, the house can become a space of resistance for oppressed groups that do not have a voice within the public space (bell hooks 1990). The relevance of these practices moved Iris Marion Young (2005) to call for a further recognition of home as a critical value. She indeed claims the necessity of democratizing home, namely of giving the possibility to everyone to build a home rather than just a house (Young 2005).

But what does building a home actually mean? The home is a space where individuals feel recognized, welcome – and therefore safe – and with which they can identify. It is strictly connected with the identity (collective and individual) of the person and therefore highly subjective and undefinable according to “official” standards. The philosopher Martin Heidegger (1971) claims that the two basic features of the act of dwelling are building and sparing (the act of preservation). He, therefore, asserts that dwelling consists of a continuous process that produces an attachment between individuals and the place in which they live. His work has been used and also criticized by several authors, especially in regard to its validity in contemporary times, where people move more easily, are less attached to specific places, and do not have the possibility to directly build their own home (Relph 1976; Massey 1995; Casey 2001). Nevertheless, it highlights the importance of the involvement of the individual in the process of home-making. Indeed, in order to build a familiar and welcoming space, the physical quality of the house has to be supported with the possibility of personalizing the domestic space (Marcus 1995; Young 2005; Brun 2015; Cancellieri 2017) and with the

creation of positive social relations within its surroundings (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983). The first aspect is connected to the need of individuals to express their individuality, but also to preserve and reproduce their cultural values and beliefs. This personalization is not always possible. It requires a certain level of privacy (intended as the possibility of controlling the space), a space that allows individuals to feel protected and secure, and the possibility to personalize it and make it a material mirror of their identity (Young 2005; Brun 2015). This means that not all houses offered on the market can easily become a home for everyone. Secondly, the feeling of safety and recognition associated with the home goes beyond the space of the house itself; it entails the necessity of building positive relationships with the neighborhood and therefore of feeling welcome (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983).

These theoretical reflections provide relevant insights on how to develop a more inclusive understanding of adequate housing, which, other than ensuring the access to fundamental services (such as electricity, running water, and so on), allows and facilitates the construction of a home. They highlight the relevance of the subjective understanding of the house: since well-being within the domestic space is determined also by immaterial factors such as the social relations within the surrounding context and the possibility of expressing one's individual personality, statistics that consider exclusively the material factors may produce a distorted image of the actual reality. Quantitative statistics should therefore be supplemented with qualitative analyses of the subjective assessment of the house. Furthermore, home-making emphasizes the importance of the direct involvement of the individual, still unsatisfactory in the case of policies towards Roma. This involvement has to be direct and individually-based in order to give visibility to individual housing needs and preferences and to avoid the implementation of housing policies that may break existing social patterns, which are generally invisible to an external policy planner.

With this purpose, it is also important to consider the role of the socio-cultural context in influencing the individual understanding of home. It is therefore necessary to respect different housing solutions by facilitating their access and the equal provision of related services. Finally, the numerous implications involved in the process of home-making that concern the broader socio-economic inclusion of the individual should advise policymakers on the potential consequences of evictions and forced relocations of Romani individuals. It is indeed necessary to consider existing home-making practices, which can be hindered by relocation, and the fact that the new accommodations may be located in an area where Roma may have difficulties finding a supportive and welcoming social structure, especially in consideration of the high level of discrimination suffered by the individuals belonging to this group.

Conclusion

This article analyzed the definition of “adequate housing” provided by international legislation and EU policy documents and its impact on the representation of Roma and on the consequent housing strategy at the EU level. In this context, the main reference is the General Comment No. 4 to ICESCR, which provides a series of “adequacy” criteria, among which lies cultural adequacy, meant to protect the expression of cultural identity. Nevertheless, this definition proves to be problematic: on one side, physical criteria may be used for forced resettlement of people by referencing their physically inadequate housing conditions; on the other side, a bounded and essentialized understanding of culture may fail to meet

the actual housing needs of the individual. At the European level, another reference in the assessment of “adequate housing” is the *European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion*, which provides a categorization of different kinds of homelessness, housing insecurity, and housing inadequacy. This document does not acknowledge cultural adequacy and explicitly includes mobile homes within the “inadequacy” category. In addition, the reports assessing the adequacy of the housing conditions of Roma use strictly physical parameters, such as the presence of basic facilities – like an indoor flush toilet – and the availability of space per person. The picture that emerges from these studies is a huge gap in terms of “housing adequacy” between Roma and non-Roma.

Consequently, the EU policy documents dealing with the inclusion of the Roma within the European Union, failing to recognize the important differences within this group, present the housing conditions of the Romani individuals as indiscriminately “substandard” and “inadequate.” This representation fosters the association between Roma and poverty, which informs policies adopting a paternalistic approach. Furthermore, as the house is deeply linked to collective identity, its denigration may result in the misrecognition of the identity itself. For these reasons, this paper calls for further acknowledgement of the importance of home-making practices, which emphasizes the importance of the involvement of the individual in the definition of the house, the role of emotional attachment to a given place, and the relevance of creating an environment where one can feel welcome and accepted. Indeed, the home, which entails a feeling more than a strictly physical place, cannot be defined in exclusively physical terms. Therefore, in order to allow the construction of a house where the individual can feel at home, the access to housing services has to be supported by the recognition of different understandings of the home and the possibility for individuals to make the house a space where they can express their individual and collective identity. Finally, the importance of the attachment to a place and of the relations with neighborhoods stresses the necessity of more thoughtful consideration of the impact of re-housing policies.

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Nomadism in Research on Roma Education

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Abstract

This paper analyzes to what degree and how educational research from a European context explains Roma disadvantage in education by referring to nomadism. Three thematic areas emerged from an analysis of 55 research papers. First, that Roma are closely associated with nomadism in the literature, creating an essentialist discourse. Second, that anti-nomadism contributes to explaining and justifying Roma exclusion. Third, that this impacts how the relationship between Roma and education is understood. Nomadism is seen as both incompatible with and in opposition to education, and nomadic learning is seen as a distinct learning style. All in all, the analysis shows that knowledge production on Roma and education has established a discourse where it is legitimate to use nomadism to explain Roma disadvantage in education. This understanding builds on an essentialist view of Romani culture, and it elaborates and sustains key tropes of antigypsyist discourses.

Keywords

- Roma
- Education
- Nomadism
- Anti-nomadism
- Antigypsyism

Introduction

Several years ago I taught a course on national minorities to students pursuing teacher education in Norway. As these students were new to the field, they unwittingly reflected some common stereotypes related to Romani culture and integration. They were shocked to learn how minorities had been persecuted by the state, but when our discussion turned to present-day integration in the classroom, the answer boiled down to how Roma integration basically was impossible because “they travel all the time.” Although most of them had never had Roma students in their classes, they assumed that integration was impossible due to nomad traditions. This made me wonder why the nomad aspect of Romani culture was present so strongly in the students’ consciousness, and why this trait was viewed as such an insurmountable challenge for the education system.

Established truths about Roma and how these are created and upheld in knowledge production have been challenged by critical scholars in recent years. An important contribution was made in 2015 in the *Roma Rights Journal* titled “Nothing about Us without Us? Roma Participation in Policy making and Knowledge Production.” Starting from the acknowledgement that knowledge production and owning the truth are linked closely with power, the journal challenged the existing knowledge production in Romani Studies (Bogdán, Ryder, and Taba 2015). Established truths such as Roma being a static category, Roma as internal other, and Roma stereotyping were addressed in the journal, which argued that research on Roma has created and upheld such truths to a large extent (Klahn 2015). The authors called for a new direction in Romani Studies where critical perspectives on power and knowledge are to be considered and where Romani scholars take part in the production of scholarship to a larger extent than ever before.

With the story of the students as a starting point, I became interested in exploring how nomadism was used in knowledge production on Roma education. I was interested in finding out whether arguments similar to those of the students also existed in educational research on Roma. Specifically, I was interested in exploring whether Roma disadvantage in education was explained by referring to nomadism so that Roma could be blamed for their own exclusion. This particular question was not new to Romani Studies, where several researchers have criticized the established scholarship for how the relationship between Romani culture and education is understood. For example, Trehan (2009) argues that scholars keep upholding essentialist views on Roma culture where “Romani culture itself is [seen as] inimical to education” (50). Brüggemann (2014) further provides an example of such scholarship where “nomadic lifestyle,” among other factors, shoulders the blame for the creation of a particular Romani education system where “reading and writing are supposed to be ‘alien concepts’ and schools are ‘alien institutions’ viewed as ‘inimical’ to Romani culture” (442). Rozzi (2017) further claims that the supposed resistance towards education is by some researchers seen as an essential characteristic of Roma: “The tendency to refuse integration and regular school attendance is interpreted as an ‘inborn tendency,’ somehow related to the nomadic tradition of the Roma population” (20).

This article supplements the above research by providing a broader analysis of how nomadism is used in research on Roma and education. The following research question is asked: To what degree and how does educational research explain Roma disadvantage in education by referring to nomadism? The article

does not try to explain Roma disadvantage in education but does address exclusively how the relationship between Roma, nomadism, and education has emerged in the research literature. The paper does not consider ways in which nomadism and education are or could be compatible. (For empirical discussions on education and nomadism, see, for example, Griffin 2014; Danaher, Kenny, and Leder 2009.)

1. Method

A two-stage process was used to select the material for the analysis that follows in this article. First, 151 peer-reviewed journal articles were identified for review (Lauritzen and Nodeland 2018). These papers were gathered through digital searches combining the terms *Gyps**, *Roma**, or *Traveller**, with *education** or *school**. The searches were carried out in four international databases commonly used in educational research: (1) the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), (2) Sociological abstracts, (3) Web of Science, and (4) PsycINFO. The sample was limited to articles written in English, with a European context, and published in the last 20 years (1997–2016). After the articles had been sampled based on these criteria, those that either were off-topic or did not cover education were removed from the sample.^[1] Using this slimmed-down sample as the starting point, the terms *nomad**, *sedentar**, and *itiner** were searched for within these articles. Fifty-five of the 151 articles included one or more of these terms and were included in the sample for this paper.

The sample includes papers discussing the following European contexts: Croatia (1), Czech Republic (3), Greece (5), Ireland (5), Italy (4), Portugal (1), Romania (2), Slovakia (1), Slovenia and Serbia (2), Spain (4), and the United Kingdom (25). Another two papers discuss the European level. It is unlikely that this sample is representative of the research field as a whole. The UK is overrepresented by nearly half of the papers, while countries with large Romani populations such as Romania are underrepresented, and large European countries such as Germany and France are unrepresented. This may be because the sample only includes research written in English from peer-reviewed journals, which favors the UK context. Further, references to nomadism might be more prominent in educational research in the UK and Ireland, where semi-nomadism is used more commonly to describe Traveller ethnicity.

The 55 sampled papers were uploaded into ATLAS.ti for coding. Only the paragraphs where the terms *nomad**, *sedentary**, or *itiner** appeared were included in the coding process. Each paragraph where one of the terms emerged was read through, and as is common in inductively-inspired research, codes were created and applied in the process. At the end of the process, the paragraphs were assigned 12 codes.^[2] I allowed for multiple coding, and a single paragraph often was given several codes. The codes formed the basis for writing the analysis presented in this article.

1 This included papers primarily grounded in a different subject area. See Lauritzen and Nodeland (2018) for a more detailed description.

2 These were: anti-education, anti-nomadism, assimilation, comparisons, definitions, discriminatory practices, education, forced sedentarization, identity, nomadic essentialism, nomadic lifestyle, and nomadic practices.

There are several limitations to this study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria in the data collection influenced what data was analyzed and therefore influenced the findings. Applying other keywords, other geographical contexts, research in other languages, and using other databases would produce different material. Moreover, this study only considered quotes and paragraphs where one of the keywords emerged, meaning that they were taken out of context. This article does not consider the wider context of each article or the context on which the articles were reporting and does not claim to represent some generalizable truth.

2. Analysis

As the research question asks “to what degree and how does educational research explain Roma disadvantage in education by referring to nomadism,” the main goal is to answer how nomadism, itineracy, and sedentarism emerged in the research literature on Roma and education. The analysis is presented under three main headings: Roma and nomadism; Roma and anti-nomadism; and Roma, nomadism, and education. These three categories emerged from the coding process. The categories are, however, not mutually exclusive but rather overlap and feed into each other. At times, the same papers and even the same quotes are used to illustrate points under all headings. The categories also build on each other to form the main argument.

2.1 Roma and Nomadism

In this first section I discuss the association of Roma and nomadism in the literature, and how this association at times creates an essentialist discourse. A range of the papers apply variants of the terms nomadic or sedentary in order to define Roma (Gobbo 2004; Bhopal and Myers 2009; McCaffery 2009; Bhopal 2011a; Bhopal 2011b; Pahic et al. 2011; D’Arcy 2012; Murray 2012; Deuchar and Bhopal 2013). Others do not explicitly state that Roma are nomadic but use different variants of the term “sedentary” to define *gadje* (e.g., Salinas 2007; O’Hanlon 2010; Murray 2012). For example, although Myers et al. (2010) recognize that “the families included in our study being housed or living on permanent sites” (546), they still write “the sedentary population” (*ibid.*) when referring to the non-Romani population. Roma therefore are identified as nomads by proxy.

Nomadism is further upheld as an important external identity marker, such as when McCaffery (2009) writes that “the movement from place to place and temporary encampments has possibly more than anything else marked them out from the settled communities” (647). Although the quote seems to give a neutral observation, it is upholding movement as the most important identity marker imposed by outsiders. The latter point is explicitly mentioned by Levinson and Sparkes (2005) who highlight that “[I]mages of the Gypsy nomad, [are] (...) constructed by outsiders” (752). This externally imposed identity marker of nomadism is perhaps most evident in policy documents where it is stated explicitly that Roma must travel in order to be recognized as an ethnic minority, for example, in the Race Relations Act in Britain (Lloyd and McCluskey 2008). Two papers mention a nomadic lifestyle as an internal identity marker (Bhopal 2011b; Levinson 2015), although Levinson (2015) argues that

other identity markers such as occupational identity is increasingly replacing nomadism among the important identity markers.

In some cases, Roma is so closely associated with nomadism that it creates an essentialist discourse. Essentialism is here understood as the view that there are certain static elements within Romani people or culture that are either unchangeable or seen as necessary for a person or cultural practice to be characterized as Romani. A clear example is where Enguita (2004) resigns to a description of what she labels “an extreme type of Gypsy way of life” when trying to define Roma:

What I do know is that there is, let us say, an extreme type of Gypsy way of life based on a clan, itinerancy, a combination of self-employment and subsistence economy, very different from the Gadge way of life, and that, at some point in between lie most individual Gypsies (...). I am convinced that we shall be better placed to understand the problems of all of them, even those who are closer to the Gadge world, by reference to this extreme type than looking for a mean or modal type that would be difficult to find (202–203).

According to the author, some Roma are more Romani than other, and one of the ingredients of “extreme” Romaniness is leading an itinerant life. What is particularly noteworthy in this rather disturbing quote is that Romaniness is associated exclusively with difference, the opposite of what is seen as *gadje*. The discussion implies that some Roma are more Romani than others, and that the more a person interacts and associates with “the Gadge way of life”, the less Romani a person becomes. Even though the author acknowledges that “most individual Gypsies” are not representative for the “extreme type of Gypsy life”, she all the same argues that all Roma people are best understood by reference to “the extreme,” including being itinerant.

In other instances nomadism and the role of family in Romani culture is seen in connection. For example: “The extended family is the embodiment of community for Travellers and not a particular geographical location” (Murray 2012, 571).

A few authors further argue that Romani mindsets are essentially nomadic whether they are leading nomadic lives or not (e.g., Lloyd et al. 1999; Levinson and Sparkes 2005; Murray 2012). In one instance this apparent commitment to nomadism is mentioned as a similarity between Roma from the UK and elsewhere in Europe: “They share cultural features with other European Roma/Gypsy groups such as (...) the expression of a strong commitment to a nomadic lifestyle even when living in a house” (Lloyd and McCluskey 2008, 333).

Although the above analysis reveals an essentialist discourse, there are also papers where such views are challenged. A range of papers underline that not all Roma are nomads (Lloyd et al. 1999; Kiddle 2000; Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003; Levinson 2007; Liégeois 2007; McCaffery 2009; Themelis 2009; Bereményi 2011; Murray 2012; Macura-Milovanović et al. 2013; Macura-Milovanović and Peček 2013; Brüggemann 2014; Rosário et al., 2014; Noula et al. 2015). Sedentariness is described as a free choice (Noula et al. 2015) or as a result of assimilation and discrimination (Murray 2012). It is also highlighted in several papers that there are great varieties between different groups who are pursuing a nomadic lifestyle (e.g., Kiddle

2000; O'Hanlon 2010), and that use of the dichotomy between nomadism and sedentariness disguise heterogeneity among Roma (Levinson and Sparkes 2005). Further, both Derrington (2005) and Zachos (2012) address how static cultural explanations are often promoted at the expense of culture as a dynamic concept, including the view that Roma are helplessly nomadic whether they want it or not.

2.2 Roma and Anti-nomadism

In this section I will explore instances where anti-nomadic policies and practices are described and instances where the authors themselves express anti-nomadic attitudes, before concluding the section with analyzing examples where nomadism is blamed for Roma exclusion.

Several papers explicitly refer to anti-nomadism. For example, New and Merry (2010) argue that nomadism has been associated with disease and lawlessness, and several authors argue that such negativity towards nomadism is understood best as a variation of hostility towards Roma (Levinson and Sparkes 2005; New and Merry 2010; Hamilton, Bloomer, and Potter 2012). Others argue that the constructed dichotomy between nomadism and sedentariness is being used to construct otherness (as argued by Doubek et al. 2015) and that nomadism has been interpreted as a racial practice and used as an ethnic marker to distinguish Roma from non-Roma (New and Merry 2010). This ethnic otherness is argued to have been used to strengthen nationalism among non-Roma (Devine et al. 2008; Kitching 2010; Setti 2015).

Setti (2015) gives an example from the Italian context, arguing that “the exonyms ‘Nomadic’ and ‘Gypsies’ were used negatively in order to develop a sense of nationalism in the newly created Italian State, denoting Roma and Sinti people as ‘ideal inner enemies’ to distinguish them from ‘true’ Italian people” (Setti 2015, 116). An example of such discourse is found in another paper from the Italian context where Trentin et al. (2006) uses nomadism to draw a distinction between “Gypsies” and “our culture”: “[G]ypsies have been present on the Italian territory for centuries and, because of *their* nomadism, have spread everywhere. *Our culture*, however, is designed for settled societies” (Trentin et al. 2006, 80, *emphasis added*). Similarly, Enguita (2004) equates nomads with “Gypsies” and draws a stark contrast between sedentary and itinerant lifestyles in Spain, arguing that sedentariness promotes coexistence, assiduous relationships, and “a solid basis to mutual trust relationships” (206). She goes on to argue that “a stable relationship with territory implies a much more careful attitude towards it than itinerancy, and the itinerant’s activities almost always become costly externalities for the sedentary dweller” (206). Camouflaged as a neutral description of cultural differences, Enguita ends up arguing indirectly that Roma lives are incompatible with coexistence, assiduous, and mutual trust relationships. A less explicit display of an anti-nomadic attitude is found in Breen (2012), where nomadism is listed as one of several existing prejudices towards Irish Travellers: “disorder, nomadism, laziness, dishonesty, backwardness, [and] dependency” (116). Although the author is attempting here to display already existing prejudice, placing the descriptive term “nomadism” together with other explicitly negative terms gives the impression that “nomadism” is also negative.

A range of papers further discuss how such anti-nomadic attitudes have transformed into anti-nomadic policies and practices, such as laws implemented to restrict the movement of Roma and enforce sedentary lifestyles (Doubek, Levínská, and Bittnerová 2015; Furtuna 2015). These laws range across countries

and centuries, drawing a picture of a tradition of hostility towards nomadism all across Europe. The oldest law mentioned in the material is from the 1600s in Slovakia (New 2011) and the latest from 2002 in Ireland (Kitching 2010: 218). In several papers sedentarization is argued to be a particular form of assimilation (e.g., Trentin et al. 2006; Salinas 2007; Furtuna 2015) and has therefore become important to resist for some (Levinson and Sparkes 2005). Hamilton, Bloomer, and Potter (2012) argue that such laws were enforced “to get rid of Travellers and other nomadic people around the word” (505). Although Trentin et al. (2006) argue that there has been a development in legislations towards greater acceptance for itinerant lifestyles, McCaffery (2009) argues that the hostility towards those living nomadic or semi-nomadic lives continues to be so strong that the assimilation into a sedentary lifestyle *de facto* continues. Legislation aimed at restricting nomadic lifestyles does not always explicitly target Roma. However, due to the strong association of Roma and nomadism, restricting nomadism can be a camouflaged effort to assimilate Roma without having to admit to antigypsyism. New and Merry (2010) refer to a case where, although Roma are not explicitly mentioned in the final version of a particular law, evidence from both the production and implementation of the law show that it is meant to target Roma.

These assimilation laws are by some seen as the reason why most Roma today live sedentary lives (Christianakis 2010; Murray 2012). Others have outlined how Roma have been forced to lead itinerant lives, for example, because Roma were forced to move because they were only allowed to stay for short periods of time in a certain locality (Kelso 2013) or because they were “barred from many localities” (New and Merry 2010, 398). Currently discrimination in housing (O’Hanlon 2010), evictions, and deportations further encourage Roma movement (Kelso 2013).

Roma are closely associated with nomadism, and that policy and research are dominated by anti-nomadic discourses lays the grounds for blaming Roma for their own exclusion and discrimination. Here, it is irrelevant whether the people described are actually living nomadic lives or not. The main point is that reference to a nomadic lifestyle is used to justify and explain exclusion. Bowen (2004) writes “their unpredictable nomadic lifestyle” (57), which indicates that it was the way of living that was the problem rather than the institutions. Similarly, Enguita (2004) argues that, “Gypsies remained in a great measure outside because of their itinerant way of life” (212), and O’Hanlon (2010) states that, “Traveller and Gypsy children, because they live a nomadic existence and live in mobile homes, are often stereotyped and discriminated against” (245). Chronaki (2005) stirs identity into the mix, adding that holding a cultural identity also leads to discrimination: “The Gypsy community in Europe is perhaps the most stigmatised and marginalized due to its semi-nomadic lifestyle and its strong cultural identity that is visible physically” (62). Because the authors write “because of” or “due to” and label itinerancy as unpredictable, the Roma lifestyle is indirectly pointed to as the problem. Even if the authors might be of the opinion that society at large should adjust to this difference, they are using the difference to explain exclusion rather than using intolerance in society at large as a starting point.

2.3 Roma, Nomadism, and Education

This paper has presented the strong association of Roma and (anti-)nomadism in the research sample. Below I consider how these connections intersect with how Roma education is discussed in the

research literature. First, I analyze how nomadism is understood as incompatible with education, and the perception that nomadism is in opposition to education. I then move on to explore the discourse promoting nomadic and Roma learning as a particular learning style.

A range of papers considered nomadism and education to be more or less incompatible. One strand in the material portrayed nomadism as an obstacle for education. Common to these quotes is that the responsibility for attendance and achievement is placed on the group rather than on the school system (Bowen 2004; McCaffery 2009; Myers et al. 2010; Kiprianos et al. 2012; Levinson 2015). For example: “their [Roma] alternative ways of economic activity, thinking and living often expressed in a nomadic way of life, make their incorporation into many mainstream institutional processes, such as schooling, difficult” (Kiprianos et al. 2012, 693). In one paper, nomadism is, together with Roma identity, given the blame for non-attendance in school: “Those Gypsy Traveller families who still travel *and take pride in their identity* are more likely to keep their children away from secondary schools” (Kiddle 2000, 273, *emphasis added*). A second strand highlighted that the reason why nomadism is an obstacle for education is because schools are not adjusting to their pupils (Bhopal 2004; Levinson 2007). For example: “Schools work on the basis of sedentary lifestyles and it is the norms of such lifestyle that Gypsy and Traveller pupils must conform to” (Bhopal 2011a, 480). Although nomadism still is seen as an obstacle for education in this quote, it differs from the above in clearly placing both the cause and the responsibility to solve it with the school. A third strand in the material considers nomadism as an obstacle for education in relation to discrimination in housing and evictions, highlighting that parents are forced to take their children out of schools when they are evicted or discriminated against when trying to access sites or housing (Themelis 2009). For example: “This [moving to avoid evictions] results in irregular school attendance and has a detrimental effect on the education of many Gypsy Travellers” (Bhopal 2004, 49).

In some papers it was not the nomadism per se but attitudes held by “nomads” and “nomadic cultures” that was seen as the problem. Some authors claim that education is not seen as relevant among people living a nomadic lifestyle (Levinson and Sparkes 2006; Levinson 2007), whereas others argue that Roma are in opposition to education: “Gypsies and Traveller communities expressed a disdain for formal education which many rejected” (McCaffery 2009, 644); “there was neither the will nor the means to assure universal schooling, because they themselves had no great desire to appear in the classrooms” (Enguita 2004, 212); and “[t]here is a core of underlying attitudes/values, forged over many generations, that would militate against the acquisition of formal literacy whatever the attendance rates of those concerned” (Levinson 2007). Levinson (2007) continues by citing a 30-year-old source to back the argument that Roma oppose literacy:

Even among those who have settled, a deep suspicion of literacy can persist, as reflected, for instance, in the belief that ‘when you learn to read and write, you lose your memory’ (Kiddle, 1999: 65) and that literacy is ‘inimical to the development of memory and intelligence – a skill for servants and secretaries, not for businessmen like themselves’ (Liegeois, 1987: 60) (12).

In trying to explain why Roma are resisting education, some authors argue that the cultural differences are too vast, that there is “a mismatch between Traveller and school culture, with disregard for nomadic traditions viewed as discouraging Travellers from actively engaging with school” (Darmody et al. 2008), or that “it is very difficult to motivate him or her [the gypsy child] to learn and assimilate ideas and values

that are very different from his or her own experience and cultural background” (Trentin et al. 2006, 82). Others argue that Roma resist education because it is perceived as a threat: “For groups whose identities are based on some form of nomadic existence, a school system that would appear to prepare children for an essentially sedentary existence, centered around workplace, is likely to be perceived as a threat” (Levinson and Hooley 2014, 384).

Several papers explicitly address anti-nomadism in the education system, expressed both as assimilation and exclusion. Some argue that education has been used in the past (Miskovic 2009; Themelis 2009) and more recently (Harry et al. 2008; Gobbo 2011) to assimilate Roma into a sedentary lifestyle, and that non-attendance therefore could be seen as a way of resisting assimilation (Levinson and Sparkes 2005). Others address schools excluding pupils from nomadic cultures historically (Bowen 2004), and in the present (Bhopal 2004; Hamilton, Bloomer, and Potter, 2012). Hostile attitudes towards Roma pupils and families are also addressed in several papers. Hately-Broad (2004) argues that whereas “distrust and suspicion” are directed towards all Roma from *gadje*, “this distrust is magnified in relation to a nomadic population” (273). Bhopal (2011b) further lifts the voices of parents to the foreground, who argue that teachers do not like it when they travel with their children to attend funerals or horse fairs. Labelling this type of traveling a “nomadic lifestyle,” the paper claims that this identity trait is more important for many parents than sending their children to school. Derrington (2007) argues that rather than actual travelling, it is precisely these anti-nomadic sentiments that keep children out of school. In explaining non-attendance, Kiddle (2000) emphasizes that parents who have been discriminated against in schools want to protect their children from similar treatment. After making this point, however, the authors move directly to a discussion of nomadism, arguing that “nomadism itself would mean an interrupted schooling and access could not be guaranteed” (Kiddle 2000, 266). Similarly, Myers et al. (2010) highlight that parents might keep their children out of school to protect them from racism and cultural erosion. This “cultural erosion” is elsewhere in the article explained as “culture of the sedentary population,” which in turn cements Roma in a nomadic lifestyle. This practice, of seeing all Roma as nomads, could according to Gobbo (2011) be seen as a particular form of discrimination: “[T]he attribution of the nomadic identity that is not theirs, conveys to Roma pupils what non-Roma teachers, for instance, believe about them; namely, that the teacher identifies each of them: [A]s a ‘nomad’, not as a pupil” (18).

Some papers uphold nomadic learning as a distinct learning style. Coming from the starting point that “[t] here are fundamental differences between Gypsy Traveller lifestyles and those of the ‘settled’ population, both in terms of social and ethnic status and a nomadic way of life” (59), Bhopal (2004) argues that, “[s]chools need to offer a ‘hands on’ approach in the classroom with an emphasis on issues and subjects that are relevant to the needs of everyday life. In the case of Gypsy Travellers these need to reflect and value the differences of nomadic lifestyle and culture” (61). Similarly, Trentin et al. (2006) describe how schools have to adjust their teaching for Roma children: “The enrolment of nomadic students (...) has required teachers to invent alternative teaching approaches to direct education (...) or demonstrating typical gypsy work at the school” (82). Others argue that Roma children, to a higher degree than *gadje* pupils, value informal education (e.g., Deuchar and Bhopal 2013), and that this can lead to difficulties in adjusting:

Designed as they are for mainstream groups following an essentially sedentary lifestyle, educational systems simply overlook the difficulties of adaptation for children from a

nomadic background. For the youngsters from each community, the dichotomy between formal and informal learning systems results in difficult choices, which have an impact not only on aspirations, future work and lifestyles, but also upon wider identities (Levinson and Hooley 2014, 384–385).

Bhopal (2011a) argues that schools are “designed to fit the needs of the majority population rather than the minority (such as nomadic groups)” (472) and highlights special orientation in particular: “The spatial element of the school and its structured environment imposes restrictions on Gypsy and Traveller children’s behaviour, which they may not be used to” (*ibid.*), since “[f]or many nomadic groups learning takes place by the family and extended kinship network” (480). That Roma children hold fundamentally different orientations towards space is also argued by Levinson and Sparkes (2005). They argue that, “Gypsy children inhabit spatial environments radically dissimilar to those of mainstream children” (751), and that it is important to consider how this impacts on school adaptation. Integrating all the above mentioned claims on differences between Roma and non-Roma learning, Trentin et al. (2006) equate the “Gypsy child” with a “nomadic child” and arrives at the conclusion that the different education systems of the two groups are so vast that school can be unbearable for Roma:

Anthropologically there is a notable difference between the educational systems of nomadic and non-nomadic groups. The schools of the *gagé* (non-gypsies) are organized according to a rigid discipline of time and space, division of classes by age, and a primarily verbal and artificial way of teaching, with education lasting until or beyond adolescence. The gypsy child, on the other hand, learns by listening and through concrete action that takes place within the clan, passing precociously from infancy into adulthood. Gypsy children are fundamentally free. They are used to moving around in open spaces with few rules governing them. As a consequence, being confined for many hours in a structured closed environment, i.e. the school, can be unbearable for them (81).

In some instances, the belief that Roma children’s learning styles are fundamentally different from those of *gadje* children, and that they require a different curriculum from the majority children, has led to segregated education initiatives, such as the “nomads’ workshops” described in Gobbo (2011): “The separate, excluding arrangement paradoxically allows Roma pupils to maintain their ethnic identity at the price of their identity as pupils, while it frustrates the teachers’ efforts to provide learning to their nomadic pupils” (18).

3. Discussion

The above analysis revealed three main discourses related to Roma and nomadism in educational research: (1) Roma are closely associated with nomadism, (2) nomadism is mainly understood in negative terms so that it can be understood as anti-nomadism, and (3) this lays the ground for understanding Roma disadvantage in education based on apparent nomadism, thus making Roma too different for the regular education system.

In the first section of the analysis, the association between Roma and nomadism was explored. References made to nomadism when seeking to define Roma were analyzed, as well as the reference to nomadism as both an internal and external identity marker. Finally, I analyzed essentialist understandings of Roma and nomadism. For example, one paper promoted “[G]ypsiness” as something that can be measured on a scale, so that one can arrive at a description of an extreme “Gypsy.” Another view visible in several papers was that although this apparently extreme “Gypsy” life may be abandoned by a Romani individual, Romani people’s mindsets will remain fundamentally different from those of the *gadje* majority, particularly in relation to nomadic culture which is claimed to influence Romani people’s way of thinking and acting. These understandings resemble what Selling (2015) describes as “the fictional character of the conceptual Gypsy, which in antiziganist discourse is projected onto Roma and other persons” (120). The abovementioned ideas of “[G]ypsiness,” including innate nomadism, constitute characteristics of this “conceptual Gypsy.” When these are linked with identity, one easily arrives at what McGarry (2017) labels “an ethnicized identity,” defined as a process of dissimilation leading to ethnogenesis, “where the group is understood by supposedly essential characteristics such as nomadism” (20). The resilience of this antigypsyist discourse is illustrated in the analysis here: when the essentialist claim that all Romani persons are nomads is confronted with empirical evidence that in fact most are sedentary, the image of “the conceptual Gypsy” strikes back by claiming that despite Roma being sedentary, they have nomadic mindsets. As such, the first part of the analysis reveals a discourse which inseparably connects Roma with nomadism.

When the association between Roma and nomadism was established, the second section of the analysis moved on to explore Roma and anti-nomadism. After having outlined how the research papers describe anti-nomadic policies and practices historically and in more recent times, I moved on to explore expressions of anti-nomadic sentiments in the papers, where it seems that anti-Roma and anti-nomadic sentiments feed into and strengthen each other. This connection has been pointed out by, for example, Donahue, McVeigh, and Ward (2003) who argue that although racism and anti-nomadism are distinct phenomena, “this discrimination manifests usually in combination – both phenomena are often experienced simultaneously” (39). McVeigh (1997) argues that anti-nomadism stems from sedentarism, which is defined as “that system of ideas and practices which serves to normalize and reproduce sedentary modes of existence and pathologies and repress nomadic modes of existence” (9). The notion of sedentarism, McVeigh (1997) argues, include both incitement of direct hate-speech and acts against nomadic groups, and the subtler sedentary normativity embedded in “ideas, actions and structures which construct being sedentary as the only possible mode of existence within contemporary society” (9). Anti-nomadism therefore does not only affect Roma but is rather a “cultural universal” (Donahue, McVeigh, and Ward 2003, 39). Anti-nomadism stretches back in time, and as with other versions of racism, a nomadic lifestyle was previously given genetic explanations (*ibid.* 40). Anti-nomadism is also a worldwide phenomenon, where a sedentary normativity causes tension with nomadic communities all around the world (*ibid.*). Ellwood (in Donahue, McVeigh, and Ward 2003, 39) argues that nomadism is seen as unmodern, and that nomadic peoples therefore should be settled both for their own good and for the good of the nation. The reasoning leading to these conclusions, she argues, is often benevolent and patronizing (39). This universal anti-nomadism intersects and escalate with antigypsyism, which according to Knudsen (2016) “has to be understood as an instrument of stigmatisation, whose intent is not to observe and understand the circumstances of the ‘other’ side, but to find elements of identification that legitimate separation and other discriminative actions against those ‘others.’” Nomadism seems to have acted

as a particularly important element for such legitimization of discrimination historically. Wippermann (2015) argues that social antigypsyism is grounded in this very understanding that Roma have chosen freely “to be eternal wanderers” (5), and McGarry (2017) adds that the idea of nomadism has made it possible to see Roma as not really belonging to the states where they hold citizenship: “Roma are seen as a problem community that does not ‘fit’ the projection of the nation” (8). As the sedentary-normative mindset is a cultural universal, nomadism is associated strongly with Roma to the extent that it is understood as an essential part of Romani identity and culture, and nomadism is established as playing a particular role in antigypsyist ideology, ground is laid for using nomadism to blame Roma for their own exclusion. The analysis in this article showed that this is the case also in educational research. The field is therefore contributing to an antigypsyist discourse where anti-nomadism is used to legitimize Roma exclusion.

The third section of the analysis addressed the intersection between Roma, education, and anti-nomadism in the research literature. I started by analyzing how nomadism is seen as both incompatible with and in opposition to education. Roma disadvantage in education could be analyzed with reference to dimensions applied in other comparable contexts such as poverty and rurality (UNESCO 2015), pressing issues such as segregation in areas such as housing and schooling (e.g., Rostas 2012; Picker 2017), or effects of hate violence such as forced evictions (Björge and Witte 1993; Stewart 2012). Although these dimensions are also present in research on Roma and education, the analysis in this paper also revealed that nomadism is seen as both incompatible with and in opposition to education. Since Roma already have been tied to nomadism, and nomadism is understood as fundamentally negative, it comes as no surprise that discourses exist where the problem of integration is placed squarely upon Roma rather than the education system. It is a vicious circle that is difficult to escape. As End (2015) puts it: “these patterns of prejudice have existed, and they take recourse to whatever empirical facts seem useful to justify such biases: for example, if Romani children don’t attend school, they are seen as primitive and hostile to education. If they attend school, they are viewed as a threat to the education of non-Romani children” (103). The analysis also revealed a tendency to understand nomadic learning as a distinct learning style, which resembles the discussions on essentialism and nomadism as a reason for exclusion. It is a similar discourse formation that is found here. Even when Roma are not travelling, they are perceived to have nomadic mindsets. According to this way of thinking, Roma require a different pedagogy in order to learn. Their insurmountable difference is seen as the reason for their disadvantage in education. An alternative approach to the issue could be to focus on the anti-nomadism rather than the apparent nomadism when seeking to explain Roma disadvantage in education.

The analysis revealed a discourse in educational research where Roma are associated strongly with nomadism, nomadism is almost solely understood in negative term, and this apparent nomadism is used to “blame the victim” so that Roma exclusion can be explained with reference to nomadism. To contribute to such an argument was probably not the intention for many of the researchers. It is worth quoting Hancock’s essay (2010) on fake Romani culture: “To be fair, not all fake Romani culture has been faked deliberately. More often it is simply the result of misguided or misinformed hypotheses finding their way into the conversational account, and being repeated by subsequent writers unchecked” (177). Simply put, references to nomadism have become such an established part of the discourse in educational research that it has become an unquestioned truth which is being reproduced. This might lead to what Kwiek (2009) labels unintentional exclusion. In their attempt to understand Romani minds and culture, scholars unintentionally sustain and elaborate exclusionary discourses with the help of antigypsyist projections

of Romani people as eternal wanderers. This is an example of how research and established knowledge production have upheld stereotypes and the understanding of Roma as a static category.

Conclusion

This paper has explored to what degree and how educational research explains Roma disadvantage in education by referring to nomadism. Out of 151 systematically sampled research papers, 55 included the terms nomadic, itinerant, or sedentary. The analysis that was carried out suggests that the idea of nomadism has played an important role in the knowledge production on Roma and education. On the most basic level, many researchers use the terms nomadic or itinerant to define Roma, some to the extent that it resembled an essentialist view of Romani culture, creating and establishing a strong association between Roma and nomadism. Furthermore, nomadism is largely understood as deviant and a challenge for society. Many of the research papers analyzed raised this issue by referring to anti-nomadic policies and practices. Other research papers expressed anti-nomadic attitudes, such as using nomadism to blame Roma for their own exclusion. The analysis further considered how nomadism is used to explain Roma disadvantage in education, either because nomadism is seen as incompatible with or in opposition to education, or because nomadism is seen as a distinct learning style. Based on this analysis, the paper has argued that educational research on Roma resembles antigypsyist discourses where essentialism, anti-nomadism, and sedentarism have played important roles.

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From Reflexivity to Collaboration: Changing Roles of a Non-Romani Scholar, Activist, and Performer

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Abstract

Recently scholars have begun to investigate who produces knowledge about Roma and with what agendas. I extend this inquiry to ask how reflexivity by a non-Romani ally and researcher contributes to analyzing the production and use of knowledge in Romani Studies. I examine various roles I have inhabited and forms of scholarship I have produced, both successful and unsuccessful, during my long involvement in Romani studies to reveal how and why I represented Roma, and what uses this scholarship served. Calling for a “reflexive turn” in Romani Studies, I note that while self-examination of knowledge production is useful for all researchers, for non-Roma it is mandatory because historically non-Roma have held more authority. Embracing “critical whiteness” theory, I examine my privileged roles and my attempts at collaborative advocacy. Tracing a historical trajectory of shifting subjectivities, I narrate several crises, such as balancing essentialism with advocacy, respectfully presenting Romani music, and combining diplomacy with activism to illustrate dilemmas of representation that I have faced and the responses I crafted. These issues all underline the responsibility that non-Romani allies have in accounting for their words and actions.

Keywords

- Reflexivity
- Representation
- Collaboration
- Activism
- Advocacy
- Critical whiteness

Introduction

In the last few years, scholars have begun to investigate who produces knowledge about Roma and with what agendas (Ryder et al. 2015; Matache 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Surdu 2016). I extend this inquiry to ask how reflexivity by a non-Romani ally and researcher contributes to analyzing the production and use of knowledge in Romani Studies. To this end, I examine various roles I have inhabited and forms of scholarship I have produced, both successful and unsuccessful, during my 35-year involvement in Romani studies to reveal how and why I represented Roma, and what uses this scholarship served. This reflexive analysis of my shifting positionalities illuminates representational quandaries and claims of truth and effective advocacy.^[1]

I believe that good scholarship coupled with robust collaboration and activism can only emerge when researchers honestly account for their positionality. Calling for a “reflexive turn” in Critical Romani Studies, I note that while self-examination of knowledge production is useful for all researchers, for non-Roma it is mandatory because historically non-Roma have not only produced most of the scholarship about Roma but also positioned themselves as the authorities, the experts, “on” Roma; the structure of the system has bolstered this hierarchy, such that Romani voices have rarely been heard. As the editors of this journal wrote: “Romani activist-scholars [...] share the plight of other racialized scholars who are unconsciously perceived as ‘incompetent’ and who are accused of ‘dilut[ing] academic rigorousness’ [...] The position of any colored, racialized person is repeatedly undermined as a result of persistent structural inequality and the myths of meritocracy” (Bogdan et al. 2018, 4). I specifically take up Matache’s plea to non-Romani scholars to “employ genuine scholarly reflexivity” and to “involve Roma as equal partners in Roma-related research” (2017). Analyzing my attempts at collaboration and advocacy thus inherently involves examining my own privileged scholarly claims to truth and authority.

I trace my trajectory from a naïve student documenting gender, work, and belief among 1970s American Kalderash through politicization in 1980s socialist Bulgaria to involvement in transnational migration to working with U.S. Roma-led NGO Voice of Roma to serving as a witness in legal cases. Throughout I examine several crises in my positionality, such as balancing essentialism with advocacy, respectfully presenting Romani music, and combining diplomacy with activism. These “revelatory moments” (Trigger et al. 2012) open up new understandings of society and culture through the researcher’s probing evaluation of her place in and her effect on the research. By charting my changing positionalities, I illustrate dilemmas of representation that I have faced and the responses I crafted.

1. Reflexivity and Romani Studies

In this section I trace the rise of reflexivity in anthropology and then investigate its applicability to Romani Studies. The reflexive turn can be traced to the second wave of feminist demands in the 1960s to examine

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference Critical Approaches to Romani Studies at the Central European University, May 2017. I would like to thank the peer reviewers for their helpful suggestions for revision.

critically various power dimensions inherent in research; soon after, anthropologists finally began to confront their own legacy in colonialism and racist history. Simultaneously, feminists underlined the dictum that the person doing the research affects the research, and further, that males have been the main narrators and the main subjects of culture. In addition to questioning anthropological “truths,” scholars questioned the very process of producing knowledge and inscribing it in writing. They not only reread and reinterpreted the classic texts but also interrogated fundamental enlightenment/scientific concepts of objectivity, positivism, and replicability by a “neutral” observer, all leading to a “crisis of representation.”^[2] I hold that what emerged from this period was a more robust form of scholarship that takes account of the researcher as an active producer of knowledge in a field of unequal power relationships.

All of this is relevant to the present moment in Romani Studies when Romani scholars are demanding discursive space under the rubric of “Nothing about us without us” (Ryder et al. 2015). They chronicle the power that non-Romani academics have wielded over Romani subjects, in the pursuit of “knowledge.” Similar to pioneer feminists, postcolonial scholars, and 1970s anthropologists, Roma are questioning the production of accepted knowledge, pointing out that powerful people create truth paradigms while marginal people are not heard. Bringing the margin to the center can transform both the products and the methods of scholarship. This paradigm change can extend even further in questioning the center/margin binary itself. For example, Roma are far from monolithic; some subgroups such as Vlach Romani speakers are historically overrepresented in scholarship and tend to stand in for the whole, with unfair results. We also need to take account the multiple locations that non-Roma occupy, as I illustrate below when unveiling my shifting positionalities.

Criticisms of reflexivity surfaced quite early within anthropology: critics claim reflexive writers focus too much on themselves – the anthropologists – rather than those being studied and descend into narcissism and autobiography. This is true in some cases, but rigor and responsibility can mitigate against excess (Pillow 2010). More fundamentally, critics ask what happens to objectivity when all we have are multiple positions from which to proclaim truth. I myself am not afraid that knowledge will suffer when we reveal our subject positions. To the contrary, I believe that ethnographic empiricism is still a valid mode of inquiry; if it is coupled with a deep and honest assessment of positionality, it leads to better scholarship and more reliable results.

Michael Stewart (2017) takes up precisely the issue of “who speaks for whom” in his recent criticism of the “Nothing about us without us” stance. He interprets this as a “closed-society research paradigm”, in other words, a demand for exclusivity by Roma: “a wave of reaction among activist Romani intellectuals that demand ‘Roma studies’ taught by Roma, that suggests research agendas should be controlled by ‘the Roma’ or whoever claims to represent them...” (127). To the contrary, I see Roma scholars eschewing exclusivity while simultaneously demanding legitimacy. For example, Mirga-Kruszelnicka (2015) claims: “Romani scholars cannot claim greater legitimacy over the knowledge they produce on Roma, but

2 Notable early works of this period include Ruby, *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology* (1982); Clifford and Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986); and Behar and Gordon, eds., *Women Writing Culture* (1996).

neither can their non-Romani colleagues. This artificial dichotomy should be overcome as both Romani and non-Romani scholars are, in fact, legitimate voices” (45). I thus read the movement as a healthy and necessary claim to discursive visibility by Romani intellectuals, coupled with a call for reflexivity for all researchers. Brooks (2015) precisely underlines this “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” (58).

Stewart (2017) furthermore defends “scientism and objectivity, claiming they are not a means by which ‘Roma have been de facto excluded from knowledge production’ but the very foundation of any universal reason and the research agenda of any university worthy of the name” (143). Questioning his valorization of “universals” and “science,” I underline that “objective truths” need to be investigated precisely because they have been delivered by those in power; this is the foundation of the very critique of anthropological history that I outlined above, and that is now being developed by Romani scholars. Ryder (2015) terms this split in Romani Studies “scientism vs. critical research” (13). Aligning himself with the latter, he writes: “Critical researchers influenced by postcolonial theory have challenged the notion that developing theory should be solely based on the thoughts of academics but instead incorporate the voices and experiences of those experiencing racism and oppression” (14–15).

As Roma begin to question “The White Norm in Gypsy and Romani Studies” (Matache 2016a, 2016b, 2017), non-Roma are obliged to examine how their privileged access to authority has affected their methods, their scholarly output, and the uses of their scholarship in policy. Mirga-Kruszelnicka (2015) points to models from indigenous, post-colonial, and feminist scholarship in the shift to legitimize Romani voices. Non-Romani allies can turn to these fields for models of self-reflection. As Viswersawan (1988) writes, “If we have learned anything about anthropology’s encounter with colonialism, the question is not really whether anthropologists can represent people better, but whether we can be accountable to people’s struggles for self-representation and self-determinism” (39).

The concept of “critical whiteness” underlines my reflexive motives as a non-Romani scholar. Growing out of critical race theory, critical whiteness theory demands that white people take account of their structural role in maintaining privilege. This squarely applies to Romani Studies – not only have Roma have been historically racialized but also non-Roma can fruitfully expose the structures that maintain inequality. Vajda (2015) similarly points to critical whiteness as a necessary reflexive step in the development of Romani Studies: “[...] 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” (48).

Some critical whiteness scholars recommend that the final methodological move after analyzing white privilege, should be proactive – toward anti-racist advocacy; this means action that is collaborative, participatory, and useful. Alcoff (1998), for example, writes about “the many white traitors to white privilege who have struggled to contribute to the building of an inclusive human community” (25). In asking “What should white people do?” Alcoff suggests white people should move beyond acknowledging their oppressive roles to providing anti-racist models, thereby avoiding the trap of inaction that arises when one is mired in guilt. Below I explore this action component.

2. From Reflexivity to Collaboration to Advocacy

Today, I strongly feel that collaboration with and advocacy for Roma are essential to my work. But during my graduate training in the early 1970s neither collaboration nor advocacy were on my radar. The two concepts, collaboration and advocacy, need to be distinguished and may or may not be paired. Collaboration can mean something as non-threatening (to the establishment) as two scholars co-writing esoteric academic literature that has nothing to do with advocacy. In contrast, I support the type of collaboration that wields epistemological weight – that systematically interrogates the power that non-Romani academics have wielded over Romani “subjects” to produce knowledge.

Harraway’s concept of “situated knowledge” (1988) argues that knowledge emerges from particular positionalities that are informed by hierarchies. People in dominant positions shape “truths” and thereby relegate the experiences of women and minorities to invisibility and inaudibility. This has been the situation of Roma until recently, both in scholarship and in representations in discourse and image. One reason is that few Roma have been allowed to occupy intellectual seats of power; there have certainly been grassroots intellectuals and community leaders, but they rarely were permitted to climb the official structures of authority. Now more Roma who are well educated with official degrees and certificates are claiming visibility and audibility. Re-centering scholarship with Romani voices as primary is a necessary paradigm shift.

Historically, Roma have certainly “spoken” but their utterances have not been “legible” to dominant powers; they have been excluded from scholarship about and representations of themselves. Spivak (1988) refers to the same dilemma of post-colonial people speaking but not being heard. Scholarship thus needs to be deconstructed as the site of epistemic struggles between the interests of the powerful and the disempowered. Brooks (2015) provocatively asks, “What happens when we reconsider Romani Studies by taking seriously Romani expertise and Romani knowledge production?” Part of the answer lies in rethinking the traditional methods of doing research; in the older model, the discipline’s history (which was determined by established scholars) determined viable topics and methods, and the scholar tested them on subjects. Like Vajda (2015), I argue that collaborative methods such as participatory action research can help open new topics to inquiry and simultaneously interrogate the historical authority of non-Roma (48). Non-Roma can help to dismantle structural exclusion first by realizing they are part of the structure of privilege, and then by helping to dismantle it via emancipatory methods of research.

For anthropologists, collaboration can happen at every stage – planning, fieldwork, analysis, as well as writing.^[3] In Romani Studies, there are a few good collaborative models of fieldwork, such as work in the United Kingdom by Greenfields and Ryder (2012) and in Spain by Gay y Blasco (2017) and Gay y Blasco and de la Cruz (2012). Tremblett and McGarry (2013) point out that, unfortunately, current policy work does not favor collaboration; rather it “often subscribes to a notion of ‘scientific’ research which does not

3 See Lassiter (2005). Some have argued that anthropology by its very nature is collaborative because we seek to represent others’ experiences. Sanjek introduced the idea of “mutuality” to express the value anthropologists place on their positive connection to people with whom they work; this leads to investment in their social and public worlds (2015). This is idealistic, and it is often absent.

traditionally encompass research carried out by stakeholders (i.e. Roma people themselves) as worthy or important” (5). Tremblett and McGarry advocate for the “participation of Roma minorities [...] in a non-tokenistic fashion in research and policy making processes” (5). Many scholars advocate this view, but it has still not become standard practice.

3. Challenges in Engaged Research

This brings us to the second concept, advocacy or activist anthropology, which is a form of engaged scholarship that aims to “use theory and method to benefit the people we study by partnering with them to move towards a just world” (Beck and Maida 2013, 1). Public anthropologists deliberately pair the idea of critique with collaboration: “acting as experts and advocates, critiquing the oversimplified assertions of politicians, government officials, and the media...” (Beck and Maida 2015, 1–2). In Romani Studies, many scholars have done the work of critique but have not necessarily embraced collaboration. I hold that collaboration provides more insightful critiques that better resonate with communities. For example, in my music work which seeks to dismantle stereotypes, my Romani collaborators have pointed out that the stereotype of the genetically endowed Romani musician often works in their favor. They do not really want to “uphold” this stereotype, but they feel that they have no choice – their profession depends on it (Silverman 2012a). Yet musicians would all agree that not all Roma are musical. Thus, when I do collaborative public educational music programs with Roma, we point out these ironies, highlighting their specific musical talents and hard work, within the context of a historical and economic view of Romani professions.

Activist scholarship underlines that both the goals and the methods of research will be mutually developed by scholars and communities, thus supporting collaboration (Hale 2008). Furthermore, Participatory Action Research (PAR) emphasizes that methods are in service to activist goals, determined by the affected people; thus community members constitute the local public that scholarship serves, and knowledge is “co-constructed” (Schensul 2015).^[4] In Romani Studies, Ryder (2015) has advocated for this approach at the same time that he has noted its absence in much United Kingdom policy work. He writes that “inclusive research needs to be promoted which ‘goes beyond’ the academy” and “is centred on participatory and community based research as a tool for furthering social justice”; he provides the Roma Research and Empowerment Network based in Budapest as an example (20).

Weiss (2016) reminds us that these inclusive frames “have precedents in feminist and women of color ethnography, which have long cultivated reciprocal, dialogic, and horizontal relationships between researcher and researched...” Postcolonial scholars articulate a similar argument. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, indigenous scholar Linda Smith (1999) asks, “whose research is it? [...] Whose interest does it serve?” (10). Thus, we must ask what “knowledge for whom and for what purpose” (Maida and Beck 2015, 5). As non-Roma accept hospitality and knowledge from Roma, we need to continually ask ourselves: what is our relationship to our hosts/teachers? What are we doing for those who so generously taught us?

⁴ Hale (2008) terms this co-theorization.

Embracing engaged scholarship and activism is not easy – there are myriad challenges and contradictions in goals, methods, and products. Osterweil (2016) writes that goals are often messy: “while the intention is certainly to move toward justice,” we cannot “presume that social movements and communities are clear-cut entities with common goals with which we, anthropologists, can easily name and align.” This is paramount in Romani Studies where there are multiple subject positions within the large categories “Roma” and “non-Roma.” Humility and sensitivity are sorely needed. Weiss (2016) states: “when we take for ourselves the arrogant role of assisting others who may not want our help or when we assume that they have much to learn from us, but we have nothing transformative to learn from them, we reproduce the divisions between anthropologist/informant or expert/object that collaboration is intended to undermine.”

How do we guide our work in a collaborative direction that is accountable to communities? Davis (2016) tentatively answers that we: “need to approach our collaborations with awareness and humility, acknowledging that our ways of knowing might not always be what others are looking for.” One common pitfall is assuming the role of an “academic superhero” who can solve all problems. Checker (2014) underscores the real-life limitations of activist projects when she sarcastically claims that she can “scale vast configurations of power with a single e-mail. [...] More generally, as anthropologists celebrate and promote a disciplinary shift toward public and engaged scholarship, are we glossing over our own limitations and overestimating or overstating the kinds of change we can effect, especially at this political-economic moment?” (416). The savior complex is just as damaging as a lack of advocacy because it shuts down communication and often ends in failure. Later in this article I will explicate an example of my own overestimation of efficacy in my quest to abolish the term “Gypsy” in music marketing.

Another important factor that academic activists must confront is the omnipresent role of the university in our lives; we cannot deny that we build careers from our collaborations, which in turn creates more privilege. Moreover, universities in the neoliberal era gain the legitimacy of social justice from our work despite the fact that these same institutions often undermine social justice and equality. In building our careers, activist scholars are caught in the bind of implicitly upholding the values of their universities. Although academics have more privileges than community activists, “we also operate within – and are subject to – the same political and economic trends and demands that increasingly circumscribe activists’ efforts” (Checker 2014, 416). Checker further argues that engaged research is “better served if we acknowledge the contexts in which we operate, along with our own powerlessness and vulnerability” (*ibid.*).

For example, my university does not classify advocacy work as scholarship; rather, it is classified as “service.” Thus legal consulting, organizing festivals, booking tours for musicians, and writing program notes and grants for arts projects with Roma do not count as research outputs and do not advance my academic career. In contrast, scholarly articles advance my career, but ironically do not reach the general public and may do little to actively help Romani communities. As a senior scholar who is less vulnerable than my junior colleagues, I have strongly lobbied for recognition of multiple forms of public scholarship; this is another form of academic activism.

4. Shifts in Research

My career trajectory mirrors the theoretical shifts of the last 40 years and the ironies of the formative years.⁵ In the 1970s, no activist or feminist ethnographies existed; yet we were on the streets protesting against the Vietnam War and for Black Studies and Women's Studies. Today, anthropology embraces critical thinking, and I teach classes in post-colonial and feminist theory and activist research methods. The following list summarizes my projects by time, theme, and location. Unlike some anthropologists, I have worked with numerous subgroups of Roma in multiple locations. This has made me extremely hesitant to generalize about all Roma; in fact, I am almost fanatical about explaining the historical and cultural specificities of each group. On the other hand, I note that all Romani groups, regardless of class and region, have faced discrimination, which often takes a racial dimension; however, the details of hierarchy vary considerably.

1970s	Work, ritual, belief, gender – American Kalderash
1980–89	State repression of Romani music, culture as resistance – Bulgaria
1980s–present	Migration, gender, ritual and music – New York Macedonian Muslim Roma
1990s–present	Voice of Roma: public education through music – U.S. Roma
1990s–present	Politicization, Europeanization, and emerging human rights framework – Macedonia
1990s–present	Legal aid with U.S. Kalderash and asylum cases with Balkan Roma
1990s–present	Appropriation, race, and representation of “Gypsy” culture – U.S., Western Europe
2011–present	Migration, state policy, gender, and ritual – Kosovo Roma in Germany

My Romani research started in the United States in 1975 when I became a volunteer teacher in a Romani alternative school in Philadelphia. My dissertation research (1976–79) with the largest Romani groups in the United States, Kalderash and Machwaya, dealt with ethnic identity, gender, and the pollution and taboo systems (Silverman 1981, 1982, 1988). Having migrated to the United States from various parts of Eastern Europe about a hundred years ago, many Kalderash knew very little about other Romani groups in Europe and the United States. Among the few tangible things I was able to give to Kalderash Roma were historical information and cassette tapes of East European Romani music. In this period, I considered myself a documenter and analyst, and in no way an activist; there were few published works about Roma to consult and few models of engaged research to follow.

One symptom of my lack of awareness in this period was my uncritical use of the word “Gypsy.” When speaking Romanes, Kalderash community members referred to themselves as Roma, but in English they used Gypsy, and so I used the term in my early writing. I did not yet comprehend the inherent contradictions in my role as ethnographer and did not consciously get involved in activism, although I constantly pointed out stereotypes and discrimination that Roma faced. I observed daily prejudice against these Roma, and they confided many instances of humiliation to me; for example, when we were traveling

5 I have written about my fieldwork in Silverman 1981, 1982, 1988, 1996b, 2008, 2012a, and in press.

to visit relatives in Florida in 1977, several restaurants refused to serve us. But I did not problematize my terminology, and I wrote about culture in a detached manner that I later regretted (see below).

After immersing myself in American Kalderash culture, travelling with families, and gaining some fluency in their Vlach dialects of the Romani language, I was anxious to pursue Romani fieldwork in Bulgaria, a country I had visited regularly since 1972. I first worked with Roma in Bulgaria in the 1980s in the context of research on wedding music, a fusion genre that was prohibited by the government. Here, I became politicized because Romani music was politicized – Muslim Romani musicians were forced to change their names, were fined, and even sent to jail for playing their music. Working with Roma in socialist Bulgaria was challenging because by 1984 they did not officially exist. Despite government policy I circumvented prohibitions and spent considerable time in Romani settlements studying cultural resistance to state policy. I was critical of the government in my writing (1988), risking future entrance into Bulgaria, but was determined to bring these human rights violations and this music to wider acclaim; this was my first activist move. But I was operating solo – at the time no Romani culture NGOs existed there, and resisters operated locally and kept a low profile.

Since the fall of socialism, I have become an advocate for these and other Balkan musicians by arranging numerous tours and albums. I helped Bulgarian Romani saxophonist Yuri Yunakov prepare his successful asylum case and became a booking agent, tour manager, and vocalist for his ensemble. I also introduced Romani musicians to American audiences via lectures and performances at camps and festivals. In all of these venues, I am committed to collaboration, specifically ensuring that Romani voices are heard center stage via educational panels and program notes about artists life histories and the contexts of music.

I also became politicized in 1990 while I resided in Šuto Orizari (Šutka), a settlement of 40,000 Roma outside of Skopje, Macedonia, as I witnessed the formation of the first Romani political parties. The idea of my working with Roma in Macedonia emerged collaboratively via a suggestion by a Romani woman whom I met in New York in 1988 when she was visiting her brother. They lived in the neighborhood in the Bronx where I was born. From the beginning of my research then, I approached Macedonian Roma from multiple locations with the guidance of community members who sent me to visit kin. I have continued to work with Muslim Roma in Macedonia and New York until the present, with trips to Macedonia and to Macedonian Romani communities in Western Europe, Australia, and Toronto (Silverman 1996a, 2012a). In New York City I am involved in mentoring the second and third generation of Roma as they enter higher education and professional life.

Migration emerged as a theme in my work as early as the 1970s, with American Kalderash, then later with Macedonian and Bulgarian Roma in the U.S., and most recently with Kosovo Roma in Germany. The latter are refugees from a very brutal phase of Yugoslav wars who still, after 20 years, have *Duldung* (tolerated) status in Germany and are being deported back to Kosovo in significant numbers. Through ties to a large extended family I am documenting their precarious situation in Germany in the context of their work, family, and ritual life. I plan to publish about this with the goal of advocating for a more tolerant German migration policy.

As the Romani human rights movement emerged in the 1990s, I struggled to combine activism and scholarship and was alternately accused of neglecting one for the other. Whereas Ian Hancock advised

me to concentrate on activism regarding human rights abuses and to forget about analyzing music, some of my colleagues in academia said I was spending too much time on activism. Many Macedonian Roma in New York agreed with Hancock's sentiment and advised me to forgo a music focus because it promotes stereotypes; they suggested that I focus on middle-class educated Roma to counteract the ubiquitousness of "Gypsies" as poor beggars playing music. I have taken their advice and have published on education, work, and gender (2012b) with new collaborative projects planned.

A "reciprocal ethnography" that I attempted with Macedonian Roma in New York was only partially successful. Lawless (1992) introduced the concept of reciprocal ethnography regarding the collaborative writing of texts, whereby: "The scholar presents her interpretations, the native responds to that interpretation; the scholar, then, has to adjust her lens and determine why the interpretations are so different and in what ways they are and are not compatible" (310). This can be an open-ended process, with many "rounds".^[6] Thus, I sent large portions of my book manuscript to many Romani collaborators but only two or three responded due to time constraints. One musician gave me very helpful feedback, and today his daughter is working towards becoming an activist. I also had fruitful discussions about gender roles with a middle-aged Romani woman who disagreed about how much financial power I was attributing to women in her community.^[7]

My vision of a collaborative writing project on gender with women in this community, however, has not yet materialized. Older and middle generation women are extremely busy working and supporting their families in the precarious American economy; many are the major earners in their families. They do not have the luxury to devote time to ethnography: here my privilege as a non-Romani, university-paid ethnographer is crystal clear. This also illustrates how the pipeline to scholarly roles is hindered by economic constraints. Some younger generation women, however, have reached the middle class and are better educated. I am hoping to work with them to document their own culture and to co-author with them. They are hungry for information about Roma, and many are seeking to read materials about their parents' generation (including my book). I have mentored several young Roma in college admissions, and I hope to help them produce their own scholarship. For example, the daughter of a musician is producing an exhibit about her father for the RomArchive Balkan music section where I am the curator; she also has plans to open a Roma culture center.

In comparing my earlier work with current work, I note the paradigmatic shift from outsider/observer/documenter to co-producer of collaborative knowledge. Today, it is inconceivable for me to think of writing about Macedonian Roma in New York without consulting them about topics and interpretations. Moreover, my work is now always framed in political terms, noting hierarchies and challenges of access. As I have witnessed a generation grow up and marry, both my thinking and their thinking about their own identities have become more activist and more engaged in advocacy. For these reasons, I hope to collaborate on a project about their changing roles, centering on gender.

6 Lawless (1992) ended up prioritizing her own analysis (after she revealed that she did not agree with her collaborators' interpretation) because she believed her collaborator was in denial about (or refused to confront) male domination.

7 I documented our disagreements in the online text supplement to Silverman 2012a.

Turning now to a reflexive analysis of specific challenges in my research, I underline that examining conflicts can help us learn from experience. Osterweil (2016) writes: “Frictional or conflictual moments can become important sites of collaborative knowledge production, even if, at the time, that collaboration feels more like conflict than co-laboring.” Thus, below I focus on uncomfortable moments and dilemmas I faced that taught me how to bridge difference with respect. We need to “recognize that knowledge and theory production are key sites of political practice and struggle [...]” (Osterweil 2016). We also need to resist “sidelining the uncertainties, limitations, and anxieties that often accompany activist scholarship” (Checker 2014, 416). Davis (2016) asks: “what are the limits of collaboration? Are there pressure points impelling us to replicate power dynamics and hierarchies, however inadvertently? [...] Ultimately, divisiveness can reproduce some of the dissonances between researchers and participants that collaboration seeks to diminish.” The examples below empirically illustrate dilemmas regarding my roles as a non-Romani ally.

5. Contradiction: A Legal Example

A 2013 court case in Portland, Oregon, involving Kalderash Roma encapsulated contradictions in my positionality in two ways: first, it exposed my role as an outsider who has more power than insiders but is needed to “defend” them; and second, my early naïve writing came back to haunt me. To provide the context: Oregon is home to a large Kalderash population faced long-term racial profiling (Silverman 2017). I have done advocacy work with local families for several decades, and I have tried to explain Kalderash culture without essentializing it. My goal in my work, both scholarly and activist, has been to represent Roma as just as “normal” as any other ethnic group. For example, in consulting with Oregon hospitals about cultural sensitivity with Romani patients, I have described Kalderash beliefs and taboos as part of their folk religion, just like any other ethnic group. However, this case challenged these assumptions.^[8]

An elderly Romani widow was going to lose her house because her daughter was convicted of elder fraud, and the house was registered in the daughter’s name. The daughter had admitted to the fraud, served a jail sentence, and repaid the money in question, plus penalties. But the non-Roma who were defrauded filed a civil case to obtain all the daughter’s assets. The house had been signed over to the daughter many years ago when she was fourteen years old. My task as an “expert cultural witness” was to prove that the family did not believe or understand that the daughter actually owned the house because of their culture.

Ironically, my outsider non-Romani “professor” status legitimated my “objectivity.” The contradictions in this legal “cultural expert” role were apparent: I had to show that I was insider enough to be an expert on Romani culture but outsider enough not to be biased. I had more power than any Romani person in the proceedings, but I was needed to legitimate what the Romani family said. In addition, precisely how I was obliged to frame the defense was problematic to me as a scholar!

⁸ *Hughes v. Ephrem*, Case No. 1200-25302E. See also <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/or-court-of-appeals/1721070.html> and <https://law.justia.com/cases/oregon/court-of-appeals/2015/a153439.html>.

According to legal scholar Renteln (2004), a “cultural defense” promotes fairness in the legal system by allowing judges to “consider the cultural background of litigants in the disposition of cases” (2004, 5). It is usually but not exclusively used in criminal defenses. The lawyer’s strategy was to use me to prove that culture trumped the legality of the document of house ownership. My testimony depended on portraying Roma as different as possible from “mainstream majority Americans.” This type of essentialism is something I have fought against my whole life. But in the court room it was our legal strategy to make Roma into a bounded exotic subculture (Silverman, submitted).

I needed to underline “difference” via inheritance patterns that would explain why parents would sign over their large house to their youngest daughter when she was only fourteen years old. I explained that Romani culture was patrilocal, patrilineal, and elders were respected. Because the family only had female children, the youngest daughter was obliged to respect her parents by ensuring their care as they aged; the house would be “hers” for the purpose of their security, so they could live in it until they died. I also emphasized that the parents were illiterate and could not read the document they signed, so they did not realize what “transferring ownership” meant.

I couched all of this in how “different” “Roma” were from “Americans,” something I do not usually promote. My evidence was the significance of the extended family, retention of Romani language, lack of intermarriage with non-Roma, and vitality of the taboo system. The *marhime* (taboo) system was especially intriguing to the judge, who asked many questions about it; I explained the gender division, the bodily division into clean upper and “polluted” lower halves, and that Roma do not eat in non-Romani homes, do not sit on tables, and bring their own pillow to hotels and hospitals. As I was explaining how Roma sort clothing into upper and lower for washing, necessitating two washing machines (if a family can afford them), the elderly Romani defendant interrupted that she had four washing machines (for male and female, upper and lower)!

This revelation cinched the case for the judge in terms of insularity, exoticism, and cultural difference. He ruled in favor of allowing the defendant to keep her house via “an equitable remedy.” In 2015 the case was appealed, and again the judge ruled in favor of the Romani family, stating: “These relatively unsophisticated people managed their lives very differently from those in modern American culture. They lived by different codes. But their codes clearly included honor.” Thus, by my constructing Kalderash as “all Roma,” and Roma as bounded, insular, exotic, and traditional, in contrast to modern, I was able to win legal ground for Roma.

Even more troubling was a long and grueling cross-examination of me by the prosecuting attorney where she first tried to discredit me as an expert by saying I only write about Romani music in Bulgaria. She then tried to use an article that I wrote in 1982 to argue that Roma routinely commit fraud. The attorney quoted from my article “Everyday Drama: Impression Management of Urban Gypsies” where I claimed that a performance theory framework would help us understand the various “roles” of Roma as an “afflicted minority” for welfare workers, truant officers, and so on. The prosecutor claimed that if Roma are so expert at performing, then right now in the courtroom, “isn’t Mrs. Ephrem posturing and performing as innocent whereas she committed insurance fraud and also protected her daughter who was a felon?”

I did write about roles – but back in 1982 I was a different person – I was “discovering” performance theory, was still using the disrespectful term “Gypsy,” and had no idea that my theoretical framework would be used against Roma thirty years later. I was sweating profusely when the prosecutor read aloud from my 1982 article, but I was able to turn the interrogation around. I explained that performance theory means we are all performing at every moment in our lives – not just Roma. For example, the judge in the court room wears long black robes, sits behind a wooden barrier; and we sit lower than him in special sections and must address him as “your honor”; these legal behaviors are very ritualized and performative.

Luckily, the judge was very curious about his own performance roles, even asking me for references about the courtroom as a “stage,” and eventually the prosecutor’s argument fizzled. However, this case taught me that our inscribed words last forever and directly affect the lives of Roma. I would never write an article like that now; but as a junior scholar I was naïve about terminology, advocacy, and politics. In this case, the contradictions in my positionality did not have a negative impact and we won the case, but I learned important lessons about texts and the responsibility of an author. I also underline the conundrum that in legal cases, the institutional structures are not controlled by Roma, and non-Roma are often given the primary advocacy roles.

Although essentialism has suffered a healthy critique, it is often required for identity politics and advocacy (Silverman, submitted). On the other hand, I hold that a cultural defense can sometimes be damaging. In Europe, controversial cases have arisen where lawyers have defended Romani beggars on the basis of culture, and Romani activists and anthropologists have countered that begging is not a historic cultural practice but rather an economic adaptation (Reggiu 2016). In the last twenty years, begging has emerged as a practice by which non-Roma culturally define, criminalize, and regulate Roma. Negative images and discourse about begging Roma (especially migrant Roma) are abundant in the media. In a 2008 Italian case, “Several Italian judges, including the members of the Supreme Court, have defined begging with children as a ‘Roma cultural practice.’ In response, the Italian Parliament enacted law no. 94/2009, which severely represses the practice” (Ruggiu 2016, 31). In 2013 in France lawyers again offered a cultural defense not only of begging but of coerced criminal begging among children. “Rather than focusing on the argument that the Roma are forced to resort to crime because of poverty and discrimination, it claimed that in some cases they were simply following age-old Roma traditions and generally operate outside the norms of society in ‘the style of the Middle Ages’” (Bilefsky 2013). These Italian and French cases illustrate how cultural arguments can have dangerous implications even when employed to defend Roma. The very title of Bilefsky’s article, “Are the Roma Primitive, or Just Poor?” belies how Roma are categorized as uncivilized and even dangerous to their children. Essentialist culture concepts then can be recruited both for pro- and anti-Roma agendas. Note also that non-Roma supply the discourse and are the agents crafting the fate of Roma.

6. Conflict: Listening, Learning

A second example of my applied work illustrates the contradictions in my role as non-Roma scholar of Romani music. In 1999 I was chosen by the World Music Institute to be the Educational Coordinator of their first North American tour of Romani music: *The Gypsy Caravan: A Festival of Roma Music and Dance*. The festival included six groups of Roma: Antonio El Pipa from Spain, Musafir from India, Yuri

Yunakov Ensemble from Bulgaria, Kalyi Jag from Hungary, Taraf de Haidouks from Romania, and Kolpakov Trio from Russia. My duties involved writing extensive program notes, meeting with the press, translating, facilitating panels and question and answer sessions with the artists, and so on. I was not paid for this work, although I was a paid vocalist with the Yuri Yunakov ensemble.

Soon after I accepted this position, I received an angry phone call from a jazz musician (whom I had never met) who was of urban Slovak Romani descent. He yelled that I was not qualified to do this job and complained that I had chosen terrible musicians for the tour; he said: “they are peasants – they don’t even read music – and why isn’t my urban music represented?” I explained to him that I did not choose the musicians, that the World Music Institute had chosen them months ago, and I gave him the telephone number of the director. I explained that, indeed, some of these musicians were rural villagers who learn orally, but their music was of very high quality, and I sent him musical samples to convince him.

Although I certainly did not agree with him, I was very upset and was ready to quit and suggest to the director that he, as a Rom, replace me. Before quitting, however, I decided to seek advice from Ian Hancock, a highly regarded American activist/scholar of Romani descent, who knew me and my work. Hancock was very clear. He advised me not to quit. He said that despite my not being Romani, I was equipped for this job; he also offered to speak to the Rom. I learned several lessons from this. First, that there are wider frameworks of inequality surrounding every decision, and it is best not to assume you know about everything. Second, non-Roma should offer their expertise (knowledge, advocacy) but leave it to Roma as to whether they wish to employ it (and in what form and shape). Third, listening, learning, and reframing is the best response.

Regarding the Gypsy Caravan, there were many other conceptual and terminological conflicts I experienced in my role as Educational Coordinator (Silverman 2007, 2012a). For example, whereas I objected to the use of the term “Gypsy” in marketing and journalism, most of the musicians did not seem to care; they also did not mind that generic “Gypsy” images were used in tour advertising. They seemed to accept that these battles were already lost or not worth waging. However, musicians vocally pushed back against other constraints in the realm of artistry, such as the amount of time each group was given on stage; they actively fought reductions in their performance slots. They also defied some of the producers’ directions about what they should perform on stage. Similarly, Ortner (1995), theorizing resistance, claims that it is often partial and paired with collaboration.

This example illustrates that I, as non-Romani scholar/advocate, inhabited a vastly different positionality from these professional musicians who have faced prejudice for decades and have crafted ways of negotiating their terrain. And unless I continuously checked in with them, I would have made some very bad choices about activism. Along these lines, Vajda (2015) encourages non-Roma to interrogate their own Critical Whiteness: “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 term) ‘white non-Romani’ identity” (53). Similarly, Rao (2017), quoting Dana Arviso who worked with northwestern Native Americans, suggests humility:

If you’re going to be a white person working with communities of color you really have to know your role and know your place in the organization [...]. You have to take it pretty seriously and

understand the need for and how to practice cultural protocols. Perhaps most importantly, you have to be willing to hear when you've made a mistake and learn from that (2017).

7. Performer/Organizer: Balancing Advocacy and Diplomacy

My next set of examples are drawn from my roles as a singer and public programmer of Romani music in relationship to my current research on cultural appropriation (Silverman 2011, 2014, 2015a, 2015b). Much of this work has taken a critical stance on the globalization of “Gypsy” culture because it operates increasingly without Romani participation. “Gypsy” culture has become fashionable as a fantasy brand, for example, with the term gypster (gypsy plus hipster) and in foods like Gypsy teas, in fashion with Gypsy chic styles and brands like Gypsy Sport. In the realm of music, many Gypsy festivals have no Romani performers; in addition, DJs in the Balkan Beats scene use names such as *Gypsy Sound System*, *Tsiganization Project*, *Gypsy Jungle*, and so on. I have analyzed how, paradoxically, these ethnicized commodities become valuable at the precise moment when real Roma are demonized, targeted, and expelled; I thus investigate how the romantic and criminal stereotypes operate together.

Yet I sing Balkan Romani music, sometimes professionally, and often with Roma. So does Romani culture belong only to Roma? Am I against non-Roma performing Romani music? Obviously not, but context matters a great deal. I take a political stance about power in this discussion and prioritize Roma. I advocate that non-Romani musicians should always identify themselves in public as non-Roma, give credit to their Romani teachers, present educational materials, and most important, collaborate with Roma. Moreover, I am committed to not only involving but also training Roma for roles as music performers and producers, booking agents, and managers. Along these lines, I have worked with Voice of Roma (VOR) a Romani-led NGO in the U.S. that sponsors music festivals and tours that have a strong educational component.⁹ In this work I uphold the tenets of engaged anthropology “by producing texts, films and exhibits for public consumption, and by actively engaging *with* people on the ground to make change through research, education, and political action based on dialogue” (Beck and Maida 2015, 1–2).

Specifically, VOR seeks to empower Roma to present their arts in their own terms. VOR's collaborative work showcases the co-production of knowledge whereby the viewpoints of Roma are showcased, but non-Romani allies have important roles precisely because they have better access to resources. A contradiction, however, is apparent: although VOR is led by a Rom and tries to attract Romani audiences,

⁹ VOR mission is as follows:

It is the mission of Voice of Roma to promote and present Romani cultural arts and traditions in a way that counters both romanticized and negative “Gypsy” stereotypes, and in so doing, to contribute to the preservation of Romani identity and culture. VOR also works to heighten awareness of human rights issues faced by Roma in today's world, and to support efforts by Roma to (re)build and maintain their communities, improve their lives, and to strengthen the Romani voice both nationally and internationally. Our mission is accomplished through organizing and implementing cultural arts, educational, economic development, and charitable projects for and about Roma (voiceofroma.com).

the overwhelming majority of the audience members for its events are non-Romani Americans. A challenging area is the issue of stereotypes: VOR seeks to dismantle stereotypes but its focus on music could be seen as contributing to stereotypes (see my earlier discussion about music). Gypsies are expected to sing and dance and that is exactly what they do at the VOR festivals. However, VOR has tried to harness the interest in music to inform its captive non-Romani audience about the historical and political contexts of the music and performers.

In panels and question/answer sessions we encourage Romani performers to discuss their life histories in their own words. Musicians thus narrate their experiences of learning music in the context of community life, and issues of discrimination, exclusion, and prejudice inevitably arise. Non-Romani audiences then begin to see Roma as real people facing real challenges, not as fantasy artists. A good example is Bulgarian saxophonist Yuri Yunakov who, like many musicians, prefers to perform rather than talk but quickly learned that audiences can be primed to develop curiosity about his life. When audiences hear him narrate that he was forced to change his name and that he went to jail for performing Romani music in socialist Bulgaria, his music takes on new politicized implications. This educational approach contrasts with most shows of “Gypsy music” that provide an exotic array of stereotypical images and sounds.

Finally, a recent conundrum that I faced exposed the delicate balance between musical advocacy and diplomacy. A New York Macedonian Romani family asked me to help secure visas for *Prilepski Zvezdi* (Prilep Stars), the top wedding band from their hometown, so the band could perform at a family celebration in October 2017. The band had been denied tourist visas, so I tried to find an organization to sponsor them for a cultural exchange visa. VOR was unable to do this because its festivals only happen in spring. I knew that the New York Gypsy Festival (sponsored by the nightclub *Drom*) happens in October. However, this festival has an objectionable name, has hired fewer and fewer Roma over the years, has not supported educational efforts, and in 2016 used a stereotypical graphic of a dark-faced clown with a broad white smile that was reminiscent of African-American minstrelsy.^[10] In fact, in 2016 I helped to initiate a campaign to lobby the festival to change their name and to include more Roma. U.S. Romani activists and allies mounted a protest on a temporary website, “Gypsies don’t like NY Gypsy Festival,” to explain their complaints with this festival.^[11] Note that we did not urge a boycott because this would hurt the musicians who were hired (including two Roma).

10 See <https://www.facebook.com/nygypsyfest>.

11 American Romani activist Ioanida Costache posted this on Facebook on September 9, 2016 (and used these hashtags to create awareness: #nothingaboutuswithoutus #protestthefest):

The ‘New York Gypsy Festival’ capitalizes on the commodification of Romani culture by employing inane stereotypes in its marketing and excluding representatives from the ethnic group it refers to – pejoratively, I might add – in its name. From Silverman: ‘Every year there are fewer Romani artists in this festival and less Romani music. Last year a well known Romani musician was asked to perform for no money. The organizers have refused to allow educational flyers be distributed.’ And as Alexander Markovic points out, even the festival’s logo features a caricature (presumably intended to represent a person of Romani descent) that is reminiscent of the grotesque images associated with minstrelsy. This isn’t about whether there is one token Roma performing at the festival or not. This is about the use of an offensive exonym, the appropriation of culture and the commodification of that culture divorced from the people to whom that culture belongs. The word ‘Gypsy,’ as the promoters of this festival employ it, indexes nothing beyond damaging stereotypes. The festival is NOT interested in educating their attendees about the Roma, rather they are content with profiting financially by exploiting a romanticized, exoticized, orientalized and misrepresentative image of the Roma.

It is worth mentioning that Drom's owners have nourished the career of Macedonian Romani clarinetist Ismail Lumanovski and his band *New York Gypsy All Stars*. Plus, they are one of the only venues in New York that produce Roma music events. So I decided to be diplomatic and practical and ask Drom to sponsor Prilepski Zvezdi for their 2017 festival, thereby using their lawyer to secure visas for them. I reasoned that although I protested this festival just the year before, I could still try to change the festival from the inside to facilitate hiring more Roma with better contracts. I succeeded in getting Prilepski Zvezdi hired for the festival (the visas came through) and secured them a good contract. The family celebration was a huge success, and the festival event was attended by many Roma, despite the objection of one community member who asked everyone to boycott because of Drom's discriminatory attitude. I learned that activism is sometimes paired with behind the scenes diplomacy. For many musicians, securing work is the most important goal for them; advocacy for them entails negotiation and sometimes even compromise with the very objectionable institutions that oppress them.

Conclusion

I still believe what I wrote several years ago: that my observations are only “partial truths” in many senses. “My access to resources, my non-Romani ‘outsider’ status, my gender, and my training have certainly affected my perceptions [...] Hancock reminds us that until recently, all representations of Roma were constructed by non-Roma, and Roma exercised no control over these descriptions and images, whether scientific, artistic, or literary (1997, 39–40). This is finally changing, and the non-Roma ethnographer is either obsolete or must delicately negotiate her place” (Silverman 2012a, 15). A non-Romani person working with Roma highlights issues of ethics, representation, privilege, access, and most important, power differentials. For this reason I support a “reflexive turn” in Romani Studies whereby everyone, but especially non-Roma, examine their own positionality both in research and advocacy. Non-Roma need to question their voice when speaking about a group that is trying to define its own voice, and they need to listen and withdraw when a context requires their exclusion. I believe non-Romani allies do have an important role in scholarship and advocacy. Non-Roma can facilitate, mediate, and provide resources for various academic, cultural, economic, and political projects, but this requires a conscious awareness to eschew paternalistic and colonizing stances.

My selected examples of revelatory moments in fieldwork/advocacy chronicle the changing positions I have inhabited as non-Roma researcher, activist and performer. They clearly illustrate that collaboration and advocacy are necessary but extremely challenging to implement. For this reason, honest disclosure is necessary. Analysis of positionality is a critical move in two senses, the structural and the personal. Structural analysis reveals institutional constraints within which we operate, whether they are in academia, the court room, or the concert stage; it exposes the entrenched hierarchy of knowledge and the biases of authority. Disclosure also brings personal lessons; for me these center around reflexivity as a component of advocacy and a key to better, more engaged ethnographic scholarship.

I began as a naïve apolitical anthropologist and learned about discrimination from my Romani collaborators. Bulgarian musicians, Kalderash fortunetellers, and Macedonian and Kosovo migrants all showed me how they selectively resist oppression from the ground up, when and in what form advocacy

was appropriate, and when to merely adapt to what could not change. My focus on music brought me squarely into the realm of arts advocacy and public culture where representational issues and terminology about Roma are often riddled with conflict. Legal work has amplified my brokering role, a role that non-Roma often occupy but need to regularly interrogate. These issues all underline the profound responsibility that non-Romani allies have to be accountable for their words and actions. Reflexivity is one small but significant step in this direction.

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Non-Romani Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity: Queer(y)ing One's Own Privilege

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Abstract

This paper considers the positionality and reflexivity of non-Romani, ally-identified researchers vis-à-vis insider/outsider research by critically examining – or queer(y)ing – non-Romani researcher identity and the privilege that goes with it. On a theoretical level this can be facilitated by, for example, queer theoretical concepts and the concept of critical whiteness. Critical whiteness is “queer” by virtue of being counter/non/anti-normative in relation to whiteness as a social norm (white-normativity). In practical terms, employing queer, feminist, and critical whiteness methodologies means that reflective and reflexive researchers conducting research “with,” “for,” and “on” Roma do not “have to be” Romani in order to participate in knowledge production on Romani communities. Nonetheless, it implicates their ability to critically examine their own privilege and challenge it accordingly, that is, not only academically but also politically and socially.

Keywords

- Non-Romani
- Positionality
- Reflexivity
- Identity
- Queer
- Methodology
- Critical whiteness

Introduction

After centuries of studying without being studied, of examining without being examined (or so they thought), white scholars have found themselves face-to-face with an other that stares back at them, writes back, and analyzes back, and perhaps they have felt, as Sartre (1988, p. 291) felt, ‘the shock of being seen’ (Emirbayer and Desmond 2012, 581).

Romani intersectional feminist and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex, queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) scholars often have been marginalized and excluded from Romani Studies and the mainstream, predominantly heteronormative Romani rights movement. However, there are “new” intersectional feminist and LGBTIQ Romani voices who have succeeded in showing alternative ways of treating Romani identities and identifications, that is, not through an exclusively ethnic lens but as multiple and intersecting. The articles contained in the special issue of *Roma Rights Quarterly* “Nothing About Us Without Us?” (2015) ask for the long-overdue inclusion and participation of Romani scholars in knowledge production that non-Romani scholars have been accustomed to and often have taken for granted. In a partial response to Stewart’s (2010) call for Romani Studies to transcend the “ethnic frame of reference,” the special issue goes much further. It presents a “new paradigm,” which seeks to include both Romani and non-Romani critical voices by asking (hence the question mark in the title of the issue) a series of questions, including questions regarding researcher positionality and reflexivity.

Recently, Stewart (2017) issued an academic warning on “the dangers of a close-society research paradigm” in relation to Critical Romani Studies. Debating this “rhetorical riposte to exclusion” (138), Stewart “question[s] whether discussing issues around the ‘authority to speak’ will advance the substantive issues that ought to concern all scholars in this field, Romani and non-Romani” (*ibid.* 125). One certainly may agree with the notion that “closed-society paradigms” are prone to being problematic or even dangerous due to often being signs of conservatism or dogma. In this vein, it is worth remembering that Romani Studies, a subject field which, until very recently, has been dominated by non-Romani (white), middle-class, often heterosexual, cis male scholars, provides an example of such orthodoxy – something that Stewart himself partially admits – thus raising a series of questions regarding researcher positionality and reflexivity.

Researcher positionality and reflexivity fundamentally impact all aspects of how social science researchers do qualitative research. This article primarily stems from Chapter 4 “Queer Intersectional Ethnography As a Methodology” of my doctoral thesis, “The Experiences of Romani LGBTIQ People: Queer(y)(ing) Roma” (Fremlova 2017), whose aim it was to contribute knowledge by shedding light on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, an area which is largely unexplored in Romani Studies (and in queer theorizing, too); and to queer(y) historically constructed, stereotypical, and essentialized narratives about Romani LGBTIQ people. The article is an epistemological reflection that considers the methodological issues of non-Romani researcher positionality and reflexivity, what Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, 68) termed “reflexive sociology.” It starts by outlining the main tenets of research positionality and reflexivity. Underpinned by Hall’s (1996b) conceptualization of “new ethnicities,” it goes on to discuss what “queer” and “queerness” are, and what their deployment can achieve in terms

of avoiding homogenizing and essentializing conceptualizations of “Roma” ethnic identity – not only theoretically but also methodologically. The article then moves to a discussion about the methodology of queer(y)ing ethics and ethnography-informed research, particularly in relation to the outsider/insider binary of the researcher’s position that has implications for and raises important questions about how a researcher is located within different social normativities and how reflexive/reflective they are of their researcher position and other privilege(s). These methodological discussions lead me to an exploration of what it means to be an ally-identified, non-Romani researcher doing research “with,” “for,” and/or “on” Roma, as well as what it means to be a lesbian/queer researcher doing research “with,” “for,” and/or “on” Romani LGBTIQ people, and critically examining – or queer(y)ing – my own privilege in the process.

1. Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity: Coming from the Inside and/or the Outside?

There’s no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all (Hall 1990, 18).

Positionality refers to a researcher’s discursive *situatedness* in the social world in relation to power relations that are often asymmetrical and exist in inequitable ways. It is “relational, unstable, not fixed and contextually situated” (Grimaldi et al. 2015, 147), determined by *where* the researcher stands in relation to power; this can shift over time and/or in the course of conducting research (Greene 2014). Positionality reflects the ontological and epistemological values and worldviews into which the researcher – the main orchestrator of collecting, collating, analyzing, and interpreting data – is discursively embedded (Gadamer 1975) and enmeshed. It is complemented by a gamut of variable, intersectional, and interlocking factors, such as the researcher’s identities, including ethnicity/race, gender/gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic status and/or class, educational background, dis/ability, political views, religious beliefs, etc. Browne et al. (2017) understand these identities as “reiterated performativities, that are not fixed over the course of the project, but are also seen as relationally constituted, (re-)created through interactions between people, places and things (...), and requiring explicit and ongoing self-reflectivities (...)” (2017, 1379).

It is therefore reasonable to expect that these variables – or “multiple social belongings” (Grimaldi et al. 2015, 138) – impact the “contemplative eye” of the researcher (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 69) and, by extension, the research process, thus “impeding or allowing for certain insights and affecting the researcher’s attitude towards the researched” (Grimaldi et al. 2015, 138). Researchers always brings into their research – the process itself, the product, as well as the researcher-researched relations – their own sets of values, views, and beliefs that are framed by the wider socio-cultural contexts and social systems in which they are embedded and through which they then construct meaning. Grimaldi et al. (2015) warn of the potential risks of reproducing “conventional narratives of cultural inquiry” (Thomas 2003, 45) due to “the lack of attention towards the ‘politics of social research’ (Punch 1994) and its mundane practices and settings” (*ibid.* 136). Additionally, still referring to Thomas (2003), they opine that “this requires the adoption of ‘a more reflective style of thinking’ (2003, 45) about the relationship between knowledge production, research practices, power relations, wider societal frames of meanings/values

and social domination” (*ibid.* 137). Writing about whiteness as a social norm, Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) make the following observation:

Whiteness often informs the types of questions sociologists pursue and the audiences they address. Needless to say, behind each sociological question inevitably stands a whole host of background assumptions. When sociologists attempt, without questioning their own questions, to address such issues, they implicitly affirm the legitimacy of these threads of inquiry (579).

All of this means that very little – if any – qualitative social science research is or can be value-free, however “objective” social science researchers think they are; in turn, the resulting research affects the individuals, social groups, and/or communities under investigation. Additionally, as Browne et al. (2017) observe,

[f]eminist epistemologies across disciplinary boundaries have long understood that there is a politics of location in research, arguing that a ‘view from nowhere’ does not exist (Longino 1993, 137; WGSF 1997). If all knowledge is created through the politics, history and location of where it is produced, then it matters where this knowledge is produced – as well as how, why, and by who (Stanley and Wise 1983; Haraway 1991; Monk and Hanson 1992; Rose 1993; Harding, 1997; Silva and Ornat 2016) (1377).

Ultimately, the how, why, where, and who of the positionality/situatedness of a qualitative social science researcher vis-à-vis social normativities – such as white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy, and the researcher’s ability or lack thereof to navigate them and reflect on them – fundamentally impact on their involvement in all aspects and at every stage of their research.

The relationship between positionality and reflexivity is an organic one: the researcher engages in the process of self-analysis and self-scrutiny, thereby reflecting on their research in the context of their own positionality. Reflexivity entails a self-conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher (self) and the “other” (Chiseri-Stater 1996; Pillow 2003), as well as of the lenses through which the researcher views this relationship. The notion of reflexivity encapsulates an ongoing process whereby the researcher tries to gain a full understanding of their work, which is linked to their researcher identity and the reasons for conducting the research (Lather 1991a; 1991b). Feminist and critical theory research scholars, such as Harding (1991), Lather (1996), Naples (2003), or Hamdan (2009), consider researcher reflexivity a desirable methodological tool vis-à-vis the position(ality) of the female researcher. Employing researcher reflexivity throughout the process of conducting rigorous academic research requires the researcher to pay close attention to and assess the impact of their involvement in how they devise research methods and methodologies, conceive of the “field,” are able to engage with the participants, collect and collate particular types of data and analyze and interpret them.^[1]

¹ Besides being reflexive of the workings of social normativities, or “the social unconscious,” reflexivity entails also being reflexive of two additional levels of oft-neglected assumptions or presuppositions: “the disciplinary and scholastic unconscious” (Emirbayer and Desmond 2012, 592), which are beyond the scope of this article but undoubtedly merit much deeper investigation.

2. Insider/Outsider Research?

Anthropologists who study their own societies will also add immeasurably to their theoretical understanding of mankind. It has been suggested that lack of fieldwork in the anthropologist's own society is a measure of the anthropologist's 'disassociation' from his own culture and has probably led to distortion in his abilities to grasp another culture (Lewis 1973, 590).

Later in this article, I will focus on my own researcher positionality as both an outsider and an insider. My own experience of being a non-Romani lesbian researcher conducting qualitative research with Romani LGBTIQ people supports the notion that the boundaries between insider/outsider status can be somewhat blurred, and rather than conceiving of it as a binary opposition, it is helpful to conceptualize the role of the researcher on a continuum (Breen 2007; Trowler 2011). For now, I would like to make a few remarks about "insider research": the study of one's own social, cultural group, community, or society (Naples 2003) into which the researcher is enmeshed and "imbricated (...) and possesses an *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community and its members" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2013, 251). There, researcher reflexivity naturally has a place, too.

Although insider research has flourished in recent years, the phenomenon spans over four decades (Thorne and Paterson 2000). Additionally, Merton (1972) wrote about some of the academic debates pertaining to insider/outsider research. In anthropology, Lewis (1973) tried to put an end to the colonial and logical positivist argument that "objective" reality about other, "outsider" cultures could be ascertained exclusively by an outsider researcher. Insider research has been conducted across the humanities and social sciences, often with members of marginalized and underprivileged groups and/or communities that are sometimes referred to as "hard to reach," such as sexual/gender or ethnic/racial minorities. Insider researchers may share multiple cultural traits, identities, and/or profound experiences with the community they study or perhaps but a sole category of identification (Chavez 2008). For instance, in feminist research, Chmielewski and Yost (2013), who self-identify as bisexual women, have investigated bisexual women, exploring their own "dual roles [that] blurred the lines between researcher and participant" (242). Insider positionality then refers to "the aspects of an insider researcher's self or identity which is aligned or shared with participants" (Chavez 2008, 475). Additionally, insider researchers may be confronted with methodological and ethical issues regarding access, bias, objectivity/validity, and confidentiality that may be deemed irrelevant to outsider-researchers (Breen 2007; Greene 2014, 3–6). Such a positionality located "within" may affect the type of data gathered, as well as data analysis and interpretation.

Banks (1998) makes the following differentiations: *indigenous-insider* (possessing the values, perspectives, behaviours, beliefs, and knowledge of their respective community); *indigenous-outsider* (perceived by the community as an outsider due to having assimilated into mainstream/outsider culture); *external-insider* (socialized into mainstream/outsider culture, rejecting the cultural values of their community); and *external-outsider* (a visitor, interested in learning more about the group, they are not a part of as they are socialized into a community different from the one they study and have only a partial understanding and appreciation for its cultural values). While the typology itself may be too prescriptive, restrictive, and at times problematic, it does serve as a useful illustration of the wide range of positions one may occupy on

the insider/outsider spectrum. Nonetheless, as Naples (1996) points out, “insiderness or outsidersness are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations (...)” (140). This suggests that neither the insider nor the outsider has “a monopoly on advantage or objectivity” (Chavez 2008, 476). Or, indeed, as Hellowell (2006) argues, one does not have to be a member in order to have and/or gain knowledge of the specific community under investigation.

3. Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity in Romani Studies

In Romani Studies, there historically has been an abundance of non-Romani scholars researching and theorizing almost every aspect of the lives of Roma (or “Gypsies,” according to some scholars). Some non-Romani researchers (e.g., Tremlett 2009, 2017; Kazubowski-Houston 2010; McGarry 2010; Grimaldi et al. 2015; Lambrev 2017; Fremlova 2017) have touched upon and/or addressed, albeit to differing degrees, the issue of their researcher positionality and reflexivity. However, there is an urgent need for non-Romani scholars engaging in what is sometimes referred to as “outsider research” to consider and incorporate the topics of researcher positionality and reflexivity on a much larger scale.

Consequently, it is especially critical for academics – especially those who are members of dominant social groups and/or cultures and who engage in researching minority and/or marginalized groups (Bhopal 2010) – be aware of and reflect on their positionality and privilege, all the more so since doing research that highlights difference may contribute to the further marginalization and/or stigmatization of the research participants and their communities (hooks 1990). In Romani Studies, Tremlett (2009), for example, demonstrates how some of the scholarship that seeks to highlight the heterogeneity of Roma minorities often unwittingly contributes to perpetuating the trend of homogenizing and “othering” Roma. Thus, well-meaning research can perpetuate the stigmatization of Roma. Research can inflate the ethnic aspects of the multiple identities of Roma to the exclusion of other identifications or ways in which Roma are and belong as ordinary members of society. Research can also neglect or even ignore Romani ethnicity altogether, thus denying the notion that antigypsyism targets Roma on the basis of Romani ethnicity. This is detrimental to Romani communities. For example, in the Czech Republic, non-Romani scholars Jakoubek and Poduška (2003), Jakoubek and Hirt (2004), and Jakoubek (2004) made highly controversial claims suggesting that the common traits that Roma share are poverty and loyalty to kinship, which in their opinion do not constitute the principle of ethnicity and/or nationality.^[2] These considerations are particularly salient for the subject field of Romani Studies where there has been a reluctance to engage with critical views. For instance, introducing the concept of critical whiteness (e.g., Roediger 1991; Frankenberg 1997; Levine-Rasky 2002; Vajda 2015) into Romani Studies, in her paper “Towards ‘Critical Whiteness’ in Romani Studies,” Vajda (2015) raises fundamental questions about the structural positionality of white non-Romani scholars in a monological and monocultural vacuum without the input of those most acutely affected by academic racism, i.e., Romani

2 Subsequently, the legitimacy and validity of these radical versions of constructionism have been questioned by a number of Czech academics (Barša 2004; Elšík 2004) due to the implications and politically detrimental impact the research had on Czech Romani communities, particularly at the local level.

scholars. Consequently, in its current form, Romani Studies actively contributes to recentering hegemonic white power structures. Echoing Spivak's (1987) "epistemic violence," Brooks (2015), for instance, uses the term "epistemological erasure/invisibility" (2015, 61) to refer to the absence of Romani subjects, Romani communities, Romani knowledge production and its producers, whose silence or allegedly "inexpert status" continue to "conserve the West as Subject" (2015, 57). Such epistemic or "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 4) "can (and often [does]) occur as a result of the intertwining between power relations" (Grimaldi et al. 2015, 134, referring to England 1994, 249) within the research process and practice.

Commenting on whiteness and white positionality being, by default, a benchmark, and a norm against which everything else is measured, Howard and Vajda (2016) argue that:

the invisibility of white positionality is the product of a lack of acknowledgement of the historical processes which have created white, and in this case, non-Romani, privilege and the social norms which maintain this advantage: '[W]hiteness has long reserved the privilege of making everyone but itself visible, lest it be exposed as a position within a constellation of positions' (2016, 44, referring to Leonardo 2002, 41).

Whiteness as a taken-for-granted privilege results in white-normativity. Historically, it has been associated with colonialism and its attendant hegemonic asymmetrical power relations. According to Bhabha (1984), its bearer/enforcer – who can be white or what Fanon (1952) called "black skin/white masks" – produces a mimetic representation that "emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha 1984, 126) and knowledge production, for that matter. Similar to the whiteness/white-normativity nexus, male privilege results in another type of social normativity – patriarchy. Feminist, and later intersectional feminist scholarship, have been instrumental in questioning how researcher-researched relations are framed by patriarchy (and other, intersecting axes of inequality). As such, it has long sought to challenge the presumed "neutrality" and "objectivity" of the research process and practice, including reflections on the positioning of the researcher vis-à-vis the "researched" in the process of producing "objective" knowledge (e.g., Harding 1987; Maynard 1994; Morris, Woodward, and Peters 1998; Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002) and its attendant power relations. The researcher's position(ality) vis-à-vis power relations in the social world is but one of a series of factors, albeit important, that impacts scholarly insight. Taking into account all of the considerations laid out in the two sections above, this article also notes that while the persistent lack of Romani scholars in Romani Studies can be seen as symptomatic of white-normativity as a dominant social orthodoxy – a social phenomenon very much in need of redressing – scholarly and scientific acumen also comes by way of long years of instruction, education, specialized expert training, and rigorous academic research. More often than not, researchers are experts in their respective fields. Nonetheless, their expert status should not – and cannot – be the alpha and omega of social science research. The following section explores two additional aspects of the research process and practice that go hand in hand with positionality and reflexivity, and which impact directly on the epistemology of research:³ methodology, and theory.

³ According to Harding (1987), epistemology is a theory about how knowledge is produced: who can know what and under what circumstances. Methodology is an argument about how method – a technique for gathering and analyzing information – is linked to epistemology (i.e., about the implications of an epistemology for research practice).

4. The Researcher As a Cartesian or a Sociological Subject? At the Intersection of Methodology and Theory

As England (1994) remarked, feminism and poststructuralism opened up social science research to “voices other than those of white, Western, middle-class, heterosexual men” (242). Nevertheless, epistemic or symbolic violence is at times still enacted when researching marginalized groups, including Roma, through *epistemocentrism*s, bias, and a focus on the values and concerns of the dominant group (Harding 1987) such as androcentrism and ethnocentrism. This entails the “ethnocentrism of the scientist (...): ignoring everything that the analyst injects into his perception of the object by the virtue of the fact that he is placed outside of the object, that he observes it from afar and from above” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 69–70). Grimaldi et al. (2015) posit that another danger is posed by “neopositivist empiricism” (cited in England 1994, 242):

an epistemology which specifies a strict dichotomy between object and subject as a prerequisite for objectivity and is supported by methods that position the researcher outside of the researched worlds and reduce engagement to a mere nuisance or a possible threat to objectivity. (...) Whereas apparently working to enact an ‘emancipatory, non-exploitive and democratic research practice’ (Punch 1994, 84), the adoption of such epistemological stance poses distance, impartiality and neutral detachment as ‘a criterion for good research’ and constructs the researcher as ‘a carefully constructed public self’ which is ‘a neutral collector of facts’ and objectify the researched as a ‘malleable’ and passive ‘mere mine of information to be exploited’ (England 1994, 243). In this respect, we argue here for the need to challenge the view that ‘science is intrinsically neutral and essentially beneficial’ (Punch 1994, 88). Conversely, we assume as criteria for ethical research: a) the building of relations of mutual respect and recognition, and b) the abandoning of the search for objectivity in favour of critical provisional analysis based on plurality of (temporally and spatially) situated voices and silences (Grimaldi et al. 2015, 145).

The above description of the neopositivist researcher is strikingly reminiscent of the Enlightenment’s ideas about the Cartesian subject as self-determining, self-evident, self-sustaining, coherent, rational, and stable. It was Stuart Hall (1992) who argued that the loss of the Cartesian fantasy of a stable “sense of self” that occurred in the latter part of the twentieth century resulted in “de-centering individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves – (...) a ‘crisis of identity’” (275) and in the emergence of the postmodern subject. The postmodern subject was reconceptualized as fragmented and having “no fixed, essential, permanent identity, (...) composed not of a single, but of several sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities” (*ibid.* 276), “never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (Hall 1996a, 4). This type of subject is also a sociological one: a modern, interactive conception of identity and the self where the inner core of the subject is formed in relation to “‘significant others’ who mediate to the subject the values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the world he/she inhabit[s]” (Hall 1992, 275). This conception of the postmodern sociological subject is one that is salient not only for the researched but for the researcher as well.

In the above sections, I have established that the researcher's positionality – and researcher identity, for that matter – is a discursive one. At this juncture I would like to look at a number of theoretical considerations emanating from Hall's ideas about identity and identification, and queer theorizing that have a direct methodological and epistemological bearing on the researcher, their positionality, reflexivity, the research process and practice.

From an epistemological point of view, identity – which, for Hall, signified both a “product” as well as a discursive “process” – underwent major reconceptualizations, particularly in the late twentieth century. “Old” collective social identities – or sets of cultural values, symbols, meanings, and systems of cultural representation – were formed along the lines of ethnicity/race, class, nation(ality), and sex/gender as part of essential, universal, homogenous, unified “already-produced stabilities and totalities” (Hall 2000, 45). Hall believed that the main sources of people's cultural identity in the modern world are national and ethnic identities as systems of cultural representation they are born *into*. These “old” collective social identities have been fundamentally transformed, giving rise to “new” types of collective social or cultural identities, which “do not stitch us in place, locate us, in the way they did in the past” (Hall 2000, 63), yielding a much greater degree of plurality and fragmentation. These “new” identities offered a glimpse into a politics that is “able to address people through the multiple identities which they have – understanding that those identities do not remain the same, (...) that they cross-cut one another, that they locate us differently at different moments” (Hall 2000, 59).

Elaborating extensively on a significant shift in conceptualizing the term “black” in black cultural politics in the United Kingdom, Hall ushered in a new approach to conceptualizing ethnic identities or “new ethnicities” as multiple, multifaceted, fluid, constantly changing, and intersecting. “Black” did not cease to denote the specific experiences of individuals who identified as “black”; however, it was no longer sustainable for referencing ethnicity/race in its narrowest sense as the only defining aspect of identity. It was necessary to account for other aspects of identity, or categories of identification, predicated on *difference*. These locate each postmodern subject, qualitative social science researchers included, differently within different social and cultural systems, paradigms, and discourses. This “new” logic of (ethnic) identity grounded in difference enables each subject to “speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture. (...) We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are” (Hall 2000, 447; original emphasis). This means that even the researcher's identity and positionality are *ethnically located*.

When reflecting on identity and identification, Hall was talking about the location or position(ality) of the subject in relation to *difference* from social norms and normativities. That is exactly where “queer” comes in. Just as Hall (2000) calls for an anti-essentialist “politics of recognising that all of us are composed of multiple social identities (...) through their diversity of identifications” (57), in which identity becomes a “movable feast” always (trans)formed by how we are represented and addressed in the surrounding cultural systems (Hall 1996c, 598), Butler (1993) suggests that identities are open to continuous negotiation and influence. Thus, it is in relation to the circumstances surrounding us that we locate our sense of “self”:

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 (Butler 1993, 15).

Halperin describes queer as “an identity without an essence (...), demarcat[ing] (...) a positionality vis-à-vis the normative – a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or feels marginalized because of his or her sexual practices” (1995, 62). Additionally, according to Gamson (1995):

[q]ueerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built, taking apart the idea of a ‘sexual minority,’ and a ‘gay community,’ indeed of ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ and even ‘man’ and ‘woman.’ It builds on central difficulties of identity-based organising: the instability of identities both individual and collective, their made-up, yet necessary character (390).

In queer theorizing, the term “queer,” which often refers to non-heteronormative sexualities and non-cis gender identities, takes on a new meaning: non/counter/anti-normative. With this in mind, queer theorizing can thus be understood as a critical, counter-normative, anti-identitarian, and anti-assimilationist theoretical approach that looks at the deployment of social norms and interrogates dominant social normativities, orthodoxies, and dualisms: what Butler (1990) calls “regulatory fictions.”

Queer theorizing highlights the unstable and fluid nature of identities, whilst disrupting and doing away with fixed identity categories and socially, discursively produced binaries such as man/woman, gay/straight, heteronormative/homonormative (Browne, Lim, and Brown 2007). It deconstructs and sabotages dominant hierarchies and normativities and takes them “beyond the heterosexual/homosexual binary to a usage of queer theory as an approach that critiques the class, race and gender specific dimensions of heteronormativities as well as homonormativities (...) that does not simply describe and reify the spaces of sexual ‘others’” (Oswin 2008, 96). Queer research, methods, and methodologies can then be seen as any form of research, methods, and methodologies situated within conceptual frameworks that critically examine, uncover, unpack, and explore – or queer(y) – the unstable and taken-for-granted nature of social norms, meanings, and their attendant power relations.

Within queer theorizing one particular queer concept, queer assemblages (Puar 2007), enables a conceptualization of identities and identifications as fluid, rhizomic “becoming/s beyond being/s” (Puar 2005, 128). Such a conceptualization of identities and identifications is very helpful, especially in subject areas such as Romani Studies where, as discussed, identity has tended to be understood primarily along essentialist lines and through an ethnic lens (Fremlova 2017), thus leading to conceptualizations that homogenize and “other” Romani identity.

Nonetheless, “queer” is not without limits or problems. The predominantly white mainstream of queer theorizing was the subject of critique from lesbians of color (e.g., Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982; 1983; Lorde 1984; Anzaldúa 1987) and later from queer of color theorists (Reid-Pharr 2002; Anzaldúa 2002; Ferguson 2004; Gopinath 2005, 3; Eng et al. 2005) for its “disconnect” from and epistemological silences on structural

oppressions experienced by non-white and non-cis queer subjects, such as racism or transphobia (Helen (Charles) 1993) or classism (Cohen 2005). This includes Romani LGBTIQ people, some of whom are striving for basic survival against antigypsyism, homophobia, and/or transphobia. As a result, they do not always have the privilege of choosing to “playfully destabilise” (Tucker 2009, 16) – in a queer way – the very same structures that threaten their lives (Fremlova 2017). Queer of color critique makes up for this deficiency by trying to understand, dissect, and unpick the ways in which discourses of sexuality are inextricable from prior and continuing histories of colonialism, nationalism, racism, and migration.

Queer theorizing has also been critiqued for its neglect of the workings of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations (Yekani et al. 2010) – an area of inquiry attended to by intersectionality (its popularization is largely attributed to Crenshaw 1989, 1991; preceded by Truth 1851; the Combahee River Collective 1977; hooks 1981; Davis 1982; Lorde 1984, 1988; Mohanty 1988). Intersectionality signifies “the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts” (Brah and Phoenix 2004, 76). Importantly, Crenshaw *did not* intend intersectionality as “some new, totalizing theory of identity” (1991, 1244). Intersectionality as it has been applied in Romani Studies by Romani intersectional and critical race theory scholars (e.g., Oprea 2004; Kóczé 2009; Jovanović and Daróczy 2015), has been critiqued, for instance, for fixing and stabilizing identities (Puar 2007) and for failing to interrogate power relations around class (Skeggs 1997), disability, and transgender (Erel et al. 2010). Notwithstanding these critiques, intersectionality still offers one of the most viable and comprehensive theorizing of the workings of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Given the benefits offered by both queer theoretical concepts and intersectionality, I argue for the need to read intersectionality in conjunction with queer assemblages (Puar 2007). Queer intersectionalities enable us to account for the fluidity of identities and identifications or “becoming/s beyond being/s.” Simultaneously, they make it possible to attend to the workings of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations associated with social normativities through which identities and identifications are in a constant process of being discursively shaped and formed. Queer intersectionalities are relevant to the researcher’s positionality vis-à-vis hegemonic asymmetrical power relations that lie at the heart of social normativities. However, it cannot be followed through in this article.

In this section, I have made a number of observations regarding the theoretical underpinnings of identity, including the researcher’s identity, in relation to researcher positionality and reflexivity, which impact directly on the research process and practice. In the following two sections, I proceed to offer some insights into research practice with respect to queer(y)(ing) ethics and ethnography-informed research which I gained during my doctoral research.

5. Queer(y)(ing) Ethics and Ethnography-informed Research

I conducted the fieldwork for my doctoral research between 2015 and 2016, having been aligned with Roma-related causes since the early 2000s and involved in Romani LGBTIQ activities and events since 2008. I

participated in the first and second International Roma LGBT conferences in 2015 and 2016, resulting in a particular level of entanglement in a delicate network of friendships and social relations with many of the research participants. It was important for me as a researcher to acknowledge that emotions were an important factor during social interaction with the participants, which manifested in recurrent, socially-recognized routines and/or patterns (Wetherell 2012). Consequently, I came to appreciate that I exercised a “significant influence on the development of the research and the engagement of the participants” (Curtin and Fossey 2007, 92–93). I became aware that this could potentially influence the interpretation of data (Creswell 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Creswell and Miller 2000). Simultaneously, I realized that as someone who has been involved in Romani and Romani LGBTIQ activism and activism-driven research, not only was I “allowed to have a political project in my research (...), I [was] also allowed to ‘perform myself’ as a social actor within the research through the reflexive implication that entangle[d] me into the lives of [the] participants” (Detamore 2010, 168; Denzin 2003). I came to recognize that it was not just my activist background and commitment to social justice and equality but also my emotional attachment to the “cause” and to the participants that was a driving, motivational force behind the research, as well as the events, and which gave meaning to the emotional experience. At the same time, I felt I had a duty to be transparent about that influence by “bring[ing] [my] preconceived beliefs into the dialogue” (Harry, Sturges, and Klingner 2005, 7). I did that by disclosing those aspects that I was aware of to the research participants, along with aspects of my background, including my non-Romani ethnicity that could influence the way in which I conducted the research and analyzed and interpreted the data. As a result, over the course of the fieldwork, I assumed an overt researcher position that moved between the role of “participant as observer” and “observer as participant.”

Despite some of the challenges related to my being non-Romani (discussed below), in order to make sure that all the research participants were fully aware of my “role,” I informed the participants of the exact nature and purpose of the research, of what exactly I intended to do and why at every stage of the research. When the fieldwork took place at events, I made all the participants aware of the nature and purpose of my presence, ensuring that I explained the nature and purpose of the research to the participants after they had received all the information in writing prior to their participation in the research. This degree of openness and transparency was of pivotal importance in terms of the research ethics of the researcher-researched relations, particularly in terms of maintaining my preexisting friendships and relations with the research participants, built on trust, and building new ones. Detamore (2010) refers to these elements that constitute the researcher-researched relations as “ethical formations,” “ethical constructions,” and “ethical terrains” (168–169).

As a result of my “queer” positionality and reflexivity as a researcher interrogating my own privilege (discussed below), the ethics of conducting social science research that makes a maximum effort to not reify and/or reinforce existing normativities, social divisions, and asymmetrical hegemonic power relations became “not merely a management tool for methodology but a methodological tool for the constitution of methods itself” (Detamore 2010, 182). Consequently, “queer ethics” sat at the core of my doctoral research as a method for crafting and defending alternative social worlds (*ibid.* 168).

It is in the rational flip of the ethical and the methodological, of ethics and methods, as a means to constitute complex researcher/researched relations that the queer enters as a technique to explore such assemblages. (...) The result is something unnameable and uniquely special that has the tendency to resemble something that looks much more like kinship (*ibid.* 170, 178).

It was within the context of researcher-researched relations that queer(y)ing ethics as well as my “queer” researcher positionality became constitutive of the methodology.

In my previous research with, for, and/or on Roma, which has spanned the past two decades, I tended to perceive my role as a *messenger* although I often asked myself many questions pertaining to the social positioning and privilege associated with who gets to *emit, carry, and receive the message*, as well as to the discursive context in which this *transmission* takes place. As Jackman (2010) reminds us, “researchers must recognise the role of the ethnographer as mediator and interpreter of cultural text” (116). Rooke (2010) cites “the assumed stability and coherence of the ethnographic self,” reminiscent of the aforementioned neo-positivist/Cartesian conceptualizations of the researcher. She recalls the “considerable criticism ethnography has been subject to due to its epistemological underpinnings and its representational conventions,” and its trajectory from its earlier colonialist, imperialist, ethnocentric versions to postmodern critiques of ethnography. These have led to what is referred to as an interpretative turn – recognizing that ethnography is more than mere cultural reportage, relaying the truth or “reality” of a situation, stressing its role as a cultural construction of both self and the other (Rooke 2010, 25, 27, 28). Ethnography, according to Rooke (2010), is “methodologically untidy, (...) filled with ontological, epistemological and ethical dilemmas” (27, 28). My use of ethnography-informed research in my methodology entailed the introduction of “a queer sociological ethnographic perspective that brings together queer theories of sexual subjectivity and an ethnographic approach to researching identity categories and the practices which generate them (...) [to] counter the tendency towards high abstraction and [over] reliance on theory” (*ibid.* 26) with a view to illuminating complex and abstract concepts such as queer assemblages.

Assemblage has been applied as a research methodology across social sciences (Murray Li 2007; Fox and Alldred 2013, 2015; Wetherell 2014; Alldred and Fox 2015). From a methodological point of view, queer assemblages have an important ethnographic dimension as demonstrated by Puar (2007) who assembled “varied and often disjunctive primary sources” and ethnographic data, including formal interviews, participant observation, and discursive analyses in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007). Writing about the cross-cultural use of ethnography as a theoretical and practical guide in the study of sexuality, Jackman (2010) recalls Engebretsen’s (2008) claim that ethnography allows for the use of “multifaceted ‘think’ data that enables effective re-thinking of received analytical paradigms” (Engebretsen 2008, 112) in conceptualizing “the situated realities of everyday realities” (Jackman 2010, 116). Jackman thus points to the socially and culturally “constructed” nature of the notion of the ethnographic “field.” He makes a suggestion to reorientate and resituate researchers’ perception of ethnographic “fieldwork” by conceiving of it by means of two related concepts: “queer publics” (Warner 2002, 14) and “queer assemblages” (Puar 2007, 221). Jackman (2010) considers queer publics to be a useful conceptual tool as it is relational and metacultural; it neither delineates clear boundaries nor designates identifiable constituents or bound diffuse social forms in time and space, unlike the “field” (126). In Jackman’s view, the study of queer assemblages entails a more radical, albeit less clearly defined reorientation and repositioning of researchers in relation to conducting research – ethnographies of queer assemblages have the potential to study sexualities and experiences. They also help to facilitate an understanding of identities and identifications as the rhizomic, intuitive, fluid workings of queer assemblages, characterizing links and relationships between constitutive categories of identification that do not assume either an overarching system, structure, groupness, or a common set of roots (Puar 2007, 212, 215). Theoretically and methodologically, this is highly relevant

to and useful for conceptualizations of Romani identities and identifications. Conventionally, within Romani Studies research and scholarship, where Roma constituted the “researched,” non-Romani researchers have theorized Roma through an ethnic lens, thus homogenizing and essentializing Roma predominantly as an ethnic group. In my queer take on ethnography, the researcher-researched relations also were informed by our common identifications and belonging as LGBTIQ on the basis of sexuality and gender identity.

The properties and traits of queer assemblages as both a theoretical concept and a methodology inherently benefit queerness (i.e., non-normativity) thanks to the challenges they pose to ways in which dualisms, binaries, and orthodoxies are deployed. Importantly, the choice of methodology for my doctoral research was informed by the nature of information that I needed to elicit in order to understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people and to inform the theoretical considerations with respect to conceptualizing the multifaceted identities and identifications of Romani LGBTIQ people. Ultimately, my ability to collect the data was contingent upon my position(ality) and reflexivity as a researcher, which I discuss in the following section.

6. Methodological Reflections on Queer(y)ing Non-Romani Researcher Privilege

I am a lesbian/queer, non-Romani, ally-identified researcher who has worked with and for Roma and on Romani-related issues for almost two decades. On a personal level, I am an individual with long-term emotional attachments to many self-ascribed Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people, who have been either acquaintances or close and/or good friends of mine. When starting to conduct this research, my personal and professional backgrounds came together. As a researcher, I was aware of beginning to walk a very thin line separating the notion of being an outsider as a non-Roma and an insider as a lesbian/queer person. At the same time, I was also *neither of the two*. Breen (2007) makes a similar observation:

Researchers, particularly those using qualitative methodologies, often position themselves as ‘insiders’ rather than ‘outsiders’ to their research domain. (...) I discuss the role I occupied within my PhD research, including the personal experiences that led me to consider myself to be neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’ the research domain. I explore the ways in which my experience ‘in the middle’ influenced my choice of research topic, the scope of my study, access to informants, the collection and analysis of data, and the maintenance of research rigor (163).

I had to critically examine – or queer(y) – how my own “ethnically located” and other forms of privilege were operationalized and how they played out in different contexts. For instance, when I am in the UK, I am (“read” as) a post-doctoral researcher who obtained her doctoral degree at a British university, a middle-class, migrant, lesbian, white, Eastern European female foreigner whose white/non-Romani privilege is perhaps not so obvious because of my migrant status as an EU citizen (made uncertain by the implications of Brexit) and due to not being a native speaker of English. Nevertheless, my position in relation to privilege – hence my researcher positionality – changes when I am in my home country,

the Czech Republic, where a substantial part of the fieldwork for my doctoral research took place. There, I am (“read” as) a post-doctoral researcher who obtained her doctoral degree at a British university, a middle-class, white/non-Romani, Czech, lesbian, female researcher working in the UK, who can pass and passes as straight and whose white/non-Romani privilege is perhaps much more obvious because I am an ethnic Czech and a native speaker of Czech who is also fluent in English and French. Additionally, I am an openly lesbian/queer person who (*still*) exercises a lot of privilege in relation to my social status and my white heritage (I add and emphasize the word “still” because as an openly lesbian/queer person and a female in the Czech Republic, I exercise much less privilege as opposed to straight women and/or men). However, as a white/non-Romani person, I still exercise an enormous degree of privilege.

Ultimately, my being lesbian/queer in my everyday personal life does not automatically “qualify” me to speak on *all* matters related to LGBTIQ issues. By extension, this means that in the academic world, my lesbian/queer identity and identifications *cannot* be regarded as “qualifying” me as a researcher to be an “epistemological insider” (Brubaker 2017) who, by default, can write with legitimacy and authority about *all* LGBTIQ-related topics. For example, in the course of conducting the doctoral research, I made a methodological observation relating to the underlying workings of gender in a collective, and the gender dynamics between men, women, and/or trans/intersex/non-binary people. In such situations, the language used plays a very important role, especially when engaging with participants who are not native speakers of English. In an attempt to find out more about why one particular Romani lesbian woman did not talk much during the focus group, I learnt in a subsequent interview with her that my occasional use of the word “gay” when referring to lesbians was problematic. Even though the words “gay” and “lesbian” may be used interchangeably in English at times, this is not the case in Slavonic languages. I was using vocabulary that signalled to the interviewee what can be termed a “linguistic erasure” of lesbian existence. Even though as a native speaker of another Slavonic language, Czech, and a lesbian, I use the word “lesbian” in Czech on a regular basis, following that experience, I corrected and adjusted my use of the word “lesbian” in English. As a researcher, I felt the need to be attentive to the notion that certain voices tend to dominate while others remain silent. Had I only employed focus groups, I may not have got the voices of Romani women and/or trans and intersex Roma.

While conducting my doctoral research, I had to acknowledge that for me as a lesbian/queer person, a non-Roma and simultaneously a researcher, involvement in the research was not the same as for the Romani LGBTIQ research participants. Therefore, by definition, I *was* an outsider and could not and did not pretend otherwise. And not only that – I was also a non-Romani researcher who was asking Romani LGBTIQ people to share with me their lived experiences so that I could then write a doctoral thesis. This presented a key challenge in a situation where a large portion of academic research *on* Roma – as opposed to *with/for* Roma – has been done by non-Roma. Consequently, there may have been a perception that non-Romani researchers, myself included, were advancing their careers on the back of Roma. Additionally, the impact of some research on Roma has been at times detrimental to Romani communities (for example, research by Jakoubek (2004) or Jakoubek and Poduška (2003)). These considerations became critical aspects of my positionality and reflexivity as a non-Romani researcher. Still, the notion that I am openly lesbian/queer identified, as well as overtly ally-identified, acknowledging openly that Romani identity is an identity that I do not/cannot claim and a heritage that I do not have, came to represent a fundamental link between me as a researcher and the Romani LGBTIQ participants

in the research. This thin line separating the notion of epistemological out/insiderism also enabled me to work towards becoming closer to some of the Romani LGBTIQ research participants; nonetheless, there were a small number of research participants who also participated in the international Roma LGBT conferences and found my position as a non-Roma problematic. This was mainly due to perceptions and assumptions about my heritage made by some of the Romani LGBTIQ participants as a result of my alignment with Romani-related causes and my involvement in Romani LGBTIQ activities and events, particularly the International Roma LGBT conferences.

Since I have been acknowledging openly my non-Romani heritage for almost two decades and have never been elusive about my non-Romani heritage, have never pretended to be Roma and/or been taken for Roma, none of the written information sent to potential participants contained an explicit reference to my heritage. Consequently, unless the research participants had known (of) me before, they had no way of knowing whether I was non-Romani or Romani. When those research participants who also participated in the conferences eventually met me for the first time, a few were unpleasantly surprised when I said I was non-Romani. This realization led me to appreciate that my non-Romani positionality as a researcher was an issue.

While conducting fieldwork, one of the research participants helped clarify some of the ways in which assumptions about my ethnicity and the eventual realization that I was not Romani related to experiences of antigypsyism, and how these considerations were key to subsequent interactions. I planned to hold a focus group with four self-identified Romani LGBTIQ people whom I had identified and contacted several weeks before. When I approached the potential participants on the day the focus group was supposed to take place, I reiterated that participation was voluntary, everything was anonymous, and all references to places would be removed. One of them started asking me about the guiding questions and why I was asking specifically about Roma. I explained that I was asking only those people who self-identified as Romani and LGBTIQ. The person said they felt that the questions were formulated in a way that suggested that Roma were somehow different from non-Roma, as if to suggest Romani people's sexuality was different. I said that although their response was legitimate, it was not my intention, and that it would be okay to have a discussion about exactly that during the focus group. Then I stepped away for a bit and when I came back, they were still discussing the guiding questions. However, it was clear that the Romani LGBTIQ people did not want to take part. I said that I respected their decision and I left it at that. About two months later, I received the following message from one of the Romani LGBTIQ people who had originally agreed to participate in the focus group, along with permission to use it in subsequent publications:

I just wanted to tell you that I was thinking a lot when I wasn't sure to do the interview or not. I am sorry. It's not very easy to trust 'white' people. Too often, we get abused from them or I wasn't sure what happens exactly with the information you get. It was not personal. And I still thinking of that. I don't understand, I felt very bad. It's not easy for us. This paranoia is very deep with white people (anonymous).

In this communication, the Romani LGBTIQ person was referring to the reasons for their initial decision not to do the focus group. My non-Romani ethnicity was the element linking their experiences of anti-Romani racist abuse from non-Romani (white) people with their reluctance and suspicion. In the

subsequent exchange of messages, at no point did I ask the person whether they would be willing to participate in the research. In the end they suggested that they wanted to participate in the research by sharing their story.

Looking back, I can appreciate that the responses by some of the conference participants were understandable, especially when taking into account the lived experiences of antigypsyism: a term I use in line with the definition proposed by the *Alliance against Antigypsyism* (2016).^[4] In addition to these considerations, as a lesbian/queer person, I also can conceive of a situation where someone might be co-organizing an LGBTIQ/queer-themed conference and because of that, others, myself included, might make the assumption that the person is LGBTIQ. Consequently, my interaction with them might be impacted upon finding out that they are straight: an “outsider”, “representative” of the very normativity that the LGBTIQ/queer-themed conference challenges. Similarly, some of the conference participants made the assumption that I was Roma and were taken aback, disappointed and/or unpleasantly surprised upon finding out this was not the case.

One solution to this dilemma could have been to include a reference to my non-Romani ethnicity in the written communication with the research participants – something that I will consider for my future research activities. Regardless, all of the above considerations raise some important questions about the “epistemological out/insider” binary. Recalling the concept of “critical whiteness” that Vajda (2015) brought to Romani Studies, she makes the following claim:

[T]he 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 (48).

What Vajda is proposing is “queer” by virtue of being counter/non/anti-normative in relation to whiteness as a social norm (white-normativity). In practical terms, it means that a “critical-whiteness” researcher

4 The definition proposed by the Alliance against Antigypsyism (2016) to signify:

a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma ‘gypsy’ or other related terms, and it incorporates:

A homogenising and essentializing perception and description of these groups;

The attribution of specific characteristics to them; Discriminating social structures and violent practices (...), which have a denigrating and ostracising effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages. (...)

The term Antigypsyism – in citing the majority’s projections of an imagined out-group of ‘gypsies’ which simultaneously constructs an imagined in-group – is analytically more accurate and makes clear that other groups – Sinti, Travellers, manouches [sic], Egyptians – are equally affected (Alliance against Antigypsyism 2016, 5–6; emphasis added).

“Antigypsyism” is spelt with a lowercase “g” to refer to the notion of an imagined, essentialized group of “gypsies,” to whom non-Roma stereotypically attribute specific traits, thus marking them as essentially “distinct,” “different.” This difference is then embedded systemically within dominant social structures and practices that (re)produce structural disadvantage and oppression.

does not “have to be” Romani; however, it implies that they are able to critically examine their own white/non-Romani privilege and challenge it accordingly, not only academically but also politically and socially. By the same token, a “queer” researcher does not “have to be” LGBTIQ; however, if they are straight, it implies that they are able to critically examine their own straight/heteronormative/cis-normative privilege and challenge it accordingly at all levels: academically, politically, and socially.

Conclusion

The researcher’s positionality within the social world vis-à-vis power relations may be seen by some as an essentialist, preexisting, “always-already-produced” condition – something that existed prior to the researcher starting the investigation or even prior to the person becoming a researcher. While this may be true of natural sciences, in the course of the social science research process, researcher positionality develops and unfolds discursively, in relation to others, especially the researched. Therefore, positionality, which is underpinned by identities (re)constituted through relations among people (particularly researcher-researched), places, and things, is relational, context-dependent, fluidly shifting on a spectrum, or continuum, where one “pole” may be seen as representing “insiderness” and the other “outsiderness.”

There are undeniable benefits to insider research, as shown by feminist, queer, critical whiteness, and other research. This is the case especially when researching historically misrepresented groups and communities such as Roma. In Romani Studies, a subject field with a long colonialist legacy, Romani researchers have been severely underrepresented, leading to an epistemic invisibility or even erasure enacted at times through non-Romani research ethnocentrism. Yet, whether the researcher is a member of the group/community under investigation or not, their identity *cannot* be regarded as the sole – although it is very important – criterion “qualifying” or “disqualifying” them as an epistemological insider/outsider to write with legitimacy and authority about *all* topics related to the social group(s) with whom they share the same identity/identifications.

The researcher’s “cultural,” ethnically-located identity is reflected in their discursive, spectrum-like positionality vis-à-vis power relations; this impacts all aspects of the research process, including the interaction and relations with the researched. Using my own experience of being a non-Romani lesbian/queer researcher conducting research with Romani LGBTIQ people, I demonstrated that despite being non-Romani (outsider), it was through my lesbian/queer (insider) and *neither-of-the-two* positionality that I was able to negotiate the relations between myself (the researcher) and the participants (the researched). This means that the social locations of “insiderness”/“outsiderness” do not exist as a binary opposition; nor are they static but rather ever-shifting, complementary, and permeable. Reflexivity then entails an ability to critically examine the nature of these shifting ethical terrains as part of an ongoing research process, whereby the researcher tries to understand themselves, their researcher identity, and the researcher-researched relations by viewing their work with a contemplative eye.

As research methodology, this reflexive, contemplative process implies a close link between researcher positionality, ethics and the “field.” Queer(y)ing ethics and ethnography-informed research allows for the reconceptualization of the “field” or “fieldwork,” as well as for the emergence of alternative types of

relations between the researcher and the researched. These alternative, non-normative, non-hierarchical, assemblage-like relations help reorient the researcher's positionality, including through their use of reflexivity. For example, in my queer take on ethnography-informed research, the researcher-researched relations were influenced by our common identifications and belonging as LGBTIQ, that is, on the basis of sexuality and gender identity rather than foregrounding the dichotomy of Romani/non-Romani ethnic identity – a factor which played a significant role nonetheless.

While researchers are required to adhere to their respective ethical protocols, they still exercise a significant degree of flexibility with respect to how exactly they *do* ethics in the “field.” Based on my experience of queer(y)ing ethics as a methodological tool for constituting the method of conducting research that makes a maximum effort to not reinforce existing normativities and divisions, I have argued in this article that whether non-Romani or Romani, hetero/cis-normative, or LGBTIQ-identified, a queer and/or critical whiteness researcher has an opportunity to avoid reproducing conventional social paradigms and narratives by espousing a critical, queer-informed approach to research. This may entail the researcher's sensitivity to, for example, Romani participants' previous experiences of antigypsism – or by the same token, LGBTIQ participants' previous experiences of homo/bi/transphobia – which are likely to play a role in their subsequent interactions with the non-Romani – or non-LGBTIQ – researcher. Such a positionality vis-à-vis the normative thus enables the researcher to critically examine – or queer(y) – their privilege by virtue of being reflexive and reflective of their positionality within these norms and the role it plays in the research process and practice.

Given the researcher's discursive role and positionality within the research process, one aim of Critical Romani Studies, informed by critical approaches such as queer theorizing and/or critical whiteness, could be to conceptually grasp the theoretical, methodological, and analytical underpinnings of non-Romani researchers producing knowledge about/on Roma and what kind of knowledge is thus produced (and to do so at least as much as Roma have been theorized). It would be desirable if particularly non-Romani researchers asked themselves questions including but not limited to the following:

- What role is played by my positionality as a non-Romani person researching issues of ethnicity/race in relation to Roma?
- Do I have white/non-Romani privilege and if so, how does it impact my research?
- How do I use my positionality to navigate different spaces? How is it operationalized?
- How does my positionality influence the interactions that I have with research participants?

The ability of researchers from dominant social groups/communities such as non-Roma and/or non-LGBTIQ to reflect on these or similar questions would be a significant step towards establishing research processes and research practices that provide rigorous academic insight and that understand, endorse, and promote the principles of social justice.

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Power Hierarchies between the Researcher and Informants: Critical Observations during Fieldwork in a Roma Settlement

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Abstract

Scholars have long been interested in researching Roma; a form of “top-down research,” where the researcher analyzes, gathers data, and interviews the “objects” of the research, is still dominant in the field, although an increasing number of critics have been proposing ways of including Roma in knowledge production to shape the discourse about themselves. Exclusion of Roma in the process of research silences their voices and contributes to incomplete, flawed findings that often reinforce stereotypes. This paper takes a critical look at interactions and the power dynamics between the researcher and the informant(s) during research based on one in-depth case study: fieldwork conducted in a small town in Hungary in 2012–13. The presented research is one small step towards deconstructing knowledge production with a focus on research ethics and practice, rather than a large-scale paradigm change. This paper strives to transcend the scholarly field of Romani Studies specifically, and contribute to the broader literature on Social Science methodology, especially scholarship about interpretive methods and fieldwork.

Keywords

- Fieldwork
- Roma
- Marginalization
- Knowledge production
- Ethics

1. Fieldwork: Challenges and Responsibilities

“The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts...which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (Geertz 1973, 452).

Fieldwork is characterized by the “desire to understand the social worlds inhabited by others as *they* understand those worlds”; fieldwork as a research tradition, however, had a troubled colonial past, treating native cultures as inferior (Hobbs and Wright 2006, x). With time, fieldwork as a form of inquiry became less colonially oriented, more aware of dangers of reification and objectification of the people being studied, and increasingly sensitive to the unequal power relations between the researcher and researched. Postcolonialism has gained ground among academics in the recent past, providing the ontological and theoretical foundation to examine marginalized and excluded communities, such as the Roma (see, for example, Ashton-Smith 2010).

Heron and Reason (2001) call it “traditional research,” when “people are treated as passive subjects rather than as active agents,” suggesting that research must be “conducted with people rather than on people,” because “ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own ideas and can work together in a cooperative inquiry group to see if these ideas make sense of their world and work in practice” (180). It is thus necessary to transcend such “traditional” forms of research, as a cooperative relationship between researcher and informant tends to result in more accurate knowledge.

Academics have produced a significant body of literature regarding appropriate ways to conduct ethnographic fieldwork (e.g., Amit 2000; Ritchie et al. 2013), including fieldwork with various vulnerable or marginalized groups (e.g., Hoolachan 2016; Medeiros 2017) or the “Others” (Scheyvens 2014). Furthermore, while positivist fieldwork is often characterized as blind to the agency of the researched (Fuller 2006, 334), the interpretivist fieldwork approach has expanded the scope and purpose of fieldwork to include reflexivity – the “inclusion of the observer in the subject matter itself” (McCall 2006, 3; see also Pachirat 2003 and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006) – and give “voice to marginalized, subaltern viewpoints,” which may be an end in itself for researchers (Adcock, 2006: 61). The latter approach is also known as action research or participatory action research (Schwartz-Shea 2006: 104). Interpretivist research philosophy, concerned with “unpacking beliefs or meaning embodied in actions and practices” (Bevir 2006, 284), remains silent on the particular challenges of eliciting meaning when conducting research with marginalized minority groups as well as the ethical considerations of such research. This study intends to fill this gap.

Robert Chambers (1994) pioneered a form of participatory research which enabled “local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions,” which he called Participatory Rural Appraisal (1993). Chambers acknowledged that “dominant behavior by outsiders may explain why it has taken until the 1990s for the analytical capabilities of local people to be better recognized...” (*ibid.*). Indeed, at this time, literature such as Whyte’s edited volume, *Participatory Action Research* (1991), has laid the foundation for further exploration and operationalization of more engaged research approaches. As a result of growing interest and focus on engagement with informants, nearly all subfields have expanded their methodological literature (see, for example, Low and Merry 2010; Piccoli and Mazzocchi 2016).

In addition, in order to recognize the power asymmetries between researcher and informants, it is not only the subaltern position of minorities that must be considered but also the invisible structures of white supremacy and privilege. This is the argument that Violeta Vajda (2015) makes in critiquing participatory research for its limitations. Vajda highlights the importance of “critical whiteness studies,” or in other words, the importance of non-Roma people’s critical view of their own racialized identity in the context of Roma othering:

Participatory research ... 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 (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011). 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 (Vajda 2015, 47).

In other words, it is imperative that researchers (in this case non-Roma) examine their own racialized identity in order to understand how othering and stereotypes are constructed and, in turn, influence interactions between researcher and informants.

Nevertheless, the challenges of conducting fieldwork with vulnerable and marginalized groups persist. Including informants in the process of knowledge-production and understanding the impact of power hierarchies between the researcher and informant are of central importance but often researchers fail to do this. It is also essential to recognize the power dynamics between the researcher and researched group(s). As Cupples and Kindon (2014) warn: “If you have worked in low-income communities or with groups who are marginalised, stigmatised or discriminated against, it is important to write in such a way that acknowledges that marginalisation but does not exacerbate it” (239). One strategy may be to “write about their struggles and agency” itself (*ibid.* 239). Yet, often “when the radical voice speaks about domination [they] are speaking to those who dominate, [and t]heir presence changes the nature and direction of the words [of the radical voice]” (hooks 1990, 154). Hence the following question arises: What is the most appropriate and ethical way to study marginalized communities?

Questions of ethics, justice, and fairness in research are indeed complex. Bell hooks (1990) in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* grasps the essence of unequal power relations during research:

Often this speech about the ‘other’ annihilates, erases: ‘no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority’ (208).

For hooks, those who possess power are those who are able to speak – speak through writing, expressing feelings, articulating inequalities. The most authentic and true voice is always the voice of the oppressed,

rather than any interpretation of it by the dominant group. Therefore, it is critical for the oppressed to use their voice, which becomes not only a way to convey their own thoughts, grievances, and needs but also because using one's own voice is a form of empowerment.

However, much research also fails to sufficiently acknowledge the agency of informants. While it is important to discuss the agency of the scholar, e.g., "I have used the personal pronoun 'I' to acknowledge my agency throughout the research process" (Hargreaves 2006, 255), agency of the informants must also be accounted for. Otherwise, the informants' space for agency ends up being determined by the researcher: when the researcher observes, what the researcher asks, how the researchers interprets, and which interactions the researcher notices.

Moreover, the attitude of the researcher is another significant aspect that influences research findings. In the case of poor and marginalized groups, the fundamental fault stemming from this is the following:

A danger is that rather than valuing our informants and the knowledge they possess, we pity them if they are marginalized ... We view our informants not as people who lead multi-dimensional lives – laughing, crying, celebrating, grieving and hoping, just like the rest of us – and who hold information that could increase our understanding of a particular topic, but as people we feel a need to help or that need to be taught something or to be taken down a peg or two. Our attitude towards people who face economic and other hardships should not be so shrouded by pity that we fail to see things of value in those we study (Scheyvens, Scheyvens, and Murray 2003, 168).

In other words, when conducting research with excluded, poor, oppressed, or in any way marginalized communities, researchers face a challenge in terms of their attitude towards the informants, which may influence their findings. The existence of any group must not be reduced to a single attribute, and researchers should not position themselves as the "rescuers" of the informants. Moreover, if the research concerns children or the youth^[1] of the vulnerable group in question, it presents additional challenges: "[Children and youth] is rather a category taken for granted – seen but not heard, acted upon but not with" (Bowden 1998, 282).

It is important to acknowledge that there are academics who have indeed allowed informants to become (co-)creators of knowledge, rather than objects of research. Gay y Blasco and de la Cruz Hernandez (2012) in an effort to "write ethnography together and to propose a collaborative and egalitarian anthropology" collaborated with a Gitana (Roma) in writing an intriguing biographical ethnography, arguing that ethnographic knowledge is owned by both ethnographer and informant (1). Indeed, there are attempts to hear the voices of Roma (e.g., Ryder, Cemlyn, and Acton 2014; see also Bogdan et al. 2015; Ryder 2015) and thus, there is optimism that a new direction may emerge that strives to include Roma

¹ I follow the legal definition of children, that is, those who are under 14 years of age. And, following the UN definition, youth are defined as those between the ages of 15 and 24. During research I was exposed to both groups, and mainly Roma between the ages of 6 and 16.

into discourses of empowerment and reevaluates the dynamics of power relationships. However, there is no consensus on the role of scholars making the voices of Roma heard; Stewart (2017) claims that, “academic knowledge production is not centred on speaking for, against or with certain populations” and consequently the “authority to speak” will not advance the field of Romani Studies (125, 127).

Recognizing the numerous challenges of researching marginalized groups – limited agency, unequal power dynamics, attitude of pity – this paper focuses on the actual process, that is, the methodology of research, rather than the product of research itself. Concerned with the ways a researcher can best represent the experiences lived by marginalized groups while conducting ethical and scholarly sound research, this paper strives to analyze *the particular interactions and the power dynamics between the researcher and the informant(s) during research*. To address this topic, I look at the example of the Roma minority, especially the experiences of Roma youth in one Hungarian settlement (Settlement A).^[2] In this study I strove to treat children and youth as meaningful actors who can speak for themselves, whose voices deserve to be heard if their interests are to be acknowledged and served. It was typically uncommon to engage with young Roma in an equal manner at the field site – teachers, charity personnel, visitors, and researchers often regarded the young Roma as less autonomous, responsible, and reliable than the adults.

I am particularly interested in understanding the context and history of discrimination that frame responses, attitudes, and behaviors of the Roma who participated in my research. Given the oppression Roma face on a daily basis, I found that our initial interactions reflected this prejudiced environment. I discuss the power dynamics between Roma and non-Roma in detail. To that end, I made efforts to integrate into the community through frequent visits and by forging relationships with my informants; I worked together with a local woman to conduct a survey and then consulted with her regarding observations from my field research; I reached out to youth in the community who were often overlooked by others.

This paper offers a reflection on scholarly fieldwork conducted primarily in 2012–13 in a small Hungarian town that has a segregated Romani population. Fieldwork was conducted as part of my PhD dissertation and supported by two grants;^[3] the dissertation examined the role of state schools in Roma identity formation over time in Hungary and Russia. As part of my fieldwork, I recorded over 50 interviews with teachers, directors, and community leaders, as well as over 30 interviews with Roma parents and young adults.^[4] I also have numerous field notes, recordings from roundtables, public events, and public local gatherings, especially pertaining to Roma identity and education. All interviews were conducted in Hungarian and the translation into English was done by the author.

As a brief disclosure of my positionality in the field: my family and I moved from Russia to Hungary in 1988, where I grew up in a Russian household. In my early adult life, I moved to the United States

2 To protect the identities of my respondents, I do not reveal the name of the settlement.

3 More specifically by a fellowship from the International Research & Exchanges Board, with funds provided by the United States Department of State through the Title VIII Program, and by a Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund graduate fellowship for international research. Neither of these organizations are responsible for the views expressed herein.

4 I visited one settlement on a regular basis during fieldwork and also took short trips to others and conducted interviews there.

and then returned to Hungary first for my research in 2012–13, then permanently in 2014. In different contexts, I was therefore seen as a Hungarian, Russian, *or* American by my informants but never as someone with a shared identity with them. I speak Hungarian, Russian, and English fluently. Upon my arrival to Hungary in 2012, I began taking Romani classes (Lovara dialect) but had virtually no occasion to use it, especially with young Roma. In the field site, only a small number of elderly spoke any dialect of Romani. Additionally, I often stood out as a young white woman, judged for not having children because I was in my late twenties at the time. This was an anomaly many commented on, usually inquiring why an “old woman” like me still had no children.

In this paper, rather than answer a research question *about* Roma, I look at *how* the attitudes, behaviors, and self-perceptions of Roma at Settlement A were informed by the daily interactions with me as a researcher from outside of their group/community, and in turn how these interactions shaped the way this particular group of Roma engaged with me as a researcher. I suggest that ways of engagement between two groups (researcher and informants) greatly influence what type of information is revealed; engagement encompasses the power dynamics, perceptions, biases, and past formative experience vis-à-vis the other group. Throughout this article, I use excerpts from field notes and field observations to illustrate arguments and share the immediate reflections from the period of my fieldwork.

2. Case Study: A Settlement Where ‘Electricians Are Stars’

When I first arrived to the town where Settlement A is located in the autumn of 2012, I asked for directions. A local non-Roma⁵ suggested that I keep walking on the road until I see that “something is not quite right, and that is the Roma settlement.” Indeed, it was easy to find, as I wrote in my field notes:

The difference between the settlement and the rest of the town is so obvious that one cannot miss it. Going from neat suburban houses to an absolute run-down ‘ghetto’ still fails to capture the severity of the difference. Houses in the settlement are run down, many have no roofs or stable foundations, some houses are destroyed to the core. Social life is also very noticeably different: in non-Roma areas, very few people were on the streets (it was a Friday morning) and those few who were out minded their own business, without eye contact or greeting (although I clearly stood out [as a white, non-local]). In the settlement, everyone was out in the streets – adults and children. Running around half-naked (it was a very hot day), the children were screaming, playing, running, while the adults were socializing. I received many curious looks and a few greetings immediately (August 31, 2012).

The Romani settlement I studied had a rapidly increasing population of about 500 at the time of fieldwork (2012–13); young Roma comprised the majority of the residents. According to data compiled by a local

5 While I do not believe that either Roma or non-Roma are homogeneous categories, nevertheless this distinction is important here to indicate in- and out-group membership.

charity, the average age in the Romani settlement was approximately 20 years, indicating high birth rates and low life expectancy. The level of education among the adults was low; the majority completed at most eight grades of elementary school and did not pursue studies past that. One resident suggested that “electricians are stars” there given the astonishingly high unemployment rate. The Roma population was diverse: there was intraethnic diversity, some were relatively new to the settlement while others had been living there longer, and there were a few non-Roma who integrated well with the Roma, usually through marriage.

During my research period, I traveled to and from Settlement A, choosing not to live there for several reasons: with large and extended families living together, space was scarce for everyone; I was advised not to stay there for health reasons; and I initially traveled with my partner, who did not speak Hungarian and would have had a hard time. According to survey data compiled by a local charity, the average size of living space for five people was 20 m² and only a sixth of all households had running water in their homes (survey discussed in Dunajeva 2017, 59).

I learned a great deal about the history of Settlement A from the director of the local charity. In a personal interview with him, he explained that:

When the [Socialist-era] housing projects were discontinued here, the families were put in ‘circus caravans.’ The beginning of our program in 2004 was to solve this issue. Some of the families were in the caravans sometimes for 10 years. As a result of this housing crisis many families were traumatized and fell apart as a consequence. This community is very bad [has weak social ties] as a result of this (May 29, 2013).

The animosity among residents was the reason why the charity decided not to include them in the decision-making process. This was slowly in the process of changing at the time of my fieldwork; young adults seemed to be increasingly cooperating with the charity, as I was told during my fieldwork. This young generation of local Roma saw the need for change, and while some wanted to leave (and live in the capital or abroad), others decided to stay and improve their living conditions by building sites for garbage disposal, for example.

I started coming to the settlement almost daily, at first spending most of my time at the charity’s community building, where I helped with school homework as a volunteer to anyone who came in for assistance. I got to know the parents when they wandered in and spent time listening to locals who were eager to talk about their problems with someone they saw as a “regular outsider.” I felt increasingly more confident knowing more names and being called by my name. Slowly my relationships became more personal and conversations became more profound.

Fieldwork was an emotional and educational journey: I learned to self-reflect, to critically see my own role as a researcher with an out-group status, to sympathize and empathize, and to see the resilience of the young Roma even amongst hardships. Indeed, “fieldwork is often humbling, and humility can spur different ways of thinking about knowledge production” (Schatz 2003, 11). Humility helped shed the pretense of objectivity early on – with my own identity, interests, preferences, and personal circumstances, the best I could do was to become more intimately involved in the research and become close with some

Roma whom I interacted with the most, hoping they would see me as a person first and foremost, rather than as a researcher alone.

To carry out my research, I relied mainly on participant observation, “in which a researcher takes part in daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, 1 cited in McCall 2006, 4). During my regular visits, I attended and taught classes in the local school, tutored children in the charity building, visited homes, attended funerals, birthdays, holidays, and celebrations, joined families for lunches, had abundant cups of coffees and smoked cigarettes, and simply listened and observed. It took several months to be accepted as a visitor, and even more months to gain trust. Soon I found myself engaging in actions *with* the young Roma: we ate ice cream together, gossiped about teachers, danced, and played table football. At the end of each day I reflected on my experience and recorded my thoughts, producing lengthy pages of field notes.

I also regularly shared my camera with the children and youth so they could record their own experiences. At the end of the day, I had the photos printed and handed them out to the children, youth, and their families. Eventually, some families invited me to their homes to take family photos, so they could frame and hang them on their walls. As Sarah Pink (2009) argues, it is important to understand “how local people use photography, art, drawing, video and other (audio)visual media to represent the private and public narratives and contexts of their lives” (114). Also, Susan Sontag suggests that “photographs are evidence not only of what there is but of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world” (cited in Niskač 2011, 140). Annabel Tremlett (2017) used photographs in order to examine non-stereotypical images and lived realities of Roma in Hungary. Photo elicitation in Tremlett’s research allowed the researcher to “put more of the power into the hands of the researched” (725). On nearly all occasions I was warned by non-Roma about the dangers of leaving my camera with the Roma, and on every occasion I received my camera back. Indeed, showing trust in the face of suspicion proved critical in laying a new foundation for our interaction.

Documenting the experience of my Roma informants immediately seemed to be a violation of their privacy, although privacy was a loose concept in this settlement: homes built by the charity were on display to visitors, while poorer homes had no doors, only curtains, which provided an ambiguous separation between the public and private sphere. One day there was a TV crew present. Usually such visits were meant to show the poverty that Roma live in and/or the achievements of the charity. The extent of objectification of the Roma by the TV crew (intentionally or not) was so abysmal that I felt ashamed merely because I was non-Roma just like the TV crew. In addition, because of the charity the local Roma met with a lot of various visitors, from non-Roma high school students who came to socialize with the Roma to non-Roma university students participating in integration programs or studying “Roma issues”, Hungarian government officials, and NGO representatives.

After many months of being at the field site, I noticed that the Roma/non-Roma and researcher/informant divisions started to blur. “Are you a Gypsy now, too?” asked one of the children on our walk to the ice cream parlor. “Sure I am,” I said, smiling back. Group membership, after all, “comes in shades of grey” (Schatz 2003, 7). Nevertheless, I do acknowledge my privileges: I still left the field site every evening,

the children still clung on to me begging to take them to the city, take them to my home, or at the very least, bring them some gifts the next day (for example, girls often wanted perfume). I was still seen as privileged, with resources and possibilities. Having left the community, I was always faced with my multiple roles: a confidante, a volunteer, a tutor, or, dare I say, a friend but, either way, I returned home as a researcher, recounting my day in words to my computer.

At first, it seemed difficult for me to open up about my own life to my informants – will I put myself in a vulnerable position by sharing my agony of going through divorce at the time of fieldwork? – but it quickly allowed for stronger bonds to form. I have never felt so close to anyone as I felt to the group of Roma I spent most of my time with. My heart ached when I had to return to my own reality and leave the country to write my dissertation in the U.S. For years to come I longed to write a personal account of my research. With this study I hope to fulfill this goal. Having gained some distance from my fieldwork in the years since, questions regarding how data was gathered and interpreted started to emerge. In the next section, I reflect on interactions during my fieldwork, exploring how the knowledge received can best be contextualized and analyzed.

3. Interpreting Words and Behavior

“[W]hat we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (Geertz 1973, 9).

Entering any community with the goal of research is, in a way, a form of trespassing. It is a “foreign territory” with unwritten rules and norms, with existing power dynamics and social hierarchies – all unknown to the researcher initially. Unfamiliar with these underlying conditions, the researcher nevertheless takes on the task to understand the community: this understanding must be embedded in the existing social context into which the researcher just entered and is likely to become a part of. For the Roma population I studied there were two defining institutions which shaped their behavior, attitudes, and interactions: the school and the local charity.^[6] Hence, teachers, charity workers, and the occasional visitors to the charity were important players in the web of interactions that constructed a certain discourse about the local Roma. Such messages strongly influenced how Roma perceived themselves vis-à-vis the non-Roma, including the researcher(s).

Shaming, Infantilizing, and Pitying Roma

Based on the analysis of interviews and recordings, I grouped the attitudes towards Roma by non-Roma thematically in the following recurring categories: shaming, infantilizing, and pitying.^[7] When shamed, topics such as “deficiency” of their language, culture, looks, identity, or other characteristics were described.

⁶ I recognize that family is a critical informal institution for youth as well; this study only considers formal institutions, however, as a more in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

⁷ In order to further substantiate these categories, analysis of media discourse may be conducted in the future; such analysis is beyond the scope of this study.

In Hungarian, the word *roncs* (wreckage) was often used in these instances. When infantilizing, various forms of incompetence were listed that were used as pretexts for why the state/institution/non-Roma had to intervene and help Roma families. Sentences such as “we have to teach them the simplest of things” were common. Finally, when pitying, the interviewed non-Roma teachers often expressed that they “felt sorry” or “felt bad” for Roma due to their living conditions, family environment, and other reasons.

Other scholarly works have mentioned pitying, shaming, and infantilizing as underlying attitudes towards Roma by non-Roma. For instance, Kóczé and Trehan (2009) offer the following categories in relation to the Romani movement and based on Fanon’s (1965) discussion of objectification practices: infantilization, where “Roma are perceived to be, and are thus treated as, children”; and denigration, when “members of colonized groups are [treated as] ‘defective’” (Kóczé and Trehan 2009, 59). Furthermore, Liégeois (2007) showed that “throughout history, the least negative attitudes towards Roma/Gypsies have been romantic sympathy that is influenced by folklore...and an intellectual curiosity tempered by compassion or pity” (159). Okely (2014) argued that images used to portray Roma evoke feelings of pity (73), and Tessieri (2017) showed that media in Finland reinforced stereotypes and shamed minority groups like the Roma. Goodwin (2009), in turn, argued in his analysis of the the European Court of Human Rights case of *D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic* regarding the practice of assigning Roma in “special schools” that “the Court in *D.H. and Others* is at risk of infantilizing all Romani parents in a broad and sweeping denial of their ability to be proper parents” (102).

Roma live in an environment of intimidation and over-disciplinization. For instance, at the field site, the school-aged Roma were intimidated and disciplined by teachers into behaving a certain way at their school. They were often shamed for their looks – usually due to alleged lack of hygiene – and behavior – boys for violent behavior, girls for over-sexualized demeanor. To enforce a different appearance, the school decided to buy backpacks and make-up remover for girls because “Roma girls come with purses, pretending to be grown women,” as the principle shared with me. The next day I witnessed the arrival of new backpacks. As I noted in my fieldnotes:

A week after school started, I came in to the teachers’ room and noticed that in the usually organized and simple teachers’ room with a computer, printer, microwave, fridge and 2 lines of tables, now there are about 7 new backpacks, some as expensive as almost 11,000 forints (approximately \$50). I inquired who they were for. One teacher told me that these are solutions to the problems of the [Roma] girls: girls come with small purses, which is a ‘typical problem for the [Romani] settlement’ (September 4, 2012).

The school, in other words, took on the responsibility of “normalizing” the appearance and certain habits of Roma students into what it deemed to be appropriate.

False but popular stereotypes shared by some non-Roma wrongly portray Roma as incapable of self-discipline, wherein Roma parents are perceived as being unable to raise their own children, and Roma in general are seen as being incompetent at making appropriate decisions. When I talked to Romani parents about their children’s education, they often told me of the many challenges they must overcome to assure that their children succeed in school. “My daughter pretends she is a Magyar [Hungarian non-Roma] in school because of her lighter skin. I disapprove of that but she has more friends this way, likes school

and studies better,” said a parent of a fifth-grade student. Others lamented the scarce help their children receive in school and one parent stressed her role in “giving them [the children] everything I can so they become more than we [parents] are.”

As a result, infantilization of Roma by non-Roma was looming almost constantly in the background of all interactions. In their own neighborhood, the most banal places bore the same message: the only store in the settlement, the “Gypsy store,” to my surprise had no plastic bags (abundantly available in every grocery store in the country). “They steal ‘em,” yelled the clerk while handing me a plastic bag from behind the counter for my purchase. “They steal everything! Parents don’t teach their children not to steal and they don’t show a good example either,” the clerk continued. Roma, infantilized by the society, consequently are treated as incapable to care for themselves and are thus not granted due independence and autonomy.

One teacher shared with me that many students could not study beyond the eighth grade of elementary school because of their “infantile parents” who fail to value education, fail to recognize the importance of secondary education, and actively oppose any of the teachers’ efforts to help their children. Another teacher similarly referred to the adults of the Roma community as “infantile,” explaining that, “they are always searching for someone to blame, don’t want to change or improve and they can’t be independent,” referring to the social assistance that some of the local Roma rely on. Interacting with Roma families once again proved the contrary: “We want no regular handouts or social support, we want jobs, whether we have education or not, we need jobs,” said an elderly Roma woman who was raising her four grandchildren alone. Desire for change was expressed by virtually every Romani person with whom I spoke.

Pity was another feeling shared by many non-Roma towards Roma – the teachers pitied the Roma children for their inherited “backwardness,” the charity’s work was to help the “impoverished” and “incapable” Roma, and the visitors, even those with the smallest sense of compassion, pitied the community for the appalling poverty they witnessed. “I pity [the Roma] students,” said a teacher, “Just look at A., he is a thief [*lopós*], his parents are beaters [*verekedős*], and many of them don’t even speak proper Hungarian.” This blend of pity and racism was expressed on many occasions to me.

The director of the charity service described the evolving relationship between the charity and the community as the “helpers” and the “helped,” where the former referred broadly to the “outsider whites.” In this uneven relationship, the director suggested, there was a clear tension between the two groups: an over-reliance, at times expectation, of assistance from the “helpers,” while visitors were tested based on what they could provide: food, treats, money, loans, cigarettes. This relationship further reinforced the vulnerable position of Roma as a “helpless” group that requires outside assistance to satisfy basic needs.

The handouts and various forms of assistance were often delivered with a sense of pity as well, rather than a future vision of growth of empowerment. I must note that some assistance was nevertheless important, at times critical, but there were senseless and even humiliating handouts as well. I described one such example in my fieldnotes:

It was an unusually cold November afternoon when I arrived to the charity building – the big room was usually not heated so all children were crammed together in the small, heated

room. Besides, the big room was full of piles of large garbage bags: handouts and donations arrived today. I learned how ironic donations can be: not denying good intentions, but the uselessness of it was absolutely striking. This time, for example, there was large quantity of wedding stuff: wedding invitations, nice postcards with envelopes, lunch cards for wedding and some decorations... It is ironic because none of the Roma in the settlement will have such a wedding. There is a whole corner filled with donated clothes already. The last time there were donations the clothes were simply thrown on the ground and Roma came with carts and took some (sometimes without even looking) (November 12, 2012).

I discussed this issue with a Roma NGO worker, who also highlighted the absurdity of handouts. She shared another story: when donations contained red hair dye which neared its expiration date, within a matter of days most women had red hair – a sight that was inexplicably sad.

I conducted a survey (N=50) among the Roma residents in Settlement A concerning education and issues of discrimination.^[8] The survey was done in cooperation with a local resident, a respected Roma woman in her forties. Her role was central: we consulted before and after visiting households regarding my role, questions to be asked, and later, the information we received. She was present during the interviews and advised on when she thought my presence would not be welcome, suggesting that some families may not be comfortable openly expressing their views with a non-Roma. As my associate was a confidante to many families and worked with the local social services, she knew most families very well and was, without a doubt, trusted by them.

The survey clearly revealed that the negative stereotypes were false. For instance, the widely-held belief that Roma parents did not care about education was false; support for education was evident among parents, even though most had negligible formal education themselves. What was particularly striking was the hope many of the parents had for their children while remaining pessimistic about their own future. Parents clearly wishing their children to have a better life saw that the answer lay in education: “I don’t want my son to be garbage like his father, he must study well”; “my parents thought that I, a woman, should not go to school, but I demand that my daughter doesn’t skip a single class”; “I wish for my children to go beyond elementary education and improve their lives.”

My associate and I usually engaged in informal conversations with several members of the household, where we raised topics of interest (e.g., school, teachers, their children’s performance, issues of discrimination, memories from the past). Many respondents complained about their inability to discuss these matters and desire to do so. Those who were less comfortable talking to me avoided any eye contact and talked to my Roma associate exclusively, in which case I refrained from asking questions. In some instances, I was not present and relied on insights from my associate. I took notes usually immediately after the meeting, rather than during the conversation. We regularly discussed these household visits – my associate was able to contextualize the answers having known the families for many years, at times

⁸ The survey was conducted for fieldwork and was concerned primarily with questions on Roma identity and education. For more on the survey, see Dunajeva (2014).

she pointed out when my questions might be misleading, or if I might have misunderstood any answers. Over time, I got to know some of the families more intimately myself, yet these discussions with my associate remained invaluable in my attempt to construct an accurate understanding that was sensitive to the particular environment in which that many of the local Roma live.

In short, negative attitudes towards Roma – shaming, infantilizing, and pitying – generate false and destructive stereotypes. Such pervasive stereotypes can contribute to a climate of hostility and reinforce power asymmetries between Roma and non-Roma, affecting interactions between the non-Roma researcher (me) and Roma informants, too. Consequently, it is important to consider the position of the scholar in social hierarchies by taking into account the racialization and othering that Roma experience in the face of an often unquestioned white normativity. The next section explores interactions during fieldwork, highlighting the importance of: (1) contextualizing messages, given the cultural, political, and social subordinate position of the local Roma; and (2) critical, self-reflexive scrutiny of the researcher's positionality.

Interactions between Roma and non-Roma

In the context of this highly discriminating and shaming environment, breaking the rules seemed to be a way of life, a way to resist and exert power. After school, for instance, Roma children bragged about their mischief: “We ate food during class today, several times,” shared a fifth-grader with pride. Breaking class discipline, talking back in a “Roma accent,” and endlessly showing up in the mornings with lipstick only appeared to prove the children's determination to continue a pattern of behavior deemed as undesirable by outsiders. Yet many of the local Roma did feel marginalized and unwelcome often in the company of non-Roma, whether in school or at times talking to non-Roma researchers – myself initially and those researchers who visited the settlement occasionally. A genuine instance of realization was my interaction with a 10-year-old Roma girl (N.), who became very dear to me:

As we were sitting and discussing her homework, the girl's mother came. N. got very visibly uncomfortable: while before she was cheerful and outspoken, she became reserved and anxious. Her mother stopped by to look at what we were doing, greeted me with a serious expression, and was satisfied that her daughter is taught and helped. Several times the mother tried to say something, when N. would interrupt her, talk over her, and eventually simply shout: ‘Shut up! Go away! Come on, go away from here!’ (September 7, 2012).

I felt nervous: should I discipline N. indicating to the mother that she is respected? Should I not interfere and potentially allow the mother to assume that I am indifferent to N.'s behavior? Soon it was clear to me that N. is simply ashamed of her mother, who seemed to represent the poverty, the culture, and the conditions she lived in. I had seen N. in the school and the tutoring room, where she presented herself differently: a flamboyant, talkative, outspoken, and brave girl. When her mother stepped in, the little girl showed another aspect of her personality and made it clear that she was ashamed of her mother:

N.'s mother left and N. immediately asked me: ‘Isn't she fat and ugly?’ On the one hand, I thought, this girl must be deeply ashamed of her family, while on the other hand it might be a test for me, as this was a question and not a statement. Would I think her mother, a woman

in her late forties with serious health issues living in poverty, is ugly? No, in fact I thought her mother was a caring woman, burdened by her existential problems. I told N. her mother was beautiful. Then N. turned silent and did not utter a word for several awkward minutes. I broke the silence to inquire what she wants to be when she is a grown-up. ‘Anything,’ she first replied. ‘Anything and whatever,’ she repeated. Moments later she corrected herself: ‘I want to sail the ocean! I want to find the remains of the Titanic! I want to move to America!’ (September 7, 2012).

Appreciating the role of parents, against what N. and her peers would hear in their school, and complimenting them on the least expected qualities, whether parents’ appearance or girls’ make-up, were small steps that I took towards forging a relationship that departed from the usual unequal treatment Roma were used to by non-Roma.

On the surface, N.’s behavior, it seemed to me, was that of shame and embarrassment. However, when put into context, it can be interpreted as a reaction to the negative treatment N. faces – I felt that she expected me (and majority society more generally) to see her mother as “fat and ugly.” On another occasion I believed she similarly tried to hush and dismiss her many siblings in my presence, murmuring something about the great number of children in the family. Once again, I interpreted her behavior as her way of noticeably acting upon the common stereotype of large Roma families that she had likely heard in school, media, and other sources, and learned to feel guilty about. In the privacy of her home, as I learned from my Roma associate and later witnessed myself, she was a caring daughter and sister.

My presence as a non-Roma researcher seemed to provoke shame among my informants in being Roma on several other occasions as well. Another striking example was between two adult men in the community. None of the Roma men knew me; I felt I merely embodied a non-Roma outsider for them:

Two Roma men were sitting in the charity and took out their cell phones immediately when I came in. I felt like I interrupted something and felt awkward that my presence provoked discomfort. The two men started talking, occasionally looking at me, accentuating my presence:

Man 1: [says something in Romani]

Man 2: [very uncomfortably responds, looking periodically at me and noticing my presence]
Talk like a normal person, come on! Who is a Gypsy here?! Not me!

Man 1: Neither am I! I was made by Turks and Russians [laughs]. I am a little bit of a Jew as well, which is why I think whether I should steal or bargain at the market!

[Both laugh.] (August 31, 2012).

This short exchange was rather telling – the presence of a non-Roma (i.e., me) seemed to make the Romani language appear embarrassing. Indeed, in my previous research about Roma youth welfare and Romani language, my colleague and I found that the Romani language in Hungary is seen popularly as an obstacle for advancement and academic achievements (Dunajeva and Tidrick 2015, 14–15). Meanwhile, empirical evidence conducted among Roma children in Hungary proves the contrary, that is, that Romani language is not a barrier to academic achievement (Derdák and Varga 1996).

On another occasion, a discussion about discrimination provoked strong feelings towards non-Roma, as a representative of the dominant group:

I asked an older Romani woman about her experience before regime change and whether her life improved now. To the question whether the situation will change in the future, she replied: 'No, it will only get worse! There won't be any jobs and if there will be, not for us [Gypsies]'. She became increasingly agitated and insisted on sharing an example, about her family member who is a qualified butcher and yet doesn't have a job: 'If you are a Gypsy, the job is filled,' she complained, 'even if you want to work.' As the only non-Roma in the room, she addressed her last grievance to me, with her voice raised, frowning her eyebrows: 'I don't know what the future brings... Of course Gypsies are to blame as well, but let's consider the example of criminality: if I steal a chicken, I get 5 years in prison. If you embezzle 5 million forints, you get what? Maybe you get suspended. But you stole as well! And here is where there is the biggest difference between us [Roma and non-Roma]!' (October 9, 2013).

Keenly aware of the injustices, I interpreted this woman's behavior as pointing out how structural racism in Hungary perpetuates inequality in the criminal justice system and beyond. Also, this woman seemed to notably shift our attention from Roma, seen as the oppressed, to non-Roma, who are not only the oppressors, but also due to their unearned privilege of whiteness, are allowed to carry on with little or no punishment, even for grave offences. This attitude also highlighted that ethical considerations in research, where whiteness and ethnocentrism are generally taken for granted; we can no longer suspend "the ethical" in our dealings with the "other" and must liberate the "truth" from its unexamined Eurocentric and Orientalist presuppositions" (Scheper-Hughes 1995, 409).

In summary, these instances highlighted the importance of embedding research findings in the realities of the group in order to untangle the messages conveyed. It is also important to note that within this small settlement, most issues – e.g., discrimination, Roma-non-Roma relations – were not perceived the same way by all Roma respondents. Contextualizing therefore had to be done on an individual basis. It was apparent that Roma must not only speak for themselves, but it is also important to fully appreciate the underlying capacity, constraints, and conditions in the act of speaking itself.

Conclusion

In summary, this study strove to analyze interactions and power dynamics between the researcher and the informant(s) during research. Even though interpretivist methodology is sensitive to meaning and the constructed nature of realities, researchers must still be sensitive to the asymmetries of power in the context of interactions, in this case between the Roma minority and non-Roma researcher. To this end, I explored the power asymmetries that exist between Roma and the (non-Roma dominated) institutions (e.g., charity and the school), as well as Roma and various individuals (e.g., institutional actors, non-Roma researcher, members of the dominant society).

Giving voice to marginalized communities is important, and while other researchers may have acknowledged this responsibility as well, the ethically appropriate ways of doing so remain obscure.

Indeed, it is critical to consider the deeply rooted forms of oppression, power dynamics, and social hierarchies that define the context in which “talking back” (hooks 1989) takes place. Researchers’ task is also to contextualize verbal and non-verbal communication in their efforts to interpret findings. In this study, which was limited to one particular settlement in Hungary, I considered the network of actors (institutions, groups, and individuals) in order to lay out the power hierarchies dominant in the field site. I showed that Roma often were pitied, shamed, and infantilized; subsequently, I found traces of this treatment during my interactions with them as well.

This type of treatment continuously reinforced the position of Roma as the subaltern group. Negative messages tend to be internalized and reflected during interactions between informants and researcher. The relationship between the researcher vis-à-vis the researched group given the power asymmetries is, however, not fixed and fully determined; there may in fact be ways to renegotiate existing hierarchies of power. In relation to my fieldwork, means of power renegotiation included showing trust to Roma who were otherwise treated with distrust (e.g., sharing my camera with the children/youth); appreciation of the roles parents play even if school teachers and society at large treat them as part of the problem; engaging in the same activities as informants (play table football and other games); opening up so that the researcher learns about informants while they can learn about the researcher as well.

Importantly, just like the category “Roma” is not homogeneous, and group members react differently to societal discrimination (e.g., some internalize while others resist discriminatory messages), similarly non-Roma members may either perpetuate or instead strive to renegotiate these existing hierarchies. The researcher could take up the latter role, striving to form equal relationships with the Roma informants in an effort to include Roma in the research process and produce more accurate findings. Since vulnerable groups tend to be marginalized and discriminated against in mainstream society, if silenced during research and the phase of knowledge-production, such groups experience *cumulative exclusion* as a result. There is no doubt that fieldwork as a research method has a tremendous range of responsibilities and ethical questions to consider.

With this article I also wished to contribute to the advancement of interpretivist methods in elucidating the possible challenges hidden in the relationship between the researcher and informants, with consideration of power asymmetries between the two. Beyond the importance of self-reflexivity on the researcher’s part, the researcher must carefully identify the factors (e.g., institutions, groups, historical factors, media, and alike) that define the relationship between the researcher and informants. This awareness, in turn, will help to contextualize findings in order to construct more accurate knowledge of important social issues.

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Decolonizing the Arts: A Genealogy of Romani Stereotypes in the Louvre and Prado Collections

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Critical
Romani Studies

Abstract

Knowledge producers of Romani ethnicity, like the people to whom they belong, both inside and outside normative frameworks governing development modes and the transmission of knowledge, are hampered profoundly by three fundamental ethical credentials of being: the power to say, the power to act, and the power to collect their own lives into a comprehensible and acceptable story. Due to an historical process of epistemological alienation which appeared with the Enlightenment, it has been impossible for Romani subjects to have as their duty, their responsibility to the world, the power to act.

Through a “Foucauldian archaeology” on Romani iconography in the Louvre and Prado collections, and using as a methodological presupposition historical and epistemological decolonial thought, this paper will try to advance the understanding of the genealogy of abnormativity by referring to the study of the Romani motif in the arts.

The analysis of the pictographic treatment allows us to understand how those “topoi” responded to religious, ethical-moral, and geopolitical imperatives of majority society in a dialectic that oscillates between formal presence and ontological absence from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. The arrival of the Roma in fifteenth-century Europe, in full epistemological *caesura*, between a dying hermeneutic age and the age of the nascent *cogito*, conditions a radical change in the consideration of Romani alterity. Indeed, this alteration of the Romani alterity experience by mainstream societies constitutes a paradigmatic example of epistemicidiary structural dynamics and idiomicidiaries born of the slime of “historical modernity.”

Keywords

- Epistemology of Art
- Romani iconography
- Romani history
- Decoloniality
- Alterity and exteriority
- Louvre museum
- Prado museum

Introduction

Despite being absent from accounts of national histories in which they have played a part since the nineteenth century in Europe, various Romani groups were at the heart of geopolitical affairs during their centuries-long migration from the East to Western Europe. Historiography has treated them like free radicals, outside the world and outside history, despite their valuable contributions as disseminators of knowledge and reflectors of external points of view. Alleged specialists in Romani Studies and experts of all kinds have appropriated the “subject” in order to make them their “object,” a treatment that ranges from the entomological to the cultural via a dignified vision at the climax of colonialism in the nineteenth century. Roma, Bohemians, Gypsies, *Tsiganes*, and Travellers are also creations and motifs. An analysis of two of the most prestigious and political European art collections as a means of decrypting the connections that create the structure for today’s Romaphobia and antigypsyism serves as an enriching experience in historical epistemology.

Works have been produced using contradictory projections and artistic motifs *par excellence*. Since Roma began to live among mainstream societies, these depictions have not ceased projecting the mysteries, fantasies, and fears of the latter in the performing arts, literature, and the collective imagination. At the Louvre in Paris and the Prado in Madrid, they have been depicted by the greatest masters of European painting. Here, Roma are seen every day by thousands of people without even being noticed. Even if a visitor were to seek out and glimpse the realities of Romani people in these two collections, it would be impossible to experience either the power or the vulnerability of their Otherness.

Thirteen works are listed in this article, thus creating for the first time a complete catalogue of depictions of the people whom we now know as Roma, Manouches, and Kale, whether travelling or settled, in the two most important collections in France and Spain. The items show the way in which pictorial representations of Roma have evolved, each time in response to social, moral, ethical, and geopolitical necessity among majority societies and in a dialectic that oscillates between presence and absence. In fact, the works in both the Louvre and at the Prado collections shift from a religious and moral treatment in the fifteenth century to a political treatment in the nineteenth century that finishes by Orientalizing Roma. From Raphael to Goya, Bosch to Niccolò dell’Abate via Caravaggio, Bourdon, Brueghel, Jan van de Venne, Madrazo y Gareta, Navez, and Corot, disembodiment is a common leitmotif. There are only a few works that escape this logic, thus giving us a paradigm to decipher.

Depictions of the Romani body and of Romani attributes, whether real or imagined, serve majority societies. Their appearance in Western Europe in the fifteenth century, as a full epistemological *caesura* between the waning age of interpretation and the embryonic age of *cogito*, influences a certain relationship with Otherness. Whether hermeneutical or allegorical figures of vice, seduction, or even embryonic nation-states, it is the ontological absence of Roma that is highlighted by the Louvre’s and the Prado’s pictorial lists, and this clarifies the relationship that the European power apparatus maintains with this minority.

While until the sixteenth century Romani dress and regalia were used *inter alia* to portray biblical figures known for their hermeneutic and prophetic gifts, from the second half of the sixteenth century,

and especially with the repeated use of the fortuneteller by Caravaggio and his followers, the images of Bohemians, Gypsies, or *Tsigane* gradually turned into incarnations of vice, theft, and alienating exteriority. Later, when Romanticism and then Orientalism emerged as systems of thought and representation, revealing how the West perceived the Other, the Romani figure became sexualized and the female body objectified. What was previously fantasy or even the reviled norm became the reference through “de-ethnicization”. Cultural appropriation, which different Romani groups remain victims of today, was already in the making.

Epistemology and hermeneutics are words which, from the point of view of the philosophy of ideas, help us comprehend the involvement of Romani Otherness in the very construction of the alterity/exteriority dialectic in Europe, and one must refer to the philosophy of perception in order to appreciate the issues at play in this study. In the Prado, as in the Louvre, it is just a matter of perception.

Perception is how we form a sensitive representation of everything around us. It is neither sensation (a direct impression on the senses) nor imagination (through which we (re-)compose our sensations). In perception the reception of an external stimulus connects with our mental representation of it. Interpretation and language play a major role here: the subject perceives and interprets in a space defined by their history and culture. The artist perceives, as does the society in which they live, and the person contemplating the work is the receptacle of this paradigm. When the perceiving subject is the person looking at an image that purports to reflect who that person is, when in fact it may be nothing but a reflection in a deforming mirror, the dismay it causes is such that the subject concerned has little choice: to accept and assimilate the proposed figure or to deconstruct, from a genealogical perspective, the epistemic logics of the destruction of meaning and knowledge behind the formation of the image concerned (Didi-Huberman 1992).

Those who produce art have an ethical responsibility to Otherness. The history of the fabrication of radical exteriority by the arts is a paradigm for the relationship to the Otherness maintained by majority societies from the fifteenth century to the present. The plastic artist shapes the motif, the writer creates the *topos*, and the power structures transform them into *schemes* (imaginary representations). At the very end of this process history is responsible for crystallizing them into stereotypes (see, for example, Jacob Rogozinsky).

Romani people, in their intrinsic pluralism – yet hampered by the “three fundamental ethical powers of being,” namely the power of speech, the power of action, and the power of organizing one’s own life into an intelligible, acceptable narrative – are actually excluded from their “payment obligations,” from their responsibility to the world, and also to a great extent from their power to act (see, for example, Paul Ricœur 1950). For Roma Others who are regarded as radical exteriority and who are treated as the wretched of “the wretched of the Earth” (Fanon 1961), there is no choice but to accept that they will only be emancipated, whether socially or intellectually, if the philosophical injunctions of Paul Ricœur do not become a foregone conclusion (Ricœur 1950). Our analysis and decoding of the Prado’s and the Louvre’s collections show that, beyond perception, the subjects-objects represented today are capable of surmounting the representation that has been built up and proposed throughout history by using the fundamental powers of being: the power to say, to act, to tell, and to which we must add imputability and promise (*ibid.*).

Access to the Other ideally is ethical from the start. It is the radical alterity that is manifest in the face of the Other. Neither master nor slave, the Other is a blessing. For Levinas, the face of the Other is urgency, “immemoriality” and “unbearability” all at once.¹ The ethical signification of the face is founded in the sentimental immediacy of access to the Other, where it is urgent to listen to the Other. Defining and knowing the Other is left for later. The Other is also immemorial in its ethical intrigue. As Levinas (1972) remarks, “The Other, I have always met him.” The precarity and the power of the Other are an upheaval that has always marked the subjectivity of the individual. The Other is simply the most human subjectivity, that which contains the Other in me. “Unbearability,” another of Levinas’s neologisms, thus lies in the death of the Other. To look at the Other’s face is to look at him under threat of death. The Other is less than a phenomenon because it is disappearing. So the face is ethical. It is not to be examined through the prism of sensitivity but through that of sensitivity that has passed through the filter of sentiment, where Otherness takes on the dual meaning of distress and teaching.

1. Hermeneutic Figure of the Interpreter and the Annunciator

There is no denying the importance of sixteenth and seventeenth century paintings from the Flemish and Italian collections of the museums in this story. They include works by Northern and Italian Renaissance masters such as Hieronymus Bosch, Joachim Patinir, Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Raphael and Giulio Romano. Beyond the artistic interest of the Roma theme in the paintings of these great masters, this predominance of sixteenth and seventeenth century works also raises the question of the use of this theme at a very precise moment in the history of European thought, a moment that would mark it up to this very day: the passage of time between mediaeval hermeneutics and the Age of Reason.

Before this internal otherness that comprises the Rom, Sinto and Kalo groups became fixed in the European imagination as a stereotype, culminating in their deterioration into Egyptians or Bohemians. These strangers from “little Egypt,” as they were called in the chronicles of the late Middle Ages and who are a recurring presence in Western Europe from the fifteenth century onwards, are first and foremost assimilated into three of the main archetypal figures of medieval Western culture:

- biblical Egypt and the figure of the exile (mobility), linked to the world of the Old Testament;
- the hermeneutist female figures of the New Testament;
- the nursing mother related to telluric forces.

The earliest representation of this *topos* appeared in the *Triptych of the Glorious Virgin*, an anonymous Flemish tapestry dating from the end of the fifteenth century and exhibited at the Louvre Museum. The central panel depicts the Glorious Virgin, crowned by two angels. The panel on the right shows Christ

1 Author’s translation from “Imémoriabilité” et “insupportabilité” in *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, by Emmanuel Levinas, Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971.

healing a sick man, while the panel on the left, the one in which we are interested, shows a scene from the Old Testament, namely that of Moses making the water spring from the rock during the flight of the Hebrews from Egypt. A woman, who is accompanied by a child, is dressed and styled in the manner of Gypsies of the time and has a baby at her breast. Why has the artist incorporated a Hebrew woman dressed in the style of fifteenth-century Gypsies into this religious work?

By the end of the fourteenth century, Romani people had been in Europe for some decades, and even up to a century in some areas. At that time, like the Hebrews fleeing persecution, the Roma are also a people on the move. Historical sources from the period suggest that their roaming was atonement for having renounced their faith in Christ when under Turkish rule. Moreover, everything relating to Egypt was considered to be magical and mysterious but without any negative connotations at that time. If there had been any, the woman in the panel would not have appeared in this Biblical scene. Finally, the woman who is dressed in the style of a Roma woman is holding a baby in the crook of her left arm. She appears to be nursing. This figure of the ontologically loving mother is the only connotation-free common theme in the development of Roma femininity from the chronicles of the late Middle Ages through to the poetry of the nineteenth century.

Another example of an Old Testament's figure reinvestment is present in the preparatory drawing for *Moses Saved from the Water* by Niccolo dell'Abate (Louvre 1539). The subject of this drawing is an episode from the Old Testament, taken from the Book of Exodus. Several scenes are depicted. The Pharaoh's daughter can be seen in the foreground, pointing to Moses in his basket. She is accompanied by some other women. A woman can be seen picking up the same basket or entrusting it to the rough waters of the river in the background, and even farther away some people can be seen on the river bank, as well as a suggestion of drowning. The Pharaoh's daughter's hair is coiled in a voluminous, circular style and tied up with bands or "bern" in the Romani language, in a manner characteristic of Romani women in the late Middle Ages and early modern period (Vaux de Foletier 1966). This voluminous, coiled hairstyle is typical of Romani women of the period in which the painter produced the drawing that it becomes a feature of Egyptian women. Here, a Romani attribute indicates the Egyptian origin of the people depicted.

The second phase of a spiritual treatment of the Romani presence in art is used through the hermeneutic figure of the interpreter and the annunciator, proposed by Raphael in his *Great Holy Family* (Louvre) and its corollary by Giulio Romano, *Little Holy Family* (Louvre) in the person of Saint Elisabeth, mother of Saint John the Baptist and annunciator of the coming and the death of Jesus Christ, dressed in the manner of the Gypsies of that era. It is also present in *The Holy Family* aka *La Perla* by Raphael (Prado 1518) and in *The Visitation*, a joint work by Giulio Romano, Giovanni Penni, and Raphael (Prado 1517), both of which display a positively connoted, hermeneutic interpretation of the female Roma figure.

In *The Visitation* by Romano, Penni, and Raphael, in a pyramid composition, we see a pregnant Mary with her cousin, Saint Elisabeth, whose features are those of an old woman. Behind them a landscape, and some way off, as if announcing Jesus' sacrifice, the scene of Christ being baptized by Saint John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Saint Elisabeth's hair is bound up in a turban in the Romani fashion of the day. As the mother of Saint John the Baptist, she is enigmatic, an annunciator, a hermeneutic, and as such she is portrayed with the attributes of a Gypsy woman. It should be noted that St. Elisabeth has a serious

expression. She knows the sacrifices and suffering that her son and Jesus will endure for their faith. St. Elizabeth has the power to see into the future, just as Roma women of the time were thought to do, and she is depicted with a dull complexion and more angular features. In many other scenes from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we find female figures like Saint Anne as well as images of the Virgin and child dressed in a similar way or wearing a flat round hat also characteristic of Bohemian women. This is the case in some of the works of Boccaccio, Dell'Abate, Correggio, Ansaldo, Mantegna, or Titian.

Medieval society was undergoing a transformation at that time, preparing to go through what Michel Foucault (1966) has called an epistemological *caesura*: a fundamental, structuring transition between a human being in a world conceived of through the prism of hermeneutics and interpretation (in which the ontological Roma figure could be the paradigm) and a modern society modelled on reason and *cogito*. It is in this *caesura* that Roma appear and throw a spanner in the works. Between two worlds, Oriental and Occidental, between two historical milestones, the Middle Ages and the modern period, the figure of the Rom, known by the majority societies of the time with exonyms such as *Egyptian*, *Saracen*, *Bohemian*, or even *Tatar*, shifts over the course of a few generations from otherness (from a mirrored relationship with the Other) to exteriority, imposed by the advent of normativity.

Over a few decades, a radical shift occurred in the symbolic and artistic representation of Romani individuality. In fact, around 1500, the great Egyptian companies were chased out of the towns and cities, and derogatory clichés took deep root in the pictorial treatment of Roma populations. Those who quite rightly had been considered as hermeneutists, interpreters, and disseminators of knowledge were turned into necromancers, sorcerers, cowards, child eaters, poisoners, and thieves. Through these works, we can see how magic ceases to be prophetic and sibylline, and comes to embody dupery, ugliness, vice, and theft.

The advent of reason demands the domestication of the Other. When this domestication cannot be fully attained, the Other must be banished outside the boundaries of the self, the structuring norms. The Other must be made into an outsider, and sometimes one that is so distressing that it must be exposed in an instructing way in order to be controlled. The allegory of vice and deception, the embodiment of the deceived deceiver, these are the images projected onto Romani people, and especially Roma women. As if it were a receptacle for the fear and fascination of the majority, the manufactured idea of the Romani *topos* mutates repeatedly and forever.

2. The Epistemological Crossroads

Bosch's work perfectly illustrates a profound change in how both artists and their audiences consider the margins. Bosch lies at the epistemological crossroads (*ibid.*). He associates sin, madness, idiocy, and reprehensible behavior with a large group of people, those who live on the margins.

If reason and formalism characterize his pictorial synthesis of his era, on the border between the Middle Ages and the Modern Era, one thing ties the artist to the Mediaeval era in spite of the vehemence he displays against the popular classes. His lack of regard for the lesser culture of his time notwithstanding, Hieronymus Bosch was influenced strongly by folklore: customs, rituals, and celebrations, symbolic

objects, popular proverbs, and metaphors. There lies Bosch's paradox, a constant tension between harsh criticism of popular culture and his almost systematic use of references emanating from the people.

The *Haywain Triptych* (Prado 1512–15) reflects the mental, ideological, and religious configuration of this pivotal period in the history of thought when the Romani figure first appeared in everyday European life (Vandenbroeck 2016). The *Haywain* is a moralistic allegory, a biblical metaphor for the fleeting, mortal nature of earthly things. Open, the triptych is about sin. The central panel, the main scene, is a mirror that features a hay wagon, the panel on the left shows paradise, while the one on the right depicts hell. When closed, these two panels represent *homo viator*, the wayfarer, the traveler, making his way through life.

Man, regardless of social class or place of origin, is full of desire to acquire and enjoy material possessions and is seduced and deceived by the Demon in doing so. The artist's message is meant to encourage us to forego earthly goods and pleasures in order to avoid eternal damnation, for humankind is corrupted by sin. The hay wagon, which symbolizes wealth, honors, and pleasures among others, trundles towards the granary, drawn by seven monsters symbolizing the seven deadly sins.

Underneath, in the foreground of the central panel and for the purposes of this analysis, we are particularly interested in a child who leads a blind man by the hand, a reference to the tradition of the picaresque Spanish novel, a clear sign of the circulation of ideas and themes towards the end of the Middle Ages. To their right, two Gypsy women, outsiders and mistrusted, recognizable by their dark complexions, their wide, round hats, and their shawls, are purposely placed in the center of the picture.^[2] One is taking the hand of a young, pale-skinned lady whose fine clothes tell us she is of noble stock. So the Gypsy woman is a fortuneteller, an activity frowned on by the Church. She holds a baby against her breast, tucked inside the fold of her robe, while another, bare-legged child reaches out to touch the rich woman's dress. The other Gypsy woman sits on the ground, busy washing the bottom of a baby lying across her lap, using water from a bowl on the ground beside her. Behind her are a jug, a pig, something roasting on a spit, and a dog. In his portrayal of Roma abnormality through the two female figures, bearing in mind that witch-hunting was rife in sixteenth-century Flanders (Ginzburg 1992), Bosch was unable to resist an ancient and recurrent trait attributed to Roma women, that of the loving mother, in a rather wild but nevertheless non-threatening natural setting.

Another paradox further complicates our understanding of Bosch's universe through the prism of this epistemological *caesura*. He condemns marginality while formally paying tribute to it. The reverse side of the triptych depicts a wayfarer, the only lower-class vagabond considered with benevolence in the iconography of Hieronymus Bosch. An old traveler, bent under the weight of his load, fends off a growling dog with his cudgel. He is a good man, looking back over the years. But what he sees is robbery, violence, and the punishment that awaits the people of little faith portrayed inside the polyptych.

The codification of Bosch's art, however, is such that it can appear complex and hermetic to our eyes. But the moral system he illustrates is at once rationalistic and formalistic. Bosch's work is certainly one

2 Turbans and flat round hats were typical Gypsy dress at the time, as was wearing a coarse shawl draped over the shoulder.

of the best vectors for appreciating the importance of contextualization and interdisciplinarity, the only methodological key to understanding the references and worldview of an era and its episteme.

3. The Shift from Alterity to Exteriority: From Hermeneutists to Fortunetellers

If Raphael's Saint Elizabeth, who is depicted as a Romni/Egyptian, is a sacred evocation of the proclamation of Christ's future sacrifice – a profane image – then it becomes a recurring theme for Caravaggio and European Caravaggesques. Fortunetellers, as negative allegories of vice and of moral marginality, crystallize the artistic and social representation of Roma women. Caravaggesque fortunetellers and others before them tell us about the ancient nature of depictions of Roma women as predictors of the future and mistresses of the “Black arts.”

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, the theme of the fortuneteller took center stage. The Gypsy and the naïve customer, accompanied in some cases by drinkers, musicians, and people of easy virtue, are recurring themes in all the studios of Europe (for example, *The Fortune Teller* by Le Valentin, 1628; *Meeting at a Cabaret*, 1625; *The Fortune Teller* by Nicolas Régnier, 1626). This iconographic archetype was not created by Caravaggio alone. It can already be found some decades earlier, for instance, in the *Haywain Triptych* by Jérôme Bosch mentioned above. However, as it became a school and spread internationally, the Caravaggesque motif removed the fortune teller from her complexity and the richness of her world, isolating her and turning her to an allegorical representation of immorality.

Caravaggio and the Caravaggesques crystallized and disseminated an artistic and moral motif on an international scale. Some of them projected the same moral vices, namely theft, dupery and lechery, with each of them incorporating particular features. In the case of *The Fortune Teller* by Nicolas Régnier, the motif is strongly eroticized (Lemoine 2007). It embodies the beginning of the Orientalist view of Gypsy women, forged by fascination, fear, and fantasy. Caravaggio's *Fortune Teller* (Louvre 1595–98) portrays two young people with strangely similar faces: a young Romani woman on the left and a young aristocratic man on the right, who can be recognized as such by his clothes, hat, gloves, and épée. Caravaggio set the scene by only one plane in this picture. The framing is cropped. The figures are shown from the waist up. The framing and the background, with no ornamentation or detail, block the composition and bring the scene towards the viewer, who becomes the witness. The people are positioned face to face. The expression and smile on the young woman's face support those of the man and are intensified by their matching faces. The fortuneteller is taking the young man's hand in order to read it. The position of her fingers, with the index finger on the young man's ring finger, with his ring visible, suggests that she is going to steal his jewelry. Her hairstyle (long turban) and cape (piece of thick fabric attached to the shoulder) are typical of Romani dress of the period.

4. Nationalization, Marginal Nature, Military Presence, and Disembodiment

Together, historical modernity and the age of *cogito* push a key figure of hermeneutics to the side by means of the figure of the female Gypsy. It is this exteriority that will be developed using the motif of the fortuneteller. However, as a pictorial response to this epistemological *caesura*, about halfway through the seventeenth century, and in correspondence with the nation-state concept emerging from the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, the racialized figure of the Bohemian is eclipsed gradually.

As the concept of the nation-state is consolidated by the end of the eighteenth century, all European countries test an identical process for defining the nation, with some gaining self-belief and thus their colonial enterprises. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were no doubt among the most terrifying centuries for Romani peoples. The political animosity towards them reached a climax. A multitude of different anti-Gypsy laws all around Europe were a prelude to what would be the first genocidal episode in their history that culminated in the Black Wednesday of July 30, 1749: the Great Gypsy Round-up in Spain (Gomez Alfaro 1992).

The emergence of market capitalism, the invention of printing, and the birth of vernacular languages as instruments of administrative centralization are three key elements in the construction of majority national identities (Anderson 1983). An exhaustive study mirroring these three elements – completely contrary to the pre-modern and modern economic practices of Roma – linked to circulation, orality, and the multilingual nature of Roma – would be of decisive importance for understanding the construction of a Romani *abnormality* by majority societies.

Nevertheless, Romani reality has occupied an undeniable place in European nationalist constructs. The abnormality of the inside that they already embodied had a mirror effect on the normative frameworks on which such nationalism was structured. That is why there is unity in the use of Romani motifs for national iconography. European artists of the seventeenth century mainly used Romani *topoi* in their new fashion-style paintings, the genre painting. The formula proved to be a great success, and it was practiced by numerous European painters, including Frenchmen such as Sébastien Bourdon, whose works are particularly interesting: *Soldiers at Rest*, renamed *Gypsies at Rest* (Louvre 1640–43), and *Travellers Beneath the Ruins* (Louvre 1642–43). Another example is Dutchman Jan Miel and his *Military Resting with a Fortune Teller* (Louvre 1648–50).

The works by Bourdon can be interpreted, like those by Miel, from another angle than the genre painting. These three works show day-to-day Romani life from a military perspective. This is a fundamental point because the history of the Romani people has been linked to geopolitics and military conflicts in the East and in the West since their departure from India at the start of the first millennium. Military and mercenary activity is a constant in Romani proto-history and history (Carmona 2013). This anchoring of Romani identity in warmongering and European geopolitical history allows the Romani movement to be conditioned initially by seigniorial wars and subsequently by national wars (Carmona 2017).

In *Soldiers at Rest*, renamed *Gypsies at Rest*, seven people are portrayed in the picture. There are some women, one of whom is feeding a baby, as well as children and men resting under an improvised tent. Some of the men are armed, and there are some other weapons placed on the ground. There is an armed man on an exhausted horse, viewed from behind, who appears to be addressing them. The scene takes place outside. There are ruins visible that are evocative of Antiquity, a cave, and a distant landscape. Bourdon used a mineral, metallic palette, highlighted by the red of the cavalryman's cape and the blue of the skirt on the young girl who is feeding a child. In works of this kind and at this time, European painters created what art historians named a "Bohemian setting" (Thuillier 2000). Small groups of Gypsies, often armed, resting or marching, occupy typical places such as caves or forests. Makeshift camps and this marginal yet nurturing geography underline the free nature of Romani populations in the imagination of society and of the artist. During this era, the figure of the young Gypsy girl feeding a child comes to be established as an allegory of natural freedom, a freedom that forms part of an idealized natural setting, as opposed to a society bound by strict rules and social codes.

Since their arrival in Europe in the fourteenth century, the main activities engaged in by Romani groups, and probably also their movements, were motivated by the military conflicts of the time (the Alpujarras War in Spain, the War of Spanish Succession, the French Wars of Religion, and the Franco-Flemish wars). Great companies and then more fragmented groups went to serve in the armies, the men often as mercenaries, blacksmiths, horse traders, and musicians, and the women as washerwomen and cooks.

The seventeenth century was a turning point in the history of Romani people in Europe. Military activities were an important factor in the structure of Romani society at that time. For nearly two centuries, Romani people had moved around the territory of nation-states by founding "Bohemian companies" that offered their services to seigniorial troops. Despite the incessant wars taking place in Europe, the seventeenth century marked the end of these great companies owing to national centralization policies and the passing of declarations, edicts, and legal texts against Romani populations, resulting in their being condemned to the galleys or institutions for vagrancy for their refusal to abandon their dress, language, and traditions.

Progressively the Romani exteriority undergoes a different sort of treatment. The Romani motif is idealized and becomes an allegory, but this time embodying telluric power through a politicized representation of nature owing to the advent of nationalism. Henceforth, Romani exteriority will be depicted and expressed in marginal natural landscapes and used by artists as a symbolic way of furthering the advent of nation-states.

In this entirely disembodied iconographic creation, the Romani model typically is placed in a marginal geography. If the nature of the century of Enlightenment is part of the exteriority in which marginal groups are entrenched, then the abstract idea of nature is a critical tool as well as being the foundation of the new order that this exteriority seeks. It is an object of study, but it is also a nature that is subject to norms and categories, subdued, a nature that is tamable and tamed.

In *Gathering of Gypsies in the Wood* by Jan Brueghel the Elder (Prado 1612), the Flemish master's special treatment of landscape is apparent (Prosperetti 2008; Museo Nacional del Prado 2011). The views are panoramic and mountainous, the forests are dense, and the realism of the whole is the result of his

meticulous touch and of great technical quality. The diagonal line of the mountainside divides the picture in two parts. On the left a wide landscape bathed in misty light opens up in the distance, with tiny dwellings here and there. On the right, in darker hues, a path opens up in the middle of a forest. A group of Gypsies is driving a small caravan of horses and mules. A seated woman wearing a flat, round hat and draped in a Marian blue robe holds a baby in her arms and appears to be talking to an older woman. A third woman, in an ochre robe, is talking to the man leading the mules, who is wearing a sword or dagger on his left hip. The rest of the company follow with the horses and mules. If you look carefully, you will see that all the men are armed. This whole scene is at odds with the laws in force in Europe at the time, which barred Gypsies from carrying weapons, travelling, and trading in livestock.

Nature in the century of Enlightenment is a constituent element of the exteriority in which certain marginal groups are entrenched, the abstract idea of nature is a critical tool for establishing the new order that this exteriority is looking for. It is an object of study. However, it is a nature that is subject to norms, categories, topics, a nature that is tamable and tamed. Nevertheless, this highlighting of nature and of things like man gradually provides an idealized, normative representation. The Romani exteriority and its relationship to nature cannot be represented there without a filter. Their relationship is a disembodied one there too. It is within this very relationship that the anchoring of embryonic European nationalism, Romanticism and Orientalism are rooted.

If nature is presented in *Landscape with Gypsies* by David Teniers III (1641–45) as it is by Brueghel the Elder in *Gathering of Gypsies in the Wood*, if both contrast nature (on the left) and culture (on the right), the figure of the Gypsy portrayed there has lost its substance and its panache. The characters, whose ragged clothes are bathed in light, seem physically less ethnicized and are placed on the paths like figurines. At the foot of a rocky landscape bordering a road, three Gypsies and a child – boy or girl we do not know – wait as an old woman tells a peasant’s fortune. At the entrance to the village, where the house facades seem to form an impenetrable barrier between two adjoining worlds, three other figures observe the scene.

A Dutch artist from this era, Jan van de Venne, also known as the “Master of the Gypsies,” must also be given due consideration. His pictographic treatment of the Romani figure stands out owing to a deep personal empathy with the status of his models yet showing a certain respect for the humble, noble characters. *The Gypsy Camp* (1631–1651) is a small picture, slightly larger than a tablet screen today. The painting captures a scene of everyday Romani life at the time: a younger woman delouses a child by a fire on which an old woman is preparing a meal, while a third woman watches. It takes place outside or possibly in a cave, as could be indicated by the rocky ground and the top-right corner of the picture. The artist has depicted the people in this scene in a very lively, quasi-realistic way, and the three women are representative of three stages of life. The light and the faded brown shades make the scene come alive and create movement.

Van de Venne gives us a very special view of Roma women for the time. Of course, they are depicted in a natural setting typical of the seventeenth century. However, it is a view that contains fewer stereotypes than those of other contemporary artists. Despite the poverty of these women they are depicted as dignified, loving, and attentive people.

5. Costumed Figures, Fusion, and Cultural Appropriation

From the eighteenth century onwards, the vast majority of Romani figures were costumed in a marginal and constructed geography. In the *Gypsy Wedding Feast* by Alessandro Magnasco (1730–35), a wedding feast has been arranged. This picture fully embraces the idea of the gallant Bohemian and the vacillation between projection and reality. The characters are in tents. The scene comes alive with three musicians. Just as Frans Hall's *Gypsy Girl* (Louvre 1528–1530), a strange Dutch Caravagesque painting from two centuries earlier, nothing else than the title allows us to identify the characters or even to confirm that they are actually Romani. They are all simply made up, in a formal negation of otherness.

By the end of the eighteenth century the last descendants of the Jews and Moors ceased to be perceptible in Spain, but nothing of the sort happened to Gypsies. The national cultural, literary, and musical imagination shaped a series of identifying archetypes that would determine the popular representation of Spanish society. These were mainly the *majo*, the Gypsy, the *torero*, and the *payo cateto*. A hybrid aesthetic motif was created by the interpenetration of Romani identities with the *majo* and the *bandolero* (bandit or highwayman: an outlaw living mainly by robbery and smuggling) (Ruiz Mas 2008).

Majismo is a social phenomenon that emerged around the mid-eighteenth century, in Madrid in particular. It was the man in the street's response to the hegemony of French fashion, the scope of which would bring about a veritable reversal of social mimicry, with the wealthier social classes also adopting the style. In their dress and in changing their manner of speech, young people showed their total rejection of the influence of international fashion and a renewed interest in things popular. The *majismo* of Castile was echoed by the *gitanismo* of Andalusia. For instance, theatrical works by Antonio Guerrero, Esteve, Laserna, and Ramón de la Cruz painted Gypsies in a favorable light, sometimes even displaying a certain admiration, highlighting their honesty, their loyalty in love and their artistic talents. The Gypsy thus became a familiar figure, on a par with the *majo*. Originally appearing under the reign of Carlos III, this trend later became a fully-fledged movement in the nineteenth century that would be labelled “*costumbrismo*.” Well-to-do young adopted the postures, clothes, speech, manners, and customs of the Gypsies. This fondness towards them was also the result of a romantic interest in things marginal or, more precisely, anything which noble or bourgeois young people considered to lie outside the accepted norms and standards. Literature, the arts, and music all took up the trend.

Basque historian and essayist Julio Caro Baroja suggests the appearance of the Gypsy figure in Spanish theatre coincides with the rise of the tourist industry that began to cater to foreigners expecting picaresque experiences in Spain (Caro Baroja 1990). A catalyst for cultural appropriation, at the origin of Romanticism and subsequently Orientalism, economic interests appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that did very little to benefit the communities concerned. This is the cultural panorama in which Francisco de Goya y Lucientes produced his works.

The Prado houses over five hundred works by the artist. Superimposing the Andalusian theme with the treatment of the figure of the Gypsy, *majo*, and/or *bandolero* requires in-depth research in order to identify

those works where the Romani reference is best embodied. *The Maja and the Cloaked Men* or *A Walk in Andalusia* (1777) depicts a young lady meeting with her suitor, described by Goya as a “Gypsy man and woman” (*un jitano y una gitana*) in a thick pine forest where the perspective is cut off by an adobe wall. Men with masked faces and a vaguely threatening air about them seem to be accompanying and watching the couple while, in the background, on the right, a woman wearing a white veil and holding a fan seems to be observing both the characters in the scene and the people looking at the painting.

There are two things to notice here in addition to the veracity of the ethnic origin of the subjects. One is the opulence with which the clothing of the protagonists is treated, a perfect illustration of the importance attached in those days to the *majismo/gitanismo* aesthetic. Their clothes were reminiscent of the descriptions of Gypsy clothes already mentioned in sixteenth century archives in Europe.

In the foreground of the picture the position of the couple and the other figures is a mystery. Their close proximity suggests that the masked men might be watching over the couple. While the well-lit features of the Gypsy woman’s face are perfectly visible, and her expression, backed up by the movement of her hand, seems to be inviting the man to take her somewhere away from prying eyes, the cloaked, masked men are depicted in less direct light, against a background evocative of places frequented by *bandoleros* (dry tree branch, mineral elements in the adobe wall, the rock on which one of the men sits). Whether *majo*, Gypsy, or *bandolero*, in this period, and especially in Goya’s work, the models and their identities are hard to tell apart, and only their gaze reveals their singularity.

The other thing to notice in *The Maja and the Cloaked Men* or *A Walk in Andalusia* is the special relationship the artist develops between his characters, but also with the spectator, through their gazes, what is revealed and what is concealed in order better to be seen. If something is to be *visible*, it must be placed in sight of the seer. As Merleau-Ponty (1964) explains, in the beginning every being is subjected to *seeing*. With Lacanian logic he affirms that where form is instituted, the scopic field is formed. Lacan (1963) asserts that “in the scopic field the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say I am a picture.” Before seeing, we are given to be seen, everyone is observed in the spectacle of the world, by a gaze which is not shown to us. The conscience can only see if it sees itself being seen. Such is the fantasy of Platonic contemplation: that the quality of *omnividence* should be transferred to an absolute being. His gaze presents itself as a contingency: I am looked at, it is he who triggers my gaze. Which is where the feeling of strangeness begins.

In Goya’s painting the young Gypsy sees herself being observed by the gazes behind the masks or by us looking at the painting and observed by the figure wearing the white veil on the bottom right, who also appears to be external to the scene. It is this crossing of all the gazes that calls us and draws us into this picture, where the margins seem to come together as Gypsy, *majos*, or *bandoleros*, veiled woman, voyeur/onlooker, spectator. It is in the articulation of the abnormative relationship and aesthetic fascination that majority societies have with the margins that are sown the seeds of cultural appropriation, which is still at work today and perhaps more than ever before.

At the time, armed bands were in abundance in Italy as they were in Spain. They were often selected by painters because their Romantic spirit represented free men facing an immovable society. Repressive

measures against various Romani groups and their ways of life in Europe compelled them to leave the towns and cities and to embed themselves in the mountains and remote places where bandits and *bandoleros* developed and invested in an equally marginal nature. The subject is therefore treated by almost all of the young painters who went to Rome to complete their studies, but they are inspired by contemporary people.

François-Joseph Navez, whose *Scene of Bandits with a Fortune Teller* is on display at the Louvre, describes his picture in a letter addressed to his benefactor and friend on July 21, 1821: “I have finished a picture... It is a fortune teller with an extraordinary expression and tone.” The characters depicted in this work are models who were highly rated by artists of the time. The fortuneteller, “of venerable age, slightly tanned by the sun, with hard, rugged features,” is also represented in *The Old Italian Woman* by Géricault, *The Old Italian Woman* by Léon Cogniet, and in *The Childhood of Sixtus V* and *The Fortune Teller* by Victor.

6. Intra-European Orientalism. The Epistemicidal Power of Images and Words

It is difficult not to feel extremely sad when faced with *Zingara with a Basque Tambourine* by Camille Corot (Louvre 1865–70). An impenetrable melancholy overwhelms anyone who stops to look at this face. For some, it portrays the nostalgia of youth retranscribed by a painter whose death was near; the weight of seven centuries of epistemicide, in an absence, a total absence of being, which is nonetheless able to evoke something of the Romani people and of Romani women. This young model, who appears to be innocent and who is not really, this young girl whose tambourine is meant to ethnicize her, has the dignified eroticism of all the stereotypes of the French writer Prosper Mérimée relating to female Gypsies. There are no physical elements or clothing that allow us to do this. Only the title of the work and the tambourine that she is holding in her right hand allow us to come closer to this woman from the world of music, with which various Romani groups are often associated.

Within a Romantic setting, Orientalism is powerful for those who are willing to admit it. This young girl appears to be on the brink of whispering something, and it is in this silence charged with words to come that makes it possible to catch a glimpse of the Orientalizing relationship that the nineteenth century had with the Romani body, but also with Romani language and philology.

Conclusion

Beyond a genealogical and historical approach to Romaphobia and antigypsyism, the purpose of this study is to redefine the relationship between singularity and universality, a filigree present at the core of any situated study. In light of a realignment of thinking with regard to Romani identity, the singular and the universal are revisited by the Romani episteme. Far from being a modality, these two concepts can be totally reconsidered through the prism of this plural otherness.

Romaniness can only blossom in *pluriversality* (Dussel 1993), that is, through an augmented form of alienating universalism, alone capable of enabling exteriorities – these fermentations of power – to

express themselves to the full. To quote Paul Ricœur (1950), referring to Spinoza's theorem, "it is when the being is at its most singular that it is able to meet God," which is like referring to the universal in the language of the philosopher from Amsterdam.

In the history of philosophy, at least since Kant, the relationship between the universal and the singular has always been defined as a perfectibility on the horizon of truth. In that perfectibility on the horizon of truth, epistemes that have been minoritized or relegated to the limbo of exteriority, like the Roma episteme, find themselves isolated in the idea of particularism. Approaching the universal and the particular from a Romani standpoint requires a change of paradigm.

So the Romani episteme must not be considered as something determinate, a category of a heteronomic, dogmatic, outside law that needs to be folklorized or converted to correspond to this perfectibility, the horizon of truth that underpins Western philosophy. We must imagine another relationship between singularity and universality in order to re-enter the scope of the possible and move from universality to pluriversality. Romani singularity is not "particularism." It is the means to another universal, a universal reached in a different way.

But Romaniness also means another relationship with truth. This is no minor consideration in times when men and women from different Romani groups are subjected to denials of justice. Like many marginal epistemes, the Romani episteme considers the universal in its relationship with justice. Justice permits us to move and pierce the concept of truth. The perfectible is a means of relating to the history of truth, understood as a coming together, a unification, an origin, and based on the dominant philosophical tradition. All these ways of thinking have reduced Romaniness to a particularism, a particular determination. The answer to that is not, like the Romani intellectual emancipation movements have done thus far, to clamor that Roma and their intellectuals are equally capable of thinking the universal. Instead Romani intellectuals should be thinking about reformulating the relationship between singular and universal in a very different way. This reassessment also needs to take another paradigm into account, that of the multiple forms of Romaniness. The Romani being challenges the notion of identity, taking position outside the essentialism versus universalism dialectic. If we think of justice as something dissociated from truth, that makes justice the modality whereby singulars become multiples. It means calling on a significance other than that circumscribed by truth, which marks a fixed, determined identity. It means, on the contrary, questioning the significance of multiplicities as we do that of singularities.

Throughout this analysis, therefore, we have been talking not about truth but about justice. By justice we mean returning to the three powers cited by Paul Ricœur which we mentioned in the introduction: the power to say, to act, and to tell. Far from wanting to draw an illustrated historical genealogy of the expiatory victim as embodied in the Gypsy, Manouche, Sinto, and the Rom, the exercise proposed here requires an effort to make a differentiation among the typologies of rejection. Indeed, if the theory of the scapegoat focuses our thinking about rejection of the most extreme forms of violence, also suffered on numerous occasions by the different Romani groups (for example, the Great Round-up and the *Porrajmos*, the genocide perpetrated against the Roma during the Second World War), this focalization ignores the insidious violence of exclusion, stigmatization, hygienism, and internment which make such massacres and persecutions possible and does not take into account the machinery of power or the

fear of the imperceptible other. The reality of Romani otherness lies in an oscillation, to the rhythm of history, between an imagined radical otherness and the idea of “another who is imperceptibly other,”^[3] where the imperceptible stirs up all kinds of hate.

In times when it is impossible to re-examine discourse on identity with serenity, the “Roma question” and the use of that term no longer even surprise us, so normal is it for us to consider Romani otherness as *de facto* ab-normativity. The epistemological root, the cultural identity, and the ontological *koine* of different Romani groups in Europe are denied. However, challenging the notion of a “Roma question” does not mean ceasing to think about Romani essentialism. On the contrary, it means denouncing the identification of a Man as a Roma by an external being, be it a Romaphobe with his hatred or an institution with its normative approach. Beyond its posture, this way of looking at the paradox is actually philosophical. While objecting to someone or something external identifying a human being as Romani is legitimate, it does not mean we cannot talk about an ontological form of plural identity. It does not mean one cannot be Romani even though one cannot offer a definition of it. While the “Roma question” implies ontological reflexion, while “being” is the most natural thing there is, for different Romani groups that is not necessarily evident, as the paradigm is in the question. This ontological paradox is related to what Jankélévitch says in his work on “quoddity” and “quiddity.” *Romanipen*, the sense of belonging to the Romani people, can be viewed through this lens. Quoddity is the *fact* of being; quiddity is the *way* of being. *Romanipen* is therefore a “*je-ne-sais-quoi*,” the cornerstone of Jankélévitch’s philosophy, something that is but to which we cannot give a meaning. Such fun, rhetorically thumbing one’s nose at the experts and Romologists who cannot conceive of this “inexpressibility” in light of the thinking of one of the greatest contemporary philosophers.... Neither folklore nor common memory, or so little.... It is this “*je-ne-sais-quoi*,” this imperceptibility of being Other, that kindles hate, for what we cannot grasp is also daunting.

Today, as yesterday, Roma resemble and dissemble. The “hominity” of man is “to be similar and different” (Jankélévitch 2015). Throughout their history, Roma have been locked in a difference they carry in them but which is and remains denied as a living Otherness. To think of antigypsyism and Romaphobia as a species in a genre would be to show conceptual laziness. These forms cannot be a particular case of racism as nothing is a particular case of anything. Pseudo-rational systematization would consist in thinking there is a transcendental consciousness floating over history. The importance given to the distinction is not a concern for hierarchy but a condemnation of the pseudo-scientific use of the term racism. To conceptualize racism is to banalize its effects. To make antigypsyism and Romaphobia forms of racism out of concern for benevolent universalism is what comes of abandoning differential thinking, of intellectual laziness, of denying the all-important “almost nothing,” the similar which is not the same. Subsuming Roma within a broader category prevents us from understanding antigypsyism, negrophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and racism. However, modern-day Romaphobia and antigypsyism do have a racial foundation, which is what differentiates them from their historical forms. The genocidal episode of the Great Round-up of 1749 was where it started. To deny this racial characteristic would be to ignore what makes the *Porrajmos* unique. Yet that cannot serve as a pretext for what makes the singularity of

3 Author’s translation from “l’Autre imperceptiblement autre” in *Quelque part dans l’inachevé*, by Vladimir Jankélévitch, Paris: Gallimard, 1978, p. 198.

antigypsyism, what distinguishes it from other forms of racism. It is the combination of imperceptibility and ab-normativity that makes the specificity of antigypsyism and Romaphobia. The majority societies have a moral responsibility towards history and the process of marginalization of minority epistemes. The desire for ontological autonomy is powerful for Romani generations. Unfortunately, other forms of alienation are now at work or soon will be. The quest for autonomy, in the sense of abiding by one's own law, comes up against a heteronomy (abiding by another's law), the aim of which is not so much to annoy or oppress as to nourish and satisfy, the better to subdue. Good sense and common sense are not enough: "only a truly critical and genealogical approach can address the complex combinations of activity and passivity, of command and obedience, of desire and capture of desire that attend the constitution of a subjectivity" (Astor 2016).

And to conclude on this subject, the last work in the Prado collection, *Dónde iremos? Bosnios* by Joaquín Araujo y Ruano, from 1884 is a picture of extreme weariness, exhaustion of body and soul, terrible in its resemblance to what we see every day on the streets of Europe's cities. This Gypsy family, the painter tells us, are Bosnians who sleep the sleep of the world-weary: the parents sitting, the little girl strapped to a mule, and the boy, his face flat against a tambourine, too far gone even to feel the agile fingers of the monkey searching his hair for lice. Seeing the sleep of the Other here is not just contemplation but also tension.

Yet faced with this image one can imagine that their dream, even if it is terrible, even if it is a flight, is also the potential substrate of a budding power to act. It is possible to imagine that the alienated being, if he is not completely broken, will wake up and realize the value of his culture, his "living" culture that was there before the Modern era, during the Modern era, and will outlive it, thereby reinterpreting Spinoza's concept of "*potentia*" (Spinoza 1849).

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Appendix



Anonymous (Flanders)
Triptych of the Glorious Virgin
1485
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Jérôme Bosch
Haywain Triptic
1512–1515
Museo del Prado, Madrid



Raphael, Giulio Romano, Giovanni Penni
The Visitation
1517
Madrid, Museo del Prado



Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino known as Raphael,
Giulio Romano
Little Holy Family
1519
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Frans Hals
Gypsy Girl
1528-1530
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio known as Le Caravage,
The Fortune Teller
1595-1598
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Niccolò dell'Abate
Moses Saved from the Water
1539
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Jan Brueghel the Elder
Gypsies Gathering in the Wood
1612
Museo del Prado, Madrid



Sébastien Bourdon
Soldiers at Rest, renamed Gypsies at Rest
1640–1643
Musée du Louvre, Paris



David Teniers III
Landscape with Gypsies
1641–1645
Museo del Prado, Madrid



Jan Miel
Military Resting with a Fortune Teller
1648–1650
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Alessandro Magnasco
Gypsy Wedding Feast
1730–35
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Francisco de Goya y Lucientes
The Maja and the Cloaked Men or A Walk in Andalusia
1777
Museo del Prado, Madrid



Camille Corot
Zingara with a Basque Tambourine
1865–1870
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Jean-François Navez
Scene of Bandits with a Fortune Teller
1821
Musée du Louvre, Paris



Joaquin Araujo y Ruano
Where Should We Go? Bosnians
1884
Museo del Prado, Madrid

From Gypsyland With Love: Review of the Theater Play *Roma Armee*

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Abstract

My review of the 2017 theater piece, *Roma Arme*, focuses on its attempt to decolonize the stage and denounce the complicity of cultural institutions – in this case, the theater, with its typical fetishization of Roma as exotic nomads and the simultaneous perpetuation of racist stereotypes of Roma as criminals and undesirables. I focus on storytelling as a methodology that has the power to elevate the voices of underprivileged groups, and claim that *Roma Arme*, with its unapologetic Roma-ness, undeniable coolness, and overall brilliance, is much more than an elegant *j'accuse* directed at skewering antigypsyism. Rather, it provides a timely addition to current debates about the social responsibility of art and the possibilities for the effective decolonization of the regimes of representation that govern art institutions and, as such, should be seen as a unique contribution to the ongoing process of radical self-rebranding exercised by Roma activists and cultural producers.

Keywords

- Culture
- Decolonization
- Representation
- Theater

No Romantics in Roma Statistics^[1]

Of the estimated ten million Roma currently residing in Europe, the majority live in precarious conditions: they are threatened by deportation, ghettoization, and violence. Slavery and discrimination are not merely historic footnotes but contemporary lived realities for the European Roma, who are framed by mainstream society as the ultimate Other to modernist concepts of territory and the nation-state.

Like the myth of the *Wandering Jew*, the stereotypes of the *Gypsy witch*, *nomad*, *fortuneteller*, or *horse thief* reflect a long history of persecution and mythmaking enacted by the mainstream that continue to surround Romani people and their position in society today. These stereotypes contribute to the denigration of Roma and point to the Roma themselves as responsible for their own difficult economic and social conditions instead of looking at the discriminatory systems that methodically exclude Roma from gaining access to human rights and opportunities to fully integrate into society.

The analysis of visual narratives of Roma points to two important phenomena that define how this population is typically represented: Roma are either invisible or hypervisible. The common denominator of either of these visual representations is that a Roma person tends to be cast as Other (Raatzsch and Klahn 2014; Bogdán 2015; Tumbas 2018). Depictions of Roma are subject to a primitivizing lens that presents Roma as exotic, bohemian strangers while simultaneously reproducing some of the most toxic stereotypes of criminality and backwardness. When opportunities do arise for a Roma-led artistic production, it is often appropriated by a *Gadje* (non-Roma) production, be it in film, fashion, or music.

This marginalizing and exploitative mechanism is also reflected on the level of cultural institutions. Although Roma represent an ethnic minority with a vast output of cultural production, prior to the presentation of the first Roma Pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale, Roma art had been relegated largely to ethnographic museums and Roma artists had been absent from the institutional circuit of art and art historical scholarship. The emergence of “the new generation of Roma intellectuals and artists” (Junghaus 2007) – mostly as a result of the first Roma Biennale Pavilion in 2007 – established a remarkable and unprecedented paradigm shift.

Over the last decade we have witnessed increased activity of Roma cultural producers from visual and performative art fields, including initiatives that contest cultural appropriation of Roma identity. Examples include protests against the film *The Shutka Book of Records* in Macedonia in 2006 or the open letter from the Independent Theatre circulated in Hungary in 2013 regarding the representation of Roma in theaters, and the mobilization of theater professionals from across Europe trying to address the incapacity of the mainstream stage to move beyond the “Carmen paradigm.” Romano Sveto and Mindji Panther in Austria, the Independent Theatre in Hungary, and Giuvlipen in Romania – all Roma-led theater companies – have come about in response to the limits of local theatrical circuits, where Roma actors and actresses are almost always offered supporting roles as sex workers or thieves. The actors and

¹ Dan Perjovschi, 2018.

theater professionals involved in these independent initiatives see it as their main objective to address the lack of an institutional framework for challenging the mechanisms of visibility and stereotype that dominate contemporary representations of Roma culture in Europe.

1. Making Visible

White people's sense of entitlement, alongside their dominance throughout history, hinges on the idea that theirs are the stories that matter. Western cultural institutions have been instrumental in the proliferation of damaging, racist, and demeaning visual narratives of Roma disseminated through media, art, literature, theater, and film. In a public sphere where minority identities are deprived of any appropriate speaking positions and where cultural institutions then typically internalize such existing regimes of representation, *Roma Armee*, directed by Israeli Yael Ronen in 2017 at Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theater, is an important step not only towards a more nuanced representation of Roma on theatrical stages but also towards their integration into European society.

The plays that Ronen has written and directed for the Maxim Gorki Theatre and Austria's Schauspielhaus Graz have gained her a reputation as one of Europe's most socially, culturally, and politically conscious directors. Working with what she calls a "mockumentary theater" approach, Ronen explores how majoritarian narratives internalize the concepts of nation-state, identity, neoliberalism, patriarchy, and hetero-normativity. In her plays Ronen talks about political and social phenomena through personal stories, taking politics out of their narrow context and showing the actual impact that nationalism, racism, and the securitization of ethnic minorities have on our lives. Her earlier projects – including *The Situation* that looked at the political situation in the Middle East and *Winterreise* that commented on the life of migrants in Germany – show that salient political issues are not new to Ronen's work.

First staged in 2017 in Berlin, *Roma Armee* speaks directly to the most dangerous trends in the post-Brexit era of hyperdivisions, violent racializations, and silenced counter-cultural histories: nationalism, xenophobia, persistent antigypsyism, and the normalization of violence against Roma people.

2. Berlin is Ours^[2]

“There was a cabaret and there was a master of ceremonies and
there was a city called Berlin in a country called Germany. It was the end of the world....”

Cliff in *Cabaret*

The mise-en-scene of *Roma Armee* borrows from Christopher Isherwood's iconic tale, *The Berlin Stories*, set in 1930s Berlin. Lindy Larsson, as emcee holding court over the Roma variety, opens the performance *Roma Armee* with the story of Zarah Leander, a Swedish diva, star of Universum Film AG, and “one of

² Ethel Brooks, 2017.

Hitler's best friends." Lindy's emcee role is like Gustav Gründgens' 1932 Weimar Mephistoles, a fun-loving, decadent hooligan, amusing, playful, and extravagant rather than insidious and menacing. His Roma Revue – "the Zarah Leander's Fag-Juden-Zigeuner Army" – is reminiscent of Woland's Variete Theater in Moscow, in which the devil in disguise uses black magic to create illusions that expose the greed of the bourgeois spectators. Lindy, and the other characters, Mihaela, Simonida, Riah, Mehmet, Orit, Hamze, and Sandra, succumb to "pressure to use the rare moment of opportunity to say 'the right thing'" about Roma, poverty, slavery, sterilization, and the Romani genocide. After all, we are in Germany, and as Riah says: "Berlin is not all about Berghain."

Berlin, like Foucault's definition of the space of the mirror, is both utopic and heterotopic (1986): a reflection of an ideal modernist metropolis turned into a city of trauma, savagery, and sorrow, Berlin is also an example of a spectacular rebranding. After the fall of the Wall, when Berlin became a depopulated, empty city, scaring potential dwellers with its voids and destruction, a new urban development strategy hoped to use Berlin's poverty as a (tourist) attraction. "Poor but sexy,"³ the Berlin of the twenty-first century has re-emerged as a creative city, attracting expats to its clubs and galleries and exuding a spirit of *je ne sais quoi*. Against the ever-present memory of the Nazi past, the inauguration of the "welcome politics" (*Wilkommenskultur*) that remains a model, if imperfect, for integration of migrants, was a kind of positive redemption. For all its grievous history, Berlin might actually be a model of how to get the modern world right. This Berlin is now leading Europe into a civilized, open, generous future. Given Berlin's cosmopolitanism, it is not surprising that it has become the capital of a Roma "renaissance," heralded by Junghaus in 2007.

3. Poor But Sexy

Roma Armee is based on the original idea of sisters Simonida and Sandra Selimović, who created the concept of the *Roma Armee Fraktion* as an umbrella for their interdisciplinary projects *Romano Svato* and *Mindj Panther*. According to Sandra Selimović, the concept of Roma Armee factions was established as a challenge to the traditional portrayal of Roma as helpless victims and as a subversive invitation to explore the transformative power of anger to bring about a Roma revolution (Drăgan 2018).

The play, combining political cabaret and storytelling-based theater, consists of loose interventions from protagonists sharing personal stories that celebrate the idea of Roma people organizing and being powerful enough to form an army. Antonio Gramsci (1971) coined the term "subaltern" and Nelson H.H. Graburn (1976) employed the phrase "Fourth World" to describe people "without countries" and without access to society's established institutions. Without a state of their own, European Roma have been traditionally racialized, subjugated, and silenced in the countries of their residence. Despite the fact that the amount of abuses Roma people have been collectively subjected to should grant them the title of Europe's most resilient people, they are often presented as helpless and weak victims by the mainstream. Thus, the Selimović sisters' desire to generate an image of Roma as freedom fighters sprung from the over-representation of Roma strictly as victims of European society.

3 Slogan coined by Klaus Wewereit, the mayor of Berlin from 2001 to 2014.

Ronen and her ensemble use this tension to present an idea of establishing Roma Armee factions. The cast, consisting of Roma and Romani travelers from Austria, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, and the UK, and accompanied by a hilarious Israeli and Turk duo (another set of European Others), takes turns telling stories drawn from their own lives in order to claim their identity – “in all of its complexity, multiplicity, beauty, unity – as a way into politics. Into another politics. A politics beyond the Gadge problem. A politics of hope. A politics of Romanofuturo” (Brooks 2017). The cast members talk openly about everything their grandparents couldn’t mention – and they do so without inhibition, presenting the audience with long-overdue and difficult conversations. The cast members present an extraordinary ability to use situations of extreme social humiliation, discrimination, and abuse to turn their survivors into speaking subjects. This gesture points to earlier interventions by Roma artists who have engaged in what Spivak (2012) calls “making the subaltern speak,” or what Didi-Huberman (2018) interprets as a moral gesture consisting of creation of an image in order to give back the dignity.

With stage painting and artwork by the late Damian Le Bas and his partner Delaine Le Bas, and sumptuous costumes and set design featuring Damian Le Bas’ signature maps of “Gypsy Europa,”^[4] the fighters of the Roma Armee construct a stirring revolutionary manifesto for the future of Roma and the future of Europe. Following Le Bas’ subversive gesture of overwriting European maps and Ethel Brooks’ (2013) description of Roma as the transnational avantgarde of Europe, the soldiers of the Roma Armee call for the emancipation of Roma from internalized victimhood. There are moments when the various participants of the “revolution” discover that the shared experience of Roma-ness might not be enough to keep the Roma Armee together: women take revenge on men for patriarchal oppression and Romanians are criticized for spoiling all Roma’s reputation vis-à-vis the *Gadje*. There is a lot of gunfire and some dead bodies. This revolution, as bloody as any other revolution, is underlined, framed, and led by resistance, reclamations, restitutions, repatriations, and reformations that are informed by a history of violence, dispossession, and oppression. These topics are uncomfortable. As an affront and indignation against colonization and coloniality, and all the by-products of the colonial matrix of power, they form “a programme of complete disorder” (Fanon 1963). Because “decolonization which sets out to change the order of the world (...) cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding” (Fanon 1963, 36). An excerpt from the character Mihaela’s monologue, in which she quotes Fredrick Douglass, demonstrates the revolutionary thrust of the play: “But now a new world order is in the making, and it is up to us to prepare ourselves that we may take our rightful place in it. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; the change will not come as a gentle shower, but storm. We need thunders and flashes, and the earthquake. The hypocrisy of this continent must be exposed: and Europe’s crimes must be denounced.”

This is the Roma Revolution and Roma are here to face, affront, reclaim, retribute, and reform all that was robbed from them: dignity, spirit, resources, and being. *Roma Armee* shows the extent to which our existence within the colonial matrix of power is framed around what we are told, what we listen to, and the way hegemonic knowledge is universalized. Visibility goes beyond a physical and empirical matter of

4 Damian Le Bas for Roma Army in the First Roma Biennale catalogue, Maxim Gorki Theatre, 2017, p. 3.

vision, and the way particular narratives are activated is directed by asymmetrical forms of judgment. In this context, becoming visible is a way of creating a public sphere where disagreements and conflicts can be safely aired, openly discussed, and resolved through some form of consensus.

The show is a plea – alternately bitter, humorous, and sentimental – for understanding and for empathy. Art historian Suzana Milevska (2006) has drawn on the concept of “being singular plural,” as formulated by Jean-Luc Nancy, in order to claim that “participation is one of the crucial societal tendencies needed today to control an all-embracing neo-liberalism driven by the consumerization of human relations and the resultant ‘bare life.’” To summarize, and paraphrasing the director of Maxim Gorki Theatre, Shermin Langhoff: *Roma Armea*, with its celebration of radical diversity, calls on its audience to engage in a truly plural democracy and abandon a comfortable enclosure in society divided into allegedly deficient minorities adapting to an imagined majority of the “fully fledged.”^[5]

Roma Armea

Idea by Sandra Selimović and Simonida Selimović

By Yael Ronen & Ensemble: Mehmet Ateşçi, Hamze Bytyci, Mihaela Drăgan, Riah May Knight, Lindy Larsson, Orit Nahmias, Sandra Selimović, Simonida Selimović

Premiere: September 14, 2017

Set design by Heike Schuppelius

Artwork by Damian Le Bas and Delaine Le Bas

Costumes by Maria Abreu, Delaine Le Bas

Music by Yaniv Fridel, Ofer Shabi

Video by Hanna Slak, Luka Umek

Lighting by Hans Frundt

Dramaturgy: Irina Szodruch

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⁵ Shermin Langhoff and the team at Gorki#14, September–November 2017, pp. 30–31.

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Giovanni Picker. 2017. *Racial Cities: Governance and the Segregation of Romani People in Urban Europe*. London: Routledge.

Book review by

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Giovanni Picker's book appears at a time when Romani Studies are at a crossroads of being both critiqued and revitalized by critical race, feminist, and post-colonial theories. This timing gives more weight to this book, which I believe, will soon be claimed by the newly emerging academic field of Critical Romani Studies as a foundational model of scholarship. The book focuses on a discussion of race, racialization, and racial manifestation in spatial-political terms. It provides a vivid deconstruction of the embedded racial hierarchy that has circulated historically regarding colony and metropole and which has, in turn, fueled the tangle and durable urban racial divides currently pervasive in the Global North's urban centers. Picker's book is as much eloquent interdisciplinary academic scholarship as it is a political call for scholars in the midst of a crisis-ridden Europe. His book is a plea to decenter and go beyond Eurocentric perspectives that have produced an interconnected materiality, spatiality, and visibility that systematically oppress racialized collectivities such as Roma. One of the novelties of the book is that it uncovers the colonial racial logic in the spatial-political formations of contemporary European urban centers and also analyzes four segregating mechanisms used in this process: displacement, omission, containment, and cohesion.

Racial Cities: Governance and the Segregation of Romani People in Urban Europe presents racialization as a political structuring and governing mechanism that corresponds to the colonial logic of regulation based on race and space. Picker passionately guides his readers through various geographical "nodes," as he conceptualizes it, connecting different "Gypsy Urban Areas" in European cities and historical nodes by linking colony and metropole. *Racial Cities* is a book that ambitiously connects the segregation of Roma to the historicized global economic and political restructuring of European societies.

The book consists of eight chapters including the introduction that sets up the conceptual terrain of the book. **Chapter 1** provides a historical framework that supports Picker's theoretical frameworks. The chapter consists of two parts. The first part, *Colony: Segregation Rationales*, outlines the colonial ideologies and segregation rationales based on three colonized cities: Rabat under French rule, New Delhi under British rule, and Addis Ababa under Italian rule. The second part, *Metropole: From Sedentarization to Segregation*, provides a historical overview of the formation of stigmatized "Gypsy Urban Areas" from the late nineteenth century to the last quarter of the twentieth century. This part of the chapter mainly deals with the stigmatized and racialized representations of urban marginalized groups. It shows the social and political foundation of the stigmatized urban areas after 1945. **Chapter 2** discusses the first local segregating mechanism, *displacement*, through the case study of the 2010 eviction of the Roma population in Cluj-Napoca. This is a dense ethnographic analysis that exemplifies how material deprivation, racialized representation, and public policies sustain and reproduce the segregated "Gypsy Urban Area" in Cluj-Napoca, which is located at one of the largest garbage dumps in Central Europe. This part shows the consequences of material and symbolic marginalization and how, together, these lock people into devastating socio-economic conditions and hazardous environments detrimental to their health. Picker straightforwardly talks about the kind of perception that justifies the evictions of Roma in this context. He states that, "The main issue at stake is that the ways in which these policies are legitimated – and equally, the very conditions for imagining and implementing them often revolve around a racist understanding of the place of Romani people, and by extension any group deemed unworthy, in society" (2017, 65). He also connects displacement to the racial logic of social and spatial structure which is the foundation of the modern racial state (Goldberg 2002). **Chapter 3** shifts the focus from Central and Eastern Europe towards Western Europe, namely to Pescara, Italy. In Pescara, there is a semi-

peripheral neighborhood called Rancitelli where the majority of residents are Italian Romani families. Picker analyzes in this specific context the second local segregating mechanism: *omission*. The politics of omission, as Picker explains, rests “ultimately on the neglect of racism as a structural and powerful social force imposing various thresholds of inclusion and exclusion, domination and oppression, exactly because it conforms to the overwhelmingly accepted (de)politicized approach of denying or downplaying the importance of the structural in local and micro-level social phenomena” (76). His unit of analysis, the stigmatized and segregated “Gypsy Urban Area,” is scrutinized via an ethnographic method to demonstrate how a politics of omission has been practiced in Pescara in the last several decades. On the one hand, the state has been withdrawing social services and, on the other hand, there has been increasing police enforcement in the “Gypsy Urban Area.” These measures have predominantly been driven by the doxa of post-1970s neoliberalism. **Chapter 4** outlines the construction and perpetuation of urban camps, which exemplify the third local segregating mechanism: *containment*. The twin empirical focus is on Florence, Italy, and Montreuil, France. According to Picker, “[...] containment is a specific form of arbitrarily imposing isolation, separation, enclosure and ultimately radical segregation” (Picker 2017, 101). The author does not define what “radical segregation” is or what it looks like. Rather he further specifies the difference between containment and confinement: “The *confined* are instead relegated to a relatively static and temporally fixed position of isolation like prison. The *contained*, in contrast to the confined, are therefore disposable, malleable, and less forcibly bound to a specific socio-spatial and socio-temporal configuration; however, the symbiosis between the contained and the camp is symbolically established in everyday, state and media perceptions and discursive formations” (*ibid.*, *emphasis added*). Picker also emphasizes that the contained have an illusionary freedom to gain public voice as ensured by their citizenship rights; however, in reality their possibilities are constrained by their social and legal statuses, which prevent them from challenging the domination of the state and NGOs who sustain and perpetuate the persistence and discursive and material construction of camps. **Chapter 5** is focusing on Salford, England, and specifically on its local “Gypsy camp.” Through this case, Picker describes and analyzes the fourth local segregating mechanism: *cohesion*. Social cohesion is part of a mainstream social policy discourse in Salford, England; however, in this politico-spatial context it is instead used to legitimize racially structured segregation. He demonstrates that under legally supported conditions, *social cohesion*, described by Picker as a “floating concept,” can be used to support and justify separation, residential isolation, and spatial segregation of Romani and Traveller people.

Chapter 6 evaluates the four local segregating mechanisms by linking them to the previously described threefold scheme of colonial segregation rationales, such as cultural preservation, hygiene and sanitary conditions, and enforcing social order. In order to create an epistemic link between colonial segregation rationales and European local segregation mechanisms induced by the logic of racialization, the author needs to conceptualize Roma as an internally colonized “racialized other.” Picker deploys Carl Ginzburg’s (1989) concept of “clues” to connect and create a correspondence between colonial segregation rationales and current local segregation mechanisms. The author decenters the readers’ perspective and shows new ways of connecting and understanding the structuring force of race that is embedded in the European colonial project and still informs contemporary local segregating mechanisms. He exposes the silent and unarticulated mechanisms of racialization that still drive socio-spatial arrangements that specifically relate to Roma. **Chapter 7** attempts to unpack what is beyond segregation and how scholars and activists can decenter and dismantle the deep-rooted structure of race and racialization. In order to do that he

proposes to build up an archive(s) and create the repositories of stories (these stories have been erased or invisible) that describe the racially structured contemporary postcolonial condition.

Picker explains that existing research on the spatial arrangements, disintegration, and exclusion has mainly focused on Eastern or Western Europe. The exception is Bancroft's (2005) study that connects both regions, that is, it looks at British and Czech contexts, in which "Roma and Gypsy-Travellers" are targets of historically constructed forms of racial thinking and social practices. While Bancroft's work is empirically comprehensive, it is "anchored to the contemporary relations between space, identity, and race, without accounting for the ways in which racism and urban marginality, stigmatization and class formation variously intersect to keep spatial exclusion in place" (Picker 2017, 3). Picker goes beyond the work of Bancroft and "other work on Romani people's socio-spatial conditions" (*ibid.*). Contrary to these studies, which see "segregation as a direct consequence of prejudice," Picker analyses it from a wider and more critical perspective. He critiques Eurocentrism and colonial capitalist expansion, which reproduce the hierarchical racialized spatial formations in contemporary political economy.

Picker analyzes the role of race as an analytic concept in the colonial era and in current European cities by situating race in the contemporary neoliberal capitalist order. According to him, the central motive of the book is to show the logic of racialization in the contemporary marginalization of Roma. "The genesis of race – its various elaborations and proliferation throughout imperial rule – is a heuristic angle and a valid reason for detecting correspondences between contemporary segregating mechanisms and colonial segregation rationales [...]" (Picker 2017, 8). According to his theoretical framework, Picker demonstrates the genesis of race as embedded in the colonial project: "Race emerged as part of the colonial project not as an exogenous product, but within continuous circulations, borrowing and learning process between external (colonial) and internal (within the metropole) strategies, observations, interpretations, beliefs and practices concerning personhood and morality" (2017, 9). *Racial Cities* deploys race as an analytical concept and "politically charged social force" that regulates social, political, even spatial arrangements through colonialism and still is active today in our current color-blind era of global capitalism. Picker challenges the color-blind, "raceless" studies and scholarship on Roma by showing the colonial techniques, logics, and order that reproduce racial inequality and persistent structural violence against Roma that have persisted in Europe for centuries. He walks us through the theorization of race by different authors, including Stuart Hall, David Theo Glodberg, Howard Winant, and also refers to Foucault who discussed the surplus population as a "racialized other." In this part, it would have been more productive to connect race racialization to the Foucauldian concept of governmentality. Huub van Baar (2011) in his seminal work, *The European Roma*, elaborates on newly emerging neoliberal governmentality. In this regard, Picker misses the opportunity in his theoretical framework to discuss and further develop van Baar's Foucauldian-based discussion of neo-liberal governmentality in relation to a racialized neoliberal governmentality that is imbricated in the European project of addressing the situation of the Roma minority. Following this theoretical thread, Picker could have a discussion on how Roma, as a racialized population, became the internal others, the indigenous colonized population in Europe (Kóczé and Trehan 2009; Kovács 2009). His "correspondence" between internal contemporary segregating mechanisms and external colonial segregation rationales is paradoxically supported by the Europeanization project. This is a unique case, as Huub van Baar explains, as there is no other minority that has become target of the Europeanization project to the same extent as the Roma (Van Baar 2011, 157–158).

Another critique of Picker's otherwise excellent theoretical framework could be to also consider the value of a gender analysis and apply intersectionality theories of race, gender, place, and geographies, related studies. Katherine McKittrick's (2006) *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* is an interdisciplinary analysis of black women's geographies in the black diaspora, which could be a reference for such a further study. The geographies of colonies and "Gypsy Urban Areas" as juxtaposed units of analysis could reveal some gendered patterns of captivity, which continues to be an overlooked and silenced topic – just as many Romani-related studies failed to address race consciousness for decades. *Racial Cities* is the first book that accounts for the contemporary European postcolonial condition. It profoundly deepens our understanding of the structuring forces of race – a colonial product that is still embedded in and informs much of contemporary Europe.

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Andrew Ryder. 2017. *Sites of Resistance. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in School, Community and the Academy*. London: UCL IOE Press.

Book review by

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A first glance at Andrew Ryder's book might make you think it would appeal only to those interested in the Romani communities of Britain. But don't be mistaken. This book has far more in store for its readers: first, with the tools of self-reflexive research methods, the author reviews his decades of activity as a community development worker and activist in marginalized Romani and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom, whose residents frequently face eviction due to a lack of caravan sites and stopping places (typically a consequence of racism and hostility toward this group). Second, equipped with firm theoretical knowledge, the author has much to say about the practical and theoretical dilemmas of social policy and pedagogy. Third, he also undertakes the challenge of analyzing European Romani Studies by charting new developments in this field, exploring the contestation between critical research and forms of positivism, and also appealing for a form of academic dissensus.

By reading the book backwards and devoting a few minutes to the scrutiny with which its index was created, the reader can gauge the book's thematic orientation and theoretical embeddedness, which are centered on critical thinking, empowerment, and social justice. Ryder presents the communities about which he writes primarily in terms of identity-related problems, that is, he stresses the gender, ethnic, and subcultural dimensions of Romani marginalization while also placing emphasis on how the neoliberal turn has had ominous consequences for this population. The two most frequent keywords in the index are "inclusive community development" and "eviction." The author's approach is informed mainly by four authors, each of which is outstanding by universal standards: Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak – without an easily definable ranking among them. For insiders of academia, in particular those interested in critical and emancipatory research, it must be obvious from these references that the author is engaging his subject with categories such as: the different forms of "capital" and "field theory" as elaborated by the French sociologist, Bourdieu; the "pedagogy of hope" by the Brazilian sociologist and educator, Freire; the concepts of "organic intellectual" and "hegemony" as worked out by the Albanian-Italian Marxist philosopher, Gramsci; and the terms "strategic essentialism" and "subaltern" as used by the Bengali-American feminist philosopher, Spivak. Without going too deep into the details of these eminent authors' work, I can safely state that there is a kind of congruence between their various ways of thinking and that they complement one another very well. Specifically, they are all leftists, their cognitive horizons include solidarity with the oppressed, and all their endeavors point towards desirable social transformations. It is thus obvious that Ryder's work also fits into this broader context, especially from the 1960s onwards, as it aims to produce a scholarly discourse on solidarity from the perspective of the oppressed.

Chapter 1, "A Pedagogy of Hope for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers," clarifies the main references and key concepts used in the book, and in addition to the above-mentioned authors, also emphasizes the importance of approaches such as "critical whiteness" and paradigms like "feminist standpoint theory." Ryder, a white male author, deliberately tries to de-hegemonize himself, stressing at the same time that – similar to various forms of otherness – whiteness should also be seen as part of a heterogeneous identity that intersects with other diverse categories, such as gender, class, social position, and so on. An appealing aspect of this chapter is the author's brief attempt to "objectify" himself as he sketches his own social position, political experience, and career path. **Chapter 2**, "Hegemony and Life Strategy," places the policy landscape of the UK in a historical context, giving an overview of British postwar public policies concerning the Roma from the Second World War to the Third-Way Labour period (early 1970s).

The keywords of this chapter – and also the headings of subchapters – are statism, localism, austerity, paternalism, and assimilation. Ryder cites with sympathy the typology of Thomas Acton, an unavoidable figure of British Romani Studies, which details the strategies of the British Romani community in response to policy regimes and marginalization. These strategies are: conservatism (the Romani community “clings tenaciously to tradition”); cultural adaptation (openness toward other cultures); and cultural disintegration (loss of self-respect, disorientation). Ryder draws primarily on Acton’s strategy of cultural adaptation and expands on it to also include the centrality of activism and intersectionality.

The next three chapters discuss events in an English urban venue, South Forest, and are mainly descriptive. **Chapter 3**, “Cultural Trauma, Marginalization and Resistance,” focuses on the identity of those people living in South Forest, with emphasis on the forms of convertible capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) at their disposal. Ryder also adds mention of the role of emotional capital, the value of human support and solidarity – but it’s a pity he does not dig deeper into this exciting subsidiary topic in order to give deeper insights into aspects of Romani life, such as resilience. Ryder then explains how in-group relations bear on residents’ attitudes toward later-arriving “rival groups” that arrive later: in this regard, the conflict with non-Roma refugees from Kosovo is particularly intriguing. (This similar problem is tackled brilliantly by Norbert Elias in his classic 1965 study, *The Established and the Outsiders*.) This part may be read as an illustration of the relevance of Acton’s above-mentioned strategies. **Chapter 4**, “School: Resistance and Conflicts,” guides the reader into the realm of the school system. This is a setting that, in condensed form, displays all the problems connected to the integration of peripheral social groups – despite all the possible goodwill of authorities and other official actors – that may actually end up segregating some of these groups instead. Using a case study of a school, the chapter demonstrates that crisis management techniques used by school leaders end up blaming on Roma for their “failure” to integrate. Ryder’s conceptual framework reveals that the particular Romani community under analysis here, organized on the basis of prestige, pride, and honor, sees and presents itself as a sort of challenge and resistance to the mainstream/dominant culture in which it lives. **Chapter 5**, “Identity, Exclusion and Change,” concentrates on the young community members’ peer conflicts at school, which often manifest in interethnic form. Of particular note in this chapter, is the section on the tensions and clashes between young Romanies and the Somali community, which, much like the Romani community, also predominantly defines itself on the basis of prestige and pride. The author traces these relations to the structural similarity of the two communities and to the similar cultural traumas both have had to experience. Said otherwise, the (macro) structural positioning of and the relations within each of these marginalized communities enhance the risk of conflicts with one another.

In the next two chapters, the vantage point changes again. **Chapter 6**, “Critical Pedagogy,” is actually an analysis of the feasibility of Freire’s program. Namely, Ryder focuses on the patriarchal attitude of the external helping organizations – state-led institutions, social workers, civil activists – toward the marginalized groups they are helping to integrate. Ryder outlines a few options by which the representatives of inclusive community development – most of whom work on a basis of trust – may invest members of the peripheral group with power. He also touches on the tensions between (and inside) the helping organizations that may easily counteract the achievements they are aiming for. **Chapter 7**, “Gypsies and Travellers on the Front Line: Organic Intellectuals and Strategic Ties,” outlines the dramatic conflicts that may arise during evictions against caravan sites, an emotive and traumatic experience in the Romani

community under analysis. It also raises the specific question: What can a so-called “organic intellectual” do about unauthorized encampments? The book considers the strategic alliances that can be created with different outsiders to the community in such situations, taking into account the advantages and risks for the helper and the helped, and exploring in particular the pressures community members may experience when seeking to develop forms of social capital from within a traditional community.

The horizon of analysis expands in **Chapter 8**, “Academic Cage Fighting, Position Taking and Awakenings within Romani Studies.” Here, Ryder looks at the unfolding context of Romani Studies in which the civil representatives of the Roma community, the activists working for them, and the members of academia interact with one another. One of the most evident crystallizations of such conflicts, suggests Ryder, is the tension between the “purely scientific” position of academics and the “critically committed” cognitive and action-oriented position of Roma activists. On page 118, the author includes a table charting the scope of Romani Studies in which he outlines eight ideal-typical dispositions, stratagems, and grievances. In this chapter, one senses the author’s attempted objectivity as he aims to distribute critique in equal measure to the differing factions. This is something worth marveling at; what he has discussed so far clearly shows that we are faced with a subject area that is laden with conflicts that are hard to comprehend from the present perspective, thereby justifying the distance that Ryder tries to set between himself and the object of study.

The book ends with a short and succinct subjective conclusion in which the author sums up his main statements about his own experiences with Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers, and gives an account of how his activity and motivation have changed throughout the course of the fieldwork he has conducted over several decades.

In sum, this is a unique book on several counts. First, the descriptive analyses and case studies are sensitive and accurate. Second, the chosen references and paradigms fit and complement each other well. Third, the sociological, socio-political, and anthropological explanations constitute an organic whole with self-reflection, and thus satisfy the epistemological requirements set forth by Bourdieu’s sociology of knowledge and by self-reflexive research methods.

It is a taciturn precondition of contemporary anthropology that authors should position themselves in the context of the studied subject as they also have been involved in it; Andrew Ryder is loyal to this convention. (Although, I would have liked to see even more of this kind of self-reflexive analysis throughout this book. Perhaps the author has done it right because much more of such analyses might have burst the cover of the book.) Self-reflection is not only interwoven in the introduction of the book and in some later descriptive sections (where Ryder gives an account of the impressions and experiences he gained during fieldwork, and at which point he also shares personal memories with the reader). The self-reflection Ryder uses has a broader – epistemological–phenomenological – dimension in that the thematic structure of the book itself can be viewed as the conscious reconstruction of the researcher’s life-world, which is presented in expanding concentric circles. In other words, Ryder contextualizes the themes that have been decisive in the course of his former and present work as related to the Roma population. He does this partly according to a sort of temporal logic in which he outlines his career from his early social and activist work to his later embeddedness in the university milieu. At the same time, the

book's themes and its structure aptly represent the expansion of this life-world through adaptation and development, and hence the increasing complexity of the author's evolving experiences and continuously reinterpreted relations, shaped in part by a sequence of roles from teacher to activist to academic. In this way, the reader may follow the author from the micro-universe of a particular person into the perspective of a reflexively thinking scholar. In addition, we encounter another consciously reconstructed epistemological dimension: the position of the responsible, committed leftist organic intellectual possessing the will to transform society; this, in particular, gives the book a strong ethical dimension.

The general conclusion of the book is also significant. The field of European Romani Studies, steadily on its way to being institutionalized within the academy, displays all of the typical conflicts that have been experienced by any number of oppressed groups trying to establish their own critical position on an institutional level, for instance, Aboriginal or First Nation Studies. (Just recall the conflicts that characterized the field of Gender Studies in the 1970s: almost exclusively white feminists from middle- or upper-class groups on the one hand and the black feminists of working-class background on the other. Not to speak of the forms of opposition between LGBTQ feminism versus the mainstream heteronormative feminism of today. And so on and so forth....) There is no doubt that the fields of study from new epistemological positions must come to grips not only with the actors and paradigms of mainstream academia (and the national and international institutions supporting them), but also with the critical representatives from within, who may have divergent positions and strategies. Ryder's book provides valuable insight into what could be described as a state of academic flux regarding the directions Romani Studies should take next. In sum, Andrew Ryder has written an important book by doing more than just reliably combining self-reflection with scientific analysis; following Michel Foucault, Ryder has also succeeded at transforming the discursive space created by the "experts" into an object of study.

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Foreword

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