

**Human rights entrepreneurship in post-socialist Hungary:  
from the 'Gypsy problem' to 'Romani rights'**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Nidhi Trehan**

**Department of Sociology**

**London School of Economics and Political Science**

**University of London**

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## **Declaration**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates the paradoxical developments and implications of the emerging Romani (Gypsy) civil rights movement in post-socialist Europe. Focusing on contemporary Hungary as a case study for the region, the research covers discursive and political frameworks on human rights, and critically analyses their multifaceted dimensions, including the role of human rights NGOs and INGOs and the moral entrepreneurs who run them. The research uses qualitative methods to investigate the activities of non-state actors and social agents which influence both Romani communities as well as state policy in Hungary vis-à-vis Roma.

In Hungarian society, the complex discursive shifts on Romani people, from the 'Gypsy problem' to 'Roma rights' are key components of an emerging narrative of liberal human rights entrepreneurs engaged in creating a visible space for recognition of the rights of Roma. The research investigates how the public face of the 'movement' builds itself around claims of violence and oppression of Roma. It also reflects upon key strategies and technologies employed by the movement's participants within Hungarian civil society.

The co-existence of neoliberal human rights regimes of governance with emancipatory discourses indicates, paradoxically, the continuing (re)production of racialised and other hierarchies within the movement itself which reinforce asymmetries of power within Hungarian society. Another primary finding is that in practice the movement has privileged the pursuit of civil liberties over socio-economic justice for Roma, and has, as a result, served to dislocate local Romani communities from decision-making structures.

The thesis argues that 'counterdiscourses' to neoliberal human rights approaches are effectively marginalized, as particular 'Roma rights' frameworks have become impositions from outside the Romani communities, generating arenas of strategic instrumentalisation by elite participants. Subaltern Romani communities signal their awareness of these asymmetries of power, and show their resistance through a strategic display of ironic humour and attempts at epistemic disobedience.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
CPRSI	Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (part of ODIHR)
CSCE	Commission on Security and Co-operation in Europe (see OSCE)
COHRE	Centre on Housing Rights and Eviction
COLPI	Constitutional and Legislative Policy Institute
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ERGO	European Roma Grassroots Organization
ERIO	European Roma Information Office
ERPC	European Roma Policy Coalition
ERRC	European Roma Rights Center
ERTF	European Roma and Travellers Forum (consultative status with CoE)
FIDESZ	Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége/Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Alliance of Young Democrats/Hungarian Civic Union coalition)
FN	Field Notes
GLS	Gypsy Lore Society
G-MSG	Gypsy Minority Self-Government
HHC	Hungarian Helsinki Committee
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INT	Interview
IOM	International Organisation of Migration
IRU	International Romani Union
JMM	Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Movement for a Better Hungary)
KDNP	Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic People's Party)
MDF	Magyar Demokrata Fórum (Hungarian Democratic Forum)
MIÉP	Magyar Igazság és Élet Párt (Hungarian Justice and Life Party)
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MSG	Minority Self-Government
MSZP	Magyar Szocialista Párt/Hungarian Socialist Party



NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NEKI	Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities
NEKH/	Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Hivatal (closed in February 2007)
ONEM	Office of National and Ethnic Minorities
NYT	New York Times
OCÖ	Országos Cigány Önkormányzat (National Gypsy Self-Government)
ODIHR	Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Office of Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute
PER	Project on Ethnic Relations
SZDSZ	Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (Alliance of Free Democrats)
SZETA	Szegényeket Támogató Alap
RNC	Roma National Congress
RNN	Rom News Network
RPA	Roma Polgárjogi Alapítvány (Roma Civil Rights Foundation)
RPP	Roma Participation Programme
TÁRKI	Társadalomkutatási Intézet (Institute for Social Research)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## FIGURES & ILLUSTRATIONS

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*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

- Article 25, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)

*Human rights violations are not accidents; they are not random in distribution or effect. Rights violations are, rather, symptoms of deeper pathologies of power and are linked intimately to the social conditions that so often determine who will suffer abuse and who will be shielded from harm.*

- Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power* (2003)

*As the global market economy pulverized traditional societies and moralities and drew every corner of the planet into a single economic machine, human rights emerged as a secular creed that the new global middle class needed in order to justify their domination of the new cosmopolitan order.*

- Kenneth Anderson, formerly of *Human Rights Watch* (Farmer 2003: 213)

## PREFACE

*All of my work has been in sum an inventory of my attachments; all of my work has been, it should be understood, a constant revolt against my attachments; all of my work, for certain, has been an attempt at...reconciliation between the different parts of myself.*

--Albert Memmi (1996)

In the spring of 1996, approximately two years prior to embarking upon a doctoral programme, I was employed by a newly launched international human rights organization in Budapest, Hungary – the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC).<sup>1</sup> The primary aim of this international non-governmental organization (NGO) - emphasizing its contributions to the ‘public interest’ - is to work on behalf of Romani (Gypsy) individuals whose human rights have been violated. In other words, the documentation of human rights abuses faced by Roma in Europe, and legal intervention on their behalf constitutes the primary mission of the work of this NGO. During my first year of work with the ERRC, I conducted intensive human rights field missions in the Czech and Slovak Republics which culminated in the publication of *Time of the Skinheads: Denial and Exclusion of Roma in Slovakia*, one in a series of human rights reports about Roma in Europe (ERRC 1997). In the spring of 1997, I moved to the ERRC’s expanding legal department, and became the co-ordinator of its human rights education programmes, where I continued to work full-time until January of 1998.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 2006, the ERRC marked a decade of its existence with the celebration of an anniversary event at the UK Embassy in Budapest. The event was hosted by UK ambassador John Nichols and Budapest Mayor Gábor Demszky, both of whom expressed their resounding support for the work of the organization; see <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2585>

<sup>2</sup> Though officially registered at LSE by this time, my boss Jim Goldston, then head of the legal division of the ERRC, urged me to stay in Budapest until the end of the year to complete on-going projects. Goldston is executive director of Open Society Institute’s Justice Initiative, a global law reform initiative which has offices in Abuja, Budapest, and New York City.

My sociological interests revolving around human rights in Central and Eastern Europe have been informed and shaped by these work experiences – some of which I found to be surprisingly joyful, and others which I could not ethically sustain – within the world of professional human rights. Like David Kennedy (2004), I began to gain an awareness of the human rights arena as *a site of enormous power and contestation*. As I later discovered, this reality is rarely acknowledged by most international activists who generally support an unproblematic view of human rights advocacy as working *against the forces of power*, and therefore above critical scrutiny. As a witness to the emerging ‘Roma rights’ movement in the post-socialist region (by 2005, the dynamic connections to elite *human rights entrepreneurs* and European bureaucrats had given this embryonic movement a pan-European façade, despite clearly distinct discursive trajectories)<sup>3</sup>, I began to perceive, and thus question, some fundamental problems and paradoxes inherent in the lifeworld of professional human rights, and in particular, vis-à-vis Romani communities.

How was it that the movement for the rights of Roma in post-socialist Eastern Europe had become dominated by those who were in fact *from outside Romani communities* themselves – Western and Western-educated human rights entrepreneurs, the majority of whom are not Romanians – indeed, persons like myself? Why and how were American-style discourses on civil liberties and human rights, along with their attendant legal practices, becoming hegemonic within post-socialist east European societies in such a short span of time? If one of the implicit goals of human rights entrepreneurs in the region had been to construct an oppositional discourse on Romani peoples from that of ‘deviant’ and ‘problematic objects’ to that of active subjects, indeed, citizens worthy of human rights protection, just how successful had they been in this venture? How was it

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘human rights entrepreneur’ is an adaptation of Becker’s (1963) concept of ‘moral entrepreneur’, applied to the arena of contemporary human rights, particularly in post-socialist Europe. I elaborate further on this concept in Chapter One. For an insightful exploration of the complexities of the discursive frameworks which have emerged on Romani peoples within Europe, see Simhandl (2006).

that millions of euros were being spent on state and private projects that were putatively supporting the integration of historically dehumanized, 'othered', and marginalized communities in the region, and yet, over ten years on, the fruits of these social investments had at best achieved only mixed results in terms of their life chances? Had neoliberal policy trajectories in post-socialist Hungary strengthened structural impediments to Romani integration, and to what extent were human rights entrepreneurs in the region cognizant of the paradox of their embrace of neoliberalism? Within this social field, led primarily by Euro-American elites<sup>4</sup>, what was the position of Romani peoples themselves: a culturally complex conglomerate of communities whose socio-economic circumstances had deteriorated from the late socialist times of the 1980s, to the present neoliberal political order?

These were the profoundly troubling questions that began to emerge at the front and centre of my mind as I tried to grapple with the paradoxical realities that confronted me when I visited some of the most socio-economically marginalized communities and villages in present day Europe, pockets of humanity which have been rendered zones of 'infra-humanity' with very little understanding from the outside world (Gilroy 2000a; 2000b).<sup>5</sup> To my mind, the 'time of the Gypsies'<sup>6</sup> has yet to arrive, to a European civilization which in many respects still views Roma from the persistently pathologising medieval imagery of 'wayward Gypsies'.

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<sup>4</sup> Although I use the term 'elite', I am aware of the relative nature of this term, especially with respect to the area of Romani activism; nonetheless, work with Roma (Gypsies) provides a path to a 'quasi-elite' status for marginal intellectuals and professionals, particularly for Western Europeans. I owe this insight to Professor Thomas Acton. There is further variation to this 'quasi-elite' status depending on class, ethnicity, and political affiliation.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Gilroy (2000a; 2000b) uses this term in poignant reference to both the Black Atlantic diaspora and the 'enemy' detainees in Guantanamo bay (Cuba) held by the US government at its military base there. I develop this concept with reference to Roma further in Chapter two.

<sup>6</sup> The evocative phrase 'Time of the Gypsies' was first used by film director Emir Kusturica in his 1989 film of the same name; the central characters were Romanies from Yugoslavia. It is also the title of a book by British anthropologist Michael Stewart (1997), who conducted his fieldwork in late socialist Hungary.

In this thesis, I take on the task of deconstructing what is now popularly known as 'Roma rights' with some trepidation. Having been a strong supporter and a participant within this movement in the past, it has been useful to take a step back and assess its aims, claims and strategies, as well as its discursive and policy impact on the Romani populations of Central and Eastern Europe. Making sense of contentious existential questions and traversing through the minefields of myths on Roma in mainstream academic work has proven to be a difficult journey. I am aware of the choices I have had to make to narrow my intellectual peregrinations, and to present research which is 'manageable' enough to complete as a doctoral monograph. Thus, I have had to forego addressing many interesting questions and key dimensions of the research that would be critical to explore in future work.



## CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The problem of European anti-Gypsyism

*A people are hounded from place to place in Europe throughout the centuries, and treated like the beasts of the wilderness. Laws are devised so cruel that even the judges still mesmerized by the Carolina criminalis deem them too severe, and refrain from applying them. For every penal statute presupposes a criminal act, but for these venerable judges it was something new that the mere existence of a people constituted a criminal act – A. Welcker, “Die Ziguenerplage”/“The Gypsy Nuisance”, 1902 (cited in Heuss 2000)*

*The Gypsy problem [sic] is a litmus test not of democracy but of a civil society...the two are certainly two sides of the same coin; one is unthinkable without the other. One means legislation to enable the people to vote and make them the source of power. The civil society is related to human behavior.*

– Václav Havel, playwright and former President of the Czech Republic, (NYT 1993)

The Romani subaltern<sup>7</sup> – still to be fully acknowledged in Europe – has been subjected to the disciplinary exigencies of ‘infra-humanity’, in this particular case manifested by their sheer invisibility *as humans* within European discursive and social fabrics, from history books to everyday workplaces.<sup>8</sup> Where you will find Romani people – real or fictitious – will be in the minds of Europeans who have *otherised* them, proffering them a kind of ‘distorted’ visibility (Clark 2004; Hancock 1997; Heuss 2000). In today’s Europe

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<sup>7</sup> Though I use the terms Roma, Romanies, (Romani as an adjective) and Gypsies freely and interchangeably in this text, there are certain important distinctions, which are also contextually bound. Within Hungary for example, Gypsy groups are generally divided into three broad categories: Hungarian Roma or Romungre (the majority of whom speak Hungarian as a mother tongue today, although their ancestors were Romani speakers who underwent linguistic assimilation), Vlach Roma (Olah, many of whom continue to speak Romani as a mother tongue), and Beash (many of whom speak an archaic form of the Romanian language as a mother tongue). Within these groups, there are further divisions, primarily based on traditional occupations and dialect. Thus, the diversity within the peoples referred to as ‘Roma’ or ‘Gypsy’ must never be underestimated. The term subaltern refers here to the marginalized position of Roma. First used in 1930s Italy by Gramsci (2001) to refer to certain groups who were outside formal structures of politics, it became common usage within postcolonial studies in the 1980s, where it spawned an entire sub-discipline ‘subaltern studies’ (Guha and Spivak 1988). Recently, it has gained currency amongst critical social theorists (Fraser, N. 1992; de Sousa Santos 2002; Woodiwiss 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Everyday workplaces are one site of ‘everyday racism’ for Roma. Essed (2001: 177) has coined the term ‘everyday racism’ to refer to the connection between structural and ideological forces of racism with “routine situations in everyday life”. I apply this concept with respect to Hungarian Roma in later sections of this thesis.

(both ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ halves), within this falsely constructed and vigorously recycled *imaginarium* of the ‘Gypsy problem’, Romani persons occupy varying paradoxical positions ranging from ‘annoying’ beggars, welfare dependents, thieves, and prostitutes, to exotic dancers and wedding musicians. Anti-Gypsyism is ubiquitous in contemporary ‘post-modern’, ‘post-colonial’ Europe, and certainly poses a grave challenge to our understanding of aspirational or emergent cosmopolitanism (Ansley 2005; Garavito-Rodriguez & de Sousa Santos 2005; Trehan and Kóczé 2009).<sup>9</sup>

Within the erstwhile socialist east European states, under one-party rule, this essentialised iconography of deviance and otherness was contained to some extent by the all-pervasive State which disavowed open displays of ethnicity, and celebrated, at least rhetorically, ‘worker’s solidarity’ across ethnic lines. By minimizing various cultural markers such as language and clothing, as well as seasonal economic migration, the socialist State offered Roma the possibility to join the proletariat classes through socio-economic integration. You could be a good Bulgarian, a good Hungarian, a good Slovak, a good comrade – even if you were an ‘inferior Gypsy’. There was a place for you at the common table, despite your seat being a bit rickety, and your cloth napkin tattered. I take up the subject of discursive practices vis-à-vis Roma in socialist Hungary in greater depth in Chapter Four of this thesis.

### *The ‘civilizing mission’ of the Habsburgs*

Attempts at systematic assimilation of Romani communities (or ‘Gypsy’ communities as they were then known in society) in central Europe date back to the Habsburg Empire

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<sup>9</sup> My personal experiences within UK academia have confirmed for me the diffuse nature of European anti-Gypsyism. Not too long ago, a white European academic who completed a doctorate from the University of London, and a person who (notably) specializes in gender studies told me that “Gypsies are dirty and disgusting”. This denigrating statement suggests the entrenched and pervasive nature of this form of ‘acceptable’ prejudice within so-called progressive intellectual circles in contemporary Europe. Another colleague, a doctoral student from southeastern Europe, made an ironic ‘joke’ about the recent accession to the EU of two new Balkan countries, commenting dryly, “...well, of course I know about Gypsies in the Balkans - my research focuses on crime!” (Trehan 2006).

during the era of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. The Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century covered present-day Austria, Hungary, parts of Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, southern Poland and the Ukraine, the Banat and Transylvania (Romania), Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and northern Serbia; in other words, huge swathes of territory on which Romani communities were resident. However, the *civilizing mission* of Empress Maria Theresa, and her son, Emperor Joseph II (referred to as an ‘enlightened absolutist’ by some historians<sup>10</sup>), resulted in draconian measures towards their Romani subjects. The Habsburg’s experiments with assimilation of Roma were essentially a series of special regulatory decrees enacted over a thirty year period from 1753 to 1783. Initially, these measures appeared inclusive in nature, for example, the provision of land for Romani settlement, permission for the conduct of artisan trades, and the opening up of guild membership. In addition, Romanies were to be called ‘new Hungarians’ or ‘new peasants’ (the use of the term ‘Gypsy’ being discouraged in official usage). Nonetheless, the decrees became progressively harsher and, by 1772, mandatory military service was enacted for all Romani males above the age of sixteen; *Romanes*, the mother tongue was prohibited, along with the wearing of traditional dress, marriage amongst Roma, or even keeping custody of children. Romani children were to be placed in foster homes with peasant families from the age of four, and the counties were to pay the farmers directly for their maintenance costs. In reality though, many children ran away and ultimately found their way back to their own families (Kállai and Törzsök 2000: 9-11; Kemény 2005: 15-17).

As seen from the previous example, a conscious effort was made by the Habsburgs of the time to eliminate ‘Gypsy’ identity from Austro-Hungarian lands; nonetheless, the

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<sup>10</sup> See for example, Hunyadi-Balázs (1997), Szabo (1994), and Scott (1990).

Romani body itself was ‘salvaged’ and became a site of cultural colonisation.<sup>11</sup> In some other areas of Europe, for example, in present-day Denmark, Portugal, Spain, and England, various pieces of legislation made it a crime merely *to be Romani*, and there were harsh punishments decreed (including expulsion on pain of death) in an attempt to dissuade Roma from even entering these lands (Fraser 1992; Heuss 2000). Thus, in relative terms, the Habsburgs were perhaps more ‘enlightened’ than their other European contemporaries, as they at least accepted the *corporeal humanity* of Roma, despite viewing Romani culture to be both deeply alien and inherently flawed.<sup>12</sup>

This imperial, civilizing mission suggests strong parallels with the foundations of the British colonial mindset in both the American colonies and New South Wales (Australia), where indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in foster care (usually within day and boarding schools) for the purpose of *civilizing* them, with an emphasis on making ‘good Christians’ of them, without regard for the negation of their core identity and culture (Buti 2004:1-4).<sup>13</sup> Fortunately for some Romani families living under Habsburg rule, local authorities responsible for the implementation of these new regulations did not fully comply with them. Investing in Romani ‘integration’ was not necessarily a desirable objective, guild membership for Roma was rejected by members who feared added competition from Romani artisans, and the social conflict and financial costs associated with the forcible removal of Romani children from their families and

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<sup>11</sup> Over a hundred years later, Archduke Josef Karl Ludwig of the Austrian Habsburgs became an aficionado of Romani language and culture. Nicknamed the ‘Gypsy Archduke’, he collaborated with his contemporary, Romani intellectual Franz Sztójka Nagydai, to bring out a dictionary of Romanes in the late 1800s (NYT 1888). Chapter Two provides more details of early Orientalists such as Archduke Josef, who were known as ‘Gypsylorists’, based on their affiliation with the Gypsy Lore Society.

<sup>12</sup> The humanity of Roma was denied in a far more egregious way by the Nazis, for whom Roma and Sinti were *lebensunwertes Leben*, that is, ‘lives unworthy of life’. It has been conservatively estimated that well over 500,000 Roma perished in the genocidal campaigns of the Nazis and their allies in Europe from 1939-1945, though it is likely we shall never be able to account for all those who went missing. The fate of Romani survivors post-Holocaust and their descendants remains grim and under-researched (Friedman 1995; Hancock 1989, 1997, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Boarding schools for native American children in the US became more common by the late 1870s, ensuring their isolation from the ‘contaminating’ influences of their own peoples (Buti 2004: 4).

placement in foster homes proved to be a significant deterrent. Romani assimilation therefore remained a ‘failed experiment’, mired at the level of legislative declaration: by the late 1780s, the ‘Gypsy question’ was no longer of official interest to the Habsburgs, and disappeared from the official imperial agenda with the closure of the Department of Gypsy Affairs in 1787 (Kemény 2005: 15-17; Johnson 1998). Nonetheless, the policies of the time reflected the pervasive belief in Gypsy ‘deviance’ and ‘inferiority’ within Austro-Hungarian society, and this continues to have significant repercussions for Romani communities, as pernicious narratives of *Gypsy otherness* continue to reproduce themselves in contemporary Europe.<sup>14</sup> These civilizing impulses targeting Romanies have been coupled with broader and diffuse relations of coloniality and (neo)coloniality with respect to the Central East European region, and are covered later in the thesis.



**Figure 1 – “Gypsy family with cimbalom and double bass’, image from postcard, Maár, Hungary (1929), source: Ethnographic Museum, Budapest**

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<sup>14</sup> In Hungary today, less than 15% of Roma speak a dialect of the Romani language, and this can be attributed in part to the antipathy towards the Romani culture during the time of the Habsburgs, who attempted assimilation. There are ethnolects which are mixtures of Hungarian and Romani languages that are widespread in the Romungre (Hungarian Romani) communities (Hancock 2007).

## 1.2 The post-socialist setting in Hungary

There are approximately 700,000 Romani citizens in post-socialist Hungary today. This figure is based on data gathered from representative sample surveys conducted by Hungarian social scientists (cf. Kemény and Jánky 2005), and does not represent official statistics on the Romani population from national census data, which are considerably lower, partly as a result of the strong stigma - and internalized stigmatization - attached to Romani identity which results in a general caution in self-identifying as Romani (cf. Clark 1998; Barány 2002: 159-160).<sup>15</sup> Though residing in all of Hungary's counties, there are large Romani communities in the north and northeast of the country (from the Mátra Hills eastwards to Debrecen); in the Transdanubian region, including Baranya county; the Great Plains region, and Budapest and its environs (see map below).



Figure 2 - Map of Hungary, source: Lonely Planet (2006)

<sup>15</sup> For an explanation of stigma and the processes of stigmatization, see Goffman (1963: 46). Romani ethnicity is a complex construction, and like other ethnicities, a fluid phenomenon. Moreover, persons having one Romani parent, and another non-Romani parent, may self-identify in complex ways, depending on various factors, including age (generational belonging) and community setting. For example, a female rap singer in Hungary, Fatima, of the band *Fekete Vónat* ('Black Train') has an Arab (Egyptian) father and a Romani mother. Very few studies have been done in this area, but suffice to say, contrary to popular mythology, Romani communities are not hermetically sealed, despite the fact that spatial segregation is pronounced, and indeed, is rising since the collapse of actually existing socialism.

Many of these sub-regions within Hungary have been economically depressed since the mid-1980s. Romani communities themselves are highly diverse, both linguistically and culturally, as well as a result of different historical experiences, including slavery for some communities (Hancock 1987; Achim 2004). The levels of assimilation or integration within Hungarian society also vary according to community background and state policy directed at them under successive regimes. Nonetheless, taken as a whole, Romanies comprise the most marginalized ethnic minority in Hungary: more than 50% are officially unemployed, and in some so-called ‘compact communities’ – a polite sociological euphemism for highly segregated settlements – the official rate of unemployment hovers around 99%. In contrast, under actually existing socialism, Romanies had relative income security, and by the 1980s, Hungary could boast employment rates for Romani men comparable to other Hungarian citizens.

#### Male and Female Employment Rates as a Percentage of Roma of Working Age

	1971		1978		1987		1993		2003	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Men</b>	85.2	na.	77.3	1421	74.4	1966	28.8	2456	28.0	1616
<b>Women</b>	30.3	na.	47.0	1454	49.3	1922	16.3	2386	15.1	1718
<b>Total</b>	na.	na.	62.0	2875	62.0	3888	22.6	4842	21.4	3334

**Figure 3 - Official Employment Rates of Roma in Hungary (1971-2003)**

*\*Source of 1978 and 1987 data is the 1993 survey by Kemény and Jánky (2005: 175), extracted from Kemény (2005).*

As John Wrench (2006) of the EU's Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) has noted, their integration into the larger social fabric - primarily through educational integration - has become a priority for all new EU member-states.

### 1.3 The emergence of 'human rights entrepreneurship'

*In order to define behavior, an act of enterprise is necessary* - Becker (1963)

One response to rising hostility and xenophobia - both officially, and in the public discourse since the fall of actually existing socialist regimes - has been the formation of a collective political consciousness amongst diverse groups of Roma. Within post-socialist Hungary, widely recognized amongst European policy-makers for its liberal and enlightened minorities' policies, there are a large number of Romani cultural associations (some of them active since the 1980s), development and human rights NGOs (primarily launched in the mid-1990s), and media initiatives whose purpose is to raise the visibility of the Romani community. Parallel to these developments in the non-governmental sector, a network of bureaucratic institutions resulting from Hungary's 'pro-minorities' legislation in the early 1990s has also emerged, particularly those local offices connected to the Minority Self-Governments. This institutional expansion surrounding Romani issues has generated a particular *nomenklatura* of Hungarians - some of whom are Romanies themselves - whose primary task is to govern and manage the growing Romani minority (Kovats 1998, 2001a, 2001c; Trehan 2006b). They comprise a newly emerging *epistemic community* which generates knowledge and sets policy agendas in the area of Romani social inclusion (cf. Haas 1992).<sup>16</sup>

Throughout this thesis, I refer to one sub-section of this epistemic community as 'human rights entrepreneurs'. I adapted this concept from Howard Becker's (1963) ideas on moral entrepreneurship and the moral entrepreneur, building upon them in the context of human rights movements. Specifically, in the case of the rights movement for Roma, anti-racist activists working in post-socialist Eastern Europe function as moral

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<sup>16</sup>Peter Haas (1992: 3) defines an epistemic community as "...a network of knowledge-based experts or groups with an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within the domain of their expertise. Members hold a common set of causal beliefs and share notions of validity based on internally defined criteria for evaluation, common policy projects, and shared normative commitments."



entrepreneurs as they proscribe certain kinds of behaviour in their societies. Through their interventions at national and European levels, they exhort politicians and polities to overcome their racism towards Roma, emphasizing that it is not tolerable in an enlightened, contemporary Europe. Thus, while previous generations of Europeans viewed Roma as 'problems' (and to a large extent, still do), and therefore willingly supported anti-Gypsyism in their society, human rights activists working in the area of Romani civil rights view racism itself as one of the core problems of contemporary Europe and broadly attribute the Romani communities' current predicament to it. Thus, moral entrepreneurs in the arena of human rights are persons who attempt to generate and/or enforce moral conduct (as they view it), seeking to influence groups to adopt or maintain particular norms. Becker (1963) divided moral entrepreneurs into two primary categories: *rule creators* and *rule enforcers*. He viewed rule creators as moral crusaders, as they are chiefly concerned with the successful persuasion of others (though they are not necessarily concerned with the means by which this is achieved). Becker also noted that moral crusades are generally dominated by those in the upper social strata of society:

Moral crusaders must have power, public support, generate public awareness of the issue, and be able to propose a clear and acceptable solution to the problem (Becker 1963: 147-148).

The majority of human rights entrepreneurs working in Romani rights issues fall into the former category of rule creator as they are primarily concerned with the expansion of human rights norms. In addition, I argue that human rights entrepreneurs exhibit 'classical' entrepreneurial skills when they seize opportunities for working in post-socialist civil societies in the areas of democratisation and human rights. The overwhelming majority of these human rights entrepreneurs are non-Roma, and the implications of this are raised in the thesis.

#### 1.4 Thesis summary and research questions

Post-1989 Hungary witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of both domestic and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) which embraced the tools of human rights advocacy. Domestic Romani activists began to contest violence and hostility towards their communities in CEE countries, whilst INGO human rights interventions tended to focus on reforms at the constitutional and legislative level (Trehan 2001). In post-socialist countries, civil society (that is, religious groups, independent media, NGOs, private foundations, and so forth) emerged as an influential force, and during the mid-1990s, Hungary had one of the largest numbers of NGOs per capita in Europe. Indeed, during the late 1990s, there were approximately 50,000 registered NGOs in the country, with an estimated 10,000 considered to be 'active' NGOs (Kuti 1996; NIOK 2004; World Bank 2005).

It was in the late 1980s that Romani activists, along with former dissidents and liberals in the emerging Romani emancipation movement began to visibly contest the vilification of Romanies as belonging to a 'criminal subculture' and to challenge the 'Gypsy problem' discourse by exposing discrimination and racism on the part of the state and private actors. While the 'Gypsy problem' discourse – covered in Chapters 2 and 4 - constructs the problems that Roma experience, such as unemployment, poverty, poor educational achievement, and other manifestations of social marginalisation as essentialised by-products of their own culture (for example, Roma being perceived as 'socially unadaptable' and intellectually deficient), the emerging 'Romani rights' discourse - covered at length in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 - focuses on racism and discrimination as lying at the roots of the problems that Roma face (cf. Kohn 1995; Trehan 2006a). By analysing the corpus of materials covering the human rights of Hungarian Roma documented by various NGOs and international organisations since the early 1990s - as well as the

personal narratives of key individuals who have attempted to fight anti-Gypsyism - I exposed the ideologies which underpin their work. In investigating the sources and forms of human rights discourses and their social construction, as well as the practical influence of the expanding third sector (primarily non-governmental organisations) on Romani communities in Hungary, I examined the dominant role of human rights entrepreneurs, an elaboration of Becker's 'moral entrepreneur' concept (1963) within the arena of contemporary human rights. To a large extent, the remarkable shift in the public discourse on Roma from that of 'Gypsy problem' (*'cigányproblema'*) to the more politically correct concept of 'Roma rights' within merely one decade has been the result of vigorous efforts on the part of human rights entrepreneurs, both Hungarian and those from abroad (in particular, the United States).

The core questions addressed in my work are the following:

- Is the discursive shift from 'Gypsy problem' to 'Roma rights' an indicator of parallel changes in practices related to the treatment of Romanies in Hungary? Or are the changes merely visible at the level of "elite discourse" (Van Dijk 1993), perhaps functioning to conceal discriminatory practices at the societal level?
- How has a primarily neoliberal human rights approach manifested itself in the 'Romani rights' movement? What order is it (re)producing and whose interests does this reflect? What happens to emerging human rights movements in an age of neoliberal policy hegemony? Furthermore, as the thesis investigates human rights discourses in post-socialist Hungary, and as INGOs and NGOs have been the primary vehicles for the generation and diffusion of these discourses, additional questions revolving around the NGO sector are posed in the thesis:
- What are the origins of 'Roma rights' discourse currently promoted by NGOs in Hungary?

- How do the ideologies adapted by NGOs in Hungary articulate, construct, shape and/or penetrate Romani ideological forms and advocacy culture?
- How do they relate to global (neoliberal) social forces and political structure(s)?
- What connections exist, if any, between discourse and practice in the work of the NGOs?
- Inherent to the neoliberal, technocratic policy approach towards NGO development, how has the 'NGOization' of human rights (Lang 1997; Jad 2003; Roy 2004; Stubbs 2007a) impacted the development of an autonomous, democratic voice representing the needs of European Romani communities?
- Are there alternatives to the current trajectory of the INGO-led 'Roma rights' movement?

## **1.5 Summary of chapters**

### **Chapter Two: Towards the development of a critical studies approach to human rights and Romani studies**

This chapter contextualises the interdisciplinary research that emerges within my thesis, exploring critical sociological theories and their applicability to the lifeworld of human rights entrepreneurs in post-socialist Hungary. Key literatures include texts within the sociology of human rights, critical 'race' studies, social movements and civil society, and the emerging field of Romani studies. In addition, I trace the development of a specific type of Orientalism to have emerged in Europe vis-à-vis Roma – Gypsylorism - and discuss its impact on research in the Romani studies area.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology, Methods and Sources**

This chapter expounds on both my methodological framework and research methods. I sought to understand how social 'reality' is constructed in Hungary by anthropologists,

sociologists, and other social scientists, as well as how Romani activists and human rights entrepreneurs navigate and shape this social reality through their own interventions. I employed a qualitative and reflexive approach, combining intensive ethnographic field research and participant observation with critical analysis of key texts generated by human rights entrepreneurs. In addition, semi-structured interviews with policy elites as well as numerous dialogic conversations with NGO activists were conducted.

#### **Chapter Four: Discursive and political antecedents of the ‘transition’ era: the transformation of the ‘Gypsy problem’ to ‘Roma rights’**

This chapter offers a historical contextualisation of the discourse on Roma in Hungary from the 1960s to the 1980s, focusing on the primary ideas and ideologies of the socialist era. The role of social scientists and Romani dissidents in the construction and (de) construction of the ‘Gypsy problem’ discourse (commonly referred to as the ‘Gypsy question’) is explored. In addition, the voices of prominent Romani intellectuals and elites who participated in the construction of public narratives on the human rights of Roma serve to highlight the continuities and discontinuities of discourses from this era to the present day. In addition, illustrations of discursive and policy transformation as exhibited in the Hungarian press from the period of 1950s socialism to transitional Hungary of the early 1990s are included.

#### **Chapter Five: ‘Roma Rights’ – Origins, Framework, and Practices**

This chapter, the first of three related Chapters (5-7) comprising the empirical heart of the thesis, focuses on the rise and role of Romani-related NGOs in Hungary. Chapter 5 discusses the four key sources - primarily reactions to the problems confronting Roma in ‘transition’ Hungary - of the rise of ‘Roma rights’ discursive practices in post-socialist Hungary. These include a) the collapse of socialist ideologies and structures which created an ideological vacuum for the absorption of aspects of neoliberal human rights

discourses and practice, as well as a space for growing nationalism, b) increasing racist violence and scapegoating of Roma, c) the general disillusionment of Romani representatives with mainstream political parties and electoral politics (especially after 1995), and d) the expansion into Hungary of Western philanthropic groups, human rights entrepreneurs, and capital from primarily, though not exclusively, American sources.

### **Chapter Six: The influence and impact of NGOs in the 'Roma rights' arena**

This chapter connects the rise of human rights entrepreneurship covered in Chapter Five, and analyses critical issues related to the rapid consolidation of the Roma NGO sector in Hungary in the 1990s. It then covers the work of elite NGOs and interrogates their role vis-à-vis the social construction of 'Roma rights' discourses and its significance for Romani communities. In addition, it looks at the impact of increasing institutionalisation of NGOs (NGO-isation) and its impact.

### **Chapter Seven: Popular discontent - consequences of and challenges to neoliberal conceptions of human rights**

This chapter pursues some of the questions raised in Chapters 5 and 6 to expose the limitations of contemporary neoliberal human rights ideologies and practices in Hungary. It offers insights into critical debates within the human rights arena itself, for example, the impact of litigation and legislation; the limits of the 'rule-of-law' approach; and the power asymmetries between human rights lawyers and entrepreneurs and their Romani clients. I also discuss how the 'professional', top-down, technocratic human rights model for achieving rights for Roma has become hegemonic and furthermore, elides with the neoliberal trajectories of INGOs. An additional challenge posed for Romani intellectuals and others is the hidden danger of a diffusion of 'Roma rights' discourses themselves: there is rising concern that the discourse itself may increase anti-Gypsyism and social exclusion by emphasizing 'Romani difference' or 'exceptionality' to the majority of

Hungarians, thereby exacerbating the existing social distance between Roma and other Hungarian citizens (cf. Kovats 2001a). This chapter reflects on the contentious meaning of emerging human rights discourses and political organizing around Romani emancipation in the context of post-socialist Hungary.

#### **Chapter Eight: Conclusion - the moral entrepreneurship of the Romani subaltern**

This final chapter summarises the primary arguments and observations of the thesis. The empirical evidence challenges the *a priori* belief in the effectiveness of the liberal human rights framework, as well as policy practices emanating from within the 'Roma rights' context. This human rights approach, as espoused by 'Roma rights' human rights entrepreneurs and their *constructed constituency*, has resulted in a paradoxical outcome. On the one hand, it has strengthened the awareness of human rights discourses within Hungary; on the other hand, NGOs who promote this liberal human rights framework are themselves the site of asymmetries and hierarchies which pose serious obstacles to the construction of alternative emancipatory pathways for social justice.

Therefore, for the Romani communities of post-socialist Europe, the movement as currently led by human rights entrepreneurs who conform to and/or subscribe to the neoliberal agenda for socio-economic transformation in the region can only go so far in attempting to overcome the entrenched problems of deprivation they face. Conversely, it may actually obscure relations of domination and structural violence embedded within Hungarian civil society and internationally, particularly with respect to the work of INGOs. Evidence suggests that the neoliberal approach to human rights work is not necessarily geared towards meeting the needs of the vast majority of Romani-Hungarians, let alone equipped to reaching an understanding with the Hungarian population at large. The prospects for convivial existence as discussed by social theorists such as Gilroy (2004) or cross-community solidarity will remain without promise as long as a narrow focus on the achievement of legal rights and law reform takes precedence over socio-

economic justice. The thesis also touches upon the implications of Hungary's accession to the European Union and the pan-European dimension of 'Roma rights'. I suggest that contemporary policy on Romani peoples is increasingly becoming consolidated at the European institutional level within a small circle of policy elites who are even more removed from the mass of Romani European citizens than those in Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion' and the open letter from over 50 prominent MEPs on 15 October 2007 to Janez Janša, Slovenian Prime Minister (cf. de Groene-Kouwenhoven 2007) during the period of the Slovenian EU Presidency, giving impetus for a consolidation of policy on Roma at the European level. This eventually culminated in the first EU Roma Summit held in Brussels on 16 September 2008, and was followed up by the more recent 'Roma Platform' meeting in April 2009.



## CHAPTER TWO – TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CRITICAL STUDIES APPROACH TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND ROMANI STUDIES

This chapter contextualises the inter-disciplinary research strands that emerge within the thesis, exploring critical theories and their applicability to the human rights of Roma in post-socialist Hungary. I grapple with the literature in the sociology of human rights, critical ‘race’ studies, NGOs and social movements, post-socialist studies, as well as the emerging field of Romani studies.

### 2.1 A critical sociology of human rights

Although historically the study of human rights has been dominated by positivist approaches, primarily by Western scholars with legal backgrounds who after the end of WWII and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) subscribed to doctrinal ‘universalist principles’ of human rights, contemporary sociological and ethnographic scholarship on human rights appears to be moving towards an invigorating inter-disciplinarity which aids in contextualizing human rights struggles. My research is informed by theoretical contributions in the areas of critical legal scholarship (Douzinas 2000; Garavito-Rodriguez & de Sousa Santos 2005; Kennedy 2004; Mutua 2002; O’Connell 2007; Williams 1991; Wright 2001), sociological and political considerations of human rights (Chandler 2002; Cohen 2001; Cohen and Seu 2002; Evans 2001, 2005; de Waal 1997, 2003; Farmer 2003; Guilhot 2005; Nash 2007; Pogány 2004; Toivanen 2004; Welch 2001; Woodiwiss 2005), as well as a critical reading of the autobiographical works of liberal human rights entrepreneurs themselves (Laber 2002; Neier 2004). More recently, ethnographies of human rights organizations such as *Amnesty International* (Hopgood 2005) have emerged, expanding our understanding of the ideologies and motivations of campaigners, as well as the intricacies of work within advocacy organizations. In addition, scholarship on the internal dynamics and politics of

the US civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, have enriched our understanding of the complex tensions within emancipation movements (Brienes 2006; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). Welch (2001), Ost (2005), and others point to the importance of contextualising human rights discourses generated by activists in post-socialist Europe within a globalised discursive setting. The writings of Keck and Sikkink (1998) offer further insights on the role of transnational advocacy, as well as the rise of networks and epistemic communities amongst such activists.

The sociological study of human rights requires scholars to suspend normative assumptions and pre-suppositions about the 'inherent benevolence' of human rights activities, and focus on the interplay of discourse and praxis within the human rights arena. It problematises areas of human life which are contentious, emotive and, significantly, *arenas of contemporary power*. My research grounds this body of critical scholarship on human rights with the realities of the Romani movement in Hungary by examining post-socialist human rights discourse and praxis.

## **2.2 The Romani subaltern and 'white' civil society: NGOs, social movements and critical race analysis**

*A different picture emerges if from the beginning one admits the coexistence of competing public spheres and takes account of the dynamics of those processes of communication that are excluded from the dominant public sphere*  
- Habermas (1992: 425), cited in Jacobs (2000: 20)

### ***'White civil society' and the 'Roma rights' movement***

The employment of a critical intersectional approach (examining both questions of power and positionality with respect to class, gender, ethnicity and other vectors of identity) is fundamental to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the hierarchies embedded within the domain of civil society. Thus, it is no coincidence that a Romani woman activist from an isolated eastern Hungarian village has a decidedly different voice

within the human rights arena than an Ivy League-educated male lawyer who holds an American passport.

A number of conceptual critiques of the contemporary liberal human rights framework apply both to the interventions of the state, to the role of NGO actors, as well as the complex and dynamic interplay between the two. As my research confirms, the bulk of reports, statistics and other forms of literature on policy vis-à-vis Roma are generated by academics, governmental bodies and NGOs *external to* the Romani community, with minimal or only symbolic input from Romani representatives themselves. This fact alone suggests the (re) emergence of asymmetries of knowledge-power (cf. Foucault 1972-1977) within post-socialist Hungarian civil society, and this has implications for the autonomy of the 'Roma rights' movement itself.

For the case of Romani civil society, it is instructive to look at the works of scholars who have identified lacunae in Habermasian conceptualisations of the public sphere in Europe. Whilst Habermas' (1992) insightful contributions focused on the interdependence of the *lifeworld* (public sphere) and *system* (the nexus of the state and market economy) and the negotiation of political power, other scholars have built upon his work to examine the role of subaltern groups *within* the public sphere (Calhoun 1992). Keane (1995; 1998), for example, correctly emphasizes the multiplicities of public spheres which go beyond bourgeois conceptions of civil society (for example, the ethos of middle-class volunteerism); similarly, Jacobs (2000) expounds on the notion of 'multiple publics'; in other words, the public sphere (inclusive of organs of civil society) is not a monolithic entity, but represents a site of contestation of multiple, criss-crossing publics.

Nancy Fraser (1992) has coined the term 'subaltern counterpublics' to refer to those spaces within the public sphere which are staked out by subaltern groups, acting as:

...parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs (123).

Jacobs' (2000) rich empirical study of the rise and role of black newspapers in urban America points to the limitations of inclusion within mainstream (white) civil society and the creation of an alternative public sphere created by Black Americans, in part to increase visibility within mainstream civil society. He reminds us of the early abolitionist press in the United States which was dominated by white Americans and their general indifference to the formation and success of independent Black media in the late 1800s (2000: 20-21). Similarly, the position of Roma in post-socialist Europe is today of a minority seeking visibility within 'white civil society'. As Jacobs asserts:

...the challenge of multiple publics...suggests that civil society has a fractured quality which is not being overcome by some trend towards an integrated public sphere (2000: 20).

In illuminating the denials and limitations of "white civil society" (cf. Jacobs 2000: 4-5), we are forced to confront a (re)conceptualization of the Romani movement in light of the reality of exclusionary mechanisms within civil society itself. Political scientist Cox (1999), in commenting on the position of the subaltern within civil society, illuminates this exclusion, "Corporatism left those who are relatively powerless in society out of account; but being powerless and unorganised they could hardly be considered part of civil society" (7). As I elaborate in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis, contemporary Romani civil society is an embryonic and fragile sphere, as 'counterdiscourses' and dissident ideologies continue to remain marginalized. Moreover, I suggest that the creation of the contemporary 'Roma movement' (covered in detail in Chapter Five) was itself an imposition from outside the Romani communities and has been an arena of strategic instrumentalization by elite participants (both Roma and non-Roma). However, what is equally important to note is that the subalterity of Romani civil society functions at

another level: that is, within Hungarian civil society, which is itself embedded *within* a broader global civil society, dominated by neoliberal ideological and policy trajectories (Trehan 2006a).

Furthermore, Gramscian and neo-Gramscian critiques of contemporary civil society apply directly to the Romani NGO sector in two key ways. Firstly, Gramsci's (2001) observation that civil society becomes *a site for the hegemony of the established order, rather than a site for emancipation* applies to the hierarchies which abound in the Romani NGO sector, thereby reflecting the interests of global multilateral organizations and INGOs, as well as that of Hungarian elites, who are their willing partners (Cox 1999; Gramsci 1971, 2001; Katz 2006: 333-334). The influence of local Romani NGOs in the past decade has been supplanted by the interests of powerful INGOs (including Hungarian NGOs which take on international projects) and this is the subject of my analysis in Chapters Six and Seven.

Secondly, Gramsci (2001) - writing about Italian society in the 1920s - contrasted organic intellectuals (from primarily bourgeois backgrounds), who had close links to their communities and were determined to organise them, with traditional intellectuals (scientists, writers, religious orders, government, etc) who continued to serve the ruling class as part of the dominant order. Citing the importance of organic intellectuals who would also emerge from working class backgrounds, Gramsci (1971) noted that "the mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence...but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator..." (10). With respect to the emerging Romani movement, we see the rise of organic intellectuals from various ideological trajectories and broader national (Hungarian, German, Romanian, etc.) traditions, but all have in common their desire to organise their communities to bring about social justice (Horváth 1999; Kawczynski 1999; Kóczé 1999, 2006; Kwiek 2008; Zoltan 2006). Indeed, even the few organic

intellectuals amongst Roma who work in conventional intellectual professions such as academia or the law maintain strong linkages and share active responsibilities in their home communities. Within the Romani communities of Hungary, these intellectuals offer resistance to conventional neoliberal narratives generated within the NGO sphere, even as they may simultaneously work in the mainstream NGO or political sector. Furthermore, Gramsci's insights on civil society as being an optimum site for the (re)production of hegemony by the bourgeoisie serve as an important corrective to prevalent neoliberalist understandings of civil society popular amongst both Western and, to a lesser extent, Eastern European elites - namely, that it is a straightforward site for 'emancipation' or empowerment of the masses (cf. Cox 1999). Another critical perspective on civil society comes from Chandhoke (2003), who has looked directly at the role of the subaltern within civil society at both the global level, as well as at the level of Indian society. Concurring with Hearn (2000: 816) about the limitations of formal democracy, she posits that:

The contemporary political aid industry is at its core...about system maintenance. Democracy, through and in political conditionalities, fits neatly with neoliberal agendas that have been pushed by donor agencies and multilateral funding agencies, particularly in the aftermath of the 'velvet revolutions' of 1989 in Eastern Europe. And neoliberalism is about system maintenance...In effect, informed as it is by neoliberalism, democracy in its current avatar is safe, as it simply has no potential to pose a threat to entrenched power structures (Chandhoke 2003: 6).

In my research on civil society vis-à-vis Roma, and in particular, the NGO-dominated sphere, it became clear that few theoreticians of civil society in post-socialist Europe have examined the position of subaltern communities in their analysis, and moreover, despite the growth of NGOs putatively serving the 'Romani interest', few scholars of civil society have looked critically at their assumptions about the general sphere being a space for emancipatory projects or active citizenship. Thus, mainstream scholars of 'civil society' such as Cohen and Arato (1992) have not sufficiently interrogated the position of

subaltern groups such as that of the Roma and others within east European civil societies. For various subaltern groups these arenas may, in fact, be 'uncivil' (Keane 1997). Therefore, the works of alternative theorists – Black, 'Third World', and feminists – such as Chaudhoke, Fraser, and Jacobs mentioned above, offer us useful (re)conceptualizations of civil society, including within the sphere of NGOs.

As the Romani movement has been primarily an NGO-driven phenomenon, it has also been useful to examine key texts on NGOs and social movements in tandem. Inherent to the embrace of neoliberal policies in countries where the State became relatively weak during the course of the 'transition' in tandem with privatization and de-regulation, social movements became institutionalized via the rapid growth and 'professionalisation' of NGOs. These developments ultimately led to the 'NGOization of human rights' and the creation of bureaucratic hierarchies within civil society (Lang 1997; Jad 2003; Roy 2004; Stubbs 2007a, 2007b). This insight on the institutionalisation of 'causes' taken up by human rights entrepreneurs seems to be a lacuna within the mainstream social movement literature, which either overlooks or diminishes these critical developments in the contemporary NGO sector (Fowler 1997; Ghosh 2006; Slater 2004).

### *Listening to the voices 'from below': the victims of human rights abuse*

The 'NGOization of human rights' has been a key phenomenon in suppressing Romani 'voices from below', as many of the NGOs have been structured along hierarchical, top-down models, based on prominent Western NGOs such as *Human Rights Watch* for example. Even if the subaltern can speak – as Spivak's (1988) provocative, rhetorical refrain reminds us – who is listening? Particularly in the case of the Romani victim or survivor of human rights abuse, her voice, her perspective, and her vision for justice is many times missing from the human rights literature produced today within the field of

'Roma rights' (Bukovská 2005). This issue is covered in greater depth in Chapters 6 and 7.

In examining how socio-economically marginalized communities attempt to organise strategically, and consolidate grassroots power in order to gain jobs and better access to education, healthcare, and public transportation, the classical works on local level organizing by Alinsky (1946; 1971), Castells (1983), and Fox-Piven (1977) are instructive. In particular, recent works by social scientists who have examined the contemporary work of the Industrial Areas Foundation-IAF (founded by Alinsky in 1940 to organise working class neighbourhoods in the United States), illuminate the structural obstacles encountered by poor and working class communities when they attempt to organise their communities into coalitions (Warren 2001: 40-45).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Freire (1970), Barroso (2002), and Giroux's (2006) works in the area of critical pedagogy suggest ways forward to answer the question of "what is to be done?" (Farmer 2003: 229-230).

### *Critical 'race' and Roma*

Another enriching body of literature instructive for my research has been that of critical theories on the forms and functioning of racism(s), both modern and post-modern. These are to be found in theorists such as Balibar (cf. Rorke 1999), DuBois (1965), Essed (2001), Gilroy (2004) and Hall (2000). In addition, Solomos and Back's (1995) works on 'racialised' political mobilisation is useful as a model which challenges the conventional static concepts of race, and demonstrates the complexity of everyday processes of racialisation within the political life of contemporary Europe. Hall's (2000) observations

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<sup>18</sup> I had the privilege of working for the IAF-Southwest office in Austin, Texas for six months in 2001 under the supervisions of Carrie Laughlin and Ernesto Cortes (a prominent disciple of Alinsky) as a researcher for the 'living wage' campaign. I saw first hand how schools, churches, and unions, as well as community-based organizations in working class communities could organise in the face of tremendous structural obstacles, not least of which was neoliberal policy ascendancy. I witnessed the unfolding of leadership development skills amongst some of the poorest (Latino) communities in South Texas. This experience convinced me that there were clear alternatives to the ERRRC's elite model of human rights activism and organizing amongst marginalized communities.



on ‘multicultural drift’ in the United Kingdom are applicable to post-socialist countries such as Hungary, where the rise of institutions specifically addressing Romani integration issues has been a noteworthy political development in which liberal campaigners participate. Hall argues that the diffusion of schemes whose aim is to generate ‘multiculturalism’ are not sufficient to address the entrenched problem of ghettoisation and the poor integration of minorities, and moreover, these ‘multicultural drifts’ can co-exist unproblematically with contemporary forms of racism.

In recent years, an emerging body of scholarship by political scientists and those from sister disciplines specifically examines politics and policies vis-à-vis Roma, as well as human rights activism within Romani civil society (Kovats 1998, 2001a, 2001c); Vermeersch (2006); Sobotka (2003); Pogány (2004); Barány (2002) and Klímová (2005), adding to the contributions of an older generation of scholars on the subject (Acton 1974, 1976; Liégeois 1976). I engage with their work throughout the thesis, primarily in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

### **2.3 Critical Romani studies and transdisciplinarity: busting out of the ‘Gypsyloist ghetto’**

#### ***From Gypsyloism to Romani studies***

*The Gypsies are an eastern people, and have eastern notions. It is inherent in uncivilized people, particularly those of Oriental countries, to be strongly attached to their own habits* - Grellman (1783: x), cited in Lee (1998: 10)

Akin to Jewish studies, African-American studies, women’s studies, and other group-centred inter-disciplinary areas of scholarship, contemporary Romani studies focuses on the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the diverse Romani communities throughout the world, as well as the interaction of these communities with ‘majority’ societies.

Nonetheless, Romani studies as a discipline differs from the above-mentioned ones in two significant ways. Firstly, despite recent attempts at synthesizing knowledge in the field and offering critical trajectories within it, its historical roots are steeped in ‘Gypsylorism’, which is a form of ‘Orientalism’ specifically applicable to the study of Romani peoples and culture. The term ‘Orientalism’ follows the teachings of Said (1978; 1991) in this context, and refers to an organised “...set of concepts, assumptions, and discursive practices that were used to produce, interpret, and evaluate knowledge about non-European peoples” (Kohn 2006: 11-12). Precisely because Orientalism was embedded in a Eurocentric epistemological framework, research within the Gypsylorist vein generated scholarship which - either implicitly or explicitly - legitimated the global dominance of European power. As Wallerstein (1997) emphasises, Orientalism played “...a primary role in the ideological carapace of Europe’s imperial role within the framework of the modern world-system” (5).

The emergence of Orientalism in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe led to parallel developments in Gypsylorism, and the publication of Heinrich Grellman’s (1783) *Die Zigeuner* marked an important shift in how Romanies were conceptualized.<sup>19</sup> Lee emphasizes the pivotal role that *Die Zigeuner* (“The Gypsies”) played as one of the first pieces of European scholarship where Roma were “...constituted as discursive subjects for *systematic* study” based on rational, scientific principles of the time (1998: 8-9; cf. Mayall 2004: 152-153). Though Grellman continued the tradition of essentialising and objectifying Roma, his work is notable for 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe as it marked a clear discursive break on ‘conceptualising’ Roma: from the prevailing vagrancy discourse of the late 1700s to a new ‘racialised’ discourse. Lee (1998) explains why Grellman can be considered the ‘father’ of

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<sup>19</sup> Grellman’s book, considered paradigm shifting, was a relative success in Europe: its second edition came out in German in 1787, followed by an English edition in the same year (and a second English edition in 1807) with French and Dutch language versions appearing around the same time (Lee 1998: 6).

Gypsyism, and why his text has endured as a critical source on Roma for over two centuries:

By introducing a theory based on linguistic comparisons to account for the origin of the Gypsies in India, Grellman's work marked a significant genealogical disjuncture in the othering process of Romanies (8-9).

Nonetheless, even during the time of Grellman, there were scholars who held markedly different methodological approaches with respect to their research on Roma. Indeed, Grellman's contemporary Johann Christian Rüdiger (1990/1782: 60) exhibited a far more enlightened view of Romanies, emphasizing in his work the "living speech of the Gypsies" as being the scholar's greatest asset (*"man hatte ja überall die lebendige Sprache der Zigeuner"*). He perceived the Romani language as a form of cultural capital, through which much could be gleaned about the life of Romani communities. Working with a woman who was a native Romani speaker – even if he did not credit her by name<sup>20</sup> – it was apparent to him that understanding the linguistic capital of Romani people served to contradict both the volkisch racial hatred (*'volks Hass'*) and nationalist hatred (*'national Hass'*) of Europeans for Roma, which prevented a proper understanding of their history (Rüdiger 1990/1782: 46-49; cf. Matras 1999: 89-116). Furthermore, it was apparent to Rüdiger that European society was characterized by a form of hypocrisy that co-existed with 'enlightenment values':

This is still a political inconsistency, which our enlightened century should be ashamed to tolerate. For, the mistreatment of the Gypsies has no other cause but deeply rooted xenophobia (1990/1782: 45, cited in Matras 1999: 93).

As Matras (1999) incisively points out, Rüdiger was:

...unique among his contemporaries to call for a socially engaged and morally responsible scientific discussion, accusing society and its political institutions of marginalizing and persecuting Gypsies, and showing sympathy and understanding for the causes of their misery. There is no doubt that today's empirical, engaged,

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<sup>20</sup> She was later identified as one Barbara Makelin by Adelung in 1815 (Matras 1999: 91).

and theoretical investigation of Romani [language] must look back at Rüdiger's earlier work when tracing the roots of its discipline (91)

and

... Rüdiger is a reformer. He reminds society of its own modernized moral codes and demands that their implementation be extended to offer justice and protection to the Gypsies (93).

Nevertheless, Rüdiger's astonishingly modern sociological analysis of the impact of racist ideology on both scientific and popular understanding in Europe had little impact on the thinking of the time, though it was later referenced by some Gypsylogists (Bussell 1919; cf. Fraser 1992). Why Grellman's work was taken up as an earlier source and popularized, whereas Rüdiger's became progressively marginalised can be explained in part by the sensationalist imagery on Roma at the time - including second-hand reports of cannibalism - that the former's writing luridly referred to. This conformed to existing anti-Gypsy prejudices in Europe, placing a nominal 'scholarly' veil around *otherising* stereotypes of Roma (Hancock 2001; Lee 2005; Willems 1998). These essentialising works simultaneously reinforced both the *exoticisation* and *pathologisation* of Roma, carrying these constructions and misrepresentations into modern-era Gypsylogist or 'neo-logist' writings, as Hancock refers to them (personal conversation, 2007).

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, among the coterie of early 'Gypsylogists' were to be found many prominent Orientalists of the time, including Sir Richard Burton, Archduke Karl Ludwig Josef von Habsburg, and Elizabeth Robin Pennell (Macfie Archives 2007). These early European adventurers, folklorists and international travelers were cognizant of the Indic roots of the Romani language, and indeed reinforced the Romanies' cultural and linguistic connections with the Indian subcontinent through their (pseudo)scholarly interventions. The salience of these studies was even more pronounced as a result of the strengthening British imperial presence in India - which was ironically fortuitous for Gypsylogists - who were keen to compare and contrast various Romani (sub)groups with

Indian (sub)groups, thereby solidifying the notion of Romanies as *Orientalists within* or Europe's 'internal Orientalists' (Bussell 1919; cf. Lee 1998). As Lee (1998: 6) explains:

...Gypsylorism is but a particular variant of Orientalism, in that it began with the discovery that the Romani populations of Europe had originated in India- that is, that they were an exotic and Oriental Other. Thus, whilst Orientalism was the discursive construction of the exotic Other **outside** Europe, Gypsylorism was the construction of the exotic Other **within** Europe - Romanies were the Orientalists within [original in bold].

Secondly, unlike Jewish studies, one of whose earliest strands extends back to the study of Judaic scriptures themselves within *yeshivas*<sup>21</sup>, and African-American and women's studies - both of which emerged prominently in conjunction with emancipation struggles by activists from their respective groups - Romani studies in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe emanates from specific Orientalist perspectives on 'Gypsies'/Roma constructed by intellectuals *external to* Romani communities themselves. As a result, Romani studies (*Romológia* in Hungarian) has been far removed from the emancipation struggles of Romani peoples, notwithstanding the interventions of a handful of scholars who have attempted to synthesise their scholarship and politics (Acton 1979, 1998; Hancock 1996; Marsh and Strand 2006).

As Kohn (2006: 11-13) emphasises, Said's pioneering work *Orientalism* (1978) took the reader beyond an analysis of the economic or political dynamics of colonialism, and by doing so, sharpened her understanding of the intimate connection between knowledge and power:

By foregrounding the cultural and epistemological work of imperialism, Said was able to undermine the ideological assumption of value-free knowledge and show that "knowing the Orient" was part of the project of dominating it. Thus, *Orientalism* can be seen as an attempt to extend the geographical and historical terrain of the poststructuralist critique of Western epistemology.

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<sup>21</sup> Apart from this overtly religious and traditional source of Jewish scholarly pursuit, there were also secular developments such as the spread of Yiddish literature and theatre which nurtured Jewish studies, prompting its expansion in different areas.

Following Foucault (1977; 1979), Said's concept of discourse identified the ways in which knowledge is not merely used to serve power, but rather, is *a form of power itself*. One can readily apply these insights and techniques of discourse analysis to the production of knowledge about Roma in Europe, who are akin to an internal Oriental (cf. Lee 1998; Kohn 2006).

### ***The progression of Gypsyism***

As a part of Orientalist scholarship, Gypsyism developed into an inter-disciplinary study encompassing the fields of history, sociology, literature, anthropology and especially philology/linguistics and folklore. Within the Anglo-American tradition of Gypsyism, the foundation of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) in Liverpool in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century solidified the Gypsists' role in the production of discourse on Roma, with an emphasis on cultural and linguistic attributes (Bancroft 2005: 160-161). The GLS kept in close contact with prominent Orientalists of the time: for instance, both Max Müller (Indologist and scholar of Sanskrit) and Kamill Erdős (one of the founding fathers of Gypsyism in Hungary) were active members of the society (*New York Times* 1888; cf. Macfie Archives 2007).<sup>22</sup> This latter intellectual used to exchange letters regularly with Dora Yates, who was honorary secretary of GLS and editor of its publication, the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* from 1955 to 1973.<sup>23</sup> I refer to the implications of these developments further in Chapter 4, the focus of which is an interrogation of discourses generated on Roma during socialist times in Hungary.

Simultaneous to developments in the UK and Europe, a sustained interest in ethnology and folklore in the United States resulted in the foundation of the North American

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<sup>22</sup> The German cultural centres in India today are known as 'Max Muller Bhavans' (similar to Goethe Institutes across Europe), and there is a museum and cultural centre for Roma in southern Hungary named in honour of Kamill Erdős.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/collections/colldescs/gls.html> for details of Yates' contributions to the GLS (Liverpool University Library 2007).

Chapter of GLS in 1977. This chapter of the society eventually took over the running of GLS in 1989 under the leadership of Sheila and Matt Salo, and began re-publishing the *JGLS* in 1991 (Fraser 1992: 210-211).<sup>24</sup>

Concomitant to the growing interest in Romani folklore, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the study of ‘Gypsy crime’, its purported methods, and its magnitude in various European countries also emerged. Cesare Lombroso’s (1878) work on the causes of crime singles out Roma as a criminogenic population: in *L’uomo Delinquente* (*Criminal Man*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), he describes Roma as a “thoroughly criminal race, with all its passions and vices”, including for him, cannibalism (Lombroso 2006: 19).<sup>25</sup> He therefore repeats the sensationalist narrative of Romanies as cannibals, recycled by the intrepid Grellman one hundred years earlier. This is symptomatic of a body of literature which researchers in critical Romani studies can investigate and deconstruct when looking at early ‘scientific’ writings in Europe which produced distorted knowledge on Roma, and which is continually regenerated throughout the centuries - at times unconsciously - but many times willfully, in clever guise.

### *The problematic legacy of ‘Gypsylorism’ throughout the globe*

The discussion above demonstrates that the critical deconstruction of various Gypsylorist texts is an important prerequisite for understanding how they reflect and reinforce stubborn stereotypes which have carried over through the centuries and have been dispersed globally, not least because of the hegemonic position of the English

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<sup>24</sup> See Gypsy Lore Society at <http://www.gypsyloringsociety.org/>. Liverpool University houses the Scott Macfie Gypsy Archives, one of the largest collections of Romani-related materials in the UK, see <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/news/0606gls.html>. In 2000, Liverpool UP began publishing Romani Studies. Its current editor is Yaron Matras, a prominent linguist at the University of Manchester. See further, [http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani/files/24\\_journal.shtml](http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani/files/24_journal.shtml) and <http://www.liverpoolunipress.co.uk/html/publication.asp?idProduct=3714>

<sup>25</sup> Lombroso’s book was translated into several languages, including German and English, and had a strong impact on Western legal attitudes towards Roma. For more information about Lombroso’s work and legacy in Europe, see the website for the Cesare Lombroso Museum, MUCRI (Museo Criminologico), Ministry of Justice, Department of Prison Administration, at [www.museocriminologico.it](http://www.museocriminologico.it)

language as a result of British imperialism.<sup>26</sup> This vital task of deconstruction remains incomplete, and, as Lee (1998) suggests, is rendered even more difficult by a continuous stream of research on Roma by scholars who persist in using essentialist conceptualizations and 'neolulist' (neo-Gypsyulist) ideas in their work (cf. Hancock 2007, personal conversation). One example of work that essentialises Romani culture is that of Braham and Braham (2000), academics in the area of international relations who surmise that *Romani culture itself* is inimical to education, without deconstructing *a priori* beliefs about cultural reproduction and taking into account social constructionism. Here they discuss the contentious issue of the social distance between Roma and non-Roma:

Given that the Roma have been in Europe for some seven centuries, it would seem one-sided to apportion responsibility solely to majority attitudes: social harmony requires willing partners on both sides...There may in fact be a 'cultural script' that underlies the 'root causes' of Roma migrations old and new, and one that operates alongside majority culture prejudice...Roma 'non-identity' [with the majority societies] may not only be an effect, but also a cause of their marginalisation. Their sense of integrity, their belief in their racial purity, and the importance they attach to their social system has meant that Roma have also chosen not to integrate and identify with their countries of residence...While one could argue that it is because schools in the CEE, for example, are 'Gadjo institutions' in which Roma will hear little that is positive or accurate about themselves; or that poverty and poor health – a consequence of majority prejudice – prevents their attendance; or that there is no schooling for them in their mother tongue; there may be another point for consideration: that traditionally-oriented clan leaders, suspicious of majority society, and committed to the continuity of Romani culture, are hostile to accepting more than the minimum of formal educational requirements being imposed upon Roma children (110-101).

What is remarkable about Braham and Braham's comments above is their clear lack of familiarity with Romani lifeworlds in contemporary Europe, their inability to account for the legacy of Romani oppression, and their incapacity to see the reality of the diverse forms of integration of Roma in the face of it. First of all, though Roma have migrated

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<sup>26</sup> I was a witness to this in the summer of 1996, when, at my first year of working for the ERRC in Budapest, I attended a lecture given by an Indian anthropologist from a Panjabi university at the ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University) within their embryonic programme in cultural anthropology. His lecture demonstrated a strong belief in biological determinism and was full of 19th century European fallacies about race and ethnicity. Much of his regrettable work was peppered with references of a Gypsyulist nature as well (Shidore 2007, personal communication).



for centuries, Roma have been settled in various European lands (which they consider their 'home') and have forged strong bonds of identity; again, if this were not the case, we would not be witnesses to the diversity of cultural syncretism within Romani cultural practices, and the linguistic diversity of *Romanes*. Furthermore, the authors do not provide any evidence for their strong assertion of a 'belief in racial purity' by Roma, certainly, during my field research in Hungary I never came across this phenomenon. What I did come across was an understandable lack of trust in the majority society and a certain pride in a particular value system. To be sure, traditional Romani communities continue to practice certain ritual pollution codes, but this does not translate into a belief in 'racial purity' as the Brahams suggested (cf. Trehan 2000: 117-118). Hungarian Roma – even today, in the face of resurgent violence – continue to identify as Hungarians, hence it is far too simplistic for the authors to suggest that Roma do not identify with the nations and peoples with whom they have lived for centuries (whilst most Roma are familiar with the national heroes, epic tales, and poetry of the country in which they live, rarely is the majority aware of the contributions of fellow Romani citizens to society or the richness of their cultural forms). Whilst the divide between Romani and non-Romani lifeworlds remain, the possibilities for conviviality (cf. Gilroy 2004) to overcome entrenched anti-Gypsyism should not be underestimated; but this would require a clearer analysis of the roots of oppression embedded within contemporary Romani lifeworlds.

Another illustration of essentialism in scholarship on Roma is the work of Scheffel (2004: 101-117), a Canadian anthropologist who conducted fieldwork amongst Roma in a particularly impoverished community in Slovakia in the 1990s. His book 'Svinia: in Black and White' suggests – without any problematization – that homosexuality is a form of pathological 'deviance'.<sup>27</sup> Within broader post-Orientalist discourses, there are substantial

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the section of his book covering same-sex relationships – along with other presumed 'pathologies' to be found in the Romani village – is entitled, 'Deviance, handicaps, and pathology'.

debates about the role of anthropologists, however, within ‘neolulist’ scholarship today, few challenges are forthcoming, and academics, along with policy-makers, are free to generate epistemic violence (cf. Spivak 1988) vis-à-vis Roma with impunity, often times with little regard for the political consequences of their well-meaning interventions.<sup>28</sup>

### *Social construction, mystification and misinterpretation*

As Marvasti (2004: 5) has observed, “constructionism assumes that our knowledge of the social world is a) subjective, b) situational and culturally variable and c) ideologically conscious.” Building upon the previous section, one form of possible epistemic violence emanates from a particular stream of scholarship on Gypsies and Roma, which I view as a misinterpretation of the social constructionist project. I refer here to some of the works of Western European scholars such as Willems (1998), Lucassen and Willems (1998), Okely (1983; 1997), and more recently, the scholarship of Bolton (2005). While I share a methodological interest in social constructionism with their work, and appreciate their use of Foucaultian insights as well as Said’s critical works, I believe that the notion of *a priori* nomadism is not sufficiently interrogated in their social constructionist scholarship. While it is certainly true that some Romani peoples in the past (and some in the present) were ‘commercial nomads’ (cf. Acton 1995/1995), it is not clear how or why this form of economic survival and innovation actually emerged in the first place. Perhaps the scholar who comes closest to addressing this question of genesis is socio-linguist Yaron Matras (1999). If social dynamics and experiences influence culture, then surely another

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<sup>28</sup> Several years ago, I was asked to offer an assessment (along with Professor Acton of Greenwich University) on an ‘ethnicity determination’ case before the UK Home Office of a young asylum-seeker from Kosovo who at the time of his arrival to the UK was a minor. I was shocked to discover that one of the questions on his form that he was required to fill out upon his entry to the UK was to describe the ‘Romani flag’ – his response to this question then fed into the initial Home Office assessment of the veracity of his claims. Persons familiar with the Romani movement are aware that knowledge of the flag (only adopted and designed by a handful of activists in the 1970s) is limited to small groups of Romani activist circles in Europe. Nonetheless, the UK Home Office officials (who had probably read about this from a scholarly source or from a website) were using this as bona fide information to determine asylum claims from Kosovo, thus placing in jeopardy the claims of many genuine asylum seekers.

interpretation of 'Romani nomadism' could be that it has been the result of cyclical persecutions and harassment, as well as economic survival. It is a historical fact that Roma - similar to Jews - were not allowed to settle in town centres and were excluded from European guilds which regulated particular trades, and more broadly, economic life, in the Middle Ages. However, the persistence of European anti-Gypsy persecution and violence, and the inability of Roma to gain a solid foothold in mainstream societies quite possibly resulted in a way of life that required flexibility and mobility in order to a) avoid and/or escape further persecution and b) to seek economic opportunities in less hostile environs. It is most certainly the empirical study of the lifeworlds of Romani communities of Eastern Europe (Hungarian Roma and Balkan Roma of the former Yugoslavia in particular) that informs my understanding, reading, and contestation of 'traditional nomadism' amongst Romani people. It would be important to deconstruct further an understanding of nomadism itself within the Romani cultural context. Certainly, if Roma were constantly on the move, they would not have formed the strong bonds – linguistic, cultural, and identity-wise – as they have in Europe throughout their long and rich history on the continent and in the British Isles. Romani mobility or itineracy has itself consisted of circuits of cyclical movement for commercial and family-related purposes as well as 'settlement'. Therefore, to my mind, the formula "Romani person = nomad" (as it persists within the European imaginary, and in some cases, such as in Italy today, even defines the governance framework for thousands of EU citizens) does not reflect the reality. Were I to subscribe to such a view, I would then have to believe that the majority of British Romanichals are, for example, no longer Romani, as they are in fact settled, living in brick and mortar housing, in council flats, or as residents of on authorized (permanent) caravan sites. This absence of the deconstruction of *a priori* nomadism of Roma, and the belief that Gypsies are nomadic 'by definition' suggests a lack of sufficient interrogation by some Western European scholars. One academic who

has conducted a detailed analysis of how nomadism is seen as part and parcel of Gypsy life and has also critically examined Romani studies scholarship is British social historian Mayall (2004: 36-48). Whilst I agree broadly with his social constructionist approach to identity formation amongst Gypsies, much of his criticisms of historical and contemporary scholarship in Romani studies (for example, the high incidence of obfuscation, misinterpretation and recycling of Gypsylore myths amongst other dangers), it appears that he too conflates Western Gypsy experiences with Eastern European Gypsy and Romani experiences with respect to the issue of nomadism. He states:

The second major component which is always present in some form in every version of Gypsy identity is that of nomadism. Indeed it is almost universally agreed that Gypsy and nomadism go hand in hand, leaving the settled or sedentary Gypsy at best marginal and more usually an invisible figure in texts and the popular imagination (11).

Now, while this above discourse construction may hold true for Gypsies residing in the British Isles, similar debates on the nomadism of Romani populations are far less salient amongst Eastern European scholars and within the politics of the region. There are key socio-historical reasons for this, including the fact that the *millet* system as organized under the Ottomans produced a different set of relations between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, a dynamic which fostered Romani settlement (see further Marsh 2009). In Austro-Hungary and Iberia by contrast, the ancestors of present-day Romani populations in these lands underwent regimes of forcible assimilation, which also resulted in settlement along particular patterns (usually exhibiting spatial segregation to varying degrees). This is not to suggest that nomadism no longer functions as a marker of identity for some Romanies and affiliated groups such as Travellers, however, the importance of a thorough contextualization of this 'cultural trait' is crucial to both the

aims of critical scholarship and to the success of potential policy outcomes (cf. Clark 2006; Mayall 2004).<sup>29</sup>

In addition, various forms of 'reified' social constructionist approaches found in some scholarship on Roma illustrate another key oversight: few of these scholars have taken existing empirical evidence on the Romani language seriously in their own research to determine their conclusions on Romani origins, identity, and lifeworlds. Matras (1999: 113) offers succinct criticisms of Willems and Okely's work in this regard:

...by rejecting a connection between language and origin, Willems excuses himself from studying the linguistic facts, including those pertaining to language transmission. While earlier sources were already able to distinguish between Romani and the jargons and vocabularies of the roads, it was Rüdiger who first demonstrated the structural coherence of the language by composing the first concise grammatical description. Both Willems and Okely owe us an explanation as to how and why a full-fledged language with grammatical inflections will have been transmitted from Asia to Europe and expanded there to become the everyday language of millions, without the physical migration of a population of speakers at an early stage (113).

As a consequence, their self-ascribed 'social constructionist' analysis of the 'Gypsy'/Romani lifeworld, in attempting to avoid the trap of essentialising Roma, remains narrowly constrained itself, possibly giving birth to other forms of misinterpretation and obfuscation on Roma, including the myth that Roma are a people outside of history, and furthermore, have no interest in the endeavour of (re)discovering and (re)constructing their own historical narrative, let alone recording this as written historiography. Apart from Okely (1984), this latter assertion is present in the anthropological writings of Stewart (1997), who suggests Roma are not interested in their own history. Ignoring the truism that "history is written by victors", he seems to dismiss the relevance of the syncretic heritage of Roma traced back to south Asia thus:

...talk of Indian origins unnecessarily exoticizes the Gypsies, and second it ignores their own view of themselves. For the fact is that most nonintellectual

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<sup>29</sup> Indeed, there can be serious negative policy outcomes resulting from false labeling, see for example, the case of *campi nomadi* (nomadic camps) in Italy, cf. Sigona (2005).

[sic] Rom do not seem to care where their ancestors came from...For them, identity is constructed and constantly remade in the present in relations with significant others, not something inherited from the past (Stewart 1997: 28).

Firstly, though I agree with Stewart's empirical observation that most Roma do not demonstrate much concern about their ancestry, this is true for various groups and cultures across the globe, particularly persons socialized within working class communities. This also holds true for persons who are part of various diaspora communities.<sup>30</sup> Panjabi culture, like many cultures across the globe, is syncretic in content, constructing and constantly re-fashioning identity "in the present in relations with significant others", as Stewart (1997) points out above, in his analysis of Romani identity. By identifying this characteristic as a *peculiarly* Romani trait, ironically, anthropologists like Stewart may themselves inadvertently exoticize Roma. Moreover, this reticence to make connections to the language(s), cultural mores, and other aspects of *Romanipe* (the Romani way of life) with cognate cultural experiences in South Asia, Persia, and the Balkans (where their ancestors spent significant amounts of time) is puzzling. The construction of history has always been a project and a preserve of the elite.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, when Stewart exhorts us to attend to the Romanies' views of themselves, he also implicitly suggests that this view is somehow static and unchanging in one respect: that it cannot integrate knowledge of south Asian or Balkan heritage; whilst Romani cultures in Europe are 'whole' without any direct connection to 'mother India', it would be unwise to suggest, that, as a younger generation of educated Roma become more aware of the complex web of their ancestry, they would not wish to make meaning of this emerging knowledge base. Moreover, as Romani intellectuals – whether from

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<sup>30</sup>I have no idea of who my great-grandparents were. My knowledge of my family history stops at my grandparents, nor have I felt a particularly strong desire to dig up my genealogy, although I am curious about my mother's side of the family who hail from what is now Pakistan.

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, much early Indian historiography was researched and written by non-Indians, mainly British and other Europeans during the colonial era (apart from the diaries, memoirs, and travelogues of Greek, Persian, Chinese and Arabic scholars, travelers, and conquerors whose incursions pre-dated the British Empire in India).

‘traditional’ or ‘assimilated’ backgrounds - begin to analyze their current predicament in Europe today, the discussion in many cases leads to Eurocentrism, which, at its core, has also been an enduring edifice in the construction of racialized hierarchies across the globe, fitting hand-in-glove with colonialism (cf. Wallerstein 1997; Zoltan 2006; Trehan and Kóczé 2009; Galjuš 2008; Mile 2008).

The discussion above sheds light on another missing element in much of the contemporary scholarship within Romani studies: the silence surrounding power asymmetries. Unlike Lemon (2000), whose exceptionally rich anthropological work investigates and underscores the nuances of power and negotiation amongst Roma and *gaje* (non-Roma) in Soviet and Russian society at multiple levels, much of the contemporary research either ignores or obfuscates issues of knowledge/power (Foucault 1977; cf. Vermeersch 2005).

Recent scholarship on the subject of identity by Belton (2005: 7-11) sets up a ‘straw person’ argument, namely, that the English appellation ‘Gypsy’ (whether in its common little ‘g’ form or capitalized), refers to a problematic umbrella category referring to a variety of different ethnic groups that have erroneously (or for political reasons) been lumped together. Though I concur with this observation, I do not find it to be novel or innovative, as many scholars today working in the area share this view. He also elucidates further on the dangers of merging various Travelling groups into one category (Belton 2005: 18, citing Willems), raising concern on the social construction of Gypsy culture. That cultures are socially constructed, are contextual and dynamic, under-going constant negotiation with the environment and other forces is also not a particularly striking observation within contemporary scholarship (cf. Barth 1969).

For generations, European scholars have been studying the diversity amongst various Romani groups, and continue to be vexed by disputes over their classification. The actual peoples that the labels and umbrella categories refer to, whether they are self-ascriptions

such as 'Rom' or (sometimes) exonyms such as 'Traveller' (popular within UK administrative and policy circles, for example, the "Traveller Education Service"), know who they are, which family they are from, and so forth (cf. Clark 2006). Therefore, from a sociological perspective, self-knowledge poses a significant deterrent to potential obfuscations that may be generated about *real* Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers from those external to the community. It is the social scientist's task to deconstruct the origins of these labels and to respect (in my opinion) the self-appellations of various groups (for example, 'Sinti' or 'Kale').

Viewed from an Indic perspective, the diversity amongst Roma is perfectly logical, given the parallel linguistic, occupational and sub-cultural or group diversity present within the Indian subcontinent for millennia. Along with Ian Hancock (2008), I have consistently pointed out that contemporary Romani studies is in fact dominated by Eurocentric scholarship (whether consciously or subconsciously), and thus the contributions of scholars from different regions of the world (such as Iran and Western Asia) would need to be examined (and encouraged) in order to render a more complete picture of Romani historical narratives and their connection to contemporary lifeworlds (Trehan 1996; cf. Marsh 2009).

The pronounced absence of Romani voices participating *within* Romani studies is common to this day, as suggested by the attendance at meetings of professional bodies such as the *Gypsy Lore Society*, where it would be unusual to find more than a couple of Romani or Gypsy scholars themselves. Similar to research conducted on the "Other" over a century ago in Europe, contemporary research on Roma continues to be conducted almost entirely by scholars outside Romani communities, that is, by non-Roma. Said emphasizes that organizing and classifying knowledge about the Orient is *a mode of exercising authority* (Kohn 2006). As seen through the study of discursive practices in this thesis, the organization and classification of knowledge on Roma is invariably in



the hands of non-Roma. If we contrast the power asymmetries present within Romani studies to other disciplines, perhaps only those of the colonized world come close – such as African studies. Within Romani studies, the position of Romani scholars themselves has strong parallels with the position of African scholars in African studies programmes of the 1960s and 1970s when many peoples on the continent itself were struggling to overcome colonial rule (cf. Kenyatta 1938, 1965; Brailsford 1938).

As I discuss in subsequent chapters, Romani researchers and scholars themselves continue to be viewed as ‘objects’, and are rarely considered for full-fledged partnership on research projects conducted within their own communities (Zoltan 2006). Using Fanon’s critical insights on this subject, Kóczé and I suggest that this is another form of *infantilization* of Roma (Trehan and Kóczé 2009; cf. Schmitt 1996). The aforementioned dangers of neo-lorism and its discursive production will persist as long as critical Romani scholars and their perspectives are not included in the debate, and do not serve as a corrective to misinterpretations by those whose knowledge of the Romani life world is conjectural at best. The reasons for the exclusion of Romani perspectives is complex: many prominent Romani scholars are only too keen to participate, whilst some have become disillusioned and contribute to their own self-marginalisation by refusing to participate in mainstream debates which they perceive to be – perhaps correctly - hijacked by non-Roma. This is indeed a worrying trend, and is being contested by a new generation of independent scholars who have begun to write about these contentious dynamics of power openly (Oprea 2004; Trehan and Kóczé 2009; Kwiek 2008).

Furthermore, there are – broadly speaking - some national ‘traditions’ or ‘schools’ within Gypsy/Romani studies, usually led by scholars who act as influential gatekeepers for information and knowledge on Roma: in the UK, Professor Acton of the University of Greenwich, (where Romani studies was taught for more than a decade), teaches courses on identity, based on - amongst other aspects - commercial nomadism, and on a

spectrum of 'Gypsyiness' ranging from Irish Travellers to Domari and Nawar groups in Western Asia; in France, there is Marcel Courthiade's extensive body of scholarship in linguistics, who along with Jean-Pierre Liégeois, and contributors to the academic journal *Etudes Tsiganes*, have played a dominant role in French-language scholarship; in Italy, there is anthropologist Leonardo Piasere who has trained and supervised many young researchers; in Czech Republic there was the late Milena Hübschmannová, an Indologist who provided training in Romani language and exposure to Romani culture for a generation of young Czech scholars and social workers; and in Spain, there is a strong tradition of research on Gitanos in the disciplines of anthropology, education and social work (Gay y Blasco 1999, 2002; Fernández Enguita 1999; Laparra 2007). In Bulgaria, Elena Marushiaková and her husband Vesselin Popov founded *Studii Romani*, a Romani studies centre in Sofia in the early 1990s which specializes in Balkan Romani culture and history. There is also an annual summer course in Romani studies at the Central European University (Budapest), led by British anthropologist Michael Stewart and Hungarian sociologist János Ladányi. Perhaps most significantly, there is the *Romani Archives and Documentation Center (RADOC)* at The University of Texas at Austin. Developed by Ian Hancock, a distinguished linguist who was the first scholar to teach Romani language and culture courses in the United States in the 1990s, his efforts have culminated in an endowed chair in Romani studies, as well as a doctoral programme on the subject. He is the only scholar amongst those named above who is of Romani ethnicity and has a full-time academic post.

### ***Towards the development of a critical Romani studies***

As alluded to earlier, as interest in Romani issues has been increasing, so have the number of PhD theses on Roma and Romani-related issues (cf. Kovats 1998, Pinnock 1999, Vermeersch 2003, Klímová 2005, Sobotka 2003). In addition, mainstream social

science journals are also accepting for publication more articles in the field (cf. *Sociology, Ethnic & Racial Studies, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*). Book-length publications in English are also on the rise from various speciality (cf. Romani studies, University of Hertfordshire and Interface collection) and mainstream academic publishers (Bergahn, Palgrave and Routledge). Nonetheless, much of this intellectual production remains disconnected to and uncontested by Romani people themselves, and examining the implications of this is worthy of further research itself (Lee 1998; Hancock 2007; Trehan and Kóczé 2009). Given its problematic ‘Gypsylorist’ lineage, in recent years, Romani studies appears to be slowly taking a ‘critical turn’ with the emergence of the work of critical Romani scholars - including Roma - who are now at the forefront of examining issues of epistemology and ontology within the field, as well as a critique of power-knowledge asymmetries (Lee 2005; Hancock 2006; Kóczé 1999; Kwiek 2008; Lemon 2000; Oprea 2005; Zoltan 2006). As was shown earlier, Romani interlocutors are effectively disengaged from mainstream academic discourse on Roma. Although Roma figure prominently as the *objects* of research, unlike other groups in society, they rarely engage in the dialectical process of affirming and/or contesting the knowledge which is generated about them, on their behalf, or even in quest of the elusive ‘neutral’ advancement of science and scholarship.<sup>32</sup> The works and insights of critical Romani public intellectuals emphasise these lacunae and oversights, and thus work to counter-act the structural violence their communities confront, foregrounded at the level of discourse. Perhaps it should come as no surprise then that many of the younger generation of emerging scholar-activists, as a result of their intimate experience with *multiple forms of oppression*, are women, and their interventions to the discourse are the most trenchant (Kozma INT: 1999; Oprea 2004; Zoltan 2006).

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<sup>32</sup>As Wallerstein illuminates, “The idea that science is over here and sociopolitical decisions are over there is a core concept that sustains Eurocentrism, since the only universalist propositions that have been acceptable are those which are Eurocentric” (1997: 9).

Nonetheless, it remains a truism that both critical scholarship and even scholarly activism are a 'luxury' for most Roma, including those who are organic intellectuals. Apart from a tiny number of elite entrepreneurs - both of the classical business variety (usually disengaged from formal politics and thus out of public view), and the new variety of human rights entrepreneur whose interventions are examined in this thesis, most Roma are too busy coping with the realities of declining socio-economic security within a post-socialist Europe characterized by neoliberal policy prerogatives. In Chapters Six and Seven, I discuss the visible trend of the past decade where Romani intellectuals have joined the dynamic non-governmental sector in post-socialist Europe in large numbers.

In summation, key literatures that constitute an emerging 'Critical Romani studies' stress the importance of mainstreaming this interdisciplinary field, thereby exposing it to as wide an audience as possible to undergo scholarly scrutiny (cf. Kovats 2001b). Foucault's (1977; 1979) insights on power/knowledge dynamics and their consequences for governmentality, offer us an understanding of how knowledge generated on Roma has been used as an instrument of power to define and confine policy design, implementation, and outcomes. The bulk of reports, statistics and other forms of literature on Roma and their situation in society are generated by elite NGOs, governmental bodies, and academics. The majority of this intellectual and policy production is currently *external* to the Romani community, with very little input by Romani people themselves (Romani elites are an exception to this rule as their voices are 'managed' rather successfully by power elites within the field). Overcoming the twin legacies of Eurocentrism and Gypsylorism is a huge challenge in countering the epistemic violence generated by previous scholarship on Romani peoples.

## 2.4 Struggling for truth: countering epistemic violence

*The Roma...should not be regarded simply as the passive objects of experiments in social engineering throughout different historical periods. They live within the broader macro-society and are affected by its many varied influences (economic, political, ideological, etc.) which have had a marked impact on the development of their community. This development is uneven, multi-directional, sometimes even contradictory...*- Marushiakova and Popov 2001: 47.

In this thesis, I have combined a critical sociological perspective on human rights and Romani studies in order to highlight the reality of epistemic violence which Roma are subjected to within contemporary academia (Guha and Spivak 1988). I have done so in order to explain and contest the epistemological boundaries of current scholarship in Romani studies whose foundation can be traced back to Gypsylorism.

Given the exigencies of contemporary Romani existence today, academic work on Roma cannot be a purely disengaged 'scholarly' pursuit, for the very products of scholarly output on Roma impinge upon policy-making, potentially affecting the lives of countless numbers of people. For a conglomeration of diverse communities within Europe who are consistently labeled as being something other than what they truly are, and for a people whose destiny has been systematically wrested from outside their own control, the interventions of the scholar-translator-interpreter of the Romani lifeworld deserve far more than superficial scrutiny (cf. Hancock 1997). A further exploration of some of the dilemmas inherent to research in this area is undertaken in Chapter 3, which covers issues of research methodology and methods, including ethical dimensions of the work.

## CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY, METHODS, AND SOURCES

### 3.1 Antecedents to the research and methodological considerations

#### *Case study Hungary: trans-European implications*

Though the ‘meta-universe’ for my research is contemporary Europe, I focused on the situation in post-socialist Hungary as a primary case study in order to investigate the transformation from an entrenched discourse on the ‘Gypsy problem’ to the construction of an oppositional discourse of Roma as an oppressed minority group struggling for their human rights.

Where appropriate, empirical data from other post-socialist countries was employed a) to underline the diversity of the discourse(s), and b) to highlight - by contrast - the uniqueness of one country’s policy or experience, particularly that of Hungary. In addition, I placed a strong emphasis on the broad trans-European implications of this study. In all post-socialist European countries, it may be argued, Roma are perceived in popular culture as ‘deviant’ members of society, and human rights activists purport to contest this characterization.<sup>33</sup> Apart from Hungary’s accession to the wealthiest political bloc globally (the European Union) in 2004, another reason one cannot so easily separate Hungary from the rest of Europe is because of the now evolving discourse on ‘Romani rights’ which has become part of a broader liberal human rights consciousness to emerge – and converge – in an era of globalization (Brysk 2002; Evans 2005; Guilhot 2005; Klímová 2005; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Sobotka 2003). Simultaneously,

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<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, though human rights entrepreneurs across the EU defend Roma in this way, there are significant differences in how Romani culture is conceptualized, and thus in what manner policy is generated by policy-makers. In the case of Western Europe, many Romani communities are still perceived solely as ‘nomads’, that is, they are categorized as itinerants or those with a ‘traditional nomadic way of life’ for whom caravan sites must be built: this elides quite nicely with segregationist policies at the local level based on virulent anti-Gypsyism. However, in eastern Europe, the Roma are perceived as a population which is settled, and thus in need of brick and mortar housing along with other citizens; nonetheless, broader spatial segregation and the rising privatization of the housing sector has exacerbated Romani marginalisation since the end of actually existing socialism. Currently, Roma are bearing the brunt of an evictions crisis all across post-socialist Europe (cf. COHRE 2006).

transnational capitalist flows and investments into Hungary since the early 1990s have ensured that the country cannot be separated from the rest of Europe since its domestic socio-economic policy priorities must now be subordinated to the market logic of Euro-Atlantic neoliberal policy agendas (Chen and Churchill 2005; Gowan 1996). I discuss the implications of the confluence of neoliberalism and human rights in Chapters Six and Seven.

As a result of the spread of information technologies, as well as financing from private philanthropies, states, multilateral institutions, and the European Union, the phenomenon of 'international Romani activism' has become pronounced in the last decade (cf. Klímová 2005; Sobotka 2003; Vermeersch 2006). During the course of my fieldwork between 1999 and 2001, from Brussels to Budapest, conferences were held almost weekly on a broad range of issues connected to the human rights of Roma, as the internet became a popular means of disseminating information and promoting advocacy amongst various participants in the 'Roma rights' movement. These conferences and workshops usually focused on education, legal rights, culture and identity, and occasionally, on social integration. A notable focus on employment issues - including discrimination in the labour market - emerged only relatively recently, though much of this discourse continues to be effectively decoupled from a discussion of structural economic exclusion (Kállai and Törzsök 2000; ERRC 2006; TÁRKI 2005; Zoltan 2006). In addition, public forums tended to be divided along linguistic lines as well, whereby those workshops sponsored by INGOs or multilateral agencies were conducted usually in English, and if they had the resources for translation, in Hungarian and/or Romani. This ensured that members of the 'international human rights community' were in attendance; nevertheless, these forums generally excluded non-elite Romani voices. Conversely, there were many lectures and workshops in Hungarian alone, attracting more Roma and Hungarians. These were forums where the elites of Hungarian society

(lawyers, constitutional experts, journalists, and other intellectuals) rubbed shoulders with organic intellectuals from the Romani community, many of whom would come from outside of Budapest. In many instances, these Romani community representatives were local leaders in the Minority (Gypsy) Self-Government (MSG), teachers and sometimes, social workers. Unsurprisingly, events which were solely in Hungarian were rarely attended by INGO workers and foreigners, so that what one experienced was the construction of parallel, but disconnected discourses. There were elites (both Roma and non-Roma) who at times attended both, and thus acted as bridges between these two communities. Many of the meetings sponsored by multilateral agencies were 'invitation only', and this ensured that only a few select Romani elites would be proffered possibilities for engagement with the debate, and for representing the 'Romani voice'.

It is crucial to understand at this juncture that Hungary is one of the most visibly 'Romani-sensitive' states in contemporary Europe. This has to do with Hungary's own minorities policy, codified over a decade ago with the passage of the Law on Ethnic and National Minorities (1993), which reflected both a keen nationalist interest in the fate of ethnic Hungarian communities in neighbouring countries (connected to its post-Trianon history which resulted in substantial loss of territory and people), as well as – paradoxically – the growing influence of a liberal civil society in Hungary which pushed the government for key legislative reforms in the areas of civil and political rights for Hungary's minorities (cf. Kovats 1998; Blanka 1999: INT; Stewart 2001; Vermeersch 2006). For over a decade now, the post-socialist Hungarian state has been keen to demonstrate its 'goodwill' on the rights of its Romani minority, both nationally, and within the European Union as a new member state, as it realized early on that the Copenhagen criteria (amongst other legislative yardsticks) would be used to measure its preparedness for membership to the European Union.



Another practical reason for focusing on Hungary is because of my familiarity with the research landscape there. In 1992, several years before my human rights work for the *European Roma Rights Center*, I completed a three-month public policy exchange programme for my M.A. in public policy at the University of Texas at Austin, and then conducted postgraduate research for seven months in 1995 on minority educational policy vis-à-vis Roma. In particular, the latter experience enabled me to build up a strong rapport with key Hungarian and international figures in the emancipation movement for Roma. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the city of Budapest emerged as a center for Europe-wide civil society activity on Romani issues. Numerous national institutions (both governmental, non-governmental, Romani and non-Romani led), INGOs, and multilateral agencies specializing in CEE countries are located in the heart of the city (ERRC, IOM, NEKI, HHC, etc), and access to these organizations proved relatively straightforward during the course of my fieldwork.

### ***Methodological considerations***

Problems related to data collection and interpretation, such as the translation of materials and concepts from Hungarian to English were given due consideration. Indeed, key terms such as ‘civil society’, ‘democratisation’, and ‘human rights’ have linguistically specific, culturally contextualized meanings, exhibiting particular forms in post-socialist societies. For example, in Hungarian, the word for ‘politics’ and ‘policy’ are the same – *politika* - and only through context can one discern the meaning. In addition, during the interviews, there was the further problem of *tacit knowledge* (cf. Polanyi 1973) whereby with some of the interviewees and informants, I attempted to make explicit (through various linguistic cues) what in my previous interaction with them during the course of my human rights work for the ERRC had only been made implicit. To illustrate, during some dialogic conversations with Romani representatives, I used the word *kizsákmányolás*

(exploitation) in the context of the 'Roma rights' movement. As I was to find out later on, this word is now considered a quaint term suggestive of the previous regime's socialist ideologies – and is therefore rarely used within the liberalist public discourse today (Vidra 2007, personal communication). I noticed that when I used this term, in some instances my interlocutor's eyes would become wider, and there would be a wry smile appearing on their face (Kozma 1999: INT; Horváth 1999: INT).

### *Ethical dilemmas within the research*

Bourdieu's...micro theory of social power...aimed at an anti-essentialism that would reveal all the sources of domination, but especially that symbolic or genteel violence used by the dominant to legitimate their power. Such an approach enables the sociologist to analyse cultural relations in society without imbuing the reader with the anti-humanist melancholy so prevalent in post-modern academics - Fowler (2000), cited in Formosa (2002).

There are ethical issues that are particularly relevant to my research, as it looks at the lifeworld of a marginalised group who have remained in a powerless position for most of their history in Europe, and who have an on-going 'image problem'. During the interview process with both Roma and non-Roma interviewees, I took care to make clear that this information would be used for my analysis of the current social transformation, and respected interviewees' right to confidentiality when requested. The field of 'Romani Rights' and other issues revolving around Roma are politically sensitive topics of research within Hungary, as well as throughout Europe as the European Union expands both eastwards and southwards. The vast majority of my interviewees were, however, public figures and NGO entrepreneurs who have given numerous interviews and in some cases, have had much of their ideas published in the public domain (through conference proceedings, the internet, and the press), and it was important for me to credit them.

As addressed in Chapter Two, the legacy of Gypsyloist thought in the guise of contemporary neolorism continues to influence the Romani studies field, requiring

therefore a robust anti-essentialist and reflexive approach. The fact that the quantity of publications on Romani issues is on the rise does not necessarily translate into a strengthening of *Romani agency* within the process of the production of this knowledge, nor does it mean that the publications themselves will render epistemological shifts in conventional (stereotyped) thinking on Romani populations and their lifeworld. Too many assertions within the field remain conflated, simplified, and unsubstantiated as a result of the absence of academic ‘checks and balances’, suggesting the need for disciplinary rigour as well as cross-disciplinary scholarly reflexivity (cf. Kovats 2001b; Barány 2002; Zoltan 2006). This first problem of conflation is quite a widespread one. An author may publish a solid monograph on the life of one Romani community or one particular phenomenon within a community in CEE, and then the ‘findings’ or ‘insights’ are taken as *a priori representative of all Romani experiences everywhere*, ultimately becoming decontextualised from their very source (cf. Mayall 2004). Given the tremendous diversity within the Romani lifeworld that cuts across class, language/dialect, geography, and occupation amongst other interstices, this form of reductionism can pose grave dangers when translated into policy vis-à-vis Roma. These inherent dangers convey the importance of scholarly accountability towards the impact or repercussions of publications in the field, that is, the consequences of our generative knowledge output. This *ethical* commitment suggests something beyond merely ticking a box saying that “consent was obtained by all respondents involved”, it encourages, indeed, necessitates *a deeper self-reflection* on the part of the researcher as to her or his own privileged role in constructing image(s) of, as well as knowledge about Roma and the social field(s) surrounding them, as these may eventually be employed by policy-makers, both domestic and international. The insights of feminist scholarship (Bailey 2007; Oprea 2004; Mauthner and Edwards 2007) and colonial and post-colonial studies add impetus to this commitment. Moreover, this ‘threshold of engagement’ is necessarily fluid, and

constantly changing as younger Romani scholars pose challenges within the field (Oprea 2004; Lemon 2000). Finally, as stated earlier, the issue of informed consent is particularly crucial, as Romani informants - more than most – continue to remain vulnerable to exploitation and objectification in this regard. Therefore, I have not used the names of my interlocutors from those conversations which were clearly sensitive in nature, and have instead retained their anonymity (at times with the use of pseudonyms). However, with respect to public figures or key NGO activists, I do acknowledge their contributions in public forums and moreover, with respect to the interviews (the majority of which were recorded and transcribed afterwards), I made it clear that the data would be used for purposes of my thesis and would credit them. I also promised to keep ‘off record’ or to anonymize particular data when requested to do so. Many of my interlocutors were prominent activists within ‘Roma rights’ who have become adept at given interviews to both scholars and journalists.

### **3.2 Methods and sources**

Travers (2001: 2) summarises five key methods used for data collection and analysis in qualitative research: *observation, interviewing, ethnographic fieldwork, discourse analysis and textual analysis*. Employing all of these methods, I adapted techniques of participant observation, in-depth interviews (both with elites and non-elites), and textual analysis of a variety of written documents, including both official and non-governmental.

#### ***Participant observation: the intricacies of an active membership role***

Marvasti notes that “roles are based on epistemological choices, structural necessities, and personal characteristics and preferences” (2004: 51). As mentioned in the preface, I was in the unique position of being an active participant in the ‘Roma rights’ movement itself, having worked intensively for two years at the ERRC in 1996 and 1997.

Nonetheless, as a sociological researcher (as distinct from being a human rights researcher) I was conscious – upon returning to the same ‘field’ where I had previously worked – of my new reflexive and critical role. Gradually, I also became aware of the privileges, the symbolic and social capital I was granted as soon as I spoke, as a Western-educated foreigner and as a native English speaker, but also due to the symbolic power that came with being from the United States; being an American in Eastern Europe in the 1990s – and in effect, having moved from a ‘global centre’ (London) to do research in the ‘periphery’ (though within its relative universe, urban Budapest is definitely not a peripheral space) – particularly in light of the neo-colonized space of Eastern Europe in the 1990s (Gowan 1996; Trehan and Kóczé 2009). In my interviews with Hungarian government officials and specialists in the areas of legal and constitutional reform for example, being an American was a distinct advantage, as it conferred upon me an *entrée* which I might not have had, say, for example, if I was an Indian citizen. It is important to remember that at this time, Hungary was a recipient of various forms of American largesse, including USAID sponsorship, and was keen to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which it eventually became a member of in March 1999.<sup>34</sup> In addition, when I interviewed human rights entrepreneurs (including employees – past or present – of the ERRC and OSI), I was cognizant of doing so as an American.

On the other hand, as an American woman of Indian birth and (partial) Indian upbringing, I was imbued with a sense similar to Dubois’s (1965) “double-consciousness” within the Black diaspora, and this cognizance, this prism of seeing myself through another’s eyes was something I had in common with Roma in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>For the government’s exposition of the importance of Hungary’s membership to NATO, see the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Hungary, available in English at [http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/foreign\\_policy/security\\_policy/hungary\\_in\\_nato/history\\_\\_hungarian\\_nato\\_relations/](http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/foreign_policy/security_policy/hungary_in_nato/history__hungarian_nato_relations/)

<sup>35</sup>Without meaning to essentialise Romani culture(s), or to misrepresent phenomenon by conflation, I would have to confess, that by transporting myself to my childhood in Panjab, amongst Indians, as well as

That is to say, as an Indian woman in diaspora, I was already conscious of the global struggles of various other minority groups and diasporas, and thus when I first encountered 'Roma rights', I had a particular (subconscious) schema that I could place the struggles of Roma into. In the beginning, this process was perhaps not very critical or reflexive, but as time passed this led to an understanding of the complexities and nuances of phenomenon *particular to Roma* in post-socialist Europe, phenomena that generally defied easy categorization or full explanation. Furthermore, being a woman, I was conscious of the gendered space(s) occupied by those within the movement, and these were noted in my fieldwork.<sup>36</sup> One of the mechanisms I used to get informants to 'open up' was heightening rapport through self-disclosure, and using various techniques applied by reflexive anthropologists, including auto-ethnography (Marvasti 2004: 47). As the majority of my interviewees' were familiar with me already in my previous role as a human rights researcher and educator within the ERRC, I was prompted to create a fuller identity for myself before them as a sociological researcher interested to record and witness the movement. Thus, I revealed my own childhood experiences with racism in the United States during the course of my conversations in an attempt to contextualize my personal interest in 'Roma rights'. Indeed, upon reflection, my childhood experiences with issues of 'race' in the United States had indeed been one of the key motivating factors for me to take up work as a professional human rights researcher and trainer.

In addition, as a member of the Indian (Panjabi) diaspora, and myself a native speaker of Hindi, which is also a Sanskrit-based language similar to Romani, and having experienced

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my Indian family in diaspora, many things would begin to make immediate sense. Despite the tremendous diversity in both communities/cultures, there are strong linguistic and metaphorical elements in common between Panjabi and Romani languages, as well as cultural mores, such as the notion of ritual pollution. My class privilege, and to an extent my 'American-ness', did however mitigate the burden of 'otherness' which comes from this understanding of double-consciousness. Although I discuss some key gendered dimensions to my research, a fuller exploration of these has been saved for future research.

<sup>36</sup> Many Roma were curious about why I was not yet married, and in some cases, tried to arrange 'dates' for me. At one point, I took to wearing a gold ring so that I would not receive any more questions (in fact, it was my kaleechari ring, a symbolic ring given to the sister of the bride by the groom, and had been a present from my brother-in-law). But most people assumed I had a partner when I wore the ring.

multiple migrations in my life, I could bring an array of insights similar to those some Roma themselves experience (not necessarily out of choice, one could add). In this sense, I had experiences similar to a Japanese-American anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in Japan during the early 1980s. Although she did not speak Japanese, she was constantly reminded by her subjects that she looked Japanese, and because of her physiognomy, she was treated differently than white foreigners (Kondo 1990). As someone who was already a multiple migrant (having resided for many years in India, the United States, and Hungary), and being part of an Indic diaspora myself, I could not but think differently about Romani issues than others educated in the West and particularly other foreigners who were white and non-Roma. That was what immediately differentiated me from the other non-Roma in the ERRC, for example.

Moreover, during my field research, as well as my previous experiences with the ERRC, first as a human rights researcher for one year, and then as a human rights educator for another, I engaged in numerous informal conversations with key dissidents and activists about their earlier human rights interventions, and was able to experience first-hand the climate of anti-Gypsyism in the mid-1990s. Being perceived as a Romani woman at times, there were numerous occasions when I experienced (and felt) what Roma themselves experience on a daily basis. Here, I will provide only two examples of 'everyday racism' that one encounters if one is Romani. The first involves an incident from 1995 at the railway station in Pécs, a city in the south of the country with a picturesque centre. It was while I was a postgraduate exchange student with IIE (International Institute for Education), and I happened to be with a young Beash Gypsy woman who was then eighteen years-of-age. We were waiting for her foster father to arrive on the train from Budapest. It was approximately 8 pm, and we were approached by two young Hungarian men who, as quickly became apparent, were drunk. At the time, my Hungarian language was quite basic, and so I did not understand what they were

saying, but they started yelling at us, chanting what I later learned were nationalist slogans: “You don’t belong here [get out]!” and “Hungary for Hungarians!” At that moment, I realized that I was perceived as Romani: I happened to be wearing a long black skirt with folds, which was, ironically, a traditional dress from Hungarian Transylvania, and moreover, both of us are darker than the average Hungarian. My young friend quickly grabbed my hand and told me to run from the station with her. I turned around and stared at the young men, and began to feel angry, wanting to say something in our defence, but followed her advice.

The second experience was on St. Stephen’s Day, about five years later, in August 2000, and like most people in Budapest that day, I had gone out to the Danube river (by bike) to catch a bit of the traditional fireworks on display. I did not take much notice of being alone, I know Budapest fairly well, and indeed, consider it one of my ‘homes’. After watching the fireworks display (which usually last for about half an hour or so), I went to get my bicycle which was parked on a railing adjacent to the famous Chain Bridge (*láncíd*) near Adam Clark Square on the Buda side of the city. As I proceeded to unlock my bicycle, a tall Hungarian man of middle-class appearance who was passing by with his girlfriend stopped next to me, paused for a few seconds, and said sardonically, *Ígyen egyszerű ellopni egy biciklit?*” (Is it really this easy to steal a bicycle?), and then he laughed and walked off. It took me a few seconds to register what he had actually meant to say, but the fact that his intention was to ‘control me’ and put me in ‘my place’ was clear enough. Again, I had to swallow my anger at this old label of ‘thief’ which is commonly foisted upon Roma. Needless to say, these experiences of ‘elegant racism’ in Hungary (cf. Kóczé 2004: INT) were demeaning, and had a profound impact on my understanding of the forms and functions of anti-Gypsyism, even at its most ‘benign’ level.

As a woman of colour, I was able to relate to the narratives of many of my Romani interlocutors (both men and women), and willingly shared my personal experiences of



oppression and racism in both the United States and Europe. Nonetheless, I was cognizant of the 'class dimensions' which separated me from the majority of Roma, and of my privileged position as a middle-class, university-educated woman from an Indian diasporic family settled in the United States. I attended, and on appropriate occasions, participated, in meetings sponsored by NGOs and Romani activists in Budapest as well as in towns throughout the country such as Szolnok, Pécs, and Debrecen. These included participation in public forums such as the Roma Café, which was a regular, if sporadic, discussion group beginning in the late 1990s by Aladár Horváth (director of *Roma Foundation for Civil Rights*) and other colleagues from the vibrant Romani NGO sector. At the Roma Café, activists passionately debated and discussed key themes such as school segregation of Romani children, legislative reforms, media policy, and other topical issues of the day (cf. Pogány 2004). Many of these forums were held in cultural centres, and were commonly followed by music and Romani folk dance performances which attracted a multi-generational audience (complete with young children encouraged to go dance on stage). Indeed, these events – which combined both art and politics – comprised the lifeblood of a key segment of Romani civil society in Budapest. It was attendance in these venues where I gathered an appreciation for what both elite and non-elite Roma in Hungary were thinking about, their ideas and interests, their problems, and their visions for the future. Interestingly, one of my informants recently told me that I was perceived as an 'eccentric type' by some people in the field – including many Roma who would (perhaps self-deprecatingly) wonder "who in their right mind would want to study us?" I was also considered to be humourous, and indeed, I did use irony or jokes to break ice at times.

Perhaps most crucially, as a sociological researcher, I was able to overcome my previous problem of conflicting loyalties. I had been part of the NGO world whose impact I was now interrogating, and I had empathized with the cause of Romani empowerment and

had witnessed first-hand the contradictions of my work within a human rights NGO not offering much space for autonomy or self-direction for Roma themselves. I could now view the situation from the outside, and realized that I could attempt to be 'objective' about the power asymmetries I witnessed. Nevertheless, my field role was complex at multiple levels: former NGO worker, sociological researcher, sympathetic witness. At times, some of my Romani interlocutors wondered whether I was a Romani woman from the US who was hiding her cultural heritage deliberately.<sup>37</sup> The other extreme was the suggestion, once made to me by a prominent Romani NGO activist in Hungary (only in partial jest), that as an American citizen, it was possible that I was an undercover Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent. The sheer surreality of my research role and reception in the field was astounding at times.<sup>38</sup> Thus, autobiographical narratives and experiences within the NGO sector are important to highlight in order to engage in scholarship reflexively.

### *Interviews and conversations*

My functional knowledge of the Hungarian and Romani languages expanded the repertoire of interaction within the field, enabling me to conduct interviews and hold conversations with a broad range of interlocutors. My interviews with key informants were a combination of both open-ended in-depth interviews which in many cases were supplemented with prior field interaction in NGO work and/or social gatherings, as well as ethnographic interviews, in which 'observations from the field [were used] to assess the meaning and relevance of interview data' (Marvasti 2004: 22).

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<sup>37</sup> This also happened to me on several occasions in Skopje, Macedonia where I worked with Kosovan Romani refugees as a part of a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) project for nine months in 2002.

<sup>38</sup> In retrospect, this does not appear to be as far-fetched or fanciful an idea as I initially imagined. Lindsay Moran, a Harvard graduate who had befriended Romani intellectuals in Skopje, Macedonia during her job as an American foreign service officer from 1998-2003, was indeed working for the CIA, gathering information on ethnic tensions in the Balkans. She eventually published a book - *Blowing My Cover* - about her experiences as a CIA operative (Moran 2005) in which she discusses her interaction with Roma.

25 semi-structured interviews with key framers and participants of 'Roma Rights' (both Hungarian and international figures), with media policy-makers, and with key government officers were conducted (see list of key interviews on page 251-253).

Following, McCracken (1990), I conducted long interviews with open-ended questions as prompts which focused on the phenomenon of 'Roma rights', discrimination against Roma, and government policy and NGO activity, all contextualized with particular reference to my interviewees' various positions within the field. Thus, in interviewing a Hungarian government officer from the socialist era, I was interested in their knowledge of the continuities of experience; this actually held true for most of my informants who were over thirty-five and had some first-hand adulthood experience of the socialist era in Hungary. One advantage of this interview technique was that "...by not limiting respondents to a fixed set of answers (as in a survey), *in-depth interviewing has the potential to reveal multiple, and sometimes conflicting attitudes about a given topic*" (Marvasti 2004: 21, emphasis mine). I also held innumerable, informal conversations with various activists and participants in the movement from different life paths. These included young Romani college students (many of whom were involved with *Romaversitas*, an 'invisible college' for Hungarian Roma in Budapest), Romani musicians at various venues, Romani leaders in various towns in the countryside (eastern and southern Hungary in particular), along with the 'usual suspects' or elite Roma who are the visible representatives in public. I also paid informal visits to various Romani homes and met with 'average' Romani families (those not participating directly in the 'movement' per se).

### ***Documentary and archival data***

Within the research field in Hungary, focus was placed on important works related to 'Roma rights' and Hungarian Romani communities. The large body of literature produced over the past decade within the Romani-related non-governmental sphere has

been fundamental to my work, as have documents produced officially by the Hungarian state and intergovernmental bodies. Written (textual) data was collected from monographs, journals, and other publications in the fields of political science, sociology, anthropology and social psychology, as well as additional works by economists and linguists. The corpus of literature produced (primarily after 1985) within the Romani-related non-governmental sphere in Hungary, along with official documents published by the Hungarian state and European intergovernmental bodies were assessed.

In addition, with respect to the discourse on the 'Gypsy problem', data was collected from both Hungarian and other international press sources; electronic listserves such as Romnet and Romanonet, as well as key websites on Roma; reports published by government offices; and academic articles dealing with various human rights issues.

With reference to the discourse on 'Roma Rights', the newsletters and human rights reports of the *European Roma Rights Center* (primarily from 1996 to 2005) were analysed. A content analysis of relevant human rights reports by the *Human Rights Watch* were conducted, along with a study of the annual reports and publications of approximately six major NGOs dealing almost exclusively with Romani rights issues. I analysed the materials gathered and investigated the claims of all participants in both discursive frameworks, that is, 'Romani rights' and the 'Gypsy problem'.

In addition, throughout this thesis, I have incorporated illustrations of various types of visual documentation that have been relevant to the creation of the discourse on the 'Gypsy problem', and by contrast, 'Roma rights'.

#### ***Access to archival data: OSA fellowship***

During the summer of 1999, a research fellowship with the *Open Society Archives*, housed at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, afforded me access to primary research materials at two archives in Budapest: the Hungarian National Archives, where I

accessed government documents from the socialist period, and the archives of the CEU, enabling me to investigate nascent human rights (dissident) ideologies in late socialist Hungary. NGO reports and scientific studies from the 1990s were reviewed; indeed, Hungary has a solid tradition in statistical research, in particular, the collection of census data. I also reviewed a comprehensive sample of articles from the Hungarian press and primary periodicals, focusing on the subject of discourses on Roma during the socialist Kádár regime.

### 3.3 Data analysis

Using an inductive approach to the sociological questions posed above, theory arose from qualitative, empirical research, whereby theory evolves through the research process and does so through "...the continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 273). My primary data was broadly divided into three research clusters:

- 1) Interviews with human rights entrepreneurs and elites
- 2) Texts which constitute 'Roma rights' discourses (primarily in English, but some were in Hungarian)
- 3) Archival materials and government documents in Hungary (as referred to above).

With respect to the analysis of the first category of interviews, my key objective was to obtain an understanding of the influence and transmission of human rights ideologies in contemporary Hungary. With respect to the second category of texts, these were primarily publications generated by Hungarian or international NGOs such as NEKI's *White Booklets* from 1994 to 2005, and the ERRC's *Roma Rights* (which began as a newsletter in 1996, but became a human rights quarterly by 1998); indeed, due to its global distribution, the latter has played a hegemonic role in the production and diffusion of human rights discourses vis-à-vis Roma for an English-speaking, cosmopolitan

audience. Here, I was interested in assessing the primary discourses generated, as well as observing their ideological trajectories (and if possible, tracing their origins). I examined the construction of 'Roma rights' and the frameworks used by human rights entrepreneurs as I was keen to understand if, for example, civil and political rights discourses were privileged over those of social and economic rights. In addition, it was important for me to see how 'Romani victimisation' was portrayed by the human rights entrepreneurs. Were the narratives of human rights violations vis-à-vis Roma dry and legalistic? Or were they infused with a more nuanced contextualization generally found wanting in human rights reporting? Was the Romani voice included in the text, and if so, how was this done? The final category of Hungarian documents were used heavily in Chapters Four and Five, as I attempted to create a genealogy of the activities of dissidents and activists in Hungary, as well as to investigate the birth of neoliberal human rights entrepreneurship.

### *Discourse analysis*

Whilst conducting an analysis of discursive frameworks, with a particular focus on the transformation from 'Gypsy problem' to 'Roma rights', I used techniques and insights of sorting and analyzing through 'key themes' as suggested by McCracken (1988). I identified primary concepts and constructions within the discursive framework of my interviews and textual materials, and then organised these clusters of concepts in order to ensure as comprehensive a presentation of the data as possible. I also employed the insights of Teun van Dijk (1993) on critical discourse analysis when interrogating discursive frameworks generated by elites, and their connection to (at times) subtle racist trajectories. In summary, I conducted both textual analysis and critical discourse analysis of documentary materials from newspaper articles, NGO publications, and a smaller number of government reports on Romani integration policies and programmes. In the

subsequent chapter, I cover the primary discourses on Roma in Hungary during the socialist era, focusing on a number of key themes. The primary themes of education, health, and labour policy which emerged in the 1950s are once again re-surfacing in post-socialist Hungary, and the continuity of these discourses from the past will also be explored.

## CHAPTER FOUR - DISCURSIVE AND POLITICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE 'TRANSITION' ERA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE 'GYPSY PROBLEM' TO 'ROMA RIGHTS'

### 4.1 Introduction: a discursive chronology of the 'Gypsy problem'

*Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-besitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, 'I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil?' At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.*

- W.E.B. Dubois (1897) *The Souls of Black Folk*

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, the discursive construction of Gypsies<sup>39</sup> as 'problems' has been deeply embedded in European popular and scientific discourses (including in the UK) for several centuries. History is replete with examples of customary and legal exclusion of Romani communities in European territories. Although perhaps not termed consistently as the 'Gypsy problem' (*cigány probléma* in Hungarian), the use of this phraseology to describe how Roma are *a priori* perceived as incompatible with European society, and their perceived *otherness*, dates back to at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was a time of Empire for a number of European powers, including the Habsburgs. In some discursive constructions, the term 'problem' was perhaps more of a synonym for the French noun *problématique*, especially as used by folklorists, 'Gypsylorists', and other Orientalists (Bussell 1919; Hancock 2000: 9). Although not 'overtly' racist perhaps, this

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<sup>39</sup> Roma became known as Gypsies from 'Egyptians'. One current theory, following up on Ken Lee's (2005: 33-38) criticisms of conventional theories on the subject, surmises that since their ancestors traveled through Egypt Minor (which also included Mediterranean lands), they announced themselves as people from 'Little Egypt' upon their arrival to Europe (Fraser 1992; Marsh and Strand 2006). To this day, many Romani communities use the term 'Gypsy' or its equivalent to refer to themselves.



type of usage was certainly pregnant with the power of ‘othering’ and objectification. In other cases, however, its usage implied the inferiority and deviance of Roma, and left a damaging legacy which reinforces Romani subalterity to this day (Crowe 2000; Trehan and Kóczé 2009). Although the Hungarian state was never a ‘coloniser’ vis-à-vis the Romani communities in the classical sense of the term, the governance and regulation of Romani communities has been a continuous reality throughout European history. Thus, the strong homogenising aspects of the nation-state<sup>40</sup> and the cultural subordination of Romani communities emanating from this have contributed to a subalterity of Romani lifeworlds, as well as diverse forms of epistemic violence directed squarely upon them (Spivak 1988; Zoltan 2006).

There are notable parallels with discourses constructed on European Jewry and that of European Roma: the ‘wandering Jew’ stereotype of the Middle Ages; the ‘Jewish question’ (*Judenfrage* in German) raised in debates about the integration of Jews in Europe; as well as the literature produced on Jewish ‘emancipation’, mainly by Jewish intellectuals themselves (Felsenstein 1999; Marx and Ruge 1844; McCagg 1989). The critical difference between the Jewish and the Romani case is that with respect to the latter, these mythical social constructions continue to be hegemonic in the contemporary European *imaginarium* of Roma, for example, even to the point where *Romani culture* is itself perceived as *synonymous with* nomadism. In contrast, many of the aforementioned social constructions on European Jewry are now viewed as points of historical interest alone, with the possible exception of the experience of Russian Jewry in the past decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>40</sup> In connection to this, the Habsburgs also enacted strong regulatory measures targeting Romanies within its territory, and in addition, although the Socialist regime renounced national or ethnic feeling, nevertheless, the institutions within the purview of the Hungarian socialist state—the schools, hospitals, factories, orphanages, prisons—all served to stamp a particular ‘Hungarianness’ on its diverse Romani communities (Kállai and Törzsök 2000). The literature on this phenomenon remains scant and under-researched.

Moreover, references to ‘Gypsies’ in Hungarian popular culture contribute to the reinforcement of particular stereotypes on Roma. One example is the popular novel, ‘The Stars of Eger’ (*Égri Csillágok*), a late 19<sup>th</sup> century literary classic about a genuine historical event - the Battle of Mohács (fought in 1526 against the Ottoman Turks). Read by all Hungarian children in elementary school, the novel contains depictions of Roma as lazy and cunning (this latter stereotype had positive connotations as well), but also as amusing buffoons (Gárdonyi 1899/1991). General stereotypes (and thus social labels) about the Roma of CEE continue to range from the negative to the ‘forgiving’: Roma are depicted as work shy; engaged in pick-pocketing, robbing, burglaries, and begging; they are seen as always looking for trouble and unrestrained (‘hot-blooded’); Romani women are seen as prostitutes, while the men are thought to have voracious sexual appetites; Roma are dirty (connected to poverty). With respect to the more ‘forgiving’ or positive side, Roma are seen as good musicians and entertainers. In Hungary, the use of colloquialisms in daily speech persist, such as, for example, ‘swallowing the wrong way’ [*cigányútra ment* translated literally as ‘went down the Gypsy alley’] (Kishonthy INT: 2005; cf. Stewart 1997: 113-114).

Analyses of these types of diffuse and persistent popular prejudices - mapped on to Hungarian culture for generations, including during the Socialist era - are not well documented. Therefore, this section of the thesis, which focuses on public discourses of Gypsies during state socialism, offers an exploratory contribution in this area. In order to understand how – despite clear Socialist party objectives to the contrary – Romani marginalisation persisted within state Socialist structures (albeit to a far lesser extent than previously in Hungarian history), it is important to contextualize Hungarian politics at the time, and in addition, to examine the ‘Gypsy question’ at the level of popular culture and everyday society. In this chapter, I cover a history of ideas and ideologies, including a discursive overview of the ‘Gypsy problem’ or ‘Gypsy question’. The research is based

on original archival materials gathered from the Open Society Archives (OSA) and the Hungarian National Archives in Budapest, which included some rare government documents on the Romani population, as well as newspaper articles from publications by Hungarian dissidents or the *demokratikus ellenzés* (democratic opposition).

## 4.2 Policy on the ‘Gypsy question’ during State Socialism

*Együtt dolgoztunk, együtt buliztunk! We worked together, we partied together!*

- Blanka Kozma (1999), Romani woman’s activist and Budapest City Council member, commenting on her life in Socialist times.

### *Hungarian society from the 1950s to the 1980s*

The state socialist period in Hungary includes the decades spanning the 1950s to the 1980s, and are also known as the Kádár years, named after the key political figure at the time who was to become the architect of so-called ‘gúlyás Communism’ in Hungary. Kádár came to power immediately after the failure of the 1956 uprising, and the subsequent murder of its reformist leader Imre Nagy, who had been implicated by the Russians. It was therefore during this climate of political repression, in the early days of Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP) rule in Hungary, that ‘official’ social science research came to be marked by the work of state bureaucrats who produced ethnographies influenced by Marxist-functionalist theoretical approaches on the ‘Gypsy question’ (Bán and Pogány, 1957; cf. Stewart 2001). There were also other party functionaries who wrote reports on the ‘progress of integrating Gypsies’ in the fields of education, employment and housing, as well as some studies on the phenomenon of ‘Gypsy crime’ (OSA 1999). Many of these official discourses on the ‘Gypsy question’ were then picked up by Hungarian broadsheets, and several illustrations of these are analyzed in this chapter.

By the late 1960s, with the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism (NEM), the economic policies of Hungary gradually moved towards a mix of socialist and small-scale market-oriented policies, with increasing, but proscribed, liberalization (Swain 1996). Nonetheless, the socialist period was marked by strong social control engineered by the State. Although Roma were encouraged, much like other Hungarians living in predominantly rural areas, to join the industrial proletariat by becoming miners, construction and railroad workers, there were state policies in addition, which targeted Roma specifically. Particularly after the adoption of the 1961 declaration on 'The problem of Gypsy integration', the 'Gypsy question' was constructed as a 'social problem' devoid of any ethnic component; thus, socialist policies focused on the provision of jobs, housing, and education for Roma (cf. Stewart 2001). Nonetheless, the socialist state did not adequately acknowledge the barriers connected to the 'customary' exclusion of Roma which posed a significant obstacle to their integration. Thus, in the Hungarian educational system, there was *de facto* segregation, on the basis of 'customary' spatial segregation (each village had its own Romani quarter or settlement, '*cigánytelep*'), and therefore many community schools which catered to Romani pupils were also built upon this *de facto* 'separate but equal' precept under socialism. In this manner, large numbers of Romani children became tracked into substandard schools, including schools for children with learning disabilities.<sup>41</sup> In the area of housing as well, Roma were subjected to the 'separate but equal' principle in the form of the '*cs lakás*' (*csökkentés komfortos*) or so-called 'reduced-comfort' housing built specifically in Romani settlements

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<sup>41</sup> This *de facto* segregation is currently being challenged in many court rooms across the region by human rights organizations conducting legal interventions (ERRC 2000, 2002; Winterbourne 1999: INT). It is important to note that there are segregated facilities for children even in 'mixed' (Romani and non-Romani) schools across Europe, for example, in dining facilities. See also the special report, *The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children*, Budapest: ERRC, 1997.

(despite the fact that in urban areas, there were some achievements in housing integration for Roma).

With respect to the criminal justice system, by 1970, the police had established a special department in Budapest for the express purpose of studying “Gypsy modes of criminality”, and these included the fingerprinting of approximately 2,000 Romani persons, the vast majority of whom resided in juvenile state institutions and did not have prior criminal records (Noszkai 1987, cited in Kóczé and Versitz 1997: 24). These fingerprints were also used to assess whether or not criminogenic behaviour of Roma could be detected from dermatoglyphics. In addition, from 1974 to 1989, the Hungarian Socialist Republic kept separate, official statistics on Romani prisoners and developed special police units and methodology concentrating on ‘Gypsy crime’ (Kóczé and Versitz 1997: 24).

Concurrent to government surveys on demography and crime, the folklorist tradition of modern ‘Romologia’ was propounded by Kamill Erdős at this time. As a member of the Gypsy Lore Society (covered in Chapter Two), he was a prolific ethnographer fascinated by Romani linguistic and cultural diversity, and published much of his work in the 1950s (Macfie Archives 2007). Nonetheless, Erdős himself ultimately believed that assimilation was the only future for Roma (Stewart 2001). However, with respect to Roma in Austro-Hungary, there is a large wealth of untapped material which pre-dates Erdős’ work, and thus the written history of Roma remains incomplete.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Much of these materials are kept in old scrapbooks and shoe-boxes within the homes of Romani families, generally unseen by researchers (let alone the general public). In the course of my field research throughout the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, I came across photographs of Romani musicians from the early 1900s, as well as newspaper clippings of Romani political activities during socialist times, which were carefully saved by Romani activists and intellectuals across the region.

### 4.3 Social science, dissident politics, and the ‘Gypsy question’

This section offers a historical contextualisation of the socialist discourse(s) on Roma in Hungary, focusing on the primary ideas and ideologies of the era. In examining the role of social scientists and Romani intellectuals in the construction and (de) construction of the ‘Gypsy problem’ (also referred to as the ‘Gypsy question’), the role of prominent Hungarian intellectuals and human rights dissidents who participated in the construction of public narratives on ‘Roma rights’ was interrogated, with a view to highlighting the continuities and discontinuities of discourse.

Concurrent to the above-mentioned ‘folklorist’ tradition led by Erdős in the post-War period, there was another type of discursive framework on Roma that was emerging in the socialist era, particularly from the 1970s onwards. These were the works of Hungarian social scientists and social workers such as István Kemény, Rudolf Andorka, Gábor Havas, Otilia Solt, and Anna Csongor, in which they examined the presence of poverty in their country. In doing so, some of them became particularly interested in Gypsies and began to conduct extensive demographic surveys on the Romani communities’ status in terms of employment, education, and health. In some respects, they were ‘pushing the envelope’ at that time, as these research subjects were not held in high regard by the Socialist state: by discussing the poverty that they encountered in Romani communities, they were – directly or indirectly - raising substantial criticisms of the regime.

During the early transition period, social scientists (and frequently, dissidents) who engaged with the subject of ‘poverty and Gypsies’ included Istvan Kemény (who conducted a pioneering demographic survey on Roma in 1971), Gábor Havas, and János Ladányi. In Hungarian, this question has always been articulated rather provocatively: *cigánykultura vagy szegénykultura?* Or, translated into English, ‘Gypsy culture or poverty

culture’? Social workers and educators like Anna Csongor (currently director of the *Autonomia Foundation*, a development NGO working in Romani communities), Agnes Diosi (pedagogue) and the late Zita Reger (linguist) were also figures influential in the sphere of education of Romani children in Hungary. Journalists such as the late Pulitzer-prize winning Zsolt Csalog raised the public’s consciousness in the 1980s about the entrenched discrimination and racism Roma experienced in Hungary, despite their socio-economic and cultural contributions to wider society.

These very same people were affiliated with the *demokrátikus ellenzés* (democratic opposition) in Hungary when it began to become more visible in the 1980s, having created ‘alternative’ institutions such as the political movement SZDSZ, the magazine Beszélő, as well as SZETA, which was a foundation specialized in assisting the poor. As Ferenc Köszeg, the director of Hungarian Helsinki Committee shared with me, this had an adverse impact on their career prospects, and many (including Istvan Kemény) suffered professionally as a result of pursuing their research interests on the prevalence of poverty amongst Gypsies (1999: INT).

### ***The Hungarian Press and Discourses on Roma***

A survey of local and national broadsheets, as well as more serious essays by Hungarian intellectuals (in periodicals such as *Kritika*), suggests that during State socialist times, the ‘Gypsy problem’ (or more benignly, and commonly, the ‘Gypsy Question’) occupied a significant place in Hungarian public discourse from the early 1950s onwards. For example, in a local paper from Székesfehérvár, “Gypsies on the Road to Socialist Development”, the journalist closes the article with a quote, “*egyik ember annyi, mint a másik, bár a bőre barna vagy fehér...*” or “whether we have brown or white skin, we are all the same...” (*Székesfehérvár Újság* 1951: OSA). The article (Figure 3) is featured below on the following page.

1954. 10. 10.

segítségével várható belsőünk erősödése, talmas birodalmát is.

## Cigányok a szocialista nevelés útján...

1001

Székesfehérvár, július

— Kiküldött munkatársunktól —

1.

— Csókolom a kersit! — ezzel fogadták 1950 tavaszán Harangozó Istvánt az „Alapismeretek I” tanfolyamának cigány-hallgatói Székesfehérvárt.

Harangozót jól ismerem. MÁV-munkás volt Székesfehérvárt, ma pedig a megyei tanács népművelési osztályának előadója. Csak erős embereknek van olyan tiszta, meleg szívé, mint neki. Nagy szal, széles váll, féltete ember. „Néha félek kezét fogni, mondta nekem egyszer, mert olyan a tenyerem, mint a kálapáca”. A karja, mint egy tengely fele. De a szeme lágy, s a kemény, szelcs mellkasa olyan szívet takar, mely a dolgozó emberek iránti lézö szeretettel van csordultig tele.

Harangozót erkölcsi oktatásra küldték a cigányhallgatók közé. Széld szemét végigjárta a hallgatóságon. Volt közöttük tizenkét eszendő rajkó s negyven eszendő asszony. Kordován-vínú bőrtük fényelt, parázsló szemük izzott.

— Barátaim! — mondotta nekik a kezű csókolom után. — Az emberek egyenlők. Az emberek között csak egyféle különbség van: ki dolgozik jobban és többet.

Minden szem rászegült. Nagy csend volt.

— S ne alázatlanok meg magatokal azzal, hogy kezéscókolommal köszöntök nekem.

2.

Ötvenen ültek a teremben, a székesfehérvári Szécsen-utca karkán, egy volt kocsmahelyiségben. Ez már a város határa, túl a Széchenyi-títon. Őltaz cigány lakosa volt Székesfehérvárnak, százötvenet körültek ősz-szefogtak a nyíltak, elhurcolták őket Várpalotára s a bánya melléltt agyonverték őket, mint a lacsóny, rendő fajt”. A megmaradt cigányok kifizetetlenül széttek s sem írt, sem pedig olvasni nem tudtt. Ezért szervezték meg rájuk az Alapismeretek I. tanfolyamát. Ezen az általános iskola első két osztályának anyagát tanítják — három hónapon át.

A padokat, a székeket és a tálat a tanús népművelési osztályra szerezte be. A tanfolyam pedagógiai részét Turnowsky Rózsá tanító vezette, az erkölcsi oktatást Harangozó István.

A tanító asztalán ötven könyv, ötven írka és ötven cecet fektült.

— Gyerekek, vegyétek át a tan-szerceket! — mondotta nekik Harangozó.

A színes együttes megmozdult. Suhogtak a hosszú, piros szoknyák, kék fejkendők. Volt asszony, aki hátán, rózsaszín zúskban kicsi gyermekét is elhozta. Volt olyan pad, ahol együtt ült anya és gyermeke. Kolompár Károly, a vajda is közöttük volt.

Szécsenke hajú, magas fiú állt meg Harangozó előtt:

— Aztán mit kell fizetni ezekért, kerit...

Harangozó a szemébe nézett. A fiú elharapla s mondat végét.

— Semmit, barátaim. A nép állama ingyen adja mindezt. A nép állama mindenkinek lehetőségét ad ahhoz, hogy tanuljon. Csak egyet kér — tanuljatok komolyan. S álljon munkába mindenki.

3.

Néhány nap múlva szünet előtt egy szál cigarettát „felejtett” az asztalon Harangozó István. Azzal kiemelt. Mikor visszajött, a cigarettát nem találta meg.

— Barátaim! — mondotta — egy cigarettát felejtettem az asztalon. Ki vitte el?

Senki sem felelt. Nagy csend volt. Azután egyszerre, mint zuhatag, valami fellört. Mindenki lármázott, verekedett, egymás haját tépték. De a nevet nem adták ki.

Harangozó másnap ímél egy cigarettát felejtett asztalán. A cigarettát szünet alatt megint eltűnt.

— Barátaim! — mondta nekik. — Kérjétek és kaptok cigarettát. De ne vegyétek el.

Egy csomag Kosuth-ot vett elő, a padokor köré ment és szétosztotta.

Eltelt egy hét. Azután újra az asztalon hagyott egy cigarettát. Mikor visszajött a szünetről, a cigarettát az asztalon fektült. Harangozó fel-emelte, rágyújtott s mondani akart valamit, mikor az egyik hallgató — egy fiatal asszony — felállt. Kösz-küldött magával. Egő szemét a földre sülötte. Egyik kezével rakott pipacs, piros szoknyája szegélyét fogta.

— En voltam, aki multkor elvettem a cigarettát.

Felállt egy férfi is.

— A másikat én szittam el.

Harangozó várt egy ideig.

— Köszönöm az önzinteztet — mondotta azután.

4.

Mind az ötvenen megtanultak számolni, írni és olvasni. S ennél valamivel többet: embernek lenni.

Az ötven volt hallgató ma mind dolgozik. Vannak, akik a fémgyűjtés-

nél segédmunkát végeztek. Néhányan a MÁV-nál helyezkedtek el. Többen üzembe mentek el és egyesek az építkezéseknél vállaltak munkát.

Két új tanfolyam indol. Új hallgatók számára megrendezik az Alapismeret I. tanfolyamot, a régi hallgatók részére pedig szabad idejükben az Alapismeret II. tanfolyamot, amelyen az általános iskola harmadik és negyedik osztályának anyagát adják elő.

Kezdetcsókolommal már nem küszön senki. Ha Harangozót látják az utcán, nem felejtik el megkérdezni:

— Mikor folytatódik már a tanulás, Harangozó elvtárs?

Mult héten a tanfolyam egyik hallgatója egy húszszekben díszö-belső-rést akart venni.

„Egy nacsága elemállt — mesélte nekem —, maga várhat, mondta. S végigmért. A szemébe néztem s ezt feleltem neki: Az emberek egyenlők. Elmult már az a idő, mikor u cigány mindenki ronggy volt.”

Az egyik negyvenéves asszony, mikor először írt a nevet (negyven esztendőig írástudatlan volt), sírogatott. A rajkók körültek, a szoknyájába csimpaszkodtak. Azután kirohanlak az utcára s ordítani kezdtek: „Nagymama sírt Nagymamát!” Nagymama utánuk ment, kiállt a kapuba, a főlőször tömészkodott és mosolygott. Vannak az örömek olyan pillanatai, mikor már elak és kevés az emberi szó.

5.

A budai Várban rövid idő múlva Vezetőképző Iskola indol Analfabéta Tanfolyamnak tanítói számára. A tanfolyam az Ince pápa téren lezart, a volt MOKÉP iskolában. A tanfolyamnak az a célja, hogy a dolgozó cigányokat lépezen ki cigányoktatoknak. A fehérmegyei tanács népművelési osztálya hat dolgozó cigányt javasolt a tanfolyamra: a pölinkaházi állami gazdaság csupa cigány dolgozóból álló növénytermelő brigádjának két tagját. Eresből két népművelési s egy mérőszentgyörgyi dolgozó.

A Szécsen-utrában beszélttem egy dolgozó cigánnyal, aki már olvasta Vörösmartytól A vén cigányt.

Május elején az első tanfolyam hallgatói Harangozó István vezetésével vonultak fel. Teli kedvvel énekeltek. Csak úgy zengett a „drága föld, szülőházamnak földje...” De minthu fel fejjel magasodlra emelkedtek volna, mikor azokhoz a sorokhoz érkeztek, hogy:

„Egyik ember anyja, mint a másik, lác a háré barna vagy fehér...”

Raffy Péter,

Figure 4 - “Gypsies on the Road to Socialist Development” (1951)

Furthermore, contrary to prevailing simplistic readings of the nature of socialist discourses on the ‘cigánykérdés’ (‘Gypsy question’) as merely state propaganda, many of the articles I reviewed suggested a surprising level of honesty, understanding, and many times, even compassion for the socio-economic problems (and that of integration) faced by Roma during the Kádár regime, suggesting a degree of salience and importance given



to the issue by the HSWP (Hungarian Socialist Workers Party).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, there is also a sense of *deja vu* as one ploughs through article after article about employment, housing, education, and health and sanitation of Roma, as the discourse on Roma – particularly that taken up by Romani activists in post-socialist Hungary – concentrates on *the very same problems* which Romani communities struggle with today. This suggests the strong continuities of structural exclusion from the past, a form of exclusion that contemporary policy approaches beginning in the early 1990s - which privilege discourses of ethnicity - have failed to address (cf. Kovats 1998).

In the late 1950s, there were articles which celebrated Socialist ‘engineering’ for Roma, and this continued into the 1960s, but at this point the focus shifts to discussions of the implementation of the June 1961 HSWP Political Committee’s policy on the ‘Gypsy Question’, thereby encouraging state officials in every Hungarian county to embrace Romani integration seriously in key sectors: employment, housing, education, and health policies (cf. Stewart 2001; OSA Archives 1999). Nonetheless, for a younger generation of Hungarian journalists who were perhaps not too familiar with local press coverage of Romani communities, the conventional view is that Socialist-era newspapers were almost devoid of discussions on Roma. As one young journalist (in his early 30s) and NGO activist emphasised to me:

Through the 1980s and before, Roma issues were not separated as such; according to the accepted government policy, and all the [news]papers were under strict governmental party control, there was no such thing as ‘Roma issues’--- it was considered generally as a social problem and the ethnicity of the people was not an issue open to be discussed, it fits very well into the hypocritical approach with which the mainstream politics handled the entire Roma issue, not making a debate about it, and not working out an efficient policy in terms of the largest ethnic minority in Hungary...but...afterwards, in the early 90s after the transition, the Roma issue became more of a centered theme and a focus of attention...(Miklosi 1999: INT).

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<sup>43</sup> By comparison, if one does a quick survey of contemporary UK broadsheets, it is easy to reach the conclusion that the quality and depth of articles on ‘Gypsies and Travellers’ leaves much to be desired (cf. Clark and Greenfields 2006).

Though Miklosi is correct in suggesting that Romani ‘ethnicity’ *per se* was not emphasised out of ideological pressures, journalists writing about Romani communities in Hungary clearly had much more freedom of expression to discuss poverty, marginality, and societal exclusion than is commonly assumed. Furthermore, though the policies under Socialism clearly favoured assimilation of Hungarian citizens of Romani background, the discourses on Roma which began to emerge by the late 1970s and 1980s resonate with today’s contemporary policy debates on education and employment as pathways to social integration.

Another scholar, Pogány (2004) has also pointed out the significance of the sociographic writing tradition in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1970s and 1980s (*szoöciográfia* in Hungarian), and I offer a few samples of this type of innovative journalism below.

## A kapukon kívül *Sp3*

Azt hiszitek, hogy csak én  
szorgok fényért és szeretetért  
a nagy kórusa előtt.

Sokan várjuk a kapukon kívül,  
hogy bizalmatok rezkrajcsarjattal  
megajándékozzatok!  
(Bari Károly)

Megtorpan a kocsi. A sofőr nem halt be a mély után a putrikhoz. Kizisszult. Úgy látszik, itt, a cigánytelepi грекек köreiben még egy olyan közönséges jármű is szennőző számba megy, mint szerkesztőségünk öreg Volgája. Pillanatok alatt kordulvezés vagy tízezer és ládműlők, szinte körülpogostják a tekintőknél. A sofőrnek lovális ember, a segret a legváncosabb közúti penészes a kocs szentélyében. A borzas kamazs fűs övasszöglet fész ujját a kormánygolyóra, mintha valami nagyon-nagyon, nemes holmi érintőkezősége jutott volna. A pupillák kitágul, úgy figyel az álló sebességmérő óráit.

De barménvire is közösleges és a legtöbb gyerek számára elérhető a beteljesíthető vagy ez: egyszerű a volán mellé ülni, öbölbe valószínűleg sohasem lesz sofőr. Ahhoz, hogy valaki gépjárműengedélyt kapjon, iskolai vezetélessé kell Nem sók. De ennek a 15 éves fiúnak csak három osztály van.

**Elvégzi: 3.7 százalék**

A Szabolcs megyei Tanács iskolai csoportvezetője, Batári Kálmán ezt mondja:

— A cigánygyerekek kétharmad része nem jut már el az ötödik osztályba sem. Ennyi lakatoszással pedig ma már vajmi kevésre vízli az ember. Nem csupán oktatáspolitikai probléma ez, hiszen számos szociális és anyagi

volt más lakóba helyeztetni magát. A tíz év emlékeiről, tapasztalatairól azonban szívesen, s némi nosztalgiával beszél a matcazzal orvos lakásban.

[illegible]

## Csodák és bűtykök

— Tévedés, hogy születésüktől fogva öröklötten gyengébbek volnának a szellemi képességek.

mint azoknak a gyerekeknek, akiknek teher a bőrük. Sőt, rápontos fogékonyak a zseni, ritmusa, érzelmiileg gondok, ragaszkodók. Ahhoz azonban, hogy okosodjanak a leírják kortársak teljesítményét, olyanokuk az erőfeszítés kell. Olyasmikait kellett elvégezni a 22 gyerekkel, amit normál körülmények között az orvosok, az edzők, meg a logopédus együtt végez. Keményebb, feszültségűre szoktató őket úgy, hogy én magam

esig. Az én tanításomat lerombolják a szülői ház

S amikor megkérdeztem, mit lehetne tenni, ezt válaszolta:

[illegible]

— Bármilyen is a cigány-  
szülők otthoni viszonyai, köröm-  
szakadtukig ragaszkodnak a gyere-  
keikhez. Nyolc-tíz ezer gyerek-  
nek pedig az elkövetkező évek  
során ügve sem tudnánk elegendő  
helyet biztosítani.

**Ezrel** acemben Pankotálné ér-  
vei:

— De legalább meg kellene  
problém! Kisérletkeppen is. Ott  
ahol törhetetlen a helyzet. Ési-  
bony sok családnál törhetetlen.  
A tiszai kollégiumuk szerveze-  
sénél is ellenállásba ütközik az ok-  
tatási osztály. De végl is edes-  
apák, édesanyjak, látva, hogy jó  
keretekben van a gyerek, meg-  
különböztetik a helyzettől. Ha nem is  
valamennyi cigánygyerek eszébe  
be, de negyedénél, harmadánál  
nélkülözhetetlen volna a kollé-



(Vincent Laugesen)

retix az ipkolat, talan be is le-  
jesik majd. -

— Tapasztalatokat a hasonló jellegű bűncselekményről kapunk. Pénz a néppont közreműködésével kerültek, megkötés úgy, hogy árvis idején fennmaradt csipecpú bűncselekményeket szétválasztottuk. A többi kitérte a helyi térszervezetek egy képzésénél, de már képzésre járt lelkem és a szándékú fiatalasszony szegedi el, de csak az egy nyolc fiatalasszony elvezet, nagyon drágák és okos fiatal cipőasszonyt alkalmaz.

tet a megye arról álljon itt: A  
 cigánytanulók iskolai részének  
 helyzete: című nagy pedagógus-  
 hozzártással megfogalmazott tá-  
 nulmány és módosztatni leve-  
 nény indítvány: Vegyeknek a  
 nagyobb számban elődoba ci-  
 gánytanulókat, listaközlésről a  
 helyesget (módszert), ruha és ci-  
 polizáció lejárta) munda-  
 tantarabba. Külön csoportok-  
 hozzászólás a töltőreoknak, a na-  
 valókra, a legjobb tanulóknak, a  
 rok közül kell kiválasztani; a  
 cigánytanulóknak már külön or-  
 tály létrehozása; osztályozó viz-

Figure 5 - "Outside the Gate", *Magyar Hírlap*, January 1972 (source: OSA)

The article begins with an evocative poem by Romani poet Karóly Bari, from where the title of the article is also taken:

*Azt hiszitek, hogy csak en a csörgök fényért és szeretetért a város kápuja előtt...sokan várjuk a kapukon kívül hogy bizalmatok rézkrajcárjaival megajándékozzatok! You think that I'm the only pilferer for light and love before the city gate...many of us wait beyond the gates for you to gift us with engravings of your trust!*

The 'city gate' is a very powerful symbol of an exclusionary boundary, and in this case epitomizes centuries-long Romani marginalisation. 'Engravings of trust' are a requirement for co-existence, and the Romani interlocutor awaits these.

## A cigányság gondjai és a társadalom

Beszélgetés a szerkesztőségben

A kormány a közelmúltban megtörtént a cigányság gondjait, hogy ma Magyarországon a cigánysághoz jellemző problémák megoldása érdekében a kormányzatnak a legfontosabb feladata a cigányság helyzetének javítása. A kormányzat a legfontosabb feladata a cigányság helyzetének javítása. A kormányzat a legfontosabb feladata a cigányság helyzetének javítása.

Nemcsak az állam feltételrendszerét a problémák megoldása érdekében a kormányzatnak a legfontosabb feladata a cigányság helyzetének javítása. A kormányzat a legfontosabb feladata a cigányság helyzetének javítása.

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...hiszitek, hogy csak en a csörgök fényért és szeretetért a város kápuja előtt...sokan várjuk a kapukon kívül hogy bizalmatok rézkrajcárjaival megajándékozzatok! You think that I'm the only pilferer for light and love before the city gate...many of us wait beyond the gates for you to gift us with engravings of your trust!

DR. PAPP LAJOS: Milyen is az a cigányság, amelyről beszélünk? A cigányság az a közösség, amely a magyarországi lakosság körülbelül 10-12 százalékát teszi ki. A cigányság a magyarországi lakosság körülbelül 10-12 százalékát teszi ki.

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Figure 6 - "The Problems of Gypsies and the Society", *Népszava*, 5 August 1979

(source: OSA)

The above is a sample article from the late 1970s. Featured on the right-hand bottom corner is József Vekerdi, a prominent linguist, Orientalist, and Romologist<sup>44</sup> who, one year prior to this news report, had co-authored a seminal text for the Patriotic People's

<sup>44</sup> By the early 1990s, Vekerdi's earlier work was denounced by Romani activists and their supporters, who claimed that his work had racist overtones. Interestingly, he served as a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Orientalist Studies council (MTA Orientalisztikai Bizottságának).

Front (*Hazafias Népfront*) entitled 'Gypsies on the road to progress' (Vekerdi and Meszáros 1978). Amongst other participants were Romani intellectuals Gúsztv Balázs and Mrs. Otto Kovács, as well as government secretary Lajos Papp.

Moreover, though government censors were clearly in operation (especially after the failed 1956 uprising), there appeared some very good sociographic pieces of writing which invoked humanist perspectives in the discourse on Roma, and discussed issues such as discrimination and deprivation as being at the root of many of the problems they face. Although journalists and writers were monitored by the State, Hungarian citizens, along with others in the eastern bloc countries, used creative means to subvert governmental agendas, and were able to discuss taboo subjects such as poverty, Gypsies, and the declining income of workers, as well as the problems faced by Hungarians outside of Hungarian borders amongst each other.

Another sample of such work is highlighted below (Figure 6), which is the book cover for a non-fictional monograph by Pulitzer-prize winning author Zsolt Csalog, based on the narratives of the lives of nine Gypsies from Hungary in the 1970s, similar in vein to the writings of the American progressive polemicist Studs Terkel, who tried to highlight 'the people's voices'. Nonetheless, as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee's Ferenc Kőszeg has correctly emphasised, this discourse remained limited to dissident circles, and understandably did not have much impact on the Hungarian government's policy approach to these sensitive issues at the time (Kőszeg 1999: INT; cf. Miklosi 1999: INT).

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„320 000 cigány él ma Magyarországon. Ez igen nagy szám, az arányokat tekintve is – minden harmincadik magyar ember cigány! Tizenöt év múlva minden huszonkettedik magyar ember cigány lesz. De az arányokat nem nézve is óriási tömeg: ha kézenfogva láncba állnának, Mátészalkától Sopronig érne a lánc. Gondolod, hogy ennyi embert képviseltethetsz, bemutathatsz kilenccel?” – idézi az író könyve utószavában egyik barátja kérdését. Csalog Zsolt igennel felel e kérdésre. Megkísérli, hogy kilenc cigány sorsán jelképezve, az egész magyarországi cigányság, elsősorban a fiatalabb nemzedék sorsának és életének legalább a körvonalait bontakoztassa ki az olvasó előtt.

KOZMOSZ KÖNYVEK

Figure 7 - Extract from the back cover of *Nine Gypsies* by Zsolt Csalog (1976)

The caption above reads:

320,000 Gypsies live in Hungary today. This is indeed a large number, proportionally too - every thirtieth Hungarian is a Gypsy! After 15 years, every twenty-secondth Hungarian person will be Gypsy. This is a huge crowd, even without taking the proportion into account: if they all stood holding hands, they could form a chain which would go from Mátészalka [eastern Hungary] to Sopron [western Hungary]. Do you think nine people can represent that many?" Thus writes the author in the postscript of his book, citing a question from a friend. Zsolt Csalog answers this question in the affirmative. He attempts to describe the contours of the life and fate of the whole Gypsy population of Hungary and especially those of the younger generation through the life of nine Gypsies.

## Hungary in 'Transition'

By 1991, with the strengthening of parliamentary democracy, the Director of Hungarian Police, Ándras Túros, declared that the aforementioned special 'Gypsy crime' units would be disbanded. Nonetheless, Kóczé and Versitz (1997) caution that "the large reservoir of earlier studies on the Rromani [sic] may continue to contribute to biased police behaviour", emphasizing their continued use within police training programmes (24). Moreover, by 1992, as a result of the *Hungarian Act on the Protection of Personal Data and the Publicity of Data of Public Interest* (Chapter I, section 2), government agencies began to classify data on ethnicity as 'special data', thereby prohibiting such data from being gathered or used without the specific consent of the individual. The article below refers to the decision by the police (Ministry of Interior) to discontinue 'Gypsy crime' investigation.

# A statisztikában nem lesz/cigány/bűnöző

(colanet)  
Írta: Dobos János rendőr ezredes, az ORFK bűnüldözési osztályának vezetője

Valakinek meg kell tennie azt, amire több száz ezer állampolgár vár, még akkor is, ha ezzel nem arat egyértelmű sikert. Idegesen túlfűtött közéletünk nehezen viselné tovább azt a terhet, amit egy nem egészen átgondolt rendőri szakkifejezés használata bizonyos körökben évek óta okoz, és az ezzel érintett embereket visszatérően köznap, esetenként — mert a szóban forgó szóhasználatokat tudományos körök is átvették, definiálták — tudományos vitákra készíti.

Amikor a bűnügyi rendőrség a hetvenes évek közepén a "cigány bűnöző" és a "cigánybűnözés" kifejezéseket megfogalmazta, és ennek alapján a meghatározásoknak

megfelelő elkövetőket a bűnügyi statisztikában egy külön erre szolgáló kóddal is megkülönböztette, ezt nem fajgyűlöletből vagy előítéletek továbbélesztése, esetleg szítás miatt tette, hanem azért, mert szakítani akart a kérdés körüli álszeméremmel, és őszintén neven akarta nevezni a dolgokat. Bebizonyosodott azonban, hogy a jóakarattal itt is a pokolhoz vezető út éphőanyaga lett.

Máig is igaz, hogy a hazánkban élő, cigány származású állampolgárok közül az összességéhez viszonyított részarányuknál jóval többen követnek el — igen gyakran súlyos, környezetüket kihívóan irritáló — bűncselekményeket. Vannak csak cigá-

nyokra jellemző bűncselekményfajták. Vannak csak bűnöző cigányok által alkalmazzott elkövetési trükkök, módszerek. Ezen túl a büntetőeljárással szemben is annyira sajátosan védekeznek, amivel szemben egy, ezt a taktikát nem ismerő vizsgálóbíró egy szerűen tehetetlen. A felsoroltak készletek — és készletek jelenleg is — minket arra, hogy ezeket az eredményes bűnüldözés szempontjából elengedhetetlenül fontos jellemzőket tanulmányozzuk, nyomozóink egy részét bűnöző cigányok által elkövetett bűncselekmények felderítésére és bizonyítására specializáljuk. Erre a jövőben is szükség lesz.

Az említett kifejezések te-

hát elsősorban kriminológia, krimináltaktika és kriminológia, és semmiféleképpen nem büntetőeljárás-jogi különbségeket jelentenek. Képzeli-e el, mi történik akkor, ha egy New York rendőr vagy nyomozó a fehérek lakta Harlemben a kinegyed szokásai szerint próbál meg intézkedni. A társadalmat ugyanakkor nekünk bűnöző cigányok bűncselekményeivel szemben is védemezni kell. Arról, hogy bűnözői magatartásában a cigányok egy része az általánostól eltérő másságokat mutat maga teljesen nem hibáztható. Mindez jórészt a cigányság múltjában, történetében és jelenének ebből a örökölt terheiben gyökerez.

Figure 8 - "No more statistics on Gypsy criminals" (OSA, 1991, date unknown)

Additional continuities of policy from late socialism to the present day were noticeable in assessing the influence of government officials who began to specialize in minority affairs, especially that of the Roma. These include Csaba Tabajdi, who was head of the

state minorities office in the 1980s and early 1990s, and in addition, served as an MP for the Hungarian Socialist Party and a representative for Hungary in the Council of Europe in 2001; Imre PózsGay, head of Patriotic People's Front in socialist Hungary; and János Báthory, an architect of the pivotal Law on Ethnic and National Minorities (1993), and Head of the Office of Ethnic and National Minorities (under the purview of the Ministry of Justice) during the previous FIDESZ-led government from 2000-2002. Hungary today has a plethora of state offices and structures established specifically to manage the Romani population and to implement state policies vis-à-vis Roma, and Hall's (2000) concept of 'multicultural drift' is directly salient for an understanding of the impacts of the bureaucratization of Romani policy. Hall (2000) refers to 'drift' in the case of programmes for minorities in the UK, and how well-meaning discursive practices of multiculturalism can actually obscure the need for more fundamental shifts in government policy.

With respect to discourses generated during late socialism, Wizner has identified interesting links between scholars, teachers, and social reformers of the time such as Agnes Diósi (pedagogue), the late Otilia Solt<sup>45</sup> (philosopher and former MP), and Zsuzsa Ferge (sociologist) who engaged in 'poverty research', and earlier studies on Roma, both independent research and those commissioned by the state. Nonetheless, this emphasis on poverty and Roma resulted in, at least partially, the *Romani population itself* being considered as synonymous with *the poor*.

In addition, ethnographers and social scientists Katalin Kovalcsik, Peter Szuhay and Michael Stewart generated further knowledge about Romani communities in Hungary during late socialism. 'Late socialism' was a period of increasing reforms in social policy areas such as education and healthcare. Within the economic sphere, international

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<sup>45</sup> In 2000, I was presented with a copy of her posthumous work *Méltoságot mindenkinek* ('Dignity for All'), by the director of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Ferenc Kószeg. The book has some her finest pieces on Hungarian Roma and human rights issues.

financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank encouraged shifts towards a more neoliberal direction. Changes in the political sphere also transpired as the Socialist state began to open itself up to more consultative mechanisms outside the party apparatus.

### ***The 'Kossuth Klub' intellectuals: an elite Romani voice?***

Another key question related to policy antecedents from the late socialist era is the role of urban Romani intellectuals whom I label the 'Kossuth Klub' crowd, as they used to meet in this popular venue in central Budapest on a regular basis in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>46</sup> Many of these intellectuals participated actively in debates on the *cigánykérdés* in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and formed the first group of 'dissident' Romani intellectuals in socialist Hungary. Data on their role in discourse and policy formation was compiled from their earlier writings as well as personal conversations and interviews. One sample of their writing from the transition period in 1990, by Pál Fárkás, is offered below in Figure 9. His article offers a polemic about how Roma have not been viewed as humans, how the Hungarian socialist state did not want to recognize them as a national or ethnic minority, and how the foundation of the Hungarian Gypsy Socialist Democratic Party - of which he was then secretary in October 1989 - was a key development for the advancement of Romani people.

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<sup>46</sup> The Kossuth Klub continues to be a popular cultural/political venue located in the 8th district, on Múzeum Street. Most urban Roma living in Budapest have extended family links in the countryside.





II. évfolyam 3. szám

1990. március 20.

Ára: 9,50 Ft

## TESTVÉREIM, CIGÁNYOK!

Abban az időben szölok Hozzátok, amikor végre lehetősége nyílik az évszázadok óta semmibe vett cigányságnak is a demokrácia gyakorlására.

A szociáldemokrácia alapértékei a demokrácia, az igazságosság, a szolidaritás. Régóta óhajítja mindezt nemcsak a cigányság, de egész Kelet-Európa népei, cigányok, zsidók, szlávok, németek, magyarok, románok egyaránt. A múlt századokban, de 1945 után is a cigányságot sohasem vették emberszámba. A Kádár-rendszerben a hozzá nem értés visszavonhatatlan károkat okozott cigánynak, magyarnak egyaránt. Az atyáskodórendszer kiszolgáltatottságba és félelembe taszította a cigányságot alamizsna szociál-segélyrendszerével.

Az ingázó cigányság építette fel többek között a nagyvárosokat, rab-szolgabérért, s közben ők maguk nyomorban, putrikban éltek és élnek a mai napig is.

Testvéreim! Miebber az országban egy rossz politika végett szembe lőtünk állítva a többi nemzetiséggel és egymással is. A sztálini definíció szerint nem voltunk alkalmasak nemzeti-séggé válni, mert nincs pontosan meghatározható anyaországunk és közös anyanyelvünk.

Drága testvéreim! Mi ugyanolyan nemzetiség vagyunk, mint a velünk egy országban élő románok, szerbek, szlo-

vákok vagy magyarok. Miránk, cigány szociáldemokratákra vár az a feladat, melyet eddig figyelmen kívül hagytak a fennálló társadalmi rendszerek, hogy a cigány szellemiséget, a más kultúránkat, nyelvünket meentsük, mint ahogy menti minden nemzet az ő legjobban féltett kincsét, hogy a megújuló demokratikus országban büszkén vállal-hassuk cigányságunkat. Csak akkor vállalhatjuk büszkén magyarságunkat is, ha nem kell szégyellnünk cigányságunkat.

Ebben az országban sem a parasztságról, sem a munkásságról, sem az értelmiségről nem állíthatjuk, hogy cigányellenes. Békében éltünk együtt évszázadokon át, s így szeretnénk a jövőben is élni. Csupán a lakosság elenyésző része próbálja ellenünk bangolni a társadalmat.

Egy új történelmi korszak küszöbén szölok Hozzátok, amikor a több mint 1 milliós cigányság legjobbjainak csélye van, hogy bekerüljenek a törvényeket alkotó parlamentbe, ahol eddig nélkülünk hozták a rólunk is szóló törvényeket.

A szociáldemokrácia alapértékei: a demokrácia, az igazságosság, a szolidaritás. Mi úgy hisszük, ez és csak ez lehet a garancia a cigányság politikai, gazdasági, kulturális lehetőségeire, a demokrácia szülte jogegyenlőségen túl.

A megfélemlített társadalom fal-

vak szélére szorított cigánysága végre felelősséghatár! Erre pedig csak egy szellemiségében és akaratában egységes cigányság képes.

A Magyarországi Cigányok Szociáldemokrata Pártja 1989. október 1-jén alakult. S mára több mint 15 ezren vagyunk, cigány szocdem párttagok. Testvéreim! A nyugati szocdem pártok kifejezték segítőkészségüket irántunk is. Tőlük mi tőkét, támogatást és szak-képzést kérünk, hogy a cigányok által sűrűn lakott, elsősorban vidéki településeken olyan munkalehetőségeket hozzunk létre, amellyel a családfő 1 műszak alatt annyit keres, hogy eltart-hatja a családját. Így lányainkat és asz-szonyainkat mi is felszabadíthatjuk a nehéz fizikai segédmunka alól.

A cigányság állattartási ismeretei közismertek. Ezt lenne érdemes max-imálisan támogatni, hiszen az életmódszertermelés elsőrendű, a mezőgazda-ság létkérdés mindannyiunknak. Biz-tosítani kell a szükséges feltételeket azoknak, akik állattartásra rendezked-tek be vagyis szeretnének berendez-kedni.

Farkas Pál  
az MCSZDP főtitkára

(Elhangzott a Magyar Televízió választási műsorában 1990. február 27-én.)

Figure 9 - "Brothers, Gypsies!", *Élő Szó* (Living Word), March 20, 1990

The above is an extract from the 'Living Word' magazine of the Hungarian Gypsy Social Democratic Party and was written by Pál Farkas, then secretary of the party. This party also co-operated with the Patriotic People's Front (HNF), a quasi-state, communist-era body which activated Hungarian citizens at the grass-roots level (Pozsgay 1999: INT).

#### 4.4 The discursive transformation of the 'Gypsy Question' in the 'transition era': (re)surfacing ethnicities

In the post-socialist setting in Hungary, research vis-à-vis Roma has grown visibly, particularly in the areas of sociology, anthropology, political science and social policy. These studies are similar to those conducted during the previous socialist regimes, with the visible exception that Roma are now clearly viewed as *ethnic* minorities. In particular, social policy research on 'integration' has become popular with various governments in post-socialist countries, who have been at great pains to demonstrate to the European Union their official goodwill on the 'Roma question'.

Furthermore, the 'Gypsy question' discourse (though rarely called as such anymore), continues to manifest itself in the print media, broadcast television, public statements by politicians, crime control policies by the government, academic research by social scientists, and quite often, government policies themselves. An example of this was in January 1998, when Prime Minister Gyúla Horn of Hungary - at the congress of the Lungo Drom National Gypsy Interest Association in Szolnok - made a statement urging Roma to distance themselves from "those who live off crime" in their community (cf. UNHCR 1999). Another example, published on the internet (and interestingly, disseminated by the CSCE's Helsinki Commission), was by the Hungarian Ambassador to the US, Géza Jeszenszky. In an open editorial written to the Washington Post in July 1999, Ambassador Jeszensky complained of Hungary's misrepresentation in Western the media:

Before you think that, as the ambassador of Hungary, I feel compelled to whitewash the problems in my country, let me state a few facts. Hungary has a large Gypsy minority with serious social problems deriving mostly from poverty, poor education and, *in many cases, an inherited lifestyle that lacks any incentives to break out and do better.* It also is a fact, however, that the Hungarian government, and society in general, recognizes this problem and accepts responsibility for its amelioration. The reporter blames "institutional racism" for the problems of Hungarian Gypsies. I find it reassuring that he cannot provide a shred of evidence to prove this point. What is "institutional" in Hungary is that we have a

national government agency established specifically to deal with the problems and aspirations of national and ethnic minorities. It spends most of its budget on programs for the Gypsies, our largest minority. It is presently headed by a member of our Bulgarian minority. Earlier, however, its head was a highly educated woman from the Gypsy minority. Hungary has one of the most enlightened minority laws in the world. This makes it possible for Gypsies to elect their own self-governments, even in those places where they are dispersed among the general population and, consequently, cannot form a majority (see Appendix #4, *italics mine*).

There are two points worthy about the above statement by Ambassador Jeszenszky. First of all, he attributes “serious social problems” to an “inherited lifestyle” of the Roma. Secondly, he categorically denies the possibility of “institutional racism” in Hungary, and instead, deflects the issue of structural disadvantage that Roma confront by highlighting Hungary’s minorities legislation as a positive step taken by the government, which, at the time, was one of Europe’s most far-reaching and seemingly progressive laws. Such discourses emanating from national politicians (and published in the media) are examples of what Van Dijk (1991) refers to as “elite racism” which he qualifies with the following analysis:

...not only [do] various elites have a special set of racist ideologies and practices...their position allows them to ‘preformulate’ those of the population at large, and thus to produce and reproduce the white consensus (1991: 43).

By the late 1980s, and continuing into the transition period, Hungarian state policy towards Roma became increasingly characterised by ‘ethnic coupling’ and the ‘politics of difference’, as demonstrated by the growing number of Gypsy-specific programmes (Havas et al, 1995; Kovats 1998; Stewart 2001). Therefore, the socialist era notion of Roma as a class fraction devoid of any ‘cultural capital’<sup>47</sup> was already being challenged within Hungarian government circles, well before powerful NGO human rights entrepreneurs (whose work is covered in the next chapter) began promoting the recognition of Romani ethnicity. Viewing Roma as a people who have contributed

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<sup>47</sup>Though it is crucial to note that the Hungarian state did, in fact, promote numerous Romani cultural activities, including the world-famous ‘100 Member Gypsy orchestra’, which even performed in such far-flung places as Australia in the socialist era.

cultural capital to Europe (including their knowledge and skills) is equally difficult for European liberals to recognize today, many of whom have only superficial understandings of historical contributions of Roma.

Moreover, during the transition period, the expectation that the state should be held accountable for alleviating poverty and socio-economic problems in post-communist Hungary began waning as neoliberal policy agendas became more prominent (UNDP 2002). Thus, one on-going peril in the post-socialist era is that the current 'plight of the Roma'<sup>48</sup> can therefore be mistakenly read by the majority society as resulting from their 'different' (read: inferior) ethnicity, rather than, for example, the chronic cycle of poverty which many Romani communities are trapped in. This polarization is also evident in much of European policy towards Roma (Acton 1998). The post-socialist version of the 'culture/poverty' debate has been discussed by Szuhay (1995) and Noszkai (1995) in the Hungarian journal *Társadalmi Szemle* ('Social Bulletin'), as well as various articles in *Amaro Drom* ('Our Way') magazine which covers Romani issues.

From 1998 to 2002, the right-of-centre, nationalist-leaning government led by PM Viktor Órban of FIDESZ tended to avoid discussions of the growing marginalisation in Romani communities, choosing instead to focus on ethnic difference. In April 2002, parliamentary elections brought a socialist-liberal coalition government to power. The pendulum has now swung in the other direction: whereas during the previous communist regime, Romani *ethnicity* per se was not a large part of the discourse, and focus was placed upon building the material circumstances of Romani families to working class standards, post-socialist administrations have tended to downplay the rising impoverishment of Romani communities, and have instead created institutions resulting in the highlighting of ethnic difference to Hungarians at large (Kovats 1998; Wizner 1999).

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<sup>48</sup>This was the title of the first course on Romani studies at the Central European University in Budapest, 'Sun Summer' course in 1998.

#### 4.5 From a politics of 'dialogue' to a politics of 'declaration': the evolution of contemporary Roma policy

During the 1990s, the expansion of third sector influence and immanent European Union accession resulted in greater pressure upon the State to place a stronger priority on integration of Roma vis-à-vis the minority rights framework, since one of the explicit requirements for EU membership included an improvement in the treatment of minorities (Kovats 1997; 1998).<sup>49</sup> With respect to the influence of Hungarian civil society at this time, the National Soros Foundations began compiling reports on their Romani-related activities (particularly in the areas of education and culture). Furthermore, George Soros' Open Society Institute (OSI) established and funded regional organizations in Budapest such as the Educational Policy Institute (EPI), Constitutional and Legislative Policy Institute (COLPI), and the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGPSRI), and all of them participated actively in various Romani-related projects throughout the region (McDonald 2001: INT). In addition, the Roma Participation Program (RPP) was seen as a special effort on the part of George Soros and his colleagues to increase Romani participation *within* the Soros network itself, and by extension, within the rapidly developing civil societies of central and east Europe. OSI's critical role in the development of the Romani NGO sector is covered extensively in subsequent chapters.

What is important to note here is that although Hungary's legislative achievements were initially seen as a model for minority policy in the region (and continued to be viewed in this light within European Union policy-making circles), popular disaffection with the implementation of the Minorities Law of 1993 and the current Hungarian government's policies, was leading to a re-assessment of the previous Socialist-Liberal coalition (1994-

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<sup>49</sup>An article by Kovats (1997) probes the "relationship between increasing Roma poverty and the policy of 'dialogue'." See also his Phd thesis (1998).

1998) government's liberal and 'multicultural' approach towards Roma. One activist from the Roma Press Centre, Gábor Miklosi, shared with me his personal assessment of the situation in the late 1990s:

The state policy remains very hypocritical. This is the most tragic aspect of the entire problem, because there is no willingness from neither of the [political] parties to deal with this Gypsy issue in-depth...so state policies remain at a very surface level. Because of this integration towards the European political organisations, and NATO and the European Union...there is an external pressure on the government to deal with this issue, and for this reason, shop window-like organisations and shop window-like measures are being introduced, but the internal willingness to deal with this issue and to work out long-term plans with short-term exact measures is still missing....so, very low budgeted mid-term government programmes are being worked out, the deadlines keep being missed, and I can say that on a mainstream level, the politicians are doing a very very bad job and they will have a lot to be ashamed of in 20 years, but on the other side, as you pointed out, civil society is getting better, and I think it will be the Gypsies themselves who will force the prevailing governments or politicians or political powers to deal with them (Miklosi 1999: INT).

Looking at socio-economic indicators within Romani communities such as rates of employment, educational achievement, health and housing from 1999, and comparing them to 1989 is sobering (Kemény and Kallai 2005). Though official socialist policy did not strengthen Romani identity directly (in fact, it discouraged its overt development), by providing for the basic material needs of Roma and by discouraging ethnic chauvinism in the public sphere, Romani citizens enjoyed a modicum of economic integration into mainstream Hungarian society as they were encouraged to join the working class (cf. Pogány 2004).<sup>50</sup>

As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, policies vis-à-vis Romani communities have historically been generated by non-Romani elites. This continues to the present day, where both in the governmental sphere and in the (re)emerging civil society, the participation of the Hungarian intellectual class is dominant. As a result, the influence of Hungarian elites who frame policy on Roma such as social scientists, social reformers,

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<sup>50</sup> Conversely, state dependency was fostered in a number of Romani communities, particularly those that had become proletarianised (though this was true for other Hungarian citizens as well).

so-called 'Roma experts' and consultants, civil servants, as well as Romani intellectuals is worthy of scrutiny (Higley, et al. 1998). Government policy-makers and prominent intellectuals were in favour of fostering the development of a middle-class Romani intelligentsia, and the foundation of the *Gandhi Gimnazium* (Gandhi Secondary School) in Pécs<sup>51</sup> was one concrete example of the will of the Hungarian state in this regard. Incorporating insights from research on Roma politics after socialism, I emphasised the post-1995 era in Hungarian policy vis-à-vis Roma, suggesting that the previous "policy of dialogue" as coined by Kovats (1998), has been replaced by intransigence and attempts at power consolidation on the part of the state, in which 'declarations of progressive intent' serve as substitute for structural investments in ameliorating Romani marginalisation (Kóczé 2004: INT).

This chapter sought to review the discourse and politics on Roma that dominated Hungary in the socialist and early transition period, and inquire into the linkages between the two (both in academia and policy-making circles) in the late socialist era of Hungary. It was noted that the discourse on the Romani population in Hungary at the elite level, (that is, what is consumed in government and political quarters, as well as amongst intellectuals), and the discourse at the level of the general public or 'mass level', exhibits a significant divide. At the elite level, we can perceive two contradictory streams of discursive production in the post-socialist era. The first stream is represented by dissident intellectuals, human rights entrepreneurs and liberal politicians within Hungarian society who emphasise the equal rights of Roma, while the other stream is one that exhibits forms of elite racism as illustrated earlier by the example of politicians such as former Ambassador Jeszenszky. By stark contrast, the discursive production within zones of 'everyday racism' (cf. Essed 2001) shows us pervasiveness of anti-Gypsyism at the

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<sup>51</sup> A government-sponsored school founded in 1994 whose primary purpose is to foster the development of a Romani intellectual class.

societal level. However, the emphasis within Hungary on *elite power* – both discursive and political - once again highlights the subaltern position of the mass of Roma who are generally removed from these debates, inspite of the fact that the policies generated from these discussions profoundly impact their lives.



## CHAPTER FIVE - 'ROMA RIGHTS': ORIGINS, FRAMEWORK, AND PRACTICES

The chapter below is the first of three interwoven chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) focusing on 'Roma rights' NGOs: their origins, their rise and the role(s) that they play, along with their impact on human rights discourse and practice in post-socialist Hungary. **Chapter Five** constructs a genealogy of the contemporary human rights movement in Hungary vis-à-vis the Romani communities, illustrating both its sources and evolution. **Chapter Six** covers the structure, the content and the politics of national-level Hungarian human rights organisations, as well as their relationship to INGOs such as the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW). Special attention is paid to the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an INGO that has played a pivotal role in the formation of the 'Roma rights' movement in Europe since its foundation in Budapest in 1996. **Chapter Seven** grapples with the paradoxical consequences and the criticisms of the work of human rights NGOs in the 'Roma rights' field, and investigates the on-going challenges they face in light of neoliberal trajectories within post-socialist civil societies.

### 5.1 Introduction: the roots of Romani human rights activism

There are four key phenomena accounting for the dramatic rise in the level of NGO human rights activity vis-à-vis Roma in Hungary in the 1990s, and I offer a brief summation here, before elaborating on their significance in the remainder of the chapter. First and foremost, *the massive socio-economic changes in the country resulting from a shift from the command economy to neoliberal market capitalism laid the groundwork for the rapid marginalisation of Romani communities*. During the 1980s, there was a weakening of the socialist structures that had underpinned the Hungarian state since the 1950s. This resulted in large-scale unemployment leading to increasing impoverishment amongst Romani communities (Speder 2001: 240). Only a small number of Romani entrepreneurs have fared better as a

result of economic liberalisation (Stewart 1997; Tanaka 1998). Gábor Miklosi, International Representative for the Roma Press Centre in Budapest in 1999 explains:

...because the Gypsies were the great losers of the transition, because of their under-education, because of their social circumstances and because...the big socialist industries were closed because they were working on a deficit, and most of the Gypsy/Roma labour force was consumed [by], employed by these huge industrial plants. Once they were closed, all these people were laid off. So, impoverisation, moving into shacks, being pushed towards the edge of society...*marginalisation* in one word has become a very strong process (Miklosi 1999: INT).

As discussed in Chapter One, by 1993, the rate of unemployment for Roma in transitional Hungary had dramatically risen, from 60-70% in many communities to almost 100% in some compact, segregated communities (HRW 1993; Havas, Kertesi and Kemény 1995; Pogány 2004). Compared to the far lower national unemployment rate of approximately 10% for men, Romani communities experienced a disproportionate (and devastating) loss of employment and downward social mobility. Noted Hungarian economist Gábor Kertesi (2004), summarizes the plight of Romani workers:

[the] employment of working age Roma fell from 75 percent to 30 percent in ten years. We put forward the hypothesis that the employment of Romany workers at the middle of the nineties was not only at a very low level, but was characterised by high in and outflow rates, and an employment pattern – known from the Third World – with unstable employment and short employment spells was emerging. Not only did most of the Romany population lose their jobs to a much larger extent than the average of the Hungarian population, but those Romany persons who held on had to give up the hopes of a long-term employment relationship. The spread of unstable employment has caused social disintegration of those with a job: the lack of steady employment also means the lack of a stable lifestyle, the continued presence of bread-and-butter worries, as well as a lower level of social transfers from the state and the employers – or even the loss of entitlements (44).

This widespread and increasing impoverishment further deepened anti-Romani hostility and heightened perceptions of Roma as a people who are by nature work-shy; who engage in illegal activities; and are cunning abusers of state benefit. Offering his perspective on anti-Gypsyism in transitional Hungary, Miklosi (who is not Romani himself) pointed out that:

....most of the people have very strong prejudices in terms of the Gypsies, partly because they have bad experiences, and because they do not understand that crime cannot be associated with ethnicity and it's not depending on that, and partly because there was nothing about this particular people which could convince them to the contrary, and it's not them [the Gypsies] that could be blamed for their misery, but the hypocritical policy which surrounded them and their existence during the last 100 years and very much so under communism (Miklosi INT: 1999).

In addition, by the early 1990s, there was a renewed emphasis on Hungarian national identity as well as a resurgence of ethno-cultural boundaries by political elites in Hungary (cf. Kenedi 1986; Brubaker 1996). This new political *status quo* effectively excluded Roma from its version of the 'body politic', and ironically, the political ideologies of both the nationalist parties (including the extreme right *Party for the Hungarian Truth and Life* or *MIÉP*, an openly anti-Semitic and anti-Gypsy movement) and the liberals, who celebrated 'ethnic difference', created an environment in which ethnic consciousness became accentuated across the Hungarian political spectrum. Kovats (2001a) has correctly observed that the post-socialist liberal government policies were focused on cultural differences of minorities at the expense of social solidarity with *all Hungarian citizens, thereby planting the seeds for further social fragmentation along ethnic lines in post-socialist Hungary* For Hungary's former anti-communist dissidents who became part of the liberal ruling class, these new liberal politics took the form of new legislation on minority protections, the promotion of minority cultures in media, culture, and education, and the creation of minority self-governments (Kovats 1998; 2001c). However, all these proved less effective at curbing anti-Gypsy racism and nationalist tendencies within broader society, than those of the previous Socialist regime.

Roma, as a particularly visible minority, became targets of discrimination and violence by large sections of society: not only by extreme nationalists (far-right politicians and members of neo-fascist youth groups) but also by police and state officials, particularly at the local level. The old popular anti-Gypsy mythologies (covered in Chapters One and

Two) once again surfaced, and open intolerance and hostility towards Roma became widespread.

Moreover, as Szikinger (2000) argues, central authority had weakened considerably by the late 1980s, with both the police and judiciary increasingly characterized by negligence, incompetence, and in some cases, conspiring with xenophobic elements, especially at the local level. At this time there was also a general confusion about new laws and their enforcement; this resulted in the uneven implementation of laws, and in some cases, their active subversion by state authorities, including the police. In addition, the political will necessary to deal with the increasing number of skinhead attacks and emerging neo-fascist formations was missing. These were the key factors that combined to strengthen the scapegoating of Roma, thereby laying the groundwork for renewed anti-Gypsy racism, details of which are covered further in the next section. The swift rise of the 'rights movement' for Roma can therefore be read as a response to the violence and hostility against them that grew in transitional Hungary.

The growing incidence of skinhead attacks in the early 1990s pushed indigenous Hungarian advocates (both Romani and non-Romani) to mobilise and call for a stronger response by the State<sup>52</sup> (Human Rights Watch 1993 and 1996; Noszkai 2000: INT). Although there were a handful of Romani and non-Romani social reformers and politicians who raised awareness of these issues nationally and abroad, and urged the government to act, the majority of Roma in Hungary (along with other people of colour) continued to bear the brunt of racist violence that police either ignored or only responded to tepidly.

Secondly, *the repudiation of state socialism, and the gradual erosion of attendant institutional structures in the 1980s, resulted in an ideological (as well as material) vacuum.* Explaining how this

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<sup>52</sup> In addition, human rights lawyers and experts on the police Gábor Nószkai and István Szikinger took an early lead in demanding greater protections of minorities from the State.

ideological space has been filled comprises a complex narrative vis-à-vis human rights ideologies in Hungary. On the one hand, former dissidents who had been vocal opponents of one-party rule in the previous regime, quickly adopted a liberal politics embracing classical Northern (or Western) human rights concerns rooted primarily in civil and political rights and rule of law ideologies modelled on the American experience (Carothers 1998; Guilhot 2005; Mutua 2001; Welch 2001). As covered in Chapter Seven in greater depth, economic and social rights were either divorced from, or took a back seat within, the liberal human rights framework that was adopted in the broader context of Hungary's globalising and increasingly capitalist economy. Arguably, these practices, emanating from the liberal human rights paradigm, have done a disservice to those subaltern groups in the country who continue to suffer the most social deprivation. On the other hand, the ideological vacuum also resulted in the virulent anti-Gypsyism mentioned earlier. These two opposing, contradictory socio-political forces (the embrace of liberal political ideals such as human rights versus nationalism which feeds anti-Gypsyism) have characterised Hungarian socio-political life since the late 1980s.

Thirdly, and equally importantly, *the material means necessary to conduct 'rights' work became readily accessible as Western philanthropic organisations and private donors (primarily from the United States) supported NGOs whose philosophies conformed to their own liberal ideologies about progress* - which for them meant an emphasis on strengthening 'civil society' and human rights standards (Carothers 1998; Chandhoke 2003; Guilhot 2005).<sup>53</sup> In addition, strong anti-communist ideological impulses were also present, particularly among American private foundations, and these were reflected in the interventions of key human rights entrepreneurs (for example, Dr. Deborah Harding of the *Open Society Institute*). Other US-based foundations, such as the Princeton-based Project on Ethnic Relations (PER)

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<sup>53</sup> Here the umbrella term 'democratisation' refers to the establishment and formalised functioning of civil society that aspires to be independent from the state. In addition, the term is also applied to State organs themselves. For an excellent discussion on the fluidity of this concept, see T. Carothers (1997).

headed by Livia Plaks, emphasised 'security issues' in post-socialist Europe in their work.<sup>54</sup> Here, the role of key Western human rights entrepreneurs and their Eastern 'disciples' or partners was pivotal in setting the policy agendas on Romani communities. Fourthly, and related to the point above, *the increasing disillusionment of progressive Romani representatives with mainstream political parties and national electoral politics - particularly after 1995 - buttressed the role of the NGOs as key vehicles for the promotion of the human rights of Roma*. This was further compounded by the introduction of the Minority Self-Government system (based on the 1993 Law on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities), which Roma representatives have participated in actively since its inception. The establishment of this law was mired in controversy, with allegations of electoral fraud and corruption, though reforms have been instated over time in response to these complaints (Kovats 1998, 2001c; Koulis 2001). Miklosi (1999) describes how the MSG operates for Hungary's Roma:

When I was referring to the 'shop window institutions', I had exactly this...[the system of Gypsy self-government in mind...[though] the underlying intention of this ground-breaking institution was good, but the way it has been actually carried out isn't entirely. The problem is that the local MSGs [minority self-governments] are working in tandem with local self-governments in the villages, and they have to share their tasks – basically cultural and educational tasks - but they don't have their own budgets, so they are always financially dependent on the local governments, which makes their negotiating position in the local self-government inferior all the time because they are receiving the money from them, in this sense they cannot represent their interests because they will always remain financially dependent, and it's a kind of vicious circle, and they will never have a chance to break out from that. On the national level, the problem is that when they have their minority elections, the Gypsy parties receive funding. The ones who cooperate with the ruling government receive their funding from the state budget, so they are always made to be financially interested. They are made to be on good terms and not to be very demanding towards the government, which means that for the purpose for which this system was set up, it is dysfunctional, because they cannot represent their own people if they can be financially turned down at any moment (INT).

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<sup>54</sup>See their programmes online at <http://www.per-usa.org/>.

Progressive representatives of the Romani communities perceived this system as a clever mechanism of political control on the part of the State to co-opt Romani leadership in Hungary, effectively neutralizing radical critiques of the situation (Kozma 1999: INT; Horváth 1999: INT).<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless (and perhaps unsurprisingly), large numbers of Romani leaders – particularly those in the countryside affiliated with *Lungo Drom* – have tacitly accepted the importance of the MSG system, which they view as a type of ‘training ground’ for a career in professional politics as community representatives.

## 5.2 Racism and violence: growing anti-Gypsyism

We will do away with everything bad;  
Everything base and evil will disappear;  
A blazing gun is the  
Only weapon I can win with.  
I will kill every Gypsy, adult or child...  
When the job is done, we can post  
“Gypsy-Free Zone”<sup>56</sup>

Growing anti-Gypsyism in the late socialist and early transition period (mid-1980s to early 1990s) created tremendous insecurity amongst many Romani communities who began to fear for their physical security in Hungary. For 1991 alone, Hungary’s National Security Office reported 25 skinhead assaults in Budapest. The *Martin Luther King Association* (which assisted foreigners, especially students at the time), subsequently reported 63 victims in the first half of 1992 (ADL 1995). Indeed, many attacks were never reported, in large part because of fear of retaliation on the side of the victim, and

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<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, it is important to note in by the time of the MSG elections in 2003, many Roma from the ‘progressive’ wing also saw merit in contesting these elections, in a kind of ‘can’t beat them, join them!’ ethos. These included Aladár Horvath, Blanka Kozma, and Jeno Zsigo amongst others (Origo 2003).

<sup>56</sup> ‘Gypsy-Free Zone’ was a popular song amongst skinhead groups from the early transition period (mid-1980s), and was sung by the band ‘Mos-oi’, whose name was a play on the word for ‘Smile’ [*mosoly*] (Hockenos 1993: 75).

in part because Romani communities were skeptical of the Hungarian justice system, as the response to such violence had been weak in the past (HHC/Roma Press Center 1997). As discussed in Chapter 4, some theorists of the transition attempted to explain the rising wave of violence directed at Roma by pointing to the social insecurity prevalent in Hungary, and this causal factor was also identified by some officers of the state. In 1985, for example, Dr. György Gabriel, a detective who headed the 'Family, Child and Youth Protection' division of the Budapest Police Force, attributed the increasing skinhead activity thus:

This is a society in crisis, everything is in crisis: the economy, the family, the school system, the legal system, the police...it's no wonder that the most sensitive stratum, the youth, is reacting this way (Anti-Defamation League 1995: 44-48).<sup>57</sup>

Amongst the socio-political antecedents that led to the (re)emergence of the scapegoating of Roma, were tensions resulting from increasing unemployment after the closure of factories and State-controlled firms, resulting in part from austerity measures promulgated by the International Monetary Fund (1982) and the World Bank (1984). Therefore, economic liberalization in transitional Hungary had an adverse impact on societal cohesion. Other contributing factors included the rapid political realignment (from membership in the Warsaw Pact to NATO in 1998), and the identity crises resulting from the steady erosion of institutions (as a result of shrinking state budgets and privatization) which had previously supported the mass of Hungarians.

Some scholars have pointed to the historical anti-Gypsyism in Europe, and argue that the contemporary manifestation in Hungary is a continuation of centuries-old, deeply ingrained prejudice (Hancock 1995; Matras 2000). However, Kovats (1998) more

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<sup>57</sup>Ten years later however, by 2005, such a statement would not sit well with 'Roma rights' activists who would advocate serious punishments for youth offenders ('hooligans') committing racially-motivated crimes. Recently, in early 2009, Hungary has experienced a resurgence of violent anti-Gypsyism as a series of vigilante murders targeting Romani families has shocked the nation, also bringing into sharper focus Romani socio-political vulnerability during times of economic crisis (cf. Sigona and Trehan 2009).



precisely highlights the reductionist dangers of the ethnic 'difference' discourse, thus demonstrating how state and institutional mechanisms create the symbolic and material foundations for divisions amongst different groups in modern societies. Kovats (2001a) further posits that political manipulation by the state in the form of a 'politics of difference' also contributed to anti-Gypsy racism by promoting the ethnic particularism of Roma at the expense of social solidarity with the Hungarian majority. Significantly, Romani activists such as Aladár Horváth and Angela Kóczé share similar views, though they themselves have formed strategic alliances with liberal politicians and have worked within this policy framework themselves (Horváth 1999: INT; Kóczé, personal communication 1998). Ironically, post-socialist governments that attempted to display their 'liberalist' credentials to the EU and the West by supporting programmes which focused on Romani culture and identity, were at one level exacerbating already existing notions of 'Gypsy otherness' in Hungary. Moreover, state-sponsored programmes in the areas of civic and cultural activities tended to obscure the broader issue of the wholesale socio-economic exclusion of Romani masses that emerged with the transition.

By the late 1980s, it was clear that Hungarian institutions such as the police and courts were failing to protect Romani citizens from perpetrators of racially-motivated crimes such as skinhead attacks (Szikinger 2000; Szabo 1998). Small, but active skinhead gangs were well established in major Hungarian towns, including the capital, Budapest. However, as national and international media began to focus on the violence directed at Roma in the early transition period, pressure was placed on state authorities to act (*The Washington Times* 1990). For example, Arpád Göncz, a respected writer and intellectual, who was then President of Hungary, wrote a compelling piece in the *Pest Weekly* entitled "199 Years from Human Rights? Arpád Göncz on the Situation of Gypsies" (Göncz 1990). In his essay, he openly attacked growing anti-Gypsy sentiments in Hungary, and

other intellectuals followed suit at this time, showing solidarity with Hungarian citizens of Romani ethnicity.

Moreover, pressure from human rights organizations such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (founded in 1989) also resulted in some reform measures. For example, in response to the growing skinhead violence at this time, the government conducted a large-scale sweep of skinhead gangs in Budapest. Although this curbed skinhead activities in the capital, by 1991, a new epicentre of skinhead activity emerged in northeastern Hungary, where the town of Eger (the seat of Heves County) and its environs, became notorious for its large number of violent attacks on Roma and others (HRW 1993; Noszkai 2000; cf. Kürti 2000). Though the city is relatively prosperous, the surrounding towns and villages are economically depressed, in particular the large Romani settlements in the area. To illustrate the climate of violence at the time, in May 1991, an estimated 150 skinheads attacked Roma in a pogrom-like assault in Eger. This was followed by further attacks in October 1991 and in August 1992 (HRW 1993: 48-49). Nonetheless, by the mid-1990s violence perpetrated by skinheads had declined to some extent, as some skinhead formations dissolved, and the popular support for right-wing political formations such as, MIÉP for example, led by the charismatic former MDF party member István Csúrka, dropped precipitously. This can be attributed in part to developments within Hungarian society as a result of the elections in 1994 when the Socialists were elected (replacing the more conservative, right-of-centre MDF), along with the implementation of government policy reforms in the run-up to EU accession which placed heightened focus on Hungary's compliance with the Copenhagen human rights criteria for all new member states. Nonetheless, with respect to the influence of the Europeanisation agenda, one astute Romani observer had this to say about the impact of the EU human rights accession framework on domestic Hungarian politics back in 2001:

[t]he Romani issue is generally not understood on the ground as one of systemic human rights violations, and is rather only seen as an imposed condition for admission to the EU. I am concerned that this results in a situation in which our issues are addressed only out of a fear of exclusion from the EU, and therefore that solutions devised may never be efficient and may never address the real roots of the problem. That is, EU pressure may possibly create a new obstacle in the struggle (Kóczé 2001: 28).

### *Awareness of civil rights for Roma*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the 1970s and 1980s, voices showing solidarity with Romani Hungarians were to be heard amongst the ranks of Hungarian dissident intellectuals such as Zsolt Csalog and Otilia Sólt. By 1988, Aladár Horváth had established the Anti-Ghetto Committee in Miskolc, planting the seeds for Romani direct action and civil disobedience practices in Hungary. Horváth, who had already gained a reputation as a ‘troublemaker’ by the local communist power structure in the area of Miskolc in the northeast of the country, also served as a soldier for one year in a segregated army unit. Below, he reflects on his experiences of political socialization during the 1980s:

They [local communists] did not want me to politicize my fellow [Romani] soldiers...I had a lot of conflicts because I was beginning to have a role in trying to enlighten them about their oppression...I saw that the people were living in extreme misery, the children in segregated schools, the soldiers in segregated units too. They did not want to place their hand in our hand, a Gypsy hand, because we were ‘untrustworthy’, this was the ideology then, we must work, that’s all...Then, in the summer of 1988 I participated – because at that time the multi-party system had just begun to be formed – in a forum put together by the MDF and SZDSZ and a few other parties. And I went there to educate the state [about our situation] and it turned out that *they* [the socialist government] were deciding on what to build for [us] Gypsies, and I thought, “I’m not going to allow this”...and they decided that they would build ‘reduced comfort’ housing for 160 Gypsy families 2 kilometers outside the city...I then attended some meetings organised by the opposition parties in Budapest and it was there that I met Havas [Gábor], Ladányi [János], and Biró Ándras, and I asked them to come to Miskolc and support me. And well, with my intellectual friends from Miskolc, and Gypsies who understood the situation, along with some members of opposition groups in Budapest, I created the Anti-Ghetto Committee...it was likely the first citizens’ movement in Europe...the first Romani citizens’ movement, and we worked a lot, we made many plans and we organised professionally...on March 2, 1989, we were successful and the local council had to withdraw their decision...and we won. And...from one day to the next, I became a politician, and I did not

realize this, and I had never wanted to be one, and I still did not realize that I had actually become one (Horváth 1999: INT).

In the early years of the 'transition', the dangers of the growing marginalisation and increasing number of human rights abuses perpetrated on Roma were raised by social reformers and politicians from the liberal SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats), along with the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Party). This took place during the first multi-party elections in the Hungarian Parliament, signaling the end of one-party rule, and newly elected liberal and progressive MPs urged the government to enforce stricter protections and generally strengthen the rule-of-law in Hungary. Aladár Horváth, a former teacher and a national-level Romani activist, Ferenc Kószeg (chairman of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee), and Tibor Dérdak, a teacher specialising in Romani children's education and a key force behind the Gandhi Secondary School<sup>58</sup> were all members of parliament from 1990 to 1994 to actively call for stricter legal protections, as well as rights for Roma (Kószeg 1999: INT; Horváth 1999: INT). Horváth, director of the *Roma Foundation for Civil Rights*, one of the leading domestic human rights organisations in the country, was also a founding member of both the *Roma Parliament* and *Phralipe* ('Brotherhood') Romani civil organizations. However, despite the strenuous efforts of these reform-oriented individuals, as well as those of fellow Parliamentary figures Otilia Sólt, Zsolt Csalog and Gaspár Miklos Támás - all of whom were prominent dissidents under the previous regime - the majority of Roma in Hungary, along with other visible minorities, continued to experience racist violence (HRW 1993: 48-52). The Human Rights Watch report, "Struggling for Ethnic Identity: the Gypsies of Hungary" (1993), is the first such report on the issue of 'Roma rights' by an international human rights organisation. It highlights the progression and scope of skinhead violence directed at guest workers from Cuba,

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<sup>58</sup> A government-sponsored secondary school founded in 1994. Its primary purpose is to foster the development of a Romani intellectual class.

students from Africa, and the Roma of Hungary, all of which intensified in the late 1980s (See Figure 6 for the cover of the report).

In addition to the dynamic Horváth, urban Romani activists such as Agnes Dároczi (journalist and advocate for Roma, who was then employed by the Ministry of Culture), Jenő Zsigó (social worker and the head of the Gypsy Social, Cultural, and Methodology Centre) and the late Béla Osztójkán (writer and poet) played key roles in the development of an independent Romani voice within the Hungarian public sphere. In 1989, these Romani dissidents became the founding members of *Phralipe* and *Roma Parlament*, the first indigenous Romani advocacy formations in post-socialist Hungary. Meanwhile, Flórián Farkas, along with colleagues from smaller towns in the Hungarian countryside, established *Lungo Drom* (Long Road) in the formerly communist stronghold town of Szolnok (central Hungary), a political movement that since its inception forged an alliance with the Hungarian state on Roma policy (Kovats 1998, Horváth 1999: INT). Farkas, a clever political operator, in fashioning this strategic alliance with the state, managed to become head of the National Gypsy Self-Government of Hungary from 1995 to 2002 (despite being under investigation for corruption charges).

The rising violence facing their communities propelled members of the *Roma Parlament* and *Phralipe* to campaign with more vigour. On July 11, 1993 in Eger, these indigenous Romani activists organised one of Hungary's largest post-War mass demonstrations against racism and fascism. Several thousand Roma and their sympathizers reportedly attended this event, protesting the lack of police protection and civil rights for Roma (see photograph below, in Figure 9). Gyula Naday, chairman of the pro-government *Democratic Association of Gypsies (DAGH)*, one of the largest Gypsy organisations at the time (which was in opposition to *Phralipe*, an organisation far more critical of the state), termed the demonstration as "hasty and poorly timed from a political viewpoint" in light of the passage of the Law on Ethnic and National Minorities in the Hungarian

Parliament in May of that year. However, he did concede that the action was useful in bringing attention to the issue (OMRI 1993). Nevertheless, that same year, the Hungarian Supreme Court ruled that the law dealing with racially-motivated crime did not apply to skinhead attacks on foreigners, Gypsies or other members of ethnic minorities. Indeed, the few skinhead cases that managed to reach the courts were viewed as simple acts of 'hooliganism' by Hungarian judges (Fox 1995). This meant that the little faith Roma had in the Hungarian justice system diminished even further. Eventually, the impetus to change this legislation came about in 1998, fuelled also to a large degree by outside pressure rather than internal domestic mechanisms. Key organisations such as the OSI, the ERRC, Human Rights Watch, and European bodies as well as the OSCE were instrumental in reforming this law. The impact of these external actors is explored further in Chapters 6 and 7.

The cover photo below shows the demonstration in Eger (northeastern Hungary), held on July 1993, when thousands of Roma gathered to protest growing skinhead violence and anti-Gypsyism. It is taken from the first detailed report on the human rights situation of Roma in Hungary published by a Western INGO (HRW 1993). The Romani men photographed are holding leaf branches in their hands as symbols of peace; their expressions are serious and troubled, but also hopeful.

## STRUGGLING FOR ETHNIC IDENTITY



## The Gypsies of Hungary

### Helsinki Watch

A DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Figure 10 - "Struggling for Ethnic Identity", front cover of *Human Rights Watch* report (1993). Photo credit: Csaba Toroczky

### *Police-Roma Encounters*

As alluded to earlier, apart from the rising number of skinhead assaults, Hungarian police, particularly those working at the local level, were also culpable of anti-Gypsy racism. In February 1992, Hungarian police raided several villages using anti-terror units

at the request of local officials who wanted them to discipline ‘troublemakers’. As a result of the raids, several Roma suffered serious injuries. In May 1994, in the village of Örkény, nine Roma were injured in clashes with law enforcement. The police claimed that the detectives, who had visited the village to investigate a robbery, had acted in self-defense when attacked by 150 Roma. Such claims of self-defence have been routinely employed by law enforcement to veil their acts of brutality against communities (Fox 1995: 3-4; HRW 1993; Szikinger 1999: INT). According to the ‘White Booklets’, a series of human rights reports published annually by the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Rights (NEKI), a Hungarian NGO, Roma have continued to be the primary targets of police misconduct. For example, in the 1996 report, nine serious cases of police abuse of power were documented. Many of the cases involved verbal assaults on the suspect’s ethnicity and subsequently, physical beatings ranging from ‘mild’ slapping sessions to serious injuries requiring hospitalisation. One expert on Hungarian policing claims that institutionalised racism is rampant within its ranks:

Many foreign observers and domestic experts tend to accept declarations of police and political leadership about democratic transformation of law enforcement in Hungary. In my opinion, the problem of Roma-police relations alone points to the structural deficiencies, far from being explained by the “rotten apple” or “temporary difficulties of the transition” theories (Szikinger 2000).

Szikinger further cited the militarisation and centralization of police organs as a danger to the constitutional principles on which the post-socialist Hungarian democracy was been founded. As Geza Finszter (2001) notes, with respect to police reform in Hungary, two distinct schools of thought developed in opposition to one another: the evolutionist position vs. the reformist position, and Dr. Szikinger represents the latter. Reformists wish to see the police structures firmly under the purview of public administration and emphasise depoliticisation, decentralisation, and demilitarisation of the police. The evolutionists focus primarily on police functioning, building up of self-confidence and morale that had been lost during the political changeover, and discipline, thereby



eschewing any attempts at fundamentally altering police organisation and operations (Finszter 2001: 139-141). This latter, more conservative approach to policing has come to represent the conventional wisdom in approaches to police reform in Hungary.

### ***Push for Reforms: the Ombudsman institution***

Domestic advocacy groups such as NEKI and the Romani Civil Rights Foundation also took advantage of external pressure placed on the Hungarian government in order to push for systemic reforms. In 1995, the Hungarian government created an autonomous institution, the Minority Ombudsman for the rights of ethnic and national minorities.<sup>59</sup> Since the office began its operations, a majority of individual complaints have been from Romani citizens.<sup>60</sup> One indication of Dr. Kaltenbach's autonomy as a civil servant was evidenced by his repeated calls for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, despite a Hungarian Constitutional Court decision which suggested that such legislation was not necessary.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the government in the late 1990s, led by Viktor Órban's right-of-centre FIDESZ party, and their coalition partners from the conservative Independent Small-Holders Party (FKP) and the Hungarian Christian's Party (MKP), were strongly opposed to the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation, despite repeated calls from European bodies such as the Council of Europe, as well as INGOs working in human rights. One of the few parties to openly support such legislation at the time was the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP).

In the 1997 Annual Report of the Ombudsman's Office, Mr. Kaltenbach (himself a member of Hungary's German minority) reported that 63% of the plaintiffs who filed a

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<sup>59</sup> On June 30, 1995 three Parliamentary Commissioners (or Ombudsmen) were elected by the Hungarian Parliament for three different areas of rights: one for Human Rights, one for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, and one for National and Ethnic Minorities. See detailed analysis by Krizsán (2001).

<sup>60</sup> Since June 2007, the Minority Ombudsman of Hungary (selected by the Parliament) has been Dr. Ernő Kállai, himself of Romani origin, see further <http://www.kisebbségiombudsman.hu/index.php?lang=en>.

<sup>61</sup> Act CXXXV 'On Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities' was adopted on 22 December, 2003 by the Hungarian Parliament, and acts as the core anti-discrimination law in Hungary today.

report with the office were of Romani ethnicity. Furthermore, the report gives a breakdown of the most frequent types of cases the office dealt with and lists police, judicial organs, and local governments as the primary offenders. By publishing these annual reports (in Hungarian and English) on the state of minority protections in Hungary, the Ombudsman's institution has gained much respect from both the Hungarian Romani activists and the government alike.

### *The Dilemma of Ethnic Statistics*

From 1974 to 1989, the Hungarian Socialist Republic kept separate, official statistics on Romani prisoners and developed special police units and methodology concentrating on combating 'Gypsy crime'. By late 1989, these statistics were said to have been discontinued, and by 1992, as a result of the adoption of the *Hungarian Act on the Protection of Personal Data and the Publicity of Data of Public Interest*, government agencies began classifying data on ethnicity as 'special data', thereby prohibiting such data from being gathered or used without the specific consent of the individual (cf. Figure 9, Chapter 4).

A significant obstacle to gaining justice for Romani victims of racist violence in the post-socialist period has been to prove the *racial* motivation or nature of the crime in a court of law. This problem has been further compounded by the lack of data on the victim and the perpetrator, because ethnic data/statistics are no longer legal under the aforementioned data protection law.

To address this issue, several international meetings and roundtables were organised to discuss the feasibility of such data gathering. In May 2000, the Council of Europe and the *Project on Ethnic Relations (PER)*<sup>62</sup> organised a two-day joint roundtable on 'Roma and Statistics' in Budapest to discuss the complexities and controversies surrounding this issue. Present were key participants and experts in the 'Roma rights' field: Jim Goldston

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<sup>62</sup> A Princeton-based INGO connected to the US foreign policy establishment.

(Director of the OSI's *Justice Initiative*, and currently Board Member of ERRC), as well as Romani activists Rudko Kawczynski (Director of the Hamburg-based *Roma National Congress*, and currently, head of the Council of Europe's special advisory body ERTF), Dr. Nicolae Gheorghe (sociologist, and former Head of Romani/Sinti affairs office within the OSCE), and Andrejz Mirga (Polish Romani ethnographer, advisory board member to the PER, and current Head of Roma/Sinti Affairs in the OSCE). Discussion was focused on the conflict between protecting Romani individuals and communities from potential abuse of statistics, and the need for ethnic based statistics in order to prove discrimination in a court of law. Goldston vociferously came out in favour of ethnic data collection in order to prove race discrimination, and emphasised how this works in practice in the United States.

The importance of this issue to liberal human rights entrepreneurs was underscored by a second conference held in Budapest at the end of 2000, entitled 'Race/Ethnic Statistics and Data Protection'. It was held at the Central European University and sponsored by the Open Society Institute (Goldston, the former Deputy Director of OSI-New York was a driving force behind this conference) via INDOK, the Human Rights Information and Documentation Centre which at that time was headed by prominent Hungarian constitutional law expert Gábor Halmai<sup>63</sup>. In addition, specialists from various countries (including Germany, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria) were invited to speak and present their views. Indeed, the subject matter of the conference was clearly intended to be applied to the cases of Romani victims of rights violations, as referred to in the Project description below:

Since there exists a need for ethnic statistics by governments and anti-discrimination advocates, the Steering Committee of Ethnic Statistics Project which consisted of one representative each from COLPI, ERRC, INDOK, LGI

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<sup>63</sup>Halmai was a board member of the ERRC, and in addition, INDOK was funded primarily by OSI-Budapest, and used to be part of the Central European University (established by George Soros) prior to 1999.

and OSI decided to start a program aiming at improving information on the Roma community at the level of local authorities, research institutions and NGOs in order to facilitate *the planning of social policies in relation to the Romani population* (Center for Policy Studies 2002, *emphasis mine*).

Nonetheless, Romani activists from Hungary (and other countries) were noticeably missing from the audience. Indeed, the few Romani activists present cynically remarked afterwards that “it’s traditional” (*az szokásos*), meaning that their exclusion from these circles was customary or ‘habitual’ (Anon. 2000: INT). The majority of the participants were human rights lawyers/practitioners or legal experts. However, unlike the previous meeting organised by the Council of Europe/PER, the Romani perspective was marginalised such that even representatives from so-called ‘Romani’ NGOs were all non-Romani persons.<sup>64</sup> Some Roma were present in the audience and were able to ask questions at the end of the sessions. Many times during the course of my field research, I would ring Romani collaborators to inform them about important events organised by the OSI and INGOs elite circles in an attempt to increase Romani participation in these forums. These endeavours made me realize the extent to which this arena was the preserve of particular elites and its disconnection from Romani communities themselves, and emphasised to me the endogamous nature of the ‘Roma rights’ network, suggesting the depth of symbolic violence experienced by Roma within the very same ‘civil society’ working for their betterment.

### ***The Pre-eminence of the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Model***

As knowledge of widespread anti-Gypsy racism grew in post-socialist countries - thereby fostering a greater solidarity among Roma in Hungary and other European states (despite the occasional political friction between groups) - a number of Western NGOs and members of multilateral organisations such as the United States government’s CSCE

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<sup>64</sup> These included Dimitrina Petrova and Claude Cahn, representing the ERRC, as well as Florin Moisa of the Resource Center for Romani Communities in Romania.

(Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe) began to take notice and commission their own research on the human rights situation of Roma in Hungary and the broader region. As mentioned above (and illustrated in Figure 9), in July 1993, Human Rights Watch, a New-York based INGO, published its first report on the treatment of Roma in Hungary, *Struggling for Ethnic Identity: the Gypsies of Hungary*. The report was a part of the 'Destroying Ethnic Identity' series of the Helsinki Watch project, and it was at this time, in the early 1990s, that HRW/Helsinki Watch became increasingly active in covering the post-socialist 'transition' states. The first reports on Roma and human rights violations were written about the situation in two Balkan countries: *The Persecution of Gypsies in Romania* (September 1991) and *The Gypsies of Bulgaria* (June 1991). Subsequently, in 1993 and 1994, HRW published *Police violence against Gypsies-Bulgaria* (April 1993), *Increasing violence against Roma in Bulgaria* (August 1993), and *Lynch law: violence against Roma in Romania* (November 1994). There was also a report published in this series in 1992 on the human rights situation of Roma in Czechoslovakia, right before the 'velvet divorce' in 1993 when the country split into two nation-states without undue political violence.

The formats for these series of HRW reports on the human rights situation of Roma are similar: they begin with a history of the Romani population in a specific country, a brief summary is then provided of the socialist period, followed by a litany of abuses and discrimination Roma experience ranging from police brutality, skinhead violence, discrimination in the areas of access to education, health and housing, public opinion and the press coverage of Roma, and in some cases, community violence or even pogroms. The reports conclude with policy recommendations, based on international (and European) human rights instruments, urging governments to ensure greater protections for their Romani citizens and to strengthen rule-of-law practices within their state bodies (cf. HRW 1993-1998). Though the reports are primarily descriptive, the analysis and

general narrative within them veers towards a subtle neoliberal bias. For example, the back cover of the 1993 HRW report on Hungary states that:

Since the demise of the Communist regime in Hungary, the country's Gypsy or Roma population has benefited from the suspension of decades of assimilationist, and at times overtly racist, government policy and from an increased tolerance for the expression of Roma identity. However, Romas [sic] continue to suffer serious discrimination, and at times violence, at the hands of fellow citizens, and many public officials appear to exhibit the same behaviour (HRW 1993).

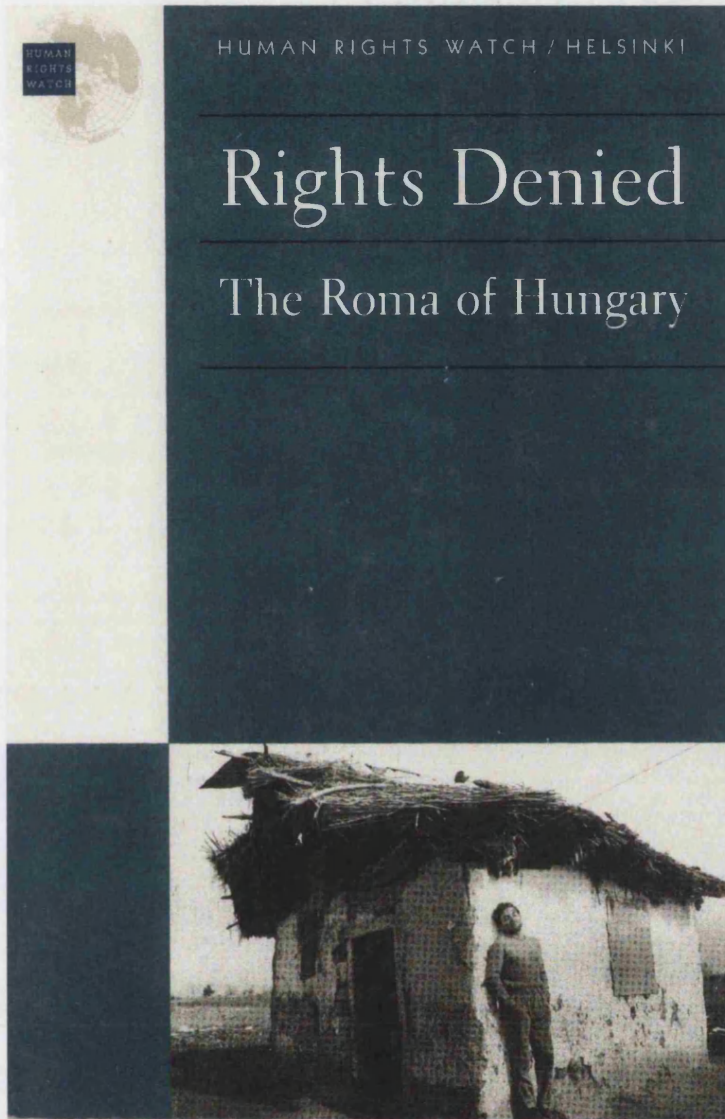
Typically, even passing mention is not made of how the embrace of neoliberal economic policies has served to undermine the socio-economic position of Roma in post-socialist Hungary. The result is that these INGO reports remained de-contextualised from the economic, political, and social realities of most Roma in the post-socialist scene, although there may be a section for example, on employment discrimination (cf. ERRC 2006). As Mutua (2002) correctly observes:

...conventional doctrinalists<sup>65</sup> stress a narrow range of civil and political rights, as is reflected by the mandates of leading INGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Throughout the Cold War period, INGOs concentrated their attention on the exposure of what they deemed "core" rights in Soviet bloc countries...in a reflection of this ideological bias, INGOs mirrored the position of the industrial democracies and generally assumed an unsympathetic, and at times, hostile posture towards calls for the expansion of their mandates to include economic and social rights (155).

Moreover, the readership itself of the HRW/Helsinki Watch reports generally consists of liberal scholars, journalists, United States government officials, 'offending' governments in question, international multilateral organisations working in Eastern Europe, European bodies, and UN bodies. Further analysis of the implications of this narrow human rights framework is undertaken in Chapters 6 and 7.

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<sup>65</sup> Mutua regards INGOs as 'conventional doctrinalists' because of their 'heavy and almost exclusive reliance on positive law in treaties and other sources of international law' (2001: 151).



**Figure 11 - HRW's second report on Roma in Hungary, "Rights Denied" (1997)**

**Photo credit: Judit M. Horváth and György Stalter**

Published in its Hungarian language version in 1996, the cover photograph above (from 1992) depicts an unemployed Romani man in front of his home in an isolated village (Helyőpapi). The image of his reclining body conveys a sense of profound resignation, in contrast to the image on the HRW's report from 1993 (Figure 10) which suggested an active, dynamic movement.

### 5.3 Disillusionment with national electoral politics

The disappointment of progressive Romani leaders with the results of progressive Romani representation in national electoral politics, as well as their increasing ideological marginalisation by the mid-1990s, also contributed to the rise of the Romani NGO sector, and the 'Roma rights' movement more broadly (Kovats 1998; Trehan 2001; Vermeersch 2001). By contrast, pro-statist Romani politicians whose predecessors had been 'Old Guard' beneficiaries of State patronage in communist Hungary remained loyal to the state after the switch to the new system. Romani political leaders (like Flórián Farkas of *Lungo Drom*) became part of a new *nomenklatura* within the Gypsy Minority Self-Government system.

In the mid-1990s, a growing cynicism with national parliamentary politics replaced the earlier mood of optimism of 1990, when several Romani members of parliament (Antonia Hága and Aladár Horváth of the Free Democrats/SZDSZ) had successfully gained seats on prominent party lists during the first post-communist multi-party elections, including and the late Tamas Péli, a Romani artist with the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). Therefore, by the mid-1990s, Romani candidates were no longer on mainstream party lists, and it became increasingly clear that the needs of Romani citizens would be ignored by politicians seeking election, despite the fact that Roma comprise close to 4% of the Hungarian electorate (Hága 2000: INT; Horváth 1999: INT; Daróczy 2000, personal communication). During the elections of April 2002, both the right-of-centre party FIDESZ and the MSZMP (Socialists) did attempt to woo Romani voters; whilst FIDESZ promised a guaranteed number of seats to the pro-government *Lungo Drom* political grouping, the Socialists targeted the large number of disaffected Romani voters, along with other Hungarian working class citizens. The subsequent Socialist-Free



Democrats coalition victory predictably resulted in a more liberal, less nationalist-leaning regime.

At the same time however, state-engineered political representation at the local level became a prominent feature of minority politics in Hungary. The MSG, legislated by the comprehensive Law on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities in 1993, became a vehicle for increased local level political activity during the 1990s. Some observers have suggested that the G-MSG resulted in a modicum of Romani representation at the local level on cultural, educational and various social issues. Nonetheless, Kóczé (2004) contends that it divides Romani identity as it forces local Roma to 'choose' between being 'Gypsy' and 'Hungarian'. As a result, many Roma who are integrated at the local level, end up not taking part in G-MSG elections, which now require a declaration of Romani ethnicity before voting. Political scientist Koulisch, who has conducted empirical research on the MSG system and its impact on Roma, refers to this phenomenon as a form of 'symbolic violence' as many Hungarians of Romani background who would otherwise be able to navigate their identity are forced to undergo a process of self-stigmatization (2005: 323-324). Following the October 1998 elections, over 850 settlements officially gained Gypsy Minority Self-Governments in Hungary. In addition, in over 320 settlements, Romani representatives obtained seats within local governments, elected positions which are ultimately responsible for the disbursement of funds to the minority self-governments. Koulisch (2001), Kovats (2001c), and Vermeersch (2001; 2006) have all analysed political developments related to the institutional evolution of the G-MSG system and its functioning since 1995. For purposes of this thesis, I focused on how it has actually undermined Romani representation at the Parliamentary level.

As Kovats (2001a) emphasises, the development of the MSG system resulted in a stifling of independent Romani politics, as nearly all post-communist governments supported the *Lungo Drom* political movement (which consisted of the old Gypsy *nomenklatura*

fostered during socialist times). Thus, many independent Romani political parties or those that aligned themselves with the Socialist or Liberal factions were excluded from parliamentary representation.

The results of a survey by Koulis (2001), based on questionnaires distributed to Romani communities in major Hungarian towns and cities in the summer of 2000, suggested that although the majority of Roma would not be in favour of abolishing the MSGs, fundamental reforms were viewed as necessary by most representatives in the countryside. Some of the questions addressed in his survey were: to what extent does the Romani MSG structure continue to be a vehicle for *Lungo Drum* (The Long Road) political activity? To what extent do opposition political movements like *Phralipe* keep control of local level political activity? In addition, what are the long-term effects of lessons learned by members of minority groups within local Roma self-governments? Do members move on to seats within the mainstream local government, after 'graduating' from minority self-governments (as Szilvia Lakatos of Pécs - a young Romani intellectual whom I befriended - had done)?

Indeed, as a result of the disappointments associated with Parliamentary representation mentioned above, only one Romani politician managed to be a Hungarian Member of Parliament from 1994-1998. As a result, the NGO sector came to be viewed by progressive Romani advocates as an avenue through which Roma had a real possibility to become active agents in shaping policy affecting their own communities. In addition, many stated that they perceived work in civil society (primarily through NGOs) to be an opportunity to influence the state, without necessarily being co-opted by it, a problem that they perceived within the Gypsy minority self-government system. At this time, a handful of former parliamentarians (Romani and non-Romani) representing Romani interests began to work in the NGO sector. Indeed, since the 'transition' began, there has been a 'revolving door' phenomenon, whereby the state and the NGO sector serve as

alternative and/or parallel spaces of activity and employment for non-Romani and Romani intellectuals. For example, Ferenc Kőszeg, director of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, was also an MP with the liberal SZDSZ party from 1990-1998. Antonia Hága, the former MP of Romani origin, is now working for *Partners Hungary*, an NGO that combines private consultancy work with non-profit training in the field of civil society development (Kőszeg 1999: INT; Hága 2000: INT). Another illustration is the career trajectory of Éva Órsós, formerly one of the highest-ranking women of Gypsy (Beash) origin in government as head of the NEKH, National and Ethnic Minorities Office. She is also a former co-chairperson of the Board of the *European Roma Rights Center*, as well as being the Director of the Mediator Foundation, an NGO which worked to attract jobs and internships for Roma within multinational corporations based in Hungary (Órsós 2001: INT). Hence, we can see that whilst she did work in the highest sectors of government, she quickly transferred her 'loyalty' to Hungarian civil society. A key significance of this development is that the small number of talented, reform-oriented politicians and individuals who would otherwise work in the political arena for inclusion of Roma and disadvantaged groups, have now taken up full-time employment in the NGO sector. This is in part because they have been effectively marginalised from mainstream political institutions, and in part because work in the NGO sector offers possibilities and means (many times lucrative) for them to continue articulating their agendas (be they subversive or complicit with the neoliberal order).

## 5.4 The impact of neoliberal politics on human rights organising

*Liberalism was never a doctrine of the Left; it was always the quintessential centrist doctrine. Its advocates were sure of their moderation, their wisdom, and their humanity. They arrayed themselves simultaneously against an archaic past of unjustified privilege (which they considered to be represented by conservative ideology) and a reckless leveling that took no account of either virtue or merit (which they considered to be represented by socialist/radical ideology). Liberals have always sought to define the rest of the political scene as made up of two extremes between which they fall. - Wallerstein (1995: 1-2)*

*The failure to assert economic rights for the Roma stemmed partly from ideology and lack of knowledge about methods to combat poverty, but also reflected the 'top heavy' structure of Roma politics in this period and its lack of significant base amongst the Roma masses.*  
- Kovats (1998: 96)

The roots of the indigenous civil rights movement for Roma in Hungary can be traced to the efforts of the early Romani social reformers who displayed consistent opposition to the Socialist state in the 1980s. As mentioned earlier, one prominent personality, an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense, is Aladár Horváth. In the mid-1980s, Horváth gained notoriety in his native Miskolc (an industrial town with a large Romani population) for establishing a Romani cultural club. This pitted him against the Communist Youth Movement as well as fellow students at his college. Then, in late 1988, as a reaction to the local Socialist Party organisation's plan to build a low amenity housing estate for inner city Roma, Horváth and some of his dissident friends organised an Anti-Ghetto Committee. In his opposition to the segregated housing estate, Horváth was joined by intellectuals from Budapest and members of the *Raoul Wallenberg Association*, one of Hungary's first human rights organizations. Eventually the plan was defeated, at the behest of special instructions from the Patriotic People's Front and the Party itself. This was one of the first successful actions of an embryonic Roma civil rights movement in the socialist bloc. Nevertheless, Horváth believes:

People helped us prevent the construction of the ghetto more as an expression of their opposition to the Communist system than of their sympathy for the Roma (Horváth 2000, INT; Kosztolányi 2001).

Indeed, Horváth was speaking in hindsight: by the mid-1990s, even the liberal political parties of Hungary, many of whose members consisted of dissidents in the former regime, had begun to distance themselves from Romani voters, who were beginning to be seen as liabilities. What Horváth suggests above is that the Liberals' support for the Romani residents of Miskolc at the time was an expression of strategic political instrumentalisation (Horváth 2000: INT).

Nonetheless, all three Romani political formations - *Phralipe* (Brotherhood), *Roma Parlament* and *Lungo Drom* (Long Road) - appropriated the language and philosophy of liberal human rights. For example, *Phralipe*, founded in 1989, had the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined in its constitution (cf. Kovats 1998). Moreover, in the 1990 elections, two out of three Romani MPs aligned themselves with the liberal Free Democrats (SZDSZ), a party that attracted a large number of vocal pro-minorities advocates such as the late Zsolt Csalog (Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist) and Otilia Solt (philosopher and socialist MP). Another indication of the over-arching liberal tendencies of these early pro-Roma reformers was seen in the debates surrounding the proposed Law on Ethnic and National Minorities between 1992 and 1993, which emphasised individual rights and multi-culturalism in the discourse.

Furthermore, state-sponsored Gypsy organizations from the socialist era such as the Democratic Association of Hungarian Gypsies (DAHG), with Gyula Naday as its head, as well as various cultural organisations, continued to function at this time, buoyed by government financing. These pro-state groups and independent Romani organisations such as *Phralipe* were depicted as always at odds with each other in the Hungarian press, and certainly, the progressive Budapest Roma, as part of the 'democratic opposition' to the socialist regime, distanced themselves deliberately from the DAHG (OMRI 1995; Horváth 1999: INT).

Eventually, the more radical political groupings of Roma became progressively marginalised, as the Hungarian state favoured the 'old guard', and eventually, their political power was weakened as leadership struggles emerged (Horváth 1999: INT; Kozma 1999-2000: INT; Kovats 1998; cf. Vermeersch 2006). For example, whilst in the early 1990s, *Roma Parlament* members Jenő Zsigó, Aladár Horváth, Agnes Daróczi and *Phralipe* members such as Béla Osztolykán (some individuals being members of both groups) were unified in their mission to fight for the rights of Roma - albeit through a variety of different strategies - by the middle of the decade, both groups had splintered and created new alliances. In fact, the earlier unity gradually faded as internal differences became irreconcilable (cf. Kovats 1998; Vermeersch 2006). As noted by Romani women's activist Kozma, the first democratically elected government under the MDF (*Magyar Demokrata Forum*) party supported a pro-statist Romani political faction *Lungo Drom*, while at the same time, the *Roma Parlament* (originally created by *Phralipe*) itself became a weak organisation as a result of internal divisions amongst activists. Furthermore, the late Osztolykán, a key Romani intellectual in the early days of the movement, became co-opted by the Hungarian government (Kozma 1999: INT). Unlike the organisations sponsored by returning émigré András Biró, these earlier political groupings established by dissident Romani activists did not eventually consolidate themselves into the Western-led human rights NGO network, and this contributed to the subalterity of Roma within the Romani NGO sector itself. These issues are discussed in greater depth below.

## 5.5 The human rights entrepreneurs: post-1995 'Roma rights' organising

*...when I lived outside of Hungary, my career was focused on the topic of the Third World, and when I came back home, what I saw was the Third World all over again.*  
–András Biró (cited in Kosztolányi, 2001)

The trail of the 'missionaries' and the foreign human rights and development experts who came to play a hegemonic role within the construction of discursive practices of 'Roma Rights' in Hungary can be traced back to one key figure: András Biró. As noted, the transition in Hungary actually began in the mid-1980s, somewhat earlier than its neighbours in CEE. Moreover, unlike Poland, for example, where the workers' movement Solidarity played a prominent role in bringing forth regime change (cf. Ost 2005), the Hungarian reformist movement developed within the Communist party *nomenklatura* itself during the transition, as surviving leaders of the old party quickly repudiated Marxism-Leninism and contested elections on democratic socialist platforms.

As Higley et al. (1989) have observed, the principal mechanism of change was a:

[n]egotiated elite settlement that occurred most explicitly during largely secret roundtable negotiations between leaders of the key elite camps in 1989...[thus] Hungarian negotiations were icing on a cake elites had baked (26).

By 1982, the Hungarian socialist state itself took the decisive step of joining the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank mechanisms by 1983, thereby opening the country up to the influence of global market forces, dramatically altering its political economy (World Bank 2005). Then, in a historic moment in 1989, it opened its border with neighbouring Austria, facilitating the regime collapse in East Germany as thousands upon thousands of East German citizens rushed to the West.

It was during this climate of monumental change that in 1986 András Biró returned to his homeland after a 30-year absence. A career journalist who had served as a development consultant with the United Nations, Biró had been the founder and editor

of the development reviews *Ceres* and *Mazingira* for the UNEP (Biró 1996). It is also important to note that by 1984, Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros<sup>66</sup> had opened the first office of his OSI (Open Society Institute) philanthropic empire in the region - the Hungarian Soros Foundation in Budapest.

Biró quickly became one of the most influential individuals - in fact, a 'gatekeeper' - within the field of 'Roma rights' in the region, founding and/or directing nearly all the key organisations related to 'Roma rights' in Hungary. First, he established the Hungarian Foundation for Self-Reliance in 1990 (also known as the Autonomy Foundation) with the purpose of engaging in development work to assist primarily rural Romani communities as well as strengthening environmental projects (World Bank 1996). Several years after that, under the auspices of the Autonomy Foundation, he established the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI), an NGO whose clients are primarily from the Romani community. He was also a pivotal force behind the establishment in 1995 of the Roma Press Centre, which monitors and promotes news and information on Roma in the Hungarian press, as well as an after-school tuition programme for Romani students residing within inner-city Budapest (Józsefvárosi Tanoda). Today, these NGOs (crucially, with the financial support of the OSI), comprise the backbone of the domestic 'Romani rights' movement in Hungary, at least as represented through urban NGOs. Typically, local Hungarians would comprise the legal and administrative staff, while funding came almost entirely from Western (mainly American) philanthropic foundations and INGOs (for whom local NGOs were implementing 'partners').

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<sup>66</sup> George Soros' interests in human rights pre-date his interest in Romani issues. By 1982, Soros had become a member of the Human Rights Watch and Americas Watch executive committees, and in 1988, he became a member of the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States. For an account of how his family survived the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Hungary, see his father Tivadar Soros' book, 'Dancing around death in Nazi Hungary' (2000). The original 1965 version was published in esperanto.



Biró actively facilitated contacts for the NGOs he founded with Euro-Atlantic private foundations such as the Ford Foundation (late 1980s), German Marshall Fund (since 1990), Rockefeller Brothers Fund (since 1990), and most prominently, the George Soros' Open Society Institute and affiliated organisations who were themselves to become key, if not hegemonic actors with respect to funding of Romani projects in the region. In addition, various European countries, as well as the European Union also provided financial assistance to these NGOs: examples included the Swiss Development Agency and the Cordaid Foundation, a Dutch government sponsored organisation.

It was not a surprise, therefore, that in 1995, Biró became the recipient of two highly prestigious awards: the Swedish 'Right Livelihood' Award (also known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'), which he shared with the Autonomy Foundation in 1995, as well as the Hungarian National Prize.

One result has been the development of a complex web of elite NGOs and INGOs, the majority of which have access to a direct 'pipeline' of Western funding, meaning that they are pledged a generous sum of money for multi-year projects in advance. Though this would normally require the approval of the Board of a particular NGO, in practice, Boards generally defer to the directors, and once the director herself approves these projects, it is regarded as *fait accompli* and generally 'rubber-stamped' by the Board in question. This illustrates one of the roots of the power and hegemony of elite human rights entrepreneurs in the development of the 'Roma rights' movement, and also suggests complex, hidden aspects of elite control; these issues are analysed further in Chapter Six.

As Biró's growing reputation for success in establishing Romani initiatives grew, the Hungarian government also tried to recruit him for his expertise. In 1995 (the same year he was awarded the National Prize), the government established its first GONGO (government-organised NGO), the Central Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies or the

*Magyarországi Cigányokért Közalapítvány*, an organisation set up to work on improving education and vocational training for Roma. The directorship was offered to Biró, who initially accepted, but subsequently declined the post, apparently in order to maintain his independence from state influence.

What is intriguing about the late 1980s and early 1990s is that little documentation exists of contacts between early Romani activists (discussed earlier in Chapter Four) and Biró. Individuals I interviewed were also puzzled as to what extent Biró consulted with the various Romani urban intellectuals when devising these NGOs, although it is clear that Aladár Horváth himself had consultations with him from the late 1980s onwards. Questions remain about whether he acted independently of these Romani leaders in his work. There is some speculation that because of his UN expertise and his seniority - he was already in his late 60s when he returned to Hungary - Biró may have believed that he knew what would work best for development within Romani communities. Perhaps Becker's (1963) insights on moral entrepreneurship are also instructive in this regard:

Moral crusaders typically want to help those beneath them to achieve a better status. That those beneath them do not always like the means proposed for their salvation is another matter. But this fact – that moral crusades are typically dominated by those in the upper levels of the social structure – means that they add to the power they derive from the legitimacy of their moral position, the power they derive from their superior position in society (149).

What is clear, however, is that by the mid-1990s, some Romani intellectuals working within the sector were frustrated with the almost autocratic power that Biró, as well as other elite non-Romani 'Romani' advocates wielded within Roma NGO circles. Once again, Romani leadership became increasingly marginalised within a field that was presumably an autonomous space representing their interests. In my interviews with Romani activists who were then in their forties, such as Blanka Kozma (1999), Agnes Dároczi (2000), and Aladár Horváth (1999), I observed a sense of resignation, bitterness and frustration, both towards the Hungarian state, as well as elite human rights

entrepreneurs, whom - they suggested to me - had monopolised precious resources at the expense of genuine social solidarity and Romani emancipation. Here, Kozma (1999) refers to the exclusionary employment structure present within elite NGOs:

...these positions are filled by people who are not Roma, you can see these are responsible positions with good pay, a car, an office, you can see everyone wants this, even non-Roma, who want good jobs and a relaxed work environment. These are a tiny number of positions, they [non-Roma] are willing to work for us, after all the pay is good...but this is not a good thing, they shouldn't stand on our side because they take the positions away from us...today only those people who have tremendous contacts can make a living from this...*the non-Roma shouldn't monopolise the Romani cause*, these [positions] should be filled by educated Roma (INT, italics mine).

Horváth too, has spoken about this eloquently on a number of occasions, and one particular speech at a public forum comes to mind, where he was asked to give his input on the Romani movement and its future on 'Roma rights' day at the CEU<sup>67</sup>:

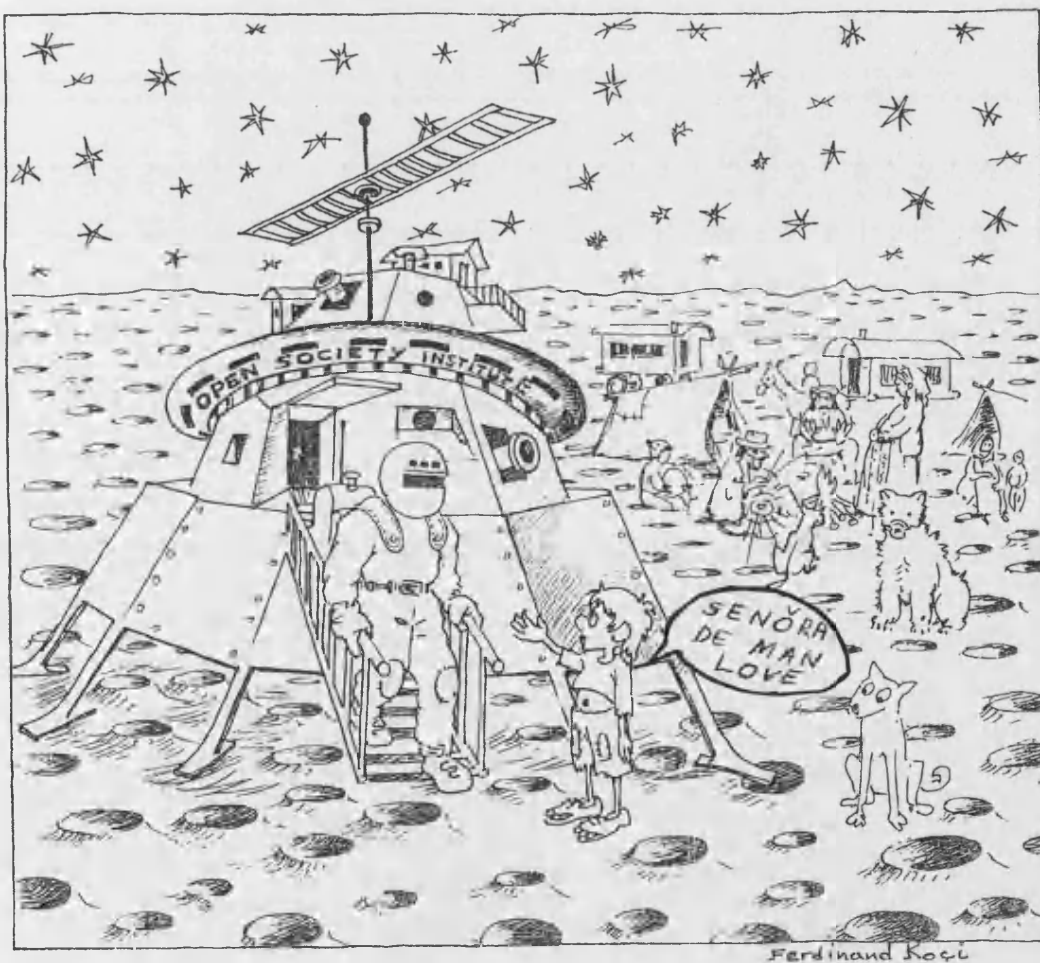
The Romani Movement has a long way to go. This present discussion itself illustrates how far we are from a normal situation: we have several non-Roma experts discussing the future of the movement, while we Roma get to say something in the end. I will offer some conclusions about the background of this development by quoting Malcolm X, who after his trip from Mecca once asked, "If you drink coffee which is too strong, too black, what do you do with it? Well, you put some cream...but if you put too much cream, it no longer tastes like coffee". This is a lesson from the Black civil rights movement, which offers us a strong critique of black integration (Horváth 2000).

Amongst several 'non-Roma experts' present at the seminar, several included ERRC executive level staff (ERRC 2001c). The role of their human rights entrepreneurship in the construction of the Romani civil rights movement is the subject of subsequent sections of this thesis. In the above speech at the Central European University, Horváth emphasised the danger of dependency that the 'Roma rights' movement faces today, a dependency not only on foreign aid and neoliberal strategies of human rights, but also control on the part of non-Romani elites within the movement itself. Indeed, Horváth

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<sup>67</sup> 'Roma Rights Day' was observed for the first time in Budapest on December 8th, 2000. It was organised by the OSI network, including the ERRC and the Central European University's Human Rights Student Initiative.

has on numerous occasions emphasised this, dating back to 1996 and 1997 when the ERRC began its human rights work. For example, in November of 1997, at a meeting I attended organised jointly by the OSI's Roma Participation Program (RPP) and the ERRC, palpable tension could be observed between Horváth and Biró. It began when Horváth raised the issue of the monopoly of non-Roma in the work of 'Romani rights' (including the ERRC). Biró intervened immediately, and took him to one side, arguing in Hungarian that this was not an appropriate forum to raise such issues (Trehan 1997: FN).



**Figure 12 - “Hey mister, give me some money”, cartoon on OSI’s relationship with Romani communities by artist F. Koçi**

The cartoon above is by Ferdinand Koçi, an Albanian Romani artist based in the United Kingdom. The cartoon depicts the asymmetrical power relationship between the OSI (the benefactor), as an astronaut landing on a moon inhabited by Roma, and the Romani

recipients or beneficiaries whose position is akin to children begging for money. It offers a poignant critique of the current state of events in post-socialist civil societies, wherein Romani civil society has become dependent on the OSI (a hegemonic donor) for its survival.

Furthermore, within these private foundation and INGO circles, key individuals push their personal agendas, and many of the same individuals, along with their spouses or partners, re-appear on various NGO and INGO boards, as well as their legal advisory committees. Throughout the 1990s, the majority of these individuals were not of Romani origin themselves, although this situation has changed somewhat, given that a younger generation of educated Roma are successfully filling these NGO posts (though some critics suggest this is tokenism).

From the 1990s, to the EU accession of Hungary in 2004, the sheer dominance of the American human rights establishment (both the US State Department and US civil society) within the 'Roma rights' movement in Europe has been noteworthy. By comparison, German, French, or British human rights advocacy networks wielded far less influence, and only became more active once Hungary became an EU accession state.<sup>68</sup> The problems of dependency and external control, which Alinsky (1971), Fox-Piven and Cloward (1977) and Warren (2001) have covered in their respective work on the organization and mobilization of poor, working class communities are discussed in greater depth in Chapters Six and Seven.

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<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, some private foundations based in northern Europe, such as the Dutch NOVIB and the British Know-How-Fund also provided sponsorship for Romani-related projects in the region.

## 5.6 The human rights entrepreneurs, part II: enter the European Roma Rights Center

Beyond the borders of Hungary, foreign human rights entrepreneurs from the New York-based OSI, such as its current President Aryeh Neier (a founder and former head of HRW)<sup>69</sup> and the recently retired Deborah Harding (formerly of the German Marshall Fund), demonstrated their considerable influence in U.S. foreign policy circles,<sup>70</sup> regularly attending both governmental and non-governmental meetings and seminars focusing on the transition in Europe and its possible dangers. For example, Harding, as the manager of the 'Political Development of Central and Eastern Europe' programme of the GMF, exchanged numerous personal faxes and letters with William J. Butler, an influential lawyer and foreign policy expert for the U.S. government who visited the region extensively between 1988 and 1993 (cf. *Butler Archives* 1990).<sup>71</sup> In a letter from January 1990 - sent to Butler in preparation for a conference in Budapest - Harding demonstrates her detailed knowledge of Hungarian politics and politicians, offering pithy summaries of their ideological leanings:

[...] Peter Schmidt (reform-oriented communist), Professor at Budapest University, "good guy; smart; balanced"...Istvan Kukuralli – President of the Patriotic Front, a party "between communists and the opposition". He has done theoretical work on the legal status of members of Parliament (Butler Archives, 1990).

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<sup>69</sup> For a view into Neier's own perspective on his work with HRW and OSI, read his human rights memoir, *Taking liberties* (2003). Neier details the enormous power he wields globally using George Soros' money for the advancement of the 'rights agenda' throughout the globe, see pp. 295-300.

<sup>70</sup> See for example, "Why Bush finally stepped in to try to stop the slaughter", 7 April 2002, *The Observer*, which quotes the OSI's Morton Halperin's opinion on the conflict in the Middle East. It also notes, with respect to US think tanks, that "The three most influential are three formidable institutions... one is the global Soros Foundation ... another is the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and a third is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)." The German Marshall Fund (GMF) is itself a "nonpartisan American public policy and grantmaking institution", see further <http://www.gmfus.org/about/index.cfm>

<sup>71</sup> Butler served as the Chairman of the executive committee of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) from 1975 to 1990, and was the honorary president of the American Association of the ICJ. He also "convened annual meetings of the principal human rights officials of Western governments to discuss issues of common concern" from 1977 to 1999 (Butler Archives, see <http://www.law.uc.edu/morgan/butler01/butlerbio.html>)

Harding's in-depth knowledge of the Hungarian power structure, and the nuances of party politics during the time of transition, informed her subsequent interventions on behalf of Roma in Hungary. As will become increasingly evident, liberal human rights missionaries such as Neier and Harding proved to be powerful catalysts for the establishment of 'Roma rights' based on a particular (neoliberal) ideology, and worked therefore in tandem with other 'democracy makers' (cf. Guilhot 2005), working to strengthen the comprehensive 'democratisation' agenda of the United States government. In the early 1990s, *Human Rights Watch* sent several lawyers and researchers to investigate and report on the human rights situation of Roma in the CEE. One of these individuals was Theodore Zang, Jr.<sup>72</sup>, an American public interest lawyer who would eventually write the first HRW report on Roma in Bulgaria. It was at this time that he emphasised to Dr. Dimitrina Petrova (an academic, activist, and former MP for the ECO Glasnost political movement), that the most pressing human rights problem in the region was that of the Roma. She elaborates:

...I was busy creating various organizations, promoting various projects, most of them in the area of human rights but also social science...I started to direct an institute which I had created called The Institute for Social and Environmental Research, and while being the director of this Institute, this guy [Ted Zang], who was a good friend from the late 1980s, and who had visited Bulgaria before, said, why don't you do something? Roma are in the most terrible human rights situation I have seen in this country...this was the first trigger, then I started to look around and to see all these, you know, people in the streets, passing through ghettos [while] driving, with my eyes...[until then] Roma were absolutely out of my vision because I was occupied with human rights...constitution building, structural problems, the Turkish minority...so I should say I went from this combination of dissident, of anti-communist dissident...from a left perspective, environmentalism and human rights to Roma. Roma were a case in point. (Petrova 1999: INT).

Petrova and her then husband, Kassimir Kanev (Chair of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee), were already prominent members of the Helsinki Committee Network,

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<sup>72</sup>Zang, a practicing anti-trust lawyer, also established the Human Rights Advocacy Program (HRAP) of Utica College in 1992 with attorneys at Utica along with Professor Theodore S. Orlin. HRAP's purpose is to counsel and train non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in transitional democracies, see <http://www.utica.edu/academic/catalog/2007-08UndergradCat.pdf> (page 42).

headquartered with the International Helsinki Committee in Vienna. Therefore, by the mid-1990s, Petrova's pioneering work in Bulgaria, along with the key contacts she had cultivated within the American human rights establishment and academia, had her well-placed for the next stage of her career in human rights – as a 'Roma rights' entrepreneur. Petrova had also developed a close friendship with Dr. Deborah Harding, who at this time was Senior Programme Officer for the German Marshall Fund. Harding would eventually join the OSI in 1996, working in senior management positions and then go on to hold the 'Roma portfolio' within the organization until her retirement in late 2006.<sup>73</sup> She is referred to by some Romani activists as *Devla* ('God' in the Romani language) Harding, a witty nod to her position of power within the democratization/human rights industry in post-socialist European countries. Indeed, it was GMF funding which in 1992 helped to establish the first proto-type 'Romani rights' NGO in Sofia, *The Human Rights Project*, established and directed by Petrova. Formerly a professor of ethics and philosophy, and a Member of Parliament from 1990 to 1991 for the Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria, Petrova became the 1992 recipient of the American Bar Association's annual human rights award, granted each year by the Litigation Section of the ABA, its largest division (ABA 1999). During the 1994-95 academic year, she was a Savage Visiting Scholar at the University of Oregon, where she collaborated with anthropologist Carol Silverman, a specialist on Balkan Romani culture. It was at this time that she became aware of the interest of Aryeh Neier in Romani issues:

Now in 1995, I spent the year in Oregon teaching human rights and ethnic relations in eastern Europe...and there was a meeting organised by OSI, by Aryeh Neier I think, where many Roma leaders were present, Ina Zoon [Romanian physicist-turned-human rights lawyer] was there, I am not sure whether Biró was present. As far as I know, at this meeting, the need to start working on rights was formulated, now...I have never seen any document of that meeting, and I'm not sure to what extent this is an idea of the Roma themselves and to what extent it is something Aryeh suggested, and they were supportive –

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<sup>73</sup>See further <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1706> about her involvement in Romani issues.



this I don't know. What I know is that Aryeh called me in July 1995 and offered me the job, offered me the job of actually (laughing)...it wasn't a job like a job, because the institution did not exist, but offered that he would support if I create this thing...Only later when I met him, he said that he's thinking of Andras Biró as Chair of the Board...(Petrova 1999: INT).

In the summer of 1995, Neier also wrote a seminal piece in the American progressive publication, *The Nation*, warning readers against the growing antipathy towards Roma in the CEE region. After several paragraphs about their human rights plight, Neier mentions Petrova's work in the *Human Rights Project* as one of the most promising developments in the region, praising her as a "dynamic lawyer".<sup>74</sup>

Subsequently, Neier, on behalf of the OSI, began holding serious discussions with Biró and Petrova in order to assess the feasibility of establishing an international legal defence organisation for Roma in the region (possibly Budapest). Another objective of these discussions was to ascertain if Petrova herself would be interested to take up the proposed INGO's management (Petrova 1997 and 1999: INT). Despite being offered a tempting academic post at the University of Oregon<sup>75</sup>, Petrova accepted the challenge of 'Roma rights' and established a regional centre in Budapest by early 1996 (INT: 1999). The *European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)* was therefore the brainchild of these human rights entrepreneurs, and it was officially launched in March 1996 as the *Roma Legal Resource Center* under the auspices of the OSI-Budapest, receiving initial funding of \$400,000 (RNN 1996). Vermeersch (2001) has pointed out the importance of 'advocacy networks' within the 'Roma rights' movement, and I apply this insight here, demonstrating how internationally powerful individuals within Western civil society such as Neier and Harding legitimise and support the work of domestic and regional NGO human rights entrepreneurs such as Petrova in post-socialist Europe. Another key

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<sup>74</sup> Petrova is not a qualified lawyer as such, though her wealth of experience with human rights law certainly makes her an expert in the field. Her educational background is in philosophy and sociology.

<sup>75</sup> Where a friend of Petrova's, Professor Carol Silverman, is a tenured professor specializing in Balkan Romani culture.

institution which has exerted a powerful influence on mobilizing for 'Roma rights' has been the OSCE's Helsinki Commission (CSCE, part of the US government), whose work began by monitoring the human rights situation in 1995, and has continued by way of detailed policy analysis and interventions (Sobotka 2003: 210-213; Guglielmo and Waters 2005; see also Appendix 5 for CSCE Statement).

During the 1990s, the international human rights entrepreneurs based in Hungary exercised overwhelming influence and domination within the 'Roma rights' field. Private foundations, government entities such as the U.S. Information Service, and academic institutes sponsored many East European activists (including some Roma) for their attendances to study trips, conferences and seminars abroad. For example, it was in 1996 that the U.S. Information Service sponsored the trips of several prominent Roma and non-Romani activists (including Aladár Horváth) to visit various minority communities and learn about American civil rights movements (Latham 1996). Moreover, the phenomenon of what is now cynically called 'conference tourism' by some Romani activists expanded even further: by 2000, if one visited Budapest (a cosmopolitan city of over 2.5 million) for only a week, there would be at least several Romani-related conferences, discussions, or cultural events taking place, making it the *de facto* centre of contemporary Roma rights activity in the region. Meusberger (2001) has documented how network-building taking place at these conferences by Western elites and their counterparts in Eastern Europe had an immeasurable impact on the production of knowledge that eventually affected the development of policies on economic aid, education and training in Hungary. After attending conferences abroad and 'representing' their countries in international fora, Hungarian activists and intellectuals returned to their home countries, where they influenced domestic policies.

The empirical data I examined in this chapter suggests that the formation of 'Roma rights' constituencies was largely fuelled by racist violence directed at Roma and by the

increasing discrimination Roma experienced in various sectors of post-socialist Hungarian society: schools, courtrooms, and public places. Another critical antecedent for the rise of the 'Roma rights' discursive and policy frameworks was the rapid emergence and rise of NGOs and INGOs fuelled by Western capital, both of a social and financial nature. These NGOs and the human rights entrepreneurs who established them have become key forces for the promotion of the 'rights agenda' for Romani Hungarians. They continue to act as an alternative power base to state-funded institutions and public foundations<sup>76</sup>, and moreover, the NGO sector has itself become a site for entrenched interests – both material and ideological.

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<sup>76</sup> According to one American who worked for the OSI's Educational Policy Support Unit (EPSU) during the late 1990s, OSI began to work more closely with the Hungarian government on educational policy at this time (McDonald 2001: INT). Indeed, there was a noticeable shift from being in 'opposition' to becoming a 'partner' in policy-making with the Hungarian government.

## CHAPTER SIX – THE INFLUENCE AND IMPACT OF NGOS IN THE ‘ROMA RIGHTS’ ARENA

*Witness the tragedy that has befallen the proponents of the concept: people struggling against authoritarian regimes had demanded civil society; what they got instead were NGOs!*

- Chandhoke (2003: 9).

This chapter connects the rise of human rights entrepreneurship discussed in the previous chapter to the rapid growth and consolidation of the Romani NGO sector in Hungary from the 1990s onwards. I then discuss the work of key NGOs and INGOs, interrogating their role in the construction of ‘Roma rights’ discourses and the significance for Romani communities. In addition, the impact of the increasing institutionalisation of NGOs (cf. Stubbs 2007a, 2007b), and the implications for the emergence of asymmetrical relationships of power and knowledge within the sector are also covered.

### 6.1 NGOs and INGOs in Hungary: an overview

More than 50,000 NGOs are registered with the Hungarian government today, and those that engage with Romani communities number well over 300 (NIOK 2004). A typology of Romani NGOs devised by two veteran activists János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi (1999), and commissioned by the Open Society Institute-Budapest in a concept paper, observed the following significant formations: local and national cultural organisations and clubs; civil rights organisations, political and human rights organisations; nationwide umbrella organisations representing Romani political interests; ‘showcase’ Romani organisations that were created and financed by the State; groups organised on the basis of kinship links, representing various interests (including economic); and religious organisations. Although these NGOs have their own constituencies, the central and east European region as a whole lacks the kind of organizations popular in established

Western democracies (particularly in North America) which are based on fee-based membership and/or individual donations collected during regular fund-raising campaigns.<sup>77</sup>

Whilst many of the NGOs identified by Bársony and Daróczi (1999) are community-based local NGOs, within the Romani rights arena itself, key INGOs and domestic NGOs play a prominent role within Hungarian civil society. I begin with an exposition of the goals, strategies, and resources at the disposal of the key INGOs involved in defending the human rights of Roma, and then analyze their work. Curiously, Amnesty International (AI) only began to take seriously rights' abuses against Roma after the mid-1990s, playing but a minor part in the global Romani rights movement until the EU accession of post-socialist states. Today, however, it is a core member of the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), a consortium of human rights NGOs working in the field (including the ERRC, ERIO, and ERGO), and this has been viewed as its explicit entry into the world of identity politics vis-à-vis Roma (cf. Guy 2009, see also Figure 13). As mentioned in the previous chapter, by 1998, the ERRC was already the pre-eminent INGO in the area, and hence, has overtaken its 'competitor', the far more established New York-based Human Rights Watch (whom it was initially modeled after).<sup>78</sup>

It was the HRW<sup>79</sup> that first published two reports on the situation of Roma in Hungary from a Western (liberal) human rights perspective: *Struggling for Ethnic Identity: the Gypsies of Hungary* (1993) and *Rights Denied: the Roma of Hungary* (1996). The reports offer a classic

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<sup>77</sup> The possible exception to this would be religious NGOs and formations amongst Roma. See Gay y Blasco (2002). Further research is needed on the nexus between Romani religious associations and political mobilization.

<sup>78</sup> As a new human rights researcher for the ERRC back in 1996, my first research trip (to the Czech Republic) was actually a joint mission with HRW's researcher Fred Abrams.

<sup>79</sup> Founded in 1978 as 'Helsinki Watch' by a group of activists, including Aryeh Neier and Robert Bernstein, HRW was originally established in order to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords signed at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). It now has a global reach, with five cross-continental divisions: Africa (1987), Americas (1981), Asia (1985), Europe and Central Asia (1978), and the Middle East and North Africa (1989), monitoring primarily the civil and political rights of citizens in over 70 countries (Brown 2001: 72-73).

catalogue of violations of civil and political rights suffered by Roma from police brutality to access to social services and systemic discrimination in education. The first report frames the debate on Roma as one of *ethnic* persecution, hence emphasising the racial nature of anti-Gypsy discrimination.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, one of the goals of the interventions of the liberal human rights entrepreneurs was to transform the terms of the debate from Gypsies as a 'problematic group' to that of Roma as a community (or communities) of people with ethnic characteristics who, like other groups, are worthy of rights and protections under the law. Indeed, it was precisely in 1993, that the Hungarian government approved its landmark *Law on National and Ethnic Minorities*, and thereby included its largest minority for special civic and cultural protections (cf. Koulish 2005).

By 1996, with the publication of the second HRW report on Hungary, we see an increasingly sophisticated discourse on rights violations; indeed, the American authors of this report, Rachel Guglielmo and Timothy Waters, were once teachers for the first state-sponsored secondary school for Gypsies in Hungary, the *Gandhi Gimnázium*, located in Pécs. This report was eventually revised and translated into Hungarian in 1997 (entitled "*Jógfőszattán*") by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee for domestic distribution (see Figure 10 above).

In addition, legal organisations advocating the rule-of-law paradigm (respect for legal institutions and legal processes) such as the Constitutional and Legislative Policy Institute (COLPI-Open Society Institute, Budapest), as well as national advocacy groups such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee became active in the mid-1990s. Another NGO that began its 'Roma rights' work in the early 1990s was the Otherness Foundation's *NEKI* (Legal Defence Bureau for Ethnic and National Minorities). Initiated by Ándrás Bíró in 1993 with Imre Furmann, a writer and legal consultant originally from Miskolc who was

once the Vice-President of the *Magyar Demokrata Forum (MDF)* political party,<sup>80</sup> NEKI quickly differentiated itself from the Romani political formations mentioned earlier by carving out a non-governmental, non-political image as it insisted on strict criteria in establishing whether a case was one of 'discrimination' or not (Furmann 1999: INT).<sup>81</sup> Though NEKI is not a Romani organization itself, the majority of its client base is of Romani origin, and as such it is one of the 'partners' in the civil rights movement of Roma. Apart from a legal secretary, nearly all members of its Budapest-based staff were non-Romani during the time my research was conducted. Their core mission has been to strengthen rule-of-law practices in Hungary, and to influence legal and human rights norms within wider society. In 2000, NEKI had five branches in various regions in Hungary, and was widely credited for increasing awareness of human rights issues within the legal profession, as well as advocating for legislative reform with the government. In addition, NEKI raised troubling questions about the existence of anti-Gypsy discrimination within the Hungary judiciary and courts, as well as within state bodies such as law enforcement; it then took the further step of initiating concrete programmes of reform of these institutions by offering training to the relevant civil servants. It periodically conducts seminars and workshops on human rights law and practice targeting relevant public officials, as well as elected officials in local and minority self-governments. In 1994, it began to publish (in Hungarian and English), an annual review of their discrimination cases, entitled the 'White Booklet' (NEKI 1995). To the limited audience reading this publication, it is an eye-opening account of the contentious relations between Romani and non-Romani Hungarian officials and individuals

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<sup>80</sup>The MDF was elected in the first free elections in post-socialist Hungary, and was founded by reformed communists. When one prominent member in the far-right of MDF – Istvan Csurka – made anti-Gypsy (and anti-semitic) statements publicly, Furmann left the party (Furmann 1999: INT).

<sup>81</sup> In 1999, for example, out of a total of 113 complaints received, they determined that only 24 cases met their criteria of 'discrimination'.

(especially at the local level), and each case entry describes in detail the legal remedies NEKI attempted to take on behalf of its clients.

Another organisation with similar goals, but a substantially different approach to 'Roma rights', is the Roma Foundation for Civil Rights. Founded by a former school teacher-turned-Romani rights advocate from eastern Hungary, Horváth is also a former Member of Parliament. In the late 1980s, he became outraged when, in the town of Miskolc, local officials decided to destroy a housing estate which was inhabited primarily by Roma, and replace it with segregated housing at a distance of two kilometers outside the city's boundaries. He organised the creation of an Anti-Ghetto Council, and this successful initiative subsequently propelled him into national-level politics in the early 1990s when he was elected as an MP on the party list of the Free Democrats (SZDSZ). The *Roma Pólgárjogi Alapítvány* (RPA) as it is known in Hungarian, began its work in 1995, and has branch offices throughout Hungary. Notably, it emphasizes that it is a *civil rights* organisation (as opposed to a legal defence bureau or 'rule of law' organisation) working to represent oppressed Romani communities in Hungary.<sup>82</sup> From its inception, the RPA has had a mixture of Romani and non-Romani staff, working together in a more co-operative and less hierarchical manner than the INGOs mentioned earlier. The insistence with which NGO activists in the Romani-rights field distinguish themselves (both non-Romani NGOs as well as Romani civil rights organisations) from each other is noteworthy.

For example, Fitsum Alemu, a legal consultant for NEKI (originally from Ethiopia, but educated in law in Hungary), suggested to me that NEKI, as a 'gajo' (non-Romani) organization was akin to the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights in the US, whilst the

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<sup>82</sup> In the past, the RPA has held meetings with former members of the American Black liberation group the Black Panthers, with the assistance of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC-Quakers). There is also a photograph of Black-American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. displayed prominently in its office.



RPA is more like the NAACP, a civil rights organization which campaigns and mobilizes within the Romani communities. He was also quick to point out that in 1999, the RPA received more funding than the NEKI, and this was good as they could then not be accused of taking a disproportionate piece of the 'Romani funding pie' (Alemu 1999: INT). His overall impression was that at the domestic level in Hungary, the relations between NEKI and RPA were co-operative rather than competitive. To illustrate, he gave the example of the struggle for enacting anti-discrimination legislation in Hungary: NEKI could send a letter to the Constitutional Court in an attempt to lobby for the introduction of an anti-discrimination law, however, this could be supplemented by a petition drive within the Romani communities initiated by the RPA.<sup>83</sup> He therefore views the two organizations operating in different – though complementary - areas of civil rights. For example, the annual floods in eastern Hungary affect a disproportionate number of Romani families, and the RPA campaigns for assistance to these families; in contrast, NEKI's role is narrower in scope (Alemu 1999: INT).

In 1996, the Romani Civil Rights Foundation established the Roma Press Centre (RPC), initially the media arm of its operations, though it now functions as an autonomous media NGO. The RPA's work has encouraged the development of a cadre of independent Romani journalists to cover issues within their communities, and also to render accurate information in the mainstream media about Roma (Miklosi 1999: INT). The RPC also produces timely publications on human rights issues and even short pithy booklets on issues of enduring importance such as the Romani Holocaust and the shocking anti-lice 'Disinfection programmes' of the communist regime which targeted Romani villagers until the 1980s (RPC 2002).

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<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, I subsequently found out that RPA had decided not to co-operate with NEKI on this initiative.

Finally, the Romani Civil Rights Foundation also has an autonomous higher education mentorship programme called the *Romaversitas* whose primary goal is to support Romani youth succeed in higher education (RPA 2000).

### ***ERRC: The 'Firm'***

*One of the things that makes the Roma problem [sic], question, so challenging, fascinating, and deeply difficult to work in, is precisely that history of oppression of Roma which is so embedded in the societies here...the fact that attitudes about Roma are so unconscious that it's only recently that people have begun to become aware of the extraordinary nature of racism towards Roma and the fact that the kinds of discrimination which Roma suffer, though they are terrible, and violations of human rights law, are often not extremely visible to most people. Therefore, one of the challenges of our work is...how to expose, highlight, for people to see, "Hey, that is an injustice, the fact that Roma can't go into that restaurant, that is a human rights violation, you know?" And that is a very difficult thing. - J. Goldston, former legal director, ERRC (1999: INT)*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the same period that domestic Hungarian NGOs were mushrooming, the Neier-Biró-Petrova trio set about establishing a high-profile international NGO on 'Roma rights' in Budapest. In January 1996, the ERRC was thus launched, becoming the very first INGO focusing exclusively on the human rights of Roma in Europe. I view the ERRC is a 'hybrid' INGO because though it is registered with the Hungarian state and functions within Hungarian law as a non-profit (and thus with a base in Eastern Europe), its scope of activities spans the whole of the European continent, in particular, where there are large Romani populations and, by extension, human rights abuses of Roma. Moreover, it can be considered an elite NGO because of the size and relative security of its budget, which stood at about \$2 million per annum in 2001. The majority of this funding came directly from the OSI pipeline, and was not linked to individual private donations or membership fees (cf. Ross Range 2001).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>In addition, it is interesting to examine the annual reports and budgets of the INGOs like the ERRC, items of which are only partially transparent to the public. Several large domestic NGOs in Hungary have annual budgets of approximately US\$ 100,000.

The ERRC sees itself as a “public interest law organization” and engages in a number of activities from human rights research and monitoring to advocacy and legal defence. It also has an education component targeting the Romani communities themselves. Collectively, its quarterly *Roma Rights* (see sample cover below, Figure 12), represents a substantial corpus of information about rights abuses against Roma all over Europe, as well as North America and occasionally, the Middle East.

**Figure 13 - Cover of ERRC quarterly ‘Roma Rights’ (No. 2 & 3, 2001)**

## ROMA RIGHTS

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTER



NUMBERS 2 and 3, 2001

### **Government programmes on Roma**

- Bulgaria
- Czech Republic
- Greece
- Hungary
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain

### **Also inside:**

- Roma in the Macedonia crisis
- Special section: lessons for advocates from recent European Court decision
- Romani language translation of the European Convention on Human Rights

The sketch depicts a Romani man before several legal magistrates at a hearing.

In its human rights publications, the ERRC combines classic Western human rights research methodologies with an innovative writing style in order to attract a broad readership. As the ERRC viewed earlier reports (1994/1996) by the HRW on the Romani human rights situation in Hungary as comprehensive, a full-length research report on Hungary has to date not been published, as has been the case for other countries of the region with significant Romani populations. However, periodic reports in *Roma Rights* and advocacy letters to the government of Hungary are filed, targeting both its international, English-speaking constituency and appropriate state officials and institutions. In March 2000, a special issue of *Roma Rights* entitled “Focus: Roma in Hungary” was released, providing an accessible compendium of human rights news on Roma in the country from the time that the ERRC first began its research work in 1996. One of the ERRC’s most salient and successful activities – according to human rights entrepreneurs – has been its legal intervention on behalf of Roma who have suffered human rights abuses. The ERRC is today the premiere legal defense organization for Roma at the international level, and has also litigated numerous cases before the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>85</sup> As mentioned earlier, it works closely at the national level with domestic legal NGOs such as NEKI in Hungary or the HRP in Bulgaria. One former head of its legal division, Jim Goldston, discusses the challenges the ERRC faced in the late 1990s:

....one of the avenues...to address discrimination against Roma is surely to use litigation, legal action in courts. Courts, until very recently, were infused with politics entirely and the notion of an independent court, [of] independent of political structures was non-existent essentially in much of the region. Recently, of course, that has been part of the change...and the question is how do we use the courts, can we use courts in ways that protect rights for everyone, including Roma? That's a huge challenge and that involves a very different kind of work in many ways, partly it's alerting people and screaming and putting pressure on governments, but part of it as well is hard investigation, hard legal research, good

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<sup>85</sup> Though there is not a comprehensive database on ERRC cases, much information can be gleaned from their website archives, see further [http://www.errc.org/Archivum\\_index.php](http://www.errc.org/Archivum_index.php)

writing, building slowly but steadily a network of investigators and lawyers who can regularly, and are willing regularly and financially able, regularly, to undertake cases which arise from investigations (1999: INT).

Goldston has identified how the institutional structures in transitional Hungary were in the process of reform; indeed, at that time in Hungary, constitutional lawyers and their counterparts from primarily the US and UK (for example, at the OSI's COLPI) were busy devising ways of re-drafting legal provisions in the area of rights legislation as well as coming up with more transparent and fair judicial procedures.

Furthermore, examining the human rights cases that the ERRC, NEKI and RPA took up in the previous decade can be useful in determining shifting patterns of violations or rights abuses that Roma in Hungary have experienced. Prior to 1995, the majority of cases dealt with violent attacks or discrimination by police; by the end of the 1990s, local governments were seen to be the primary agents of institutional discrimination (Petrova 1999: INT; NEKI 1999: 5).<sup>86</sup>

Both Jim Goldston (currently the Director of OSI's Justice Initiative and a board member of the ERRC) and Claude Cahn (former Research and Publications Director of ERRC, now working at the *Centre on Housing Rights and Eviction* in Geneva), have explicitly asserted the importance of their work in shifting the debate on Romani issues. As Goldston put it, "Before, people only wanted to think of the Roma as a social issue, an educational issue, or an economic issue...we've forced them to see it [sic] as a human rights issue" (Ross Range 2001). However, the question to pose is which "people" are referred to here by Goldston? The Hungarian public or the government of Hungary? Members of CEE civil society? This is a core question to answer and one that human rights entrepreneurs rarely address.

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<sup>86</sup> In addition, the Minority Ombudsman at the time, Jenő Kaltenbach, noted the same trend in his annual report to the Hungarian Parliament in 1999.

In addition, the fact that the majority of the items in *Roma Rights* are only in English (apart from short Romani-language summaries which began to be incorporated at a later stage) means that its audience is limited, and whilst this has resulted in the creation of an international 'Roma rights' constituency amongst members of the global civil society (the "people" that Goldston perhaps alludes to above), it has simultaneously widened the knowledge gap between English and non-English speakers, and certainly, the vast majority of Roma fall into this category. However, if one views the publications as intending to appeal to a global human rights audience, and not necessarily to serve the purpose of educative dissemination amongst Romani communities, this can be seen as understandable. Nonetheless, one critical observer, a Romani activist from the Balkans who works in INGO circles in Budapest, had this to say about ERRC's publications:

...they are not such a big deal, they are merely publishing 'public secrets'...if one looks at the machinery of the ERRC, and what they actually publish, it is simply newspaper reports which are then translated into English (sent by local monitors)...the problems of discrimination and human rights violations facing Roma throughout the region are more or less the same – just varying in degree. However, most Roma never read these reports as they are in English, and they primarily 'benefit' an international elite audience (Anon. 2002: INT).

As emphasised in previous chapters, this has been part of a broader tendency on the part of civil society itself to generate discourses on Roma which ultimately become exclusive. The majority of Roma themselves cannot readily access these discourses nor challenge them, let alone participate in their construction. One project which attempted to ameliorate this 'epistemic gap', begun in 2000, was to summarise the main stories in the *Roma Rights* quarterly and organise them in audio cassette format in Romani language for distribution to Romani communities. However, the results of this endeavour were never assessed, and moreover, the Romani intern who spearheaded this project, returned to her native Macedonia, effectively drawing the project to a close in less than two years. Despite these clear weaknesses with the ERRC's dissemination strategy, the body of human rights literature generated within the pages of *Roma Rights* is impressive and

significant (particularly for researchers),<sup>87</sup> covering contentious issues such as *de facto* segregation within the educational system, regressive housing legislation (in some cases, resulting from the privatisation of housing councils) which renders a disproportionate negative impact on Roma, and police abuse in particular Romani communities. A common thread weaving through this corpus of materials is the prejudicial treatment of Roma prevalent in European societies, and the discriminatory practices of public institutions and private individuals. In most of these texts, anti-discrimination resolutions and legislation from the European and UN systems underpin the arguments of various contributors who write on human rights of Roma.

With respect to public advocacy work at the domestic level, ERRC advocacy letters are commonly addressed to ministers of state, including the general prosecutor, minister of education, prime minister and other relevant officials in an attempt to place pressure on their offices to react to particular cases of abuse. At the international level, the ERRC enjoys consultative status with the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) of the UN and participates on various international and EU bodies. The onus is on governments and institutions to prove their compliance with the corpus of human rights laws to which they are signatory members. The ERRC also publishes the writings of Romani activists and scholars who work in the NGO sector within the pages of *Roma Rights*, offering a window into the contemporary Romani *weltanschauung* for readers, particularly on human rights debates. It is these narratives which are perhaps the most salient and useful for generating a convivial awareness within the majority society of the Romani communities' predicament in Europe today.

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<sup>87</sup> Particularly for Western European non-Roma, many of whom never come into direct contact with Roma, nor would they be exposed to knowledge about fellow Romani citizens of their country in their school textbooks. *Roma Rights* also reaches a small circle of educated Roma who then develop a clearer picture of the similarities of human rights violations across countries. Nonetheless, the mass of Roma would not be reading it, and if they did, would not find it particularly useful for their lives, apart from to confirm what they already know – that they face hostility throughout Europe (cf. Anon 2002: INT).

### *'Partner' NGOs*

As mentioned in Chapter 5, another organisation in the 'Roma rights' movement is the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, headed by Ferenc Kőszeg, a former *samizdat* publisher, and an MP with the SZDSZ party until 1999. The HHC, established in 1990, and a part of the Helsinki network in Europe, collaborated with the HRP on their first reports covering the situation of Roma in Hungary, and has good co-operation with the ERRC, demonstrating the nexus between Budapest-based Hungarian NGOs and international (primarily American) human rights organisations. Apart from the 'rights of Roma' agenda, the HHC covers other areas of human rights such as refugee protection, and prison reform, advocating for changes in Hungarian legislation as necessary (Kőszeg 1999: INT).

Though the Hungarian Foundation for Self-Reliance (*Autonomia Alapítvány*) mentioned in the previous chapter is not strictly a human rights organisation, in its capacity as a Hungarian intermediary organisation (that is, a grant-giving one) working with Romani communities, it has engaged in income-generation work in the countryside for nearly two decades. In 1994, it granted seed money to NEKI to begin its operations, and in 1997, it worked with five legal defence bureaus from four different countries (NEKI was the Hungarian representative) across the CEE region to implement the EUROMA project - sponsored by the European Commission's *Phare Democracy Programme Ad Hoc facility* - an eighteen-month project aimed at "reinforcing self-help projects amongst the Roma through providing nonprofit leadership and management training, providing media training, establishing legal defence bureaus and supporting existing ones, and setting up a regional Romani radio station..." (AA 1997: 13-14).<sup>88</sup> Finally, it is important to note the

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<sup>88</sup> I myself happened to attend the leadership training provided for Slovak Roma in Michalovce, Slovakia. At one point in the training, when Professor Hubschmannova discussed the Indic roots of the Romani language, she asked me to join her in teaching the group. To date, a regional Romani radio has not been



role of training programmes in conflict resolution coordinated by the Partners Hungary foundation, as well as the research they facilitate on key issues such as the G-MSG (cf. Koulis 2001; 2005).

Domestically, the SOROS-Hungary foundation and regionally, the Roma Participation Programme (OSI-Budapest), both a part of the Soros philanthropic networks in the 1990s, intervened in the Romani rights movement through their support for multicultural education programmes and Romani advocacy centres respectively. In particular, during the tenure of one previous RPP Director, Rudko Kawczynski, the organization took a fairly radical approach (for the region) in its organizational work, insisting that *Roma know what's best* for their communities. This ultimately pitted Mr. Kawczynski against those (primarily non-Roma) *within* the national Soros Foundations who did not wish to face up to the implicit challenge this posed for their work with Romani communities (cf. Kawczynski 1999; Anon. 1999: INT).

## **6.2 De-constructing (un)civil society in Hungary: the politics of the 'Roma industry'**

*Listening to supposedly knowledgeable people talking about civil society at conferences and other fora, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that civil society is a level playing field and the new salvation for development...Civil society is a messy arena of competing claims and interests between groups that do not necessarily like each other - Alan Fowler (1997)*

For many Western actors and observers of the transition, in particular, philanthropic bodies that have become active in the post-socialist region since the early 1990s, the NGO sector has been virtually synonymous with 'democracy-building' and 'civil society' (Fowler 1997; Pinnock 1999). In critically analysing and deconstructing this notion, I suggest that this view of the NGO sector is reductive, as it does not take into account its complexity, nor the inherent tensions within this site of power struggle, particularly in

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established, although in August 2001, a Budapest-based radio station, Radio 'C' was launched and continues to be on air to this day.

reference to the Romani subaltern within European civil societies (cf. Trehan 2009). Hence, contextualizing these terms is a pre-requisite to understanding how they have been interpreted in the modern Hungarian context.

The term 'civil society' generally incorporates NGOs, and broadly encompasses political parties, labour unions, workers' cooperatives, business associations, membership based organisations and religious bodies amongst a variety of other actors in society. Along with its twin 'democratisation', both are vociferously contested terms within the globalised discourse on development today. While I save the deconstruction of these terms and their local application for the following chapter, where a discussion of the problems of liberal theories as applied to human rights takes place, I would like to make two important points at this stage. First of all, the widespread popularity of both these terms in post-socialist eastern Europe has been a direct result of the ideological and material dominance of American human rights networks in Hungary, who have rendered these concepts virtually synonymous with human rights and NGO work in the region. Secondly, these terms themselves have been constructed on a relatively narrow understanding of human rights. In her analysis of how the concept of *democracy* has come to be formulated from a polyarchical perspective, Hearn (1998) suggests:

...democracy is limited to the political sphere. It focuses on process and clearly differentiates process from substance. *There is no contradiction in this model in affirming that 'democracy' coexists with massive material inequality.* It is outside the definition of polyarchy to address such inequality, and thus *by definition this form of democracy legitimates an unjust social order.* It does not entail an emancipatory project from an unjust status quo...Now that polyarchy has been conflated to the staple definition of democracy in both democratisation and democracy promotion literature, the idea of popular democracy is no longer on the democratic agenda (15, italics mine).

Her observations reflect the on-going concerns with the difference between 'substantive' and 'procedural' democracy, where the latter form of democracy is practiced from the perspective of 'polyarchy', whereby "elite minority rule and socio-economic inequalities

[exist] alongside formal political freedom and elections involving universal suffrage” (Robinson 1996: 356, cited in Hearn 1998: 15).

This cogently illustrates the situation for the majority of Roma, who as citizens of Hungary should, in theory, enjoy a range of human rights and protections since the transition to ‘democracy’, and yet, the reality is that they remain unable to acquire the privileges of citizenship in Hungarian society as a result of gross structural inequalities and violence (cf. Farmer 2003). In addition, Hearn’s description of polyarchival democracy almost seamlessly overlaps neoliberal models of governance in post-socialist Europe, with its strong emphasis on its procedural aspects (such as elections).

As detailed in the previous chapter, during the past decade, the movements for reforms of legal and juridical structures in Hungary were grounded in the adoption of liberalist rule-of-law and ‘democratisation’ principles as formulated by influential non-state actors such as the OSI in New York City and its affiliates in eastern European countries. Both the rule-of-law and democratization are seen as part of the broader package of the establishment of human rights regimes in post-socialist Europe, and this continues to have practical implications for the trajectory of Romani projects and initiatives throughout the region. One outcome has been the creation of a parallel system of expertise on Roma and the generation of *epistemic communities outside the Romani communities themselves*. Whereas the work of the African National Congress generated its homegrown intellectuals and moral entrepreneurs, the Soros-generated parallel system (cf. Stubbs 2007b) within post-socialist Europe has placed epistemic capital firmly in the hands of non-Roma. In Chapter Seven, I cover the problems associated with the persistent lack of alternative ideologies to counter the current hegemony within the NGO sector, and the prevailing lack of solidarity with dissident Roma displayed by neoliberal human rights entrepreneurs.

To gain further insight into the dynamics within the Romani-related NGO sector in post-socialist states, discarding assumptions about the 'voluntary sector' or the 'non-profit sector', as it is known in established Western polities, is crucial. This has to do with the peculiar nature of contemporary Central and Eastern European civil societies:

While the third sector in developed democracies relies upon the other two sectors, the problem for the corresponding third sector in the emerging Eastern European democracies is finding another basis for its existence. The easiest solution to this problem seems to be that...[it] should rely upon the Western third sector (and maybe also on the Western first and second sectors). But if the voluntary sector relies only on foreign support, it will forever remain foreign to Eastern Europe. The problem then is to find the immanent, the inherent forces that can support a voluntary sector in countries with ruined economies and political structures in transition (Mois Fayon cited in Petrova 1996).

As alluded to above, in a region continuing to experience swift economic, political and social change, elite actors have emerged, overcoming the problem of scarce resources (at least in the short-term) by relying on funding from wealthier Western countries and more recently, from the European Union. They have asserted their role in the development of an independent civil society by laying claim to public interest work, a concept which is relatively new to the region. In the case of the 'Romani rights' sector, this has consisted of promoting the application of universal human rights standards (including European human rights norms such as the EU Race Directive), conducting original research, lobbying officials and the media, and providing direct assistance to victims of human rights abuses (cf. ERRRC/Interights/MPG 2000).

### *The 'NGOisation of human rights' and elite collusion*

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the 'Roma rights' movement as practised in the countries of post-socialist Europe is primarily an NGO-led development, and conforms well to the 'NGOization of social movements' thesis (Stubbs 2007a; Roy 2004; Hanafi and Tabar 2003). It is important to note that well-funded organisations whose work focuses on the diverse Romani communities in the region generally lack grassroots constituencies, and in

many cases, do not co-operate with local NGOs. Instead of a grassroots mass movement supporting these NGOs, we see the emergence of *elite constituencies*, that is, comprising national and international policy-makers, academics, and coalitions of activists (Trehan 2001). In this respect, the Romani movement is a site for the emergence of the 'NGOization of human rights'.

Therefore, the field of human rights in Hungary, and more specifically, the 'Romani rights' sector, is characterized by a concentration of resources and access to social capital among these human rights entrepreneurs, and could be characterized as an opportunistic 'collusion of elite interests'.

Paradoxically, this is the direct antithesis of the so-called 'power-to-the-people' principle that emphasises mobilization at the community level. The bulk of the resources are funneled to the same NGOs (and in the case of Hungary, to elite INGOs such as *European Roma Rights Center* and the *Autonomia Foundation*) from the same constellation of sponsors I discussed in Chapter 5. Moreover, a further concentration of resources and consolidation of NGO power has resulted from the recently formed consortium of private foundations known as the 'Trust for Civil Society', as well as the programmes associated with the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion: 2005-2015' (Arnove 1980; Guy 2009). Another key determinant contributing to this collusion of interests and power are the strong personal linkages that individuals within NGO circles have with one another: the director of one organisation is the founder of another or vice-versa; the board member of one organization acts as a consultant for another; the spouse of one NGO director is hired as a consultant for an implementing NGO, and so on. For instance, both Rumyan Russinov and Savelina Danova (a married couple) garnered top posts in the 'Roma rights' sector in Hungary, after having worked for Petrova's *Human Rights Project* in Sofia. Russinov took over Kawczynski's post as Director of RPP (OSI), whilst Danova became a senior researcher within the ERRC itself. Another example is Joseph Schull, a Canadian

who previously worked for the Ford Foundation, and then became a board member with the ERRC. Significantly, the exclusive nature of this circle also impacts the construction of priorities for the movement as a whole, as human rights entrepreneurs network effectively across countries and consolidate their professional capital in this manner.

### *Institutionalisation of NGOs*

International human rights lawyer Chidi Odinkalu (1999) of the *Justice Initiative* of OSI-New York (formerly a staff member of the London-based *Interights*), in a trenchant analysis of the African NGO sector for the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs (CCEIA), notes that unlike community-based NGOs, a number of NGOs financed directly by Western donors do not enjoy support at the grassroots level. Thus, they are not required to be accountable to any constituency, apart from a limited number of select donors, who often subscribe to agendas that may or may not reflect the most critical needs of the communities they purport to assist. In a striking parallel to intermediary organisations working in the field of Romani issues, Odinkalu (1999: 1-2) notes that:

Most human rights organisations are modelled after Northern watchdog organisations, located in an urban area, run by a core management without a membership base (unlike Amnesty International), and dependent solely on overseas funding. The most successful of these organisations only manage to achieve the equivalent status of a public policy think-tank, a research institute, or a specialised publishing house. With a media-driven visibility and a lifestyle to match, the leaders of these initiatives...progressively grow distant from a life of struggle (cited in Trehan 2001).

The parallels with respect to African NGOs are noteworthy due to the relative similarities in the power structures, both in sub-Saharan Africa and amongst the Roma in Eastern Europe. In the early days of the 'transition', some elite NGO entrepreneurs in the region believed that systematic recruitment efforts were necessary to attract talented technocrats to the field of development and human rights. The objective was to enhance

professionalism in the field, and offering generous salaries was seen as an effective way to achieve this. Danova, formerly co-director of Human Rights Project (Bulgaria) and currently with the ERRRC, agrees that Roma face serious problems of access to resources within the NGO sector (Danova 2000: INT).

One result of the professionalisation of human rights work or the NGOization of human rights, is that the salaries of young NGO workers in the region - especially within organizations who receive direct funding from international philanthropies such as the Open Society Institute, Charles Mott Foundation, or Rockefeller Brothers - are likely to be higher than those of local Hungarian professionals, and significantly higher if one is a Western national. In Budapest, for example, a teacher employed by the state in the year 2000 earned an average of the equivalent of \$150/month, while a full-time Hungarian NGO worker based in Budapest could earn well over \$500/month. The salaries within some international NGOs in the region are proportionally higher, taking into account the cost of living and purchasing power parity, than those working in New York or London in similar positions. In some cases, these posts are tax-free for those not officially resident in Hungary (for recent job advertisements in the 'Roma rights' sector, see Appendix #6).

These monetary incentives have had the effect of attracting large numbers of people into the NGO sector, individuals who otherwise would have joined the corporate or state sector (including academic work) and perhaps equally crucially, this has had the knock-on effect of making the non-profit sector a lucrative field with career potential. This has been one result of the impact of the current human rights approach, whereby the ethos of classical human rights work has been diluted and transformed from one of *solidarity with* and *social justice for* the oppressed in favour of technocratic skill and loyalty to an emerging neoliberal hierarchy.

### *A pattern of hierarchical development*

A parallel development to the NGO-isation of human rights phenomenon is that once INGOs and elite domestic NGOs establish their dominant position within the 'Romani rights industry', they then seek to legitimate this position by reaching out to community-based organisations and forming alliances and 'strategic' partnerships. These 'partnerships' are generally not on an equal footing, as grassroots NGOs are often dependent on the elite NGOs for funding, and many times the project specifications are pre-designed according to funder's priorities (cf. Trehan 2001). This strengthens existing asymmetries within the sector leading to further hierarchisation, particularly in relation to Romani development or civil rights projects, as the project priorities of elite NGOs take precedence over those of local NGO. As Blanka Kozma (1999: INT), director of Romani Women's Association told me about the planning of Roma-related NGO projects:

...these projects were not designed from our perspective, it's not about *our survival*, it's not about *our development*...their main aim is not to help Romani society or to develop the situation, but to "prevent them [Roma] from going to England or America, so that we are not a danger to the EU"...this was the motivation [in the past], and it continues to be to this day [italics mine].

These claims by Ms. Kozma were made in the context of the growing migration of Roma to Western Europe during the late 1990s as Romani lifeworlds were rendered even more precarious, coinciding with the intensive preparations for EU accession by post-socialist governments in central Europe. This type of radical critique is rarely found in mainstream academic literature on Roma, nor is it likely to be published in the plethora of NGO publications. Nevertheless, in private conversations with numerous Romani activists, this is one of their most critical concerns about the contemporary NGO-led rights movement.

While one should certainly not lament increasing professionalism within the field of human rights, if actors within the movement and the strategies that they adopt begin to



manifest the imperatives of the neoliberal economic order, and thus lose sight of the priorities of the communities and people whom they are meant to serve, serious questions need to be raised, and, as suggested by David Kennedy (2004), perhaps reflexivity within the human rights community needs to become an *imperative*.

This development demonstrates how the concept of 'moral entrepreneurship' has itself become transformed rather significantly since the time Becker (1963) originally conceived of it:

...a man's preoccupation may become his occupation. What started as an amateur interest in a moral issue may become a full-time job; indeed, for many reformers it becomes just this. The success of the crusade, therefore, leaves the crusader without a vocation (153).

In this thesis, I suggest that the concept of 'moral entrepreneur' must be developed further, indeed, *re-conceptualised* in light of market exigencies and market penetration within the contemporary, post-socialist arena of human rights in Europe. In the particular case of the human rights movement for Roma, Becker's understanding of 'moral entrepreneur' from the 1960s has been flipped on its head as the *crusader does indeed gain a vocation*. The 'market' for jobs within the 'Gypsy industry' is not in danger of waning in the near future since much of the diminished funding (or capital) for the work of human rights entrepreneurs which was previously sourced from American philanthropies (as prominent foundations shifted their sponsorship further eastwards projects in central and western Asia) is now being replaced to a significant extent by the European Union and its numerous initiatives in the area of Romani integration (Guy and Kovats 2006). This development ensures full-time employment for human rights entrepreneurs who are ideologically comfortable with the 'NGOization' of human rights, and indeed, the *marketisation* of human rights. Moreover, a cursory look at job openings during 2007 suggests that many new technocratic jobs whose purpose is to facilitate 'Romani integration' in Europe are now actively recruiting employees. As one Romani

intellectual has suggested, the 'Roma rights' movement has generated several thousand jobs (and thus security) across Europe for technocrats who have no direct knowledge of Romani communities, and perhaps about five hundred of these positions will go to the Romani educated elite, if they are lucky. However, the mass of Roma continue to remain impoverished and excluded from the labour market, living lives of terrible insecurity (cf. Zoltan 2006). I am in agreement with Zoltan that these realities deserve to be discussed openly within the human rights 'community', particularly if the broader goals of solidarity with the oppressed – not to mention the goal of emancipatory cosmopolitanism - are to be achieved.

### *The 'Cause' becomes consumed by the Career*

Within the human rights field, and within the 'rights for Roma' movement itself, there are a number of persons devoting their life to *the cause* of Romani emancipation, whilst there are a number of others for whom it has become *a career*, a livelihood (and for some, a lucrative one).

When we compare it to, say the Indian movement for independence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, or the South African anti-apartheid movement or the Black civil rights movement in the US, one particular difference stands out. The economic interests, that is, the career-building possibilities, were not so evident within these movements, as the role of donors and private foundations was not hegemonic. In other words, moral entrepreneurs such as M.K. Gandhi, Dr. King, and Nelson Mandela, though supported by wealthy benefactors from both within their own communities and outside their communities, did not set about to earn money or live lives of relative prosperity as a result of their activist leadership. On the contrary, they demonstrably risked their lives for their principles and for the 'good' of their people, imperfect as individuals though they may have been.

Within the law-centered human rights movement for Roma - spearheaded and dominated as it is by lawyers and other professional human rights elites - it is not hard to see that one of the motivations for joining the movement is the opportunity to build a career within it. During the 1990s, these career opportunities expanded in particular for American and Western legal professionals and 'expert' consultants in post-socialist Eastern Europe. For Romani individuals, a career can be established as a so-called 'professional Gypsy' (someone who garners a position on the basis of her or his Romani ethnicity, while using it as a badge of legitimacy), and if one is non-Romani, then as a 'universalist' human rights entrepreneur, who conversely, uses the badge of 'universalism' to legitimize their interventions. Furthermore, these categories are imbricated depending on the extent to which an individual - regardless of ethnicity - gains familiarity with the complexity of Romani lifeworlds, and in so doing, transforms her or his own *weltanschauung* to reflect this cognitive acquisition, which then further influences their human rights interventions.

Following from the above, despite the growing opportunities afforded by professional work in this sector for some select Romani individuals, these phenomena could have lasting negative consequences for the current and future generations of NGO activists if cynicism begins to replace idealism, the backbone of human rights work (Trehan 2001). The values traditionally associated with voluntary sector work such as altruism, self-help, community service, alliance-building and co-operation face the danger of being diluted or marginalised by an emerging orthodoxy focused solely on the technocratic acumen of mainly non-Romani human rights entrepreneurs and the tokenism of select Roma in their midst. Work in the development and human rights sector in Hungary is in danger of becoming 'just another job' if the technocratic model gains pre-eminence over service within a community-centred approach, as these observations suggest:

As they get larger, NGOs are looking more and more like businesses themselves. In the past, such groups sought no profits, paid low wages - or none at all - and employed idealists. Now a whole class of them, even if not directly backed by businesses, have taken on corporate trappings. Known collectively as BINGOs [big international NGOs], these groups manage funds and employ staff which a medium-sized company would envy. Like corporations, they attend conferences endlessly. Fund-raisers and senior staff at such NGOs earn wages comparable to the private sector (*The Economist* 2000: 25-27).

The scenario above could describe the work of the ERRC, whom some people working in the region refer to with irony as 'The Firm', and to the lawyers working there, as 'human rights businessmen' (Anon. INT: 2006). This is in marked contrast to the relatively low-paid jobs within the voluntary sector in Western democracies, where government employees can earn as much, if not considerably more, than those employed by the non-profit sector. As a result, the generous influx of money that the post-socialist NGO sector enjoys through the auspices of the Western private foundations has led to an adjoining, perhaps dysfunctional phenomenon - what many Romani intellectuals refer to cynically (and openly) as the 'ethno-business' or 'Gypsy industry'. Indeed, Monika Horaková, a psychologist of Romani background, and former MP in the Czech Republic has claimed that:

there is too much paternalism...with too many Czechs who speak no Romani making a living by helping a people they do not understand, while Gypsies themselves go jobless (cited in Erlanger 2000).

The 'Gypsy industry' is not solely a third sector phenomenon, as it also encompasses a growing number of Romani-related offices and programmes from culture to education to minority rights in the State sector. Indeed, the EU PHARE programmes in the region have funding earmarked for the "development of civil society", which includes substantial sums of money for Romani-related projects (Bényi 2000: INT; Guy and

Kovats 2006; cf. Guy 2009).<sup>89</sup> This has also resulted in social tensions rooted in the pay differentials between local Romani NGOs and the intermediary NGOs, between Romani and non-Romani employees, and between foreign and native workers. Moreover, these phenomena are in step with Fowler's (1997) paradoxical observation that in the short term, strengthening civil society tends to increase social tensions, rather than curb them, as more actors begin to stake their claim to resources, inspite of the hierarchies which result in differential access to these. This phenomenon may be a partial function of increasing institutionalisation or formalisation of well-funded NGOs themselves. Furthermore, the linkages between the increasing bureaucratisation of human rights activity, economic globalization, and corporatist thinking permeate the civil society of the region, all serving to marginalize Romani interlocutors within it.

Some Romani leaders have responded to their general position of marginalisation (identified in Chapter Two as a form of *subalterity*) by forming strategic alliances with American philanthropists and affiliated human rights entrepreneurs. The above section discussed some of the problems associated with the institutionalisation of human rights work in Hungary. However, many supporters of the work of these NGOs argue that without their intervention, the problems that Roma face today would not be as heavily debated and contested, and moreover, the impetus to ameliorate them would not be as vigorous (Hága 2000: INT). Nonetheless, other, more critical Romani activists suggest that debate and contestation alone are not adequate tools for overcoming structural oppression (Kóczé 2004; Zoltan 2006).

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<sup>89</sup>In 2000, the PHARE budget for Romani programmes in Hungary was 9.6 million euros in total, and was disbursed through the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare (Bényi 2000: INT).

### 6.3 Relations between elite NGOs and Romani communities

Examining parallel developments in another 'subaltern' NGO sector, that of the Palestinian Territories, reveals striking parallels to the development of Romani NGOs in Eastern Europe. Two social scientists who have critically assessed the work of Palestinian NGOs suggest that they are:

...spectators in the Intifada, unable to make the necessary linkages and articulate the objectives of their organisations that promote democracy and social justice, and the overarching national agenda and strategy of the Intifada (Hanafi and Tabar 2005: 18).

They suggest further that NGOs are generally isolated and lack an organic base in Palestinian society. This observation can be applied to many Romani NGOs who are also spectators (or at best, witnesses and archivists) in the NGO-based civil society in Eastern Europe. Whilst critical voices do emerge from time to time, action is rarely taken based on these insights. As covered earlier in the thesis, human rights entrepreneurship as a professional occupation is dominated, to a large extent, by non-Roma 'Romani rights' NGO workers who then rise up in the ranks of professional NGO work, ultimately becoming directors and deputy heads of NGOs. In contrast, Roma at these levels tend to be rare, and seldom do they become entrepreneurs who devise and envision policy or arrive at project priorities for their own communities. This enterprise is almost the exclusive preserve of neoliberal-leaning non-Romani benefactors and NGO entrepreneurs.

While some researchers, such as Pinnock (1999; 2005), who studied the development of post-socialist Romani NGOs in Bulgaria, interpret the rise of Romani NGO projects as an important part of a survival strategy, which offers another avenue for strengthening their community's prospects by creating spaces of resistance to non-Romani notions of 'integration', I nevertheless view these 'NGO survival strategies' as emerging from a clear lack of volition.

Although the observation that NGO work constitutes a form of survival is clearly relevant to the case of Hungary, where the phenomenon of the 'professional Gypsy representative' became visible from the mid-1990s onwards (primarily as a result of the country's unique Minority Self-Government system which led to the election of over 3,000 local level Romani officials in the previous round of voting), whether this development affords possibilities for genuine resistance is quite another matter. My perspective is more critical than Pinnock's (2005) in this sense, as firstly, there is increasing resignation on the part of older Romani activists (in their 40s and above), coupled with a tacit acceptance by a younger generation (now in their 20s and 30s) of the existing inequalities within the contemporary NGO sector. This younger generation is removed from the solidarity-building struggles of the 1980s and seems unable to recognise the inherent contradictions of the neoliberal NGO model. Nonetheless, Éva Órsós, a prominent liberal member of civil society, believes that the NGO sector has enabled skills development in the Romani communities:

...the role of civil organisations must intensify in Hungary...this is especially important for the Roma. As these are organisations, formations, in which people can be present who cannot normally express their common interests, their common problems. And for Hungarian Gypsies, indeed for European Gypsies, one of the biggest problems is that they cannot express their problems...if you go to the Gypsy settlements and sit down with people there, they see their situation and their problems with crystal clarity...But they get no further than expressing it, they are not capable of realising their aims. So these civil organizations [NGOs]...prepare them for roles in public life. And anyone who takes a role in any type of civil organization, this means that, possibly, they could use these skills in another such organisation dealing with other issues....I see a new generation growing up which is better educated, which takes part in schools, communities, and university groups, which expresses what the problems are, and which will fight the problems they face in a tough manner (2001: INT).

Nevertheless, other Romani activists and scholars argue that the profound deterioration of the socio-economic circumstances of Roma during the rapid transition to a market economy did pressure many to create 'paper NGOs' and projects in order to gain a share of the NGO funding pie (Kovats 2003; Trehan 2001; Zoltan 2006).

### *The problem of objectification*

*It is difficult to know who are our genuine friends, and who are the parasites.*

- Blanka Kozma (1999: INT)

Another, perhaps unintentional development of the NGOisation of human rights work vis-à-vis Roma has been the objectification of Romani representatives by human rights entrepreneurs themselves. Romani critics claim that rather than being active participants (apart from the tiny urban elite Romani minority) in the human rights movement, they have become subjects for the human rights work of others, rather like ‘experiments’ for tinkering with by legal professionals and international human rights entrepreneurs (cf. Trehan and Kóczé 2009; Zoltan 2006). This kind of development harkens back to the days of ‘imperial philanthropy’, where the agency of subaltern actors within civil society was reduced or rendered invisible.

Or, as Hungarian Romani activist Kozma suggests provocatively, “*we* are nothing but a project to *them*” (INT: 1999, emphasis mine). Aside from the all-too-common mirroring of anti-Gypsy societal bias amongst non-Romani NGO workers themselves, this contentious issue also brings to the surface the great difficulties in transplanting Western notions of volunteerism or non-profit work to an increasingly competitive, career-oriented NGO sector in a region characterized by the presence of uncontested (and even unarticulated) racialised hierarchies.

Despite holding progressive beliefs with respect to justice for minorities, most of the INGO entrepreneurs in the 1990s continued to work within a rudimentary framework of civil society development, where it was not seen as necessary to conduct preliminary research into the daily circumstances of Romani communities *before* embarking upon their projects. The cause being just for these moral entrepreneurs, programmes were devised *for Roma*. Meanwhile, Romani NGOs found themselves adapting their agendas to the



priorities of high-profile partners, even though many had conceived different priorities for themselves. Though clear-cut boundaries cannot be drawn between the work of Romani-led NGOs and other NGOs in the field, the hierarchical structure currently in place ensures that Romani NGOs receive a relatively modest share of the funding 'pie' compared to those intermediary NGOs usually directed by non-Roma. When there are resource constraints (access to capital), decision-making power (and thus autonomy) is also constrained for these Romani-led NGOs (cf. Pinnock 2005).

Conducting a simple comparison of the annual budgets of intermediary NGOs with those of community-based Romani NGOs reveals that the former have resources (budgetary and otherwise) which are multiples of the latter (Kóczé 2004: INT). Intermediary organisations tend to have projects national or regional in scope, and this is cited as one explanation for the differences in funding levels.

### *The donor dependency factor*

As Romani leaders and politicians have been dependent on state structures for financial support historically, so too, in post-socialist times, Romani actors within the NGO sector have become dependent on major philanthropic donors for continuing their work. A pecking order of dependency can be observed in this regard, which has resulted in a bifurcated system of accessing grants. While elite NGOs and INGOs have relatively easy access to direct donations from large private foundations and multilateral agencies from the West (a kind of 'pipeline funding') based on long-established professional relations, local Romani NGOs are dependent upon these elite NGOs for further re-distribution of funding at the local level and cannot generally compete with them for the sources of 'pipeline funding'. As explained earlier, since most NGOs working in this arena are not financially viable without foreign assistance, and membership-funded organisations are almost non-existent, the majority of projects are necessarily donor-driven. One

explanation for the lack of voluntary membership of these organizations in the early socialist era was explained as the “legitimate suspicion against voluntary action, as during 40 years [under actually existing socialism] there was the practice of compulsory ‘volunteering’, and membership fees were deducted from salaries” (1990 Annual Report, Autonómia Foundation). However, it is also the case that volunteerism, particularly in Western capitalist societies, has been associated with a middle-class ethos that requires surplus time, and that working class people have not had the ‘luxury’ of volunteering. Donor dependency seems to have the effect of undermining the independence of local NGOs and initiatives as donors subscribing to neoliberal agendas may have different priorities from local economically-depressed communities.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, some human rights entrepreneurs have drawn parallels between Romani Europeans to communities in the so-called ‘Third World’. Nevertheless, they may overlook the relative exclusion that their own policies generate vis-à-vis Romani communities themselves. Even Romani advocates and intellectuals active within European civil society are comparable to those in the Third World in terms of their isolated position globally. Their common struggle as double minorities in the region (social reformers *and* Roma) takes place on several fronts simultaneously: not only against the state, but now increasingly, against structures which inhibit Romani participation in the achievement of their own emancipation, including those *within* civil society.

Agnes Dároczi, Aladár Horváth, Rudko Kawczynski, Angéla Kóczé and Blanka Kozma are a few amongst many Romani activists and public intellectuals in the region who believe that the hierarchical structure of the NGO sector today inhibits Romani participants from key sites of decision-making. Certainly, the burden that most Romani intellectuals carry in their attempt to represent themselves, their families, their

communities, indeed, their whole people (if this is even conceivable, let alone possible), is tremendous.

A case in point is Mr. Kawczynski's seminal, polemical piece entitled, 'The Politics of Romani Politics' (1997), written when he was director of the Roma Participation Programme (RPP) within OSI-Budapest, as well as being a board member of the ERRC. His piece raises contentious ethical questions which Romani activists have now begun to voice openly and more vociferously. For example, he asks just who are Romani and non-Romani human rights NGOs ultimately responsible to? Their donors, the Romani communities they seek to assist, and/or the general public? Who decides and who *should* decide what the priorities are for the development and emancipation of Roma via NGO sector work? In trying to address these contentious issues, the issue of strategic alliances (and the epistemic communities they generate) emerges, along with the fact that these networks to some extent determine whose interests are ultimately served. Here are Petrova's words from her editorial entitled "On Representation", through which she attempts to reach some clarity in this area:

Who is in a position to say what is "good" for "the Romani people"? What is ERRC's place in setting the agenda? The ERRC believes that racial discrimination in the sense of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is the daily reality of Roma life in end-of-century Europe. Racism degrades not only the disadvantaged minority, but members of the majority as well. Those who oppress are not themselves free and equal. Racial discrimination is a moral and a legal problem of the majority no less than it is a tragedy of the oppressed minority (Petrova 1997: 4).

Though both Roma and non-Roma human rights advocates - including Aladár Horváth and Dimitrina Petrova - would agree that racism is an ill of the majority society, they would put forward different remedies. Petrova has emphasized, in the same editorial above, that though the ERRC does not represent Roma in anyway or speak on their behalf, nevertheless, as racism is a problem of the majority society as much as it is that of the minority (Roma), therefore, there is space for an organisation like the ERRC and its

work, as, it is in serving the 'broader public interest' that it fulfills its mission (Petrova 1999: INT).

Writing five years later on the same subject, Petrova's (2003: 22-23) following concerns about Romani leaders and their alliances with homeless campaigners are symptomatic of the influence of neoliberalism upon post-socialist political thought:

...the Romani movement in Central and Eastern Europe has entered a period of consciousness building along identity lines, aimed at mass mobilization and political participation. But as with other identity movements in other times and places, we have observed the disturbing characteristic trends: an emphasis on ideological tenets, a construction of cults of personality, and conversely, creation of "enemies of the struggle." *The "ideology" emerging within the Romani movement contains an emphasis on defending the ethnic line, as well as a preoccupation with poverty as a mode of solidarity. Romani leaders in Hungary have sought alliances with, for example, groups that defend the homeless. This political cosmology has discovered, in non-Roma defenders of Roma rights, a convenient bogey.* These and other non-Roma working on various aspects of Roma-related issues currently provide a convenient medium through which the members of an otherwise fragmented and contentious Romani leadership can overcome their differences (italics mine).

If we unpack the critical statement above by Petrova, herself one of the key architects of 'Roma rights' discourse, she appears to be muddling two separate issues. The first is about the role of non-Roma within the contemporary Romani movement. While I am in agreement with Petrova that a "convenient bogey" is at times generated by Romani activists who target non-Romani human rights entrepreneurs, the fact remains that non-Roma 'experts' continue to exhibit disproportionate power in terms of agenda-setting and decision-making at the highest executive levels of INGOs and multilateral organizations. The lack of visible Romani moral entrepreneurship in the human rights arena may be a factor contributing towards this reality; another may well be the exclusion faced by Romani agents in civil society, as described earlier in this thesis.

The second point she raises about the alliance between anti-homelessness activists and Roma is likely an offshoot of post-socialist political developments in Hungary. What Petrova seemingly fails to apprehend is that an alliance with the homeless is a logical

consequence of the fact that large numbers of Romani families have been evicted or are facing imminent eviction in Europe, and this has resulted in Romani leaders seeking new and innovative political alliances (see also COHRE 2004). Furthermore, it appears that this is a veiled reference to Horváth's urban activism, in which he has explicitly made connections with homeless and pro-poor agendas. He discusses below his perspective on the dilemma of the political passivity of the mass of Roma, in relation to poverty:

One of the major problems is that Roma don't speak up in politics. They are so passive and stay in the countryside. They are not educated or don't have jobs, and the feeling that it is the Roma's own fault for being marginalised is getting stronger. The problem is in the welfare system. Roma are often poor, and poor people don't advance...there is abuse of power in the regional [countryside] level. We need demonstrations, media campaigns, more people working in the field, but for that, a new human sensitivity is needed - a sensitivity for the poor, as well as for Roma (Horváth interviewed by Vermaas 2000).

Therefore, given Horvath's own personal background as a veteran community organizer fighting against ghettoization back in the mid-1980s in the industrial town of Miskolc (long before Petrova became active in the Romani cause in her native Bulgaria), it would seem natural for him to continue to organize around a working class and pro-poor agenda in Budapest.

Other issues revolving around the 'racialisation' of the rights agenda also emerged in Hungary. Already by 1995, three respected social scientists warned against two disturbing trends in the NGO sector vis-a-vis Romani issues. They argued against a) 'rigid ethnic coupling' (eg. 'Romani-specific' programmes) as this ultimately results in further segregation of Roma from the majority society, and b) the top-down structure of most organisations whereby "grants and subsidies are swallowed up at the upper levels, and the effect of the organisations' work remains unnoticeable in the communities living in the direst circumstances" (Havas, Kertesi, and Kemény 1995). The above observations point to limitations inherent in the neoliberal *pro-voluntas* perspective.

Moreover, though there is at times internal reflection on the work and strategies of the ERRC (along with its role in the Romani rights movement), as illustrated by key editorials written by Dr. Petrova from the late 1990s in the journal *Roma Rights*, the outcome of these ruminations remain contentious. For example, “On representation” makes the explicit assertion that the ERRC is *not* a Romani organization, but a ‘partner’ organization in the civil rights movement for Roma. Curiously, this claim was in direct contradiction to the views of then board member and Romani activist Rudko Kawczynski, who back in 1997, had himself suggested that the ERRC was a ‘model Romani rights organization’ (Petrova 1997; Kawczynski 1997). Indeed, the Roma rights movement continues to be characterised by contentious debates and the production of parallel, contradictory views, highlighting the tensions emerging from the neo-colonial power relations between elite INGOs (who act as hegemons in the field) and local and national Romani NGOs (who represent a ‘subaltern counterpublic’ in the Fraserian sense).

Furthermore, the ERRC, as an INGO with direct financial sponsorship from OSI-New York, is characterised by little oversight or input from Romani communities themselves. The presence of several Romani members on the Board of the ERRC does not assuage some grassroots Romani activists, who begin to perceive these Roma as elites who are beholden to interests outside the community and have become co-opted by the agenda of the greater power structure (Anon. 2006: INT).

In contrast, domestic and community-based NGOs, whose work consists of daily interaction with the problems and crises faced by ordinary Roma, have far more ‘informal’ input from the local communities themselves. Both the Romani Foundation for Civil Rights and NEKI have branch offices in major cities in the countryside, which assist persons in more isolated areas of Hungary. However, there is a clear difference in approaches: whereas NEKI’s operations are characterised by a more centralised

operations base (from Budapest), the Romani Civil Rights Foundation's work is more decentralised, with local offices retaining a modicum of autonomy. This has also resulted in certain branch offices functioning quite well, with others remaining more or less dormant until propelled by the next human rights crisis. As the majority of Roma in Hungary (approximately 65%) live in the countryside, in smaller towns and villages outside of Budapest, the problem of the communication gap and the resource divide between urban and rural areas continues to be a serious challenge.

Another reason for differential access to funding is that donor agencies themselves harbour popular (mis) perceptions about Roma. They believe that Roma make difficult 'partners' for projects because of a) internal political imbroglios between different factions and leaders, and b) the presumably low level of professionalism and skills among Romani-led NGOs (Trehan 2001). This leads to heavier investments in NGOs led by non-Roma who are perceived as more 'politically neutral' and professional. This phenomenon has a tendency to harden prevailing anti-Romani stereotypes in the broader society, and reinforce the subordinate access that Romani-led initiatives have to the more established philanthropic organisations.<sup>90</sup>

This same phenomenon is in danger of being replicated within the emerging offices of European Union institutions and UN agencies (see, for example, the UNDP's work on poverty reduction), which has during the past five years begun to take an increasing interest in economic development and socio-economic rights issues for Roma.

Though they are the exceptions, a tiny group of younger, professionally educated and trained Romani advocates in Hungary (several dozen at the most in a population that

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<sup>90</sup> In contrast, the internal political divisions amongst non-Romani advocates working in the sector, as well as allegations of their lack of professionalism and nepotism within high-profile organizations are many times overlooked. Indeed, several directors of high-profile organisations working on Romani issues have been fired in the past amidst accusations of poor management and/or undue personal gain.

numbers well over 600,000)<sup>91</sup> were able to garner places in Romani-related policy-making institutions or within smaller NGOs. In a larger sense, they have been able to leapfrog over veterans of Romani emancipation, as donors and intermediary organisations favour younger, degree-holding and English-speaking Roma to act as interlocutors in their work over the traditional Romani leadership based in both urban and rural areas (Kozma, INT: 1999; Russinov: INT 1999; Horvath: INT 1999).

#### **6.4 Limitations of the Romani third sector**

Though perceived as an unquestionable ‘good’ by early NGO entrepreneurs, it appears difficult to suggest that the NGO sector could ever replace the work of a democratically functioning state. As a result of the past few decades of US-influenced civil society programmes which encouraged the downsizing of the state in favour of managerial ‘efficiency’, the Hungarian state (like many across the region) employed neoliberal arguments in favour of the privatization of the social sector and the expanded role of civil society in public services provision (Gowan 1996). Even if we do not subscribe to the notion that the post-socialist state has particular social policy obligations towards its citizens in key areas (health, education, transport and so on), we can still see the limitations of third-sector work in supporting Romani communities in the region. Another important factor is that the increasing visibility of NGOs in Hungary, coupled with shrinking state power (or the partial abdication of state power to the private sector), tends to place pressure on the embryonic civil society for coming up with ‘solutions’, including policy design and implementation, solutions for which it does not generally have the resources nor the capacity to implement. However, as critical scholarship on Roma has demonstrated, and as Romani activists themselves well know, many of these

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<sup>91</sup> In Hungary, approximately 500 Romani students attend institutions of higher education at present. It is from this pool of people that professional NGO workers are being recruited.



problems are structurally determined and cannot be addressed with piecemeal NGO projects (cf. Kovats 2003; Kóczé 2004: INT; Zoltan 2006).

Both Pinnock (1999) and Wizner (1999) pinpoint several reasons for this: a) many times, NGO entrepreneurs and donors subscribe to naïve ideological agendas based on popular concepts, for example ‘empowerment’, ‘human rights’ or ‘sustainability’, without connecting them to the real needs of local communities and b) NGOs ultimately cannot be held accountable by citizens as the state can and should be (after all, only the state has the power to legislate socio-economic policies whose implementation and realization is supported directly by tax payer’s contributions). Moreover, NGOs generally do not have the large-scale institutional resources which are at the disposal of the state. Essentially, NGOs are free agents operating on a voluntary basis, having neither the capacity nor the responsibility to ameliorate the structurally embedded socio-economic marginalisation that citizens of Romani origin face (cf. Wizner 1999).<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, there is also the potential danger of the state itself absolving some of its core duties towards its citizens.

Finally, as mentioned in earlier chapters on the origins and rise of the movement in Hungary, the concept of an ‘empowered mass’ of Roma continues to be missing; the contemporary ‘Roma rights’ movement has been maintained as an elite-led movement since the mid-1990s, and this points to the structural constraints that poverty itself imposes on the vast majority of Roma. The model of an organised, pluralistic, “interest group politics” popular in the United States and established EU Member States where large numbers of citizens are part of the middle-class and establish lobby groups may not

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<sup>92</sup>He further suggests that a general social programme to integrate economically disadvantaged people (interestingly, this is similar to policies attempted by the Kádárist regime before they acknowledged Romani ethnicity during late socialism), including the Romani poor, would be far preferable to the current Romani-specific trend in NGO projects and government programmes. Indeed, quite a number of Romani leaders are wary of the long-term effects of Romani-specific projects at the societal level, which they believe reinforces the implication that they are not part of the body politic.

be the one that serves the Romani communities best. As Cloward and Fox-Piven (1977) noted in their seminal work - *Poor People's Movements* - marginalized people may prefer to engage in a politics of protest because:

It is not possible to compel concessions from elites that can be used as resources to sustain oppositional organisations over time (xxi).

In sum, organizing for strategic purposes in opposition to entrenched power structures may not be a viable option for subaltern Romani communities, whose precarious foothold in mainstream society has to date proscribed the formation of effective lobby groups or even popular movements which would mobilize the mass of Roma (cf. Nirenberg 2009; Roštaš 2009).

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that for many Roma, an important functional similarity can be perceived between the state sector and the NGO sectors. Both lead to relationships of dependency and patronage that offer sources of income for participants, thereby creating loyal constituencies in support of their respective ideological and policy agendas. In Hungary, this is illustrated by the MSG system organised by the state on the one hand, and the exceptional role of Soros' OSI on the other, a role which was akin to a midwife for Hungarian civil society, as discussed in Chapter 5.

## 6.5 Assessing the work of 'Roma rights' NGOs

In my research into the world of 'Romani rights', I found it useful to examine parallels between private industry and what I term the 'human rights industry' (and specific to Roma, the 'Gypsy industry'). As Welch (2001) notes:

For organisations in the private sector, the metrics of success seem clear: profitability, rate of growth, product innovation, market share...for organisations in the public sector, however, calculations about desired outcomes are both more complex and less clear. Claims of success cannot readily be verified. Governments may be unlikely to attribute policy change to NGO pressure...(2-3).

Therefore, the question arises: how is 'success' or 'effectiveness' defined and determined by NGO actors themselves, their sponsors, and their critics?

### *Framing 'effectiveness'*

To begin with, as the primary task of human rights NGOs is to hold governments accountable for perceived abuses against citizens, scant attention is generally paid by NGO entrepreneurs to an assessment and evaluation of their own work. For example, with respect to the Autonomy Foundation in Budapest - an elite 'intermediary' NGO whose annual budget was approximately \$1 million in the late 1990s - the income generation projects that it sponsored in the rural areas of Hungary were evaluated by field monitors (consultants) who oversaw the expenditures and contents of the projects. However, their role as a co-ordinating agency for these funds (and a number of other projects, for example, the *Pakiv* World-Bank sponsored programme whose goal is to train talented Romani community workers in local development strategies) has not undergone a thorough evaluation. Therefore, organisations such as these, whilst fulfilling the minimum reporting requirements for their sponsors who are based in New York or Bonn, do not face objective scrutiny of their work by donors, and moreover, are generally not held accountable by the beneficiary community either (another reason for

this is the asymmetrical position between the INGO and the subaltern communities they purport to assist).

The observations above illuminated some of the structural barriers that Romani actors encounter within the work of the NGO sector. Many non-Romani lawyers, advocates, and educators from post-socialist Europe were trained in Western Europe or the United States, enabling them to gain a command of the English language and the particular vernacular of civil society 'speak', thus giving them an upper hand in the competition for the best jobs within the field. Perhaps most significantly, it is the non-Romani participants who have the contacts within the international philanthropic networks. One result is that the access to top posts – both technocratic and managerial – are restricted to those few Roma who can enter these networks and abide by the (unwritten) rules of the game. This is a phenomenon analogous to the 'glass ceiling' effect in the United States, whereby visible minorities are able to garner an entry-level position, but then progressively encounter stubborn barriers as they aspire for top management posts. However, this is not a surprising development: the practice of excluding particular minority groups from the civil society arena appears to be the norm globally (see Chapters 7 and 8). Ironically, within the third sector, where rhetorical emphasis is placed on concepts such as inclusion and transparency, Romani candidates, as outsiders to these human rights networks, can be passed over easily (cf. Trehan 2001).

***We're too busy being activists to be scientists!***

Another contributing factor to this lack of 'contestation', and ideological cross-fertilisation within the field, is the fact that so many Romani intellectuals are engaged in full-time politics and community representation. In other words, those who have achieved the highest formal qualifications – the badges of modern society's cultural capital – are precisely the Romani individuals who have the least energy and time to

engage critically with 'knowledge generation' in the field. Having joined the ranks of professional bureaucrats and NGO workers employed at the local, national or supra-national level, they have the least time to comment upon, critically examine or publish work that would engage scholars writing *about them* and *their lives* or their communities' lives. As Romani sociologist Nicolae Gheorghe, a member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, and one of Europe's foremost policy-makers on Romani issues (former Advisor to the OSCE's Roma and Sinti Contact Point from 1999-2006) remarked candidly, "we're too busy being activists to be scientists" (Gheorghe 2003: INT). The career trajectory of Ándor Ürmösi, a trained medical doctor of Romani background (he is a graduate of a Russian medical college), is a case in point. Though he began his career as a practicing doctor, and then as a medical researcher and instructor at the Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest, he also worked for sometime in a Moscow-based pharmaceutical company. He then returned to Hungary in the late 1990s to work in the Ministry of Education in a top post for Romani integration (Ürmös 2000: INT). In between, he served as an advisor to the Hungarian National Soros Foundation's on Romani health issues, to which he had contributed considerable expertise, including a critical evaluation of health education programmes. Fluent in both Russian and English, he impressed upon me how there were very few jobs in Hungary, even for someone with his educational and professional qualifications.<sup>93</sup>

## **6.6 Advocacy: a forum for common interests?**

Despite the number of conflicts that arise internally in the field of 'Romani rights', there are a number of common interests that almost all human rights actors gather around, and which holds the contentious movement together. One is attacking racism within the

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<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Dr. Ürmös is a talented medical researcher who has also conducted epidemiological studies on various infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

government and society at large. When ministers of state make distinctly anti-Gypsy public statements or once again, a Romani person becomes a victim of racial violence, NGOs and activists take leadership roles and jointly condemn these affronts to dignity. Naturally, this is an important function they perform, and it is in these moments, that the co-operative impulses amongst NGO actors are best manifested. One example of this co-operation was the advocacy work and public demonstration surrounding the Székesfehérvár “ghetto affair” led by the Romani Civil Rights Foundation in late 1997 and early 1998. The actions eventually resulted in the cancellation of a controversial re-housing programme that would have effectively ghettoised Romani families (Trehan 2001: 149).

As suggested earlier in the thesis, NGOs and INGOs subscribing to the ‘Roma rights’ agenda act as moral entrepreneurs, attempting to expose Europe to its deep and pervasive anti-Gypsyism. In the recent past, NGOs active on the international scene such as the *European Roma Rights Centre* and *Roma National Congress* (based in Hamburg, Germany), as well as numerous local and domestic NGOs, have worked to increase awareness of issues faced by Romani communities in international forums.<sup>94</sup> Problems of systemic discrimination in the educational system, access to housing and employment are just some of the areas in which national and international Romani rights NGOs have made significant interventions. As head of research at ERRC in 2001, Claude Cahn, in reference to the lawsuit against the Czech state contesting the placement of Romani children in remedial schools, asserted that:

What we’ve done is shift the debate...we’ve turned the discourse on the obstacles Roma schoolchildren face in the Czech Republic from education to discrimination. Nobody thought of it as a discrimination problem (Ross Range 2001).

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<sup>94</sup> Both the ERRC and the RNC are openly critical of governments in Europe. Many domestic NGOs are blocked from doing the same as they obtain funds from the state, concurrent with their official NGO status.

Here, we see a conscious, reflexive attempt on the part of human rights entrepreneurs to engage in the discursive battle on 'the Roma'. However, one contentious outcome has been that many east Europeans previously in denial about their own anti-Gypsy prejudice, have further solidified their views. This is what J. Kólómpár suggests, a Romani economist who worked for several years as a civil servant within an autonomous public foundation, the Foundation for National Employment (*OFA*) (Kólómpár 2000: INT). He notes that the press coverage given to a group of particularly assertive Roma from the village of Zámoly (who eventually received asylum in Strasbourg, on the grounds of gross ethnic discrimination by the Hungarian state), has been detrimental to Romani-Hungarian relations. He believes that the outcome of the court case stoked the fire of anti-Gypsyism even further, solidifying the image of Roma as "ungrateful, opportunistic welfare-seekers", thus resulting in far less sympathy for the Romani cause by the Hungarian majority.<sup>95</sup> Needless to say, this view is not popular amongst liberal 'Roma rights' activists, who would respond that this is tantamount to 'blaming the victim'. The several (impoverished) Romani families that sought - and successfully obtained - asylum in France had been the victims of long-term neglect on the part of Zámoly's officials and long-term racial harassment by other villagers. However, during one particular altercation, an ethnic Hungarian's death was blamed on a Romani man, creating enduring tensions in the village (ERRC 2001b).

Another outcome of human rights campaigning by NGOs has been that visible progress, if only in legislation, on the 'integration' of Roma has become a near pre-requisite for European Union accession. As Chirico (2000) has noted, this is despite the fact established EU countries themselves (such as Italy and France) engage in patently

discriminatory practices against Romani citizens within their own countries (cf. Milne 2008).

The strong intellectual influences of global human rights advocacy organisations such as the International Helsinki Federation, Project on Ethnic Relations, Open Society Institute and its affiliates, and press-monitoring organisations such as the Roma Press Centre, as well as the commissioning of reports on Roma by governments, multilateral agencies (World Bank, International Organisation of Migration, etc.) and NGOs has generated a plethora of literature on the human rights situation of Roma.

Interestingly, some high-profile human rights entities (such as Amnesty International) did not concern themselves seriously with Romani issues until agents of human rights entrepreneurship from Eastern Europe began to raise their voices at the international level (United Nations 2000; cf. Klímová 2005).<sup>96</sup> Today, however, Amnesty has come full circle, and found a place at the heart of the international Romani rights movement, see Figure 13 below, which depicts postcards which form part of AI's advocacy campaign against discriminatory measures by the Italian government.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>This UN press release from 2000 gave an overview of NGO testimonies before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) within the United Nations. The fact that it took Amnesty International more than ten years before it became seriously involved in 'Roma rights' issues at a global level may suggest the subtle bias within Western European human rights circles against engaging in the defense of Roma (whose human rights were generally invisible within Western Europe itself).

<sup>97</sup> On January 19, 2004, Romano Prodi, then President of the European Commission, gave a talk at the LSE entitled "Europe: added value, changing quickly". In the question and answer session, in response to my question about the challenges that the integration of Romani citizens posed to the future of a unified Europe and the role of the EU, he agreed that the issue was important within Europe as a whole (although he did not offer any specific details on how this could be achieved). Nonetheless, it was the Prodi-led, left-of-centre Italian government that would in 2007 begin to clamp down on immigrants, especially Roma from Eastern Europe. In 2008, vigilante mobs using molotov cocktails burned down several Romani dwellings on the outskirts of Napoli and Rome, and AI's campaign photo depicts this (cf. Milne 2008).





discounted or ignored, effectively perpetuating symbolic violence vis-à-vis Roma (Trehan and Kóczé 2009).

As covered earlier in Chapter 2, the fact that most Roma themselves are marginalised from much of this intellectual capital is troubling. This goes back to the question of the development of history and of the image/s of historically oppressed peoples. As prominent Romani linguist and former member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council Ian Hancock (1998) emphasises, if Romani people themselves are not in control of their own representation (history, media, etc.), they will remain trapped within outsiders' definitions and views of their own community, the enlightened engagement of liberal non-Roma notwithstanding. Perhaps this development will only be reversed once Romani social reformers who are embedded in their local communities assert their claims more vociferously at national and international fora, thereby influencing policy and pushing political will to reflect their communities' critical priorities, and engaging in their own forms of moral entrepreneurship.

### *Conclusion: monitoring the monitors*

At times, activities within the third sector successfully support the Romani movement for emancipation, and at other times, they tend to be complicit in 'neo-colonial' approaches. The empirical evidence indicates that the formation of 'Roma rights' constituencies was fuelled to a large extent by human rights entrepreneurs and activists who were able to generate extensive discourses on the human rights plight of Roma, based on the rising racial violence and anti-Gypsyism directed towards them (including systemic discrimination which they experienced in access to public life: schools, shops, workplaces, discos, restaurants and swimming pools). Moreover, this grievance of racial violence was then translated by INGO and NGO movement entrepreneurs as a rationale for garnering funds from liberal US and other Western philanthropies, thereby solidifying

the resource and material bases on which they could promote human rights of Roma and push for social change. As some within the movement have suggested, the work of 'Roma rights' runs on its own NGO-centred engine, and moreover, it is not clear to what extent the priorities of Romani communities determine its destination. As a World Bank employee herself noted in a report on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, "despite the eruption of activity...very few initiatives have been evaluated or monitored" (Ringold 2000). This points to the need for further objective assessment and analysis of the impact of 'Romani rights' work.

## CHAPTER SEVEN – POPULAR DISCONTENT: CONSEQUENCES OF AND CHALLENGES TO NEOLIBERAL CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### 7.1 Neoliberal transitions: transformation of state-society relations

*A piácgazdaság keményebb ellenfélnek bizonyult, mint az agonizáló pártállam.*

*The market economy is much more difficult for us to oppose than the one-party state at death's door* – Ferenc Kőszeg, Chair of Hungarian Helsinki Committee and founding member of SZDSZ (cited in Rádai 2004)

The previous chapters in this thesis covered the empirical background of the NGO sector in post-socialist Hungary in order to analyze the impact of the neoliberal human rights approach vis-à-vis the contemporary Romani rights movement, and to investigate its linkages with the rise of human rights entrepreneurship, a development which forms part of the broader trajectory of neoliberal democratization in the region. Key questions raised in my research were the following: Whose order and whose interests are reflected in the neoliberal human rights approach manifested in the 'Romani rights' movement? Equally importantly, what have its consequences been and are there alternatives to its current trajectory?

In discussing 'neoliberal' human rights concepts, reference was made to a phenomenon wherein human rights concerns and campaigning operate synergistically within a liberal capitalist system, becoming an arm of the contemporary global neoliberal economic and political order. Neoliberal economic theory became the basis for the dominant socio-economic development model in post-socialist east and central Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s - and indeed - the basis for a hegemonic socio-political order throughout the globe (Bourdieu 1998; Hardt and Negri 2000; Gill 2004; Guilhot 2005). This particular model is generally anti-statist in the sense that it believes that the state should

have a limited role in the regulation of the private sector, and its appeal within post-socialist Hungary (and other central European countries) unsurprisingly derives from the public repudiation of Marxism-Leninism in the 1980s, along with their particular history of ‘passive revolutions’ which led to the demise of communist one-party systems (Gill 2004). Neoliberal thought – whose founding fathers included prominent intellectuals such as Von Hayek, Popper and Nozick – was advocated most vociferously by the ‘Vienna’ and ‘Chicago’ schools of economic philosophy, and tailored itself well to a liberal political theory focusing on the development of modern centralized nation-states and the erosion of individual autonomy. In part, this resulted from their negative experiences of WWII and the dangers of the totalitarian state as experienced under the Third Reich. Contemporary neoliberals, such as George Soros, therefore, have long held that the “twin pillars of the so-called open society are expansive individual rights and freedoms as well as unrestricted free markets” (Chen and Churchill 2005: 3-4). Specific mention of Soros is made here because - more than any other single benefactor - he has been responsible for (through the OSI) the support and promotion of Romani and Romani-focused NGOs today, organizations which form the backbone of the movement.<sup>98</sup>

As Seckinelgin (2002) has correctly observed, the transformation of relations between state and society (including the private sector) along the lines of neoliberal imperatives, has been one substantive result of the influence of international (mainly Western) donors in developing or transitional societies. In his assessment of World Bank reports written

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<sup>98</sup> Indeed, in special recognition of his contributions to the Romani movement, Soros was presented with a t-shirt with the caption ‘Romano chavo’ (Romani lad) by the ERTF head, Rudko Kawczynski, at the EU Brussels Summit in September 2008. See the full text of Soros’ keynote speech at the Summit at: [http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles\\_publications/articles/roma\\_20080916](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/articles/roma_20080916).

by international donors/policymakers, he emphasizes that neoliberal approaches to civil society:

...attempt to realign social relations within developing countries parallel to the western liberal model of social arrangements between state, market and the third sector (2002: 1).

In the case of post-socialist Hungary today, this liberal 'realignment' or restructuring of state, market and third sector relations may well be nearing completion; nonetheless, for many Romani Hungarians (and other citizens of Hungary) it is questionable whether this new "arrangement" has been beneficial.

## 7.2 Neoliberal trajectories of human rights

*Liberals have always claimed that the liberal state – reformist, legalist, and somewhat libertarian – was the only state that could guarantee freedom. And for the relatively small group whose freedom it safeguarded this was perhaps true. But unfortunately that group always remained a minority perpetually en route to becoming everyone.*

- Wallerstein (1995: 2), cited in Farmer (2003)

To a large extent, the neoliberal approach towards human rights works hand-in-glove with the dominant discourse on 'civil society' which began to permeate the Hungarian NGO sector in the 1990s. Along with its equally protean twin 'democratisation', both are highly contested terms within the globalised discourse on human rights today. As I deconstructed these terms and contextualised their local applications in previous chapters, I would like to make two key points here. First of all, their general popularity and relative lack of contestation within post-socialist states have been direct results of the ideological and material dominance of American human rights networks throughout the 'transition', and secondly, these terms themselves have been grounded on a relatively narrow understanding of democracy and human rights to begin with. They were based on 'Washington consensus' approaches to democratisation which sought to weaken the control of the state itself within transitional democracies of the region and, in so doing,

spur the civil society and private sectors, hence bringing countries such as Hungary firmly in the sphere of global capital (cf. Gowan 1996; Chandhoke 2003).

Picking up on the first point above, there were several reasons why former dissidents in post-socialist states believed they were compelled to adopt a language and philosophy of human rights commensurate with their Euro-atlantic donors, and did so with only minimal resistance to the prevalent neoliberal framework of human rights, even when they had serious doubts about the methods and means of their Western benefactors (cf. Pinnock 2005). Petrova, the director of the ERRC until December 2006, explains the rationale for this development as she narrates the relative passivity and silence of east European human rights activists during the particularly testy time of the controversial NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo (then part of Serbia and Montenegro)<sup>99</sup>:

...three additional factors overwhelmed the judgment of human rights organizations in Eastern Europe. First, eastern European states had opted for NATO membership. The human rights community in these countries was therefore afraid of compromising their respective national chances of being admitted to the alliance if they criticized NATO. Second, the very status and jobs of most human rights activists were made possible by the generous support of Western, particularly American, donors. *Without their continued support, the future of the human rights movement would be uncertain.* Third, the human rights community in our region was caught in the sinking ship of cold war logic. Human rights activists feared that whatever they said would immediately place them in one of two camps – for or against NATO. If one is against NATO, one sides with Russia and China and therefore is an enemy to democracy (Petrova 1999, italics mine).

Moreover, she notes the “lack of leadership” from the more established NGOs in the West, whose response to the violent NATO bombing campaign was mild at best. The overwhelming feeling of powerlessness and lack of agency on the part of Eastern

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<sup>99</sup> One of the unintended consequences of this neoliberal ‘humanitarian intervention’ was that approximately 75% of Kosovo’s pre-war Romani population was ethnic cleansed and/or internal displacement within Serbia (an estimated 60,000 people, see the website for the NGO ‘*Chachipe*’ [Truth] for recent information on the plight of these communities, <http://romarights.wordpress.com/>). The wisdom of the NATO bombing in Kosovo was the subject of heated public discussions between Neier and Soros which I witnessed during the summer of 1999 at the OSI Jamboree (annual meeting of Soros’ NGO employees) in Budapest. Moreover, former Czech PM, Vaclav Havel also raised grave doubts about the bombing campaign when he presented the keynote address at the Central European University’s graduation ceremonies in the summer of 1999, which I also attended.

European activists at this time (who felt divided and uneasy about NATO's military intervention in the Balkans), as well as their inability to construct alternative discourses and practices of human rights ('without x, y is uncertain', as Petrova relayed above) demonstrates how this resulted in an implicit embrace of neoliberal approaches to human rights intervention. Aware of their financial dependency on primarily American foundations whose orientations - implicitly or explicitly - were pro-free market and limited to procedural democracy, activists in Eastern Europe had difficulty in constructing other viable means for their human rights organizing. Therefore, they were neither able to generate the methods, nor the tools, that would liberate them from a reliance on a model of human rights which was hostage to neoliberal logic.

This reiterates the crucial point about the narrowly conceived notion of 'democracy' and 'democratization' within the neoliberal model. Though there is a vast critical literature on the contentiousness of the concept of democracy (especially from 'Third World' democratic perspectives outside the Euro-Atlantic 'Washington consensus' sphere of influence), unsurprisingly, these works have not enjoyed significant purchase in a region which was hurriedly removing the remnants of another problematic ideology, that is, communism. As a result, alternative discourses and practices that were pro-working class and questioned exploitative forms of globalization, such as that promoted by Horváth of the Roma Foundation for Civil Rights or philosopher Miklos Gaspár Támás, a former leftist MP who became a leading member of *Attac* (part of the tiny Left-Green progressive movement in Hungary)<sup>100</sup> - did not have a significant impact on the prevailing conceptualizations of 'Roma rights' strategies as promoted by human rights entrepreneurs throughout the 1990s. Perhaps missing in their efforts was what Spivak

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<sup>100</sup> *Attac* was founded in France and stands for the *Association pour la taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens* and it was originally founded as a group fighting against currency speculation. See also [http://www.attac.hu/cikk.php3?id\\_article=1123](http://www.attac.hu/cikk.php3?id_article=1123) for a recent piece by Támás.



(2009) has referred to in a recent public address as “subaltern educational activism”, conceived of as a synergistic relationship between intellectuals (such as the erudite Támás) and subaltern communities and representatives of Roma in Hungary.

The lack of effective resistance to the hegemonic status quo also characterizes the Romani leadership (both traditional community leaders and those who represent NGOs) who are engaged in the human rights movement for Roma. Acton and Gheorghe (2001), long-term scholar-participants in the movement offer one salient explanation:

...in seeking legitimacy for their struggle, Roma politicians have no choice but to lock onto the same concepts of human rights and anti-racism that operate in international organizations and relations between existing states (2001).

Alternatives to the current order have yet to be articulated (or as some suggest, even formulated) because of the current grip of the neoliberal approach on the human rights arena which poses obstacles to (re)conceptualizations of Romani organizing and, by extension, the development of a more emancipatory form of politics. Part of the reason for this, as mentioned above, has been the dismissal of Romani agency by elites - both Roma and non-Roma - within the movement itself (Trehan 1999, 2001; Oprea 2005; Zoltan 2006).

### 7.3 Consequences of the ‘rule-of-law’ approach: legislation and litigation

*It is the most wonderful task of lawyers to seek new techniques of democracy... The limits of the performance of law warn us that one cannot expect law alone to realize democracy. Law can always provide only a frame, patterns, ways and methods, [law can only] carve the bed of the river* - Barna Horváth (1945), ‘Demokrácia és jog/ Democracy and Law’, Budapest University lecture, cited in Halmai (1995).

As mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6, the movements for democratic reforms in post-socialist Hungary have, to a large extent, been based on the strategic adoption of ‘rule-of-law’ and ‘democratisation’ principles as promoted by liberal reformers, the OSI, its

affiliates, and other INGOs.<sup>101</sup> Harvey (2005) has suggested that these principles - adopted within the polities of transition countries - have been commensurate with the neoliberal policy imperatives of global Western institutions such as the World Bank and IMF.

Within Hungary, there were two key components to these liberal reforms: legislation and litigation. The first one resulted in the introduction of pro-minorities' legislation, data protection acts (which prohibit keeping criminal records on the basis of ethnic criteria), liberalization of laws on media, education, and financial areas. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, laws which have specifically impacted Romani Hungarians include the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities (1993), which ultimately laid the groundwork for the MSG system, as well as the anti-discrimination legislation from 2003 which focuses on equal opportunities, and is meant to act as a bulwark against employment discrimination. This second piece of legislation was actively lobbied for by liberals and INGOs affiliated with OSI programmes and left-liberal political parties in Hungary, and indicates their belief in the law as a progressive force for Roma, hence their view on the law as 'a tool for social change' (cf. Petrova 1999: INT). Former legal director of the ERRC, Goldston explains:

...one of the challenges here of the ERRC and I think also some other legal organisations in this field is that not only are they fighting...for the specific cause for Roma to be treated as equal and dignified human beings, they are also fighting for another cause...a broader cause...which is can the rule-of law really mean something? Everyone talks about the rule-of-law in Central and Eastern Europe at this time of transition, but can the courts actually provide remedy for people who are victims of human rights abuse on a regular basis? Can the court system work? Can the legal system be made to work for people and that is a fascinating challenge, a difficult challenge, that too, is a problem of decades and centuries in the making...(1999: INT).

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<sup>101</sup> The writings of Popper and Hayek were strong influences upon its founder, Hungarian-American billionaire philanthropist George Soros, who was a student of Popper's at LSE. See Guilhot (2005) for more details of Soros' ideological development.

These were indeed the key questions on the minds of domestic human rights entrepreneurs at the time. Hungarian lawyers and constitutional experts such as Imre Furmann, Gábor Halmai, Bea Bodrógi, and Lilla Fárkas - all of whom worked tirelessly to instill rule-of-law principles within the Hungarian judicial system - became architects and front-line workers who would take on 'test-case' litigation. As mentioned earlier, American-style litigious interventions espoused by human rights entrepreneurs such as Aryeh Neier (cf. 2004) permeated the emerging rights sector in Hungary, and though 'partnerships' were forged with these domestic human rights entrepreneurs, the overall approach to social justice was a narrow legalistic one. Moreover, the implicit policy-making role of the legal approach became explicit as 'test-case' litigation was many times used deliberately to set a precedent, and act as an engine for future legislative change. This occurred most successfully in the case of the Equal Opportunities legislative provision enacted in 2003.

### **Limitations of legalistic approaches**

There are three key limitations to the legalistic approaches highlighted above. Firstly, the ideological singularity or conformity resulting from the embrace of legalism results in conceptual blindspots, as Woodiwiss (2006) relates below:

...[the] pursuit of a purely legalistic and especially of a purely civil and political legalistic strategy not only cannot be enough to secure global respect for human rights but also is not in fact regarded as sufficient by the majority of the world's population...this is because, as the social products of particular times and places, rights in general and the present array of human rights in particular are blind to certain sources of both abuse and virtue (46).

As mentioned in Chapter 6, various 'Roma rights' practices and strategies sought to gain 'justice' for Roma through primarily legal avenues which focused on civil and political rights attainment in the past fifteen years. The development of employment opportunities and other socio-economic priorities took a back seat to the attainment of civil and political rights from the period of early transition to the time of European

Union accession. Though in the late 1990s, an emphasis on the ‘extreme poverty’<sup>102</sup> within Romani communities surfaced within the ‘Roma rights’ discourse, this was fully ten years after the birth of ‘Roma rights’. Moreover, it has only been in the past several years that the core issue of economic integration has been granted more weight, and thus the connections between *increasing* Romani exclusion from the mainstream economy, *increasing* impoverishment of whole communities, and *increasing* anti-Gypsy hostility have begun to be acknowledged in public debates (cf. Sigona and Trehan 2009). Therefore, issues of socio-economic justice, when addressed, were generally peripheral to the discourse, and this is was in large part the result of the ideological hegemony of neoliberal rights discourses.

Building upon the social constructionist theme from earlier in this thesis, Woodiwiss (2006) suggests that human rights regimes and practices are themselves socially constructed; hence, if we examine who the architects of these ‘regimes of rights’ are today in post-socialist Hungary, few subaltern names will appear on the list. Critical Romani activists such as Kóczé and Kozma (2004: INT; 1999: INT) posit that resources currently funnelled into legal interventions could be better utilised by providing Roma with the necessary tools (for example, targeted skills’ training and educational enhancement) to eradicate the sources of their disadvantage in co-operation with local (Hungarian) communities, rather than conducting human rights research and engaging in litigation alone. The result is that the socio-economic priorities of Roma are often only superficially addressed by the piecemeal interventions of human rights entrepreneurs (Trehan 2001; Zoltan 2006). What remains to be more fully addressed in the public discourse is the critical observation that the financial and intellectual resources ploughed

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<sup>102</sup>A term used by international multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and Council of Europe. Recently, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) have begun to take an active interest in the European Roma. See, for example, Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens (2003) Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle (Washington D.C.: The World Bank).

into the development of a human rights movement for Roma were in reality severely disconnected from the aforementioned socio-economic realities. Dominated by human rights entrepreneurs from the United States after 1995, the ideological make-up of the human rights movement for Roma became restricted, and even limiting, as it did not allow for diverse and creative forms of emancipatory action, whether it was through the dialogical development of community projects or through the construction of transversal political linkages with other groups and communities in the broader society.

Another core drawback of narrow legalism is the differential access to legal mechanisms and the political process that subaltern groups face. Human rights lawyer Goldston (1999) himself has highlighted the gaps between lawyers and their Romani clients, particularly when it comes to the use of existing legal provisions. He notes:

...one of the biggest gaps that has to be overcome and this is *the gap between largely non-Roma lawyers and largely non-lawyer Roma*...and in evaluating the success of action today...the Assenov case...is a huge, huge success in legal terms in that it has re-written Article 3 of the European Convention...for Roma it's an enormous, potentially enormous decision because systematically, Roma have been and still generally...do not receive the same treatment when they come into police offices and prosecutors' offices and investigators' offices and complain that they have been victims of crime. This decision makes it clear that when people come to complain and make credible allegations, the authorities cannot just sit back and do nothing. If they do that, they may well be in violation of the European Convention. Now that's a powerful, powerful legal tool and it's a powerful expansion of the Convention wrought by one case...the extent to which it has meaning in process, however, *depends on our ability to connect the law to reality* and that depends to a large extent on what the nature of the lawyers and the Roma community are like...*The decision to date has been lauded by lawyers, lauded by advocates...but most Roma don't know about it, they don't know about it...* (Goldston 1999: INT, italics mine).

Here, Goldston is suggesting that legal provisions such as Article 3 would not be adequate enough to protect subaltern Roma, particularly as most do not even know of its existence. Furthermore, with respect to post-socialist Hungary, though there are now legal offices in many of the cities across the country, only those Romani individuals or families who obtain the support of organisations like ERRC or NEKI (such as provision of pro-bono legal services) would be able to overcome the inherent problem of access rooted in a lack of resources. However, what about Roma who do manage to gain pro-

bono legal aid? Adding to the costs of a legal procedure are numerous 'hidden' costs such as time lost from work, transportation, and so forth, not to mention the psychological toll of a time-consuming litigation procedure.

In addition, the invisible power asymmetries embedded in the whole legal process rarely go mentioned. In a critical reflexive piece on the interventions of legal professionals, human rights lawyer Barbora Bukovská (2006), who herself has litigated in some landmark Romani cases, has this to say about legal procedures:

...litigation concentrates [the] agenda in the hands of elites – lawyers; victims, [who] are often uneducated with little or no understanding of the law assume a subordinated position with regard to tactics and strategy *after* human rights advocates decide on litigation. Once victims are confronted with a mysterious legal procedure and complicated legal language, their 'fate is no longer in their hands', as advocates as specialists automatically take over their problems (*italics in original*).

The above insight on the imbalance of power in the relationship between non-Romani lawyers and their Romani clients reveals the subaltern position of Romani human rights victims<sup>103</sup> who, from the outset of a legal process taken up on their behalf - often initiated by an INGO lawyer or researcher seeking out a victim for a specific test case for 'impact litigation' purposes - exercise little control over both the input and the outcome of proceedings. After the court proceedings are over, many Roma continue to live lives of poverty and exclusion, their rooted position of disadvantage essentially unchanged. Indeed, some Romanies even risk becoming local or national scapegoats if there is a backlash stemming from the majority, as happened with the Zámoly Roma mentioned earlier in the thesis, for whom asylum was successfully obtained in France after a court procedure. This is another area where, as Bukovská (2006) correctly points out, there is currently a lack of ethical responsibility on the part of human rights lawyers in the region,

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<sup>103</sup> The term 'victim' can be problematised, however, it is used here generically in reference to a person suffering from a human rights abuse. There is a large literature on the subject of victims and their agency, see for example, Elias (1986) on the politics of victimisation.

since even basic respect for the victims is often missing during the case preparation process, and little follow-up is conducted afterwards (cf. Zoltan 2006; see also Appendix #3 on interviewing victims of human rights abuses and trauma and Appendix #7 on the Zámoly Roma).

The final point about legalism is that both legal victories and changes in the law can be perceived as substitutes for changes at the level of society. This type of thinking was epitomized by former Hungarian Ambassador Jeszensky, who, in vociferously denying charges of institutional racism in his country, pointed to Hungary's pro-minorities legislation (see Appendix #4). The conventional wisdom in majority Hungarian society goes something like this, 'Roma have all the legal protections they could want, our society is free of racism (and therefore the effects of prejudicial treatment)!'.

As a result, engineering respect for the 'human rights of Roma' through purely litigious means is wholly inadequate as perceptions embedded within social customs can only be changed through transforming relations and working assiduously towards a reduction in social distance between Romani Hungarian citizens and other citizens of society by fostering mutual respect. Moreover, legal reforms and 'democratisation' only go so far in transforming anti-Gypsy racism in Hungarian society, as one Romani speaker eloquently attested to before the Hungarian Parliament on 'Roma Day' in April 2000. He detailed how 'hidden' discrimination could not be overcome by institutional interventions alone:

...*historical discrimination* is [the] result of all those actions and also the social attitudes throughout history which resulted in disadvantages, but they were legal in their own era [thus], it was not illegal treatment, as it wasn't against the law. This resulted in an *accumulation of disadvantage of certain groups*. Despite the equal treatment required by law, it still resulted in disadvantages of groups in societies. ...The social aid [given] to Roma - the *socpol* - would not allow them to step up from one to two. The only way they could do this would be if they got a loan, and most don't have a job, there is really high unemployment, they couldn't make mortgage payments. Therefore, this would result in *disproportionate discrimination*. Within the primary school system of education, there is another destructive effect of hidden discrimination, a psychologically destructive effect, which hurts their human dignity...I also believe this is intentional, and only formulated as hidden discrimination, as it builds on attitudes of discrimination. We clearly see and feel

its destructive effects...this results in these people losing their chances, their hope, and [therefore] *the tools of law are not effective in this...nor is the system of justice. This is a legal gap...we have to admit that even the justice system is a partner in this [even the justice system solidifies the discrimination]. The institutions are not effective in combating hidden discrimination* (Setét 2000) [italics mine].

The speaker above articulates clearly the basic problem of what Woodiwiss (2006) identified earlier, that is, how laws are social constructs and how subaltern groups themselves (such as Roma) face structural impediments to becoming participants in their construction.

#### 7.4 Popular discontent: the limits of 'Roma rights'

*...the metaphor of the "[human rights] box" encompasses a set of historical and structural circumstances that allow the human rights framework to gain currency among elites while limiting advances, and even creating setbacks, for the awareness and acceptance of human rights among the general population.*

– Human Rights Dialogue, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs (2000)

*...from being the insurgent creed of activists during the Cold War, human rights has become "mainstreamed" into the policy framework of states, multilateral lending institutions like the World Bank, and the United Nations itself.*

- Ignatieff (2001: 22)

Whilst Romani masses remain marginalised from accessing even the most basic of human goods as a result of their impoverished circumstances, initiatives by the state generally result in co-option and division of Romani leadership, for example, the MSG system mentioned earlier (Kovats 1998, 2001c; Koulis 2005). Hegemonic voices, such as that of the Soros Foundations, argue for a 'pluralistic approach', implying that the complex problems that confront European Roma can be ameliorated through a plurality of actors and approaches within an 'open' civil society. Nonetheless, this perspective on Romani mobilisation ignores the subaltern position of Roma in society (including civil society). Pluralism works, if and only if, there is a somewhat level 'playing field', some approximation of equal access to the goods within the citizenship bundle, where various



actors can access and contribute to freely. Roma in post-socialist European countries such as Hungary do not enjoy such a 'privilege'.

With respect to post-1995 developments, it is useful to make a further comparison with Kovats' (1998) doctoral research, in which he demonstrated that rising expectations among Roma after the enactment of the 1993 Law and Ethnic and National Minorities eventually resulted in disappointment with the implementation of the Gypsy MSG system. Parallel to this development, my research has suggested that the human rights framework promoted by NGOs since 1995 also raised expectations for Roma, resulting in disillusionment and skepticism with NGO projects as a vehicle for achieving their goals of integration and equality.

After two decades of neoliberal INGO-supported human rights activities in Hungary, community-level tensions, as well as the social distance between Roma and non-Roma, rather than having decreased, as some analysts of 'democratisation' predicted would happen (with the consolidation of human rights norms proceeding in linear fashion in the newly accessed EU countries), have *actually increased* in a number of alarming ways (HVG 2006). During the prime ministership of FIDESZ' Viktor Órban from 1998 to 2002, the far-right *Party for the Hungarian Truth and Life* – an openly anti-Semitic and anti-Gypsy party – held twelve seats in the Hungarian Parliament. Moreover, since the late 1990s, the arenas of anti-Gypsyism have expanded to include online chatrooms and workers' unions (such as the police officers' union, which has made an unofficial pact recently with *Jobbik*, the far-right party).<sup>104</sup> Even more alarming were the incidents of vigilante gunmen who brutally murdered several Roma in premeditated hate crimes in 2008 and 2009 (cf. Dowling 2009).

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<sup>104</sup> *Jobbik* ('Movement for a Better Hungary') garnered 3 seats in the recent EP elections in June 2009, along with nearly 15% of the country's vote. See their website, where they are stoking a race war between Roma (Gypsies) and Hungarians [http://www.jobbik.com/?page\\_id=486](http://www.jobbik.com/?page_id=486).

The social distance between Roma and the majority population (in Hungary, but also elsewhere in Europe) remains entrenched (HVG 2006). Trials in court rooms do not always result in “justice” per se, as a primarily litigious approach does not work to ameliorate the roots of anti-Gypsyism embedded within society. Indeed, Hungarian society has begun reacting against ‘Roma rights’ by suggesting that Roma are now favoured subjects of government programmes, and that affirmative-action type policies are unwarranted (the Roma being an undeserving population for this special attention).

The human rights shell remains empty for the vast majority of Roma. It is almost as if the Romani movement (an assemblage of professional Romani human rights workers and non-Romani human rights entrepreneurs), live this parallel existence with the mass of Roma before them, in their putative “fight for Roma rights”, but have been unwilling to make the necessary connections about the terrible socio-economic deprivation experienced through poverty, disease, and lack of opportunities which are structurally determined (and hence must be approached comprehensively, with the engagement and investment of broader structures of governance).

## 7.5 The Management of Roma

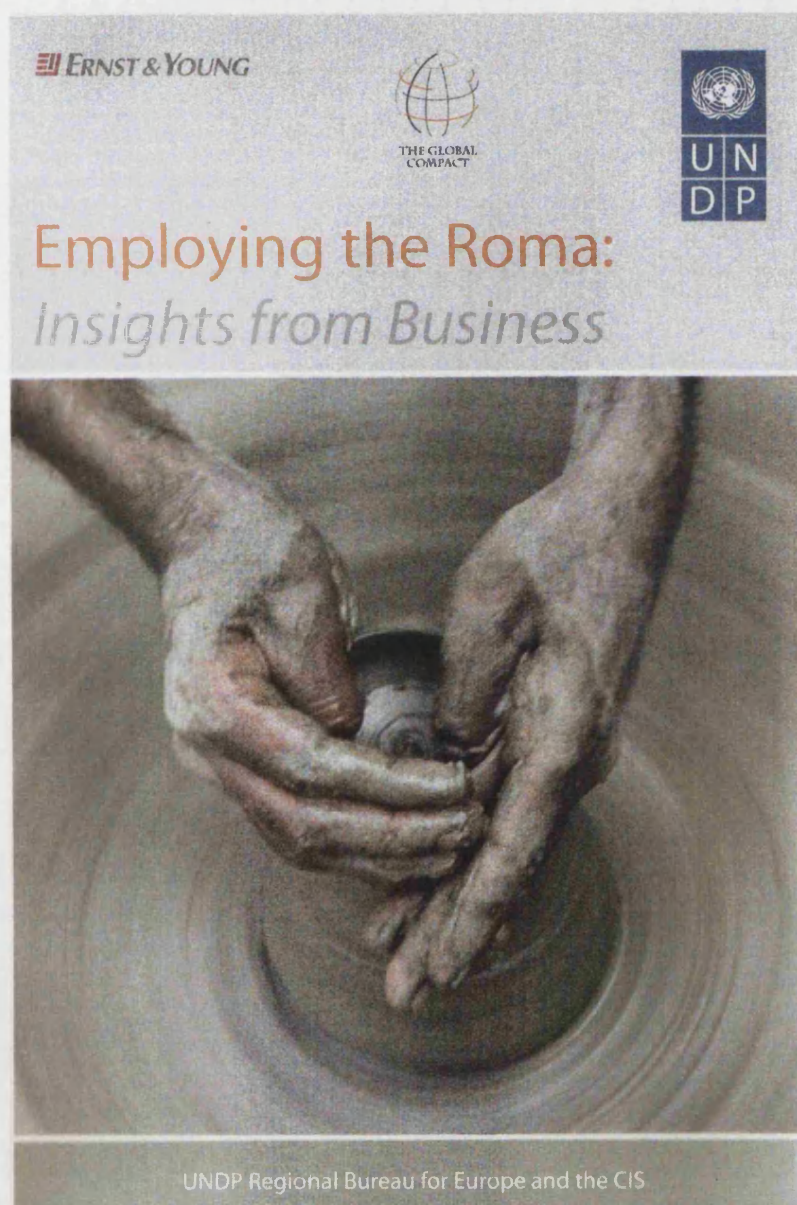
*[T]he substitution of elite interests for universal human rights becomes characteristic of the neoliberal order and forms the basis of neoliberal rights norms ---Churchill & Chen (2005)*

As shown in this thesis, the proliferation of US-funded NGOs who embraced neoliberal ideological frameworks in their *modus operandi* (such as litigation based on the ethos of ‘law as salvation’ and the creation of managerial technocracies within their organizations)<sup>105</sup> was symptomatic of the broader interests of Euro-atlantic elites

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<sup>105</sup>This is the model that was espoused by ERRC’s former director, Dimitrina Petrova, and has also been one of the legacies of NGOs such as HRW, which is closely affiliated to the OSI as a result of the Neier-Soros nexus (Petrova 2003).

attempting to manage (or pacify, as some activists suggest) marginalised Romani communities perceived as unstable and potentially dangerous to the 'democratic' order of transitional democracies. Nonetheless, this is not so straightforward, as the 'management of Roma' agenda appears to be concealed within a cosmopolitan, progressive shell in which the strengthening of democratic institutions and civil and political rights is espoused.



**Figure 15 - UNDP partnering with Ernst & Young, guide booklet for Romani employment: neoliberal ethos in action? (2005)**

The photo cover above is from a UNDP/Ernst & Young guide booklet entitled 'Employing the Roma: insights from Business.' It is an attempt by the corporate sector to become involved in job creation by encouraging MNCs in the region to hire Roma, and it also supplies concrete examples of several MNCs in the region (in Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic) who have had both positive and negative experiences with Romani employees and their (re)training.

During the past fifteen years in post-socialist, transitional European societies, these types of neoliberal trajectories have had profound implications for the design and implementation of Romani projects and initiatives, resulting in the consolidation of initiatives launched by the World Bank, the OSI, the EU and the UN with an elite donor's conference in Budapest in 2004, and referred to as the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion: 2005-2015' (Templer 2006; cf. Guy 2009; see also Figure 15 above). Though rarely broached, the politics and power asymmetries surrounding the Decade initiative are worth considering. Despite the considerable media coverage that the initiative - encompassing integration projects for Romani communities worth millions of euros - has received over the two years since its inception, and the 'politically correct' motto on their website "Nothing about us, without us", few Romani NGOs working at the community level were invited to the preliminary design meetings, and participation was based on selective criteria, thereby ensuring that the diversity of human rights perspectives would remain altogether 'manageable' by its elite sponsors (Dzeno Foundation 2005; TOL 2005).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Here is a key extract from the Decade of Roma Inclusion's "Vision and Values statement", available at [www.romadecade.org](http://www.romadecade.org): "Nothing about us without us: Roma participation will make or break the Decade. Roma representatives and civil society organizations are involved in every stage of the Decade. Roma shaped and defined the vision from the very outset. Roma civil society groups and experts identified policy priorities and played a key role in defining Decade goals and targets. Roma participation will be central to regular oversight and monitoring of the process over the next ten years."

Revolving around the core ideologies underlying the actions and policies of INGO actors in the field of human rights for Roma, one of my key findings (covered at length in Chapters 5 and 6) has been that the ideological stakes that NGO entrepreneurs built in the past decade are now closely enmeshed with material stakes such as the perpetuation of institutions and the promotion of careers. *These developments within the arena of 'Roma rights' may well reinforce the widening gap between the actual material needs of Roma and their aspirations for achieving equality as the liberal human rights framework in which 'Roma rights' is enmeshed is itself embedded within a global neoliberal order.* This reflects the paradoxical nature of human rights, or what Young has referred to as “a persistent negotiation between claim and practice within specific historical moments” as the alleged neoliberal “promise of open society and small government is thus deferred in favor of security and continuity of rule” (Young 2000: 5, cited in Chen and Churchill 2005).

## CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSION: THE MORAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE ROMANI SUBALTERN

*Our system is one of detachment: to keep silenced people from asking questions, to keep the judged from judging, to keep solitary people from joining together, and the soul from putting together its pieces.*

- Eduardo Galeano, “Divorces” (cited in Farmer 2003)

*The central point...is that human history is made by human beings and since the struggle for control over territory is part of that history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning. The task of the critical scholar is not to separate one struggle from the other, but to connect them (bold mine)... - Edward Said, “Orientalism” (2003: 331-332)*

In quoting Said (2003) above, I wish to emphasize that the struggle for “territory” is not merely a struggle over a physical entity, but over symbolic and ideological terrain as well, including the images of particular subaltern groups and their struggles (cf. Hancock 1997). This insight also applies to another contentious arena: that of human rights mobilization on behalf of Roma in post-socialist Hungary, and I have identified one aspect of this as ‘human rights entrepreneurship’. As this thesis demonstrates, the field of human rights is not an unproblematic arena: it is a complex site of multiple power struggles (ideological, material, and political), which are many times waged amongst ‘unequals’ (cf. Kennedy 2004).

In his magisterial essay on Romani contributions to the Hungarian labour market, journalist and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, the late Zsolt Csalog (1994) exposed the history of Romani political economy in an eerily similar fashion to W.E.B. Dubois’ own insightful sociological narratives of African-American economic contributions at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the post-civil war Reconstruction era (Dubois 1935, 1962, 1992). This rich history of Romani Europeans is far more compelling than standard reductive accounts, suggestive of the conviviality developed through the shared lifeworlds of the Rom and the Magyar, in spite of the enormous odds from the Romani side. Furthermore, he exhorted his Hungarian readers:

...to keep in mind that our generation's image of Gypsies does not reflect an 'ancient' condition, but is a profound and general side effect of downward mobility: 'decent' poverty has been exchanged for a slum – the lamentable result of a people's historic catastrophe (Csalog 1994: 75-76).

Based on this essay, as well as extracts from other scholars, I generated a chronology of Romani economic contributions in Hungary which provides an overview of the role of Romani-Magyar relations historically, offering testimony to the forms of Romani persecution and mistreatment, but also to centuries of conviviality and contributions of Romani Hungarians (see Appendix #1).

### **Synopsis of key findings**

In this thesis, I followed the development of a specific type of Orientalism to have emerged in Europe vis-à-vis Roma - Gypsylorism - and suggested that its legacy continues to have a profound impact today in the area of Romani studies. I also contextualised critical theories on civil society and the public sphere, and their applicability to the lifeworld of human rights entrepreneurs operating in post-socialist Hungary in the 'Roma rights' movement, demonstrating how within post-socialist civil society, Roma occupy the position of subalterns.

In conducting a historical overview on the discursive constructions surrounding Roma communities in Hungary from the 1960s to the 1980s, and focusing on the primary ideas and ideologies of the socialist era, I uncovered the pivotal role of social scientists and Romani dissidents in the construction and (de)construction of the 'Gypsy problem' or (or 'Gypsy question') discourse. Within the socialist press, an analysis of the voices of prominent Hungarian intellectuals (some of whom were key dissidents and Roma) and state officials (within the communist party) who constructed public narratives on the integration of Roma, revealed a surprisingly open discussion on Romani poverty and

social deprivation during the socialist era in the 1970s and 1980s, highlighting various discursive continuities up to the present day.

Post-1989 Hungary witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of domestic NGOs and INGOs which embraced the tools of neoliberal human rights advocacy. The thesis described how domestic Romani activists began to contest violence and hostility towards their communities, whilst liberal NGO and INGO human rights interventions tended to focus on 'rule-of-law' reforms at the constitutional and legislative level. During the mid-1990s, Hungary had one of the largest numbers of NGOs per capita in post-socialist Europe, indicative of the dynamism within civil society. Nonetheless, my thesis revealed the embedded subaltern position of Roma within Hungarian civil society and exposed its limitations and paradoxes.

Furthermore, focus was placed on the emergence of 'Roma Rights', as I interrogated its origins, frameworks, and attendant practices. I discussed the key sources of the rise of 'Roma rights' discursive practices which were primarily reactions to diverse (but connected) problems confronting Roma in 'transition' Hungary. These were a) the collapse of socialist ideologies and structures which created an ideological vacuum for the absorption of aspects of neoliberal human rights discourses and practice, as well as a space for growing nationalism, b) the general disillusionment of Romani representatives with mainstream political parties and electoral politics (especially after 1995), c) increasing racist violence and scapegoating of Roma, which rights' entrepreneurs successfully raised in the public domain and d) the expansion into Hungary of Western philanthropic groups, human rights entrepreneurs, and capital from primarily - though not exclusively - American sources. The origins of the current 'Roma rights' discourses permeating Europe lie in the interventions of human rights entrepreneurs who promoted these discourses in post-socialist countries. With the rise of human rights



entrepreneurship by the late 1990s, the influence and impact of the institutionalisation of NGOs and INGOs became more noticeable in Hungarian civil society.

In analyzing the NGO and INGO research reports covering human rights violations of Roma from the early 1990s onwards, as well as the personal narratives of key individuals (both Hungarian and those from abroad, in particular, the US) , who fought against anti-Gypsyism, I exposed the neoliberal ideologies – both explicit and implicit - underpinning their work. In investigating the sources and forms of human rights discourses and their social construction, as well as the practical influence of the NGOisation of human rights on Romani communities in Hungary, I examined the dominant role of these human rights entrepreneurs, concluding that the shift in the public discourse on Roma from ‘Gypsy problem’ (*‘cigányproblema’*) to the politically liberal concept of ‘Roma rights’ within one decade has to a large extent resulted from their efforts.

Moreover, I examined the question of how the contemporary Romani rights movement has become ideologically monopolized by the vision of Western neoliberal entrepreneurs and their Eastern European counterparts – the vast majority of whom are disconnected from the day-to-day struggle of Romani communities. In part, this stemmed from the external influence and resource mobilization by US-based private foundations (the OSI in particular), but also results from the active human rights entrepreneurship of liberal Eastern European elites and their Romani colleagues. In addition, it was at this time that NGO sector work became an attractive career option, given the large cuts to the state sector and lack of access to capital in the Hungarian private sector.

In addition, the thesis also uncovered how American-style discourses and advocacy strategies on human rights focusing on civil and political rights became ever more pronounced in post-socialist Europe. Moreover, it covered paradoxes in the world of professional human rights, especially with respect to subaltern communities whose voices are muted. This reality also demonstrated what was posited earlier in the thesis in

reference to Gramsci's (2001) assertions on civil society: that it is a site for the hegemony of the established order, rather than a site for emancipation (as it is commonly thought to be).

In my latter chapters, I exposed the limitations of contemporary neoliberal human rights ideologies and practices within the NGO sector in Hungary, interrogating critical debates within the human rights sector itself, for example, the question of the conflict between the 'self-help' and social justice model versus the 'professional', top-down, technocratic human rights model in achieving rights for Roma.

A critical challenge facing Romani activists and others engaged in the field is posed by the unforeseen dangers of a diffusion of 'Roma rights' discourses themselves: there is rising concern that the discourse itself may increase anti-Gypsyism and social exclusion by emphasising 'Romani difference' or 'exceptionality', thereby increasing social distance between Roma and non-Roma citizens (cf. Kovats 2001a).

Finally, the thesis exposed the disconnection between neoliberal approaches to human rights and social integration of Roma (with its narrow emphasis on civic and political participation) and the actual material needs of Roma which are not being met (resulting from their declining incomes since the mid-1980s which induced chronic unemployment in the communities). Human rights entrepreneurs rarely discuss these structural paradoxes, nor have they confronted the inherent limitations of neoliberal policy approaches towards achieving social justice/emancipation for Roma (Trehan 2009).

Additionally, I demonstrated how within Hungarian civil society, the minority voices of critical and progressive activists gradually became marginalized or pacified (cf. for example, those of Kozma, Horvath, Kóczé, etc.) as effective alternatives to the status quo were not articulated, despite embryonic attempts at forging alternative coalitions with the poor and working class. Indeed, Romani participants within human rights

INGOs themselves occupy the position of the subaltern and struggle to have their voices heard.

Nonetheless, a younger generation of Roma who have followed the managerial and technocratic 'human rights entrepreneurial' model, have obtained jobs as a result of the patronage of the OSI and other neoliberal sponsors (indeed, they are recruited by them) who wield tremendous power in determining policy on Roma.

### The spectrum of violence vis-à-vis Roma

*What, then, happens to human rights when they are the rights of homo sacer<sup>107</sup>, of those excluded from the political community; that is, when they are of no use, since they are the rights of those who, precisely, have no rights and are treated as inhuman? - Žižek (2005)*

In the quote above, Žižek (2005) problematizes a straightforward liberal 'universalist' concept of human rights, suggesting that unless it is connected to the realization of active citizenship, it loses its meaning. As my thesis demonstrated, Roma continue to be excluded from Europe's body politic, not necessarily because there is a dearth of legislation on rights protections or particular gaps in legislation, but because they do not have the means or tools to effectively realize these rights in the face of contemporary structural exclusion and hence overcome an embedded subaltern status. By contrast, as I raised earlier in the thesis, 'soft' Socialist states of the 1970s and 1980s (such as Hungary, but particularly Yugoslavia, which was part of the non-aligned movement and never part of the Warsaw Pact) recognized Romani people as citizens who could make contributions to their societies. This is not to suggest that anti-Gypsyism was no longer salient in these societies, but in contrasting the devastated position of most post-WWII Romani communities – survivors of the Holocaust in Europe – the socio-economic gains

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<sup>107</sup> Giorgio Agamben's (1998: 115) use of 'homo sacer' refers to a term in Roman law for one who can be "killed but not sacrificed" (translated from the Latin as 'sacred man' or 'accursed man'), and this implies a kind of abandonment or exclusion from the law. Agamben also delineates the biological from political life, and *homo sacer* epitomizes 'bare life' through his or her exclusion from the political community.

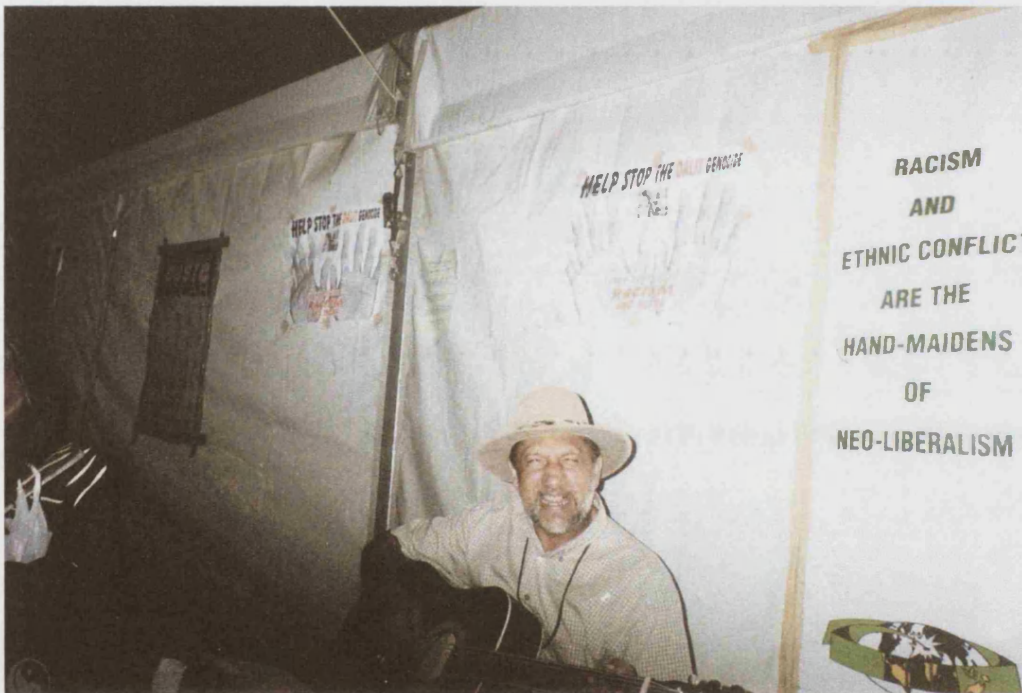
for Roma (poverty reduction, access to subsidized housing and free healthcare, and yes, even education, substandard though it was) were remarkable by the time of late socialism. On the other hand, Romani communities have been experiencing downward social mobility at the same time that their political and minority rights are celebrated (cf. Kovats 1998). But can Roma in Hungary, as contemporary *homo sacere*, realize these political rights whilst their own base in post-socialist Hungarian society continues to shrink?

An additional key finding of my thesis was that the framing and organization of knowledge on Romani people continues to be in the hands of non-Roma (from the progression of Gypsylorism to the contemporary human rights NGO sector), and in this sense it is perhaps one of the “misrecognised continuities” of the production of historical discourses (and I would add, discursive practices) that Edward Said (1978) identified in his classic work, *Orientalism* (Said cited in Brennan 2004; cf. Hancock 1997).

The concept of *epistemic violence* (Spivak 1988; Trehan and Kóczé 2009) vis-à-vis Romani Europeans is also accompanied by forms of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Koulis 2005) and *structural violence* (cf. Farmer 2003). My research has revealed how knowledge generated on Romani populations by academics, human rights entrepreneurs, and policy-makers can themselves constitute forms of violence generated these architects of discursive practice. This is particularly so when the discourses constructed and the knowledge generated obscure the centrality and depth of structural exclusion and socio-economic deprivation lying at the root of contemporary Romani oppression in Europe.

Finally, I uncovered particular ‘narrative threads’ of epistemic violence present within discursive productions on Roma. One begins with Gypsylorism, which exoticized Roma and solidified their ‘Otherness’, ensuring its impact on contemporary scholarship today. A second one connects neoliberal discourses on ‘Roma rights’ generated by Euro-Atlantic NGO human rights entrepreneurs to an EU policy-making elite. This latter discourse has recently become hegemonic, and has served to obscure contentious

relations of power, particularly in post-socialist Europe. *Will these threads be re-fashioned and re-woven one day by Romani subalterns themselves?* If the overwhelming majority of human rights entrepreneurs today are non-Roma, the implications of this would be critical to examine, and certainly Stanley Cohen's question to me (in 2007) "who are the Romani moral entrepreneurs?" was instrumental in prompting me to examine the reality of invisible or missing Romani interlocutors. One response to the challenge of the lack of moral entrepreneurship of the subaltern can perhaps be addressed by the engagement of practices of 'epistemic disobedience' (Mignolo 2007) by subaltern groups such as Roma, which Mignolo suggests are needed to counter epistemic violence.



**Figure 16 – Epistemic disobedience in action? Aladár Adam, Romani activist from Ukraine, UN World Conference against Racism, Durban (South Africa) October 2001. Photo credit: S. Jašarova**

In October 2001, Mr. Adam was sponsored by the neoliberal ERRC to attend the UN's World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, along with a dozen other Romani NGO activists, primarily from Eastern Europe (cf. ERRC 2001). In the photo above, he is shown seated next to a poster from the stall of the Dalit social justice movement in India (a poster critical of neoliberalism). Although he is actively showing

his solidarity with Dalits, a type of visual dissonance is produced here, as it is not clear if this is a deliberate act of 'epistemic disobedience'.

At this stage therefore, it would be prudent to ask if the distinctions between 'Roma rights' as emancipation or exploitation have become blurred? The lifeworld of Roma in Hungary today reveals increasing deprivation whose roots can be traced to a spectrum of structural violence. What I argue in this thesis is that the 'Roma rights movement' as it stands - its ideologies, its methods and its diffuse and multiple trajectories – actually obfuscates this violence, thereby providing a dense smokescreen, so that both Romani activists and policy-makers cannot see clearly (or if they can, they engage in a kind of collective denial), and may fall into a vicious cycle whereby they become instruments of their own oppression. Caught up in a web of career-building within the 'Roma industry', many Romani NGO entrepreneurs suggest that they have little choice but to use the frameworks generated and institutionalized by INGOs such as HRW and OSI. Though a myriad number of NGOs and offices in Europe now sponsor Romani projects (some short-term, others longer in duration), their interventions are only meaningful for themselves and their narrow interests, rather than for the mass of Roma, many of whom are not yet attuned to the 'human rights entrepreneurship' conducted in their name.

This thesis has also shown how structural violence perpetrated against Roma remains in place, whilst at the same time human rights projects and integration programmes are marketed and advertised as achieving 'progress' on their behalf. A spectrum of violence against Roma pervades European societies: whether it is in the field of culture, where non-Romani cultural impresarios dominate representations of Roma through films screened in film festivals, or in the realm of economics, where contemporary neoliberal economic regimes ensure that Roma do not have access to capital, to the social and political life of Europe, where they remain marginal, despite the recent selection of token

Romani representatives by some political parties (most recently at the European Parliamentary level).

The thesis demonstrates that emerging human rights movements (such as that for the 'rights of Roma') have become circumscribed in an age of neoliberal policy hegemony, reflecting the interests of a broader global governance structure dominated by human rights entrepreneurs, policy-makers and other elites who manage Roma without necessarily generating the means for their inclusion (for which they claim to be creating the conditions for in their programmes and interventions). Furthermore, colonial and neo-colonial relations are embedded in postsocialist Europe's relations with Western Europe, and within Hungary, and these multiple dynamics of subordination proscribe Romani Europeans and their autonomy within the NGO sector (cf. Trehan and Kóczé 2009). Inherent to the neoliberal, technocratic policy approach towards NGO development, the 'NGO-isation' of human rights has curtailed, if not stunted, the development of an autonomous, democratic voice which would effectively intervene or mediate on behalf of European Romani communities and their most critical needs.

My preliminary analysis in this area suggests that the advocacy culture and methods of neoliberal human rights entrepreneurship continues to have a profound impact on younger generations of Romani activists, who have been exposed to a 'technocratic, professional' model (cf. Roštaš 2009) rather than the self-help, bottom-up model of community development. Activists (generally older) critical of such approaches tend to become sidelined or co-opted to a large degree.

Further research would be needed to examine the development of nascent oppositional ideologies to the prevalent neoliberal trajectory of the INGO-led 'Roma rights' movement. Another area to be explored is the impact of the EU accession and how the development of Romani policy at the EU level, for example, the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) initiative, the EU Roma Brussels Summit (September 2008), Roma

Platform (April 2009) have impacted both the NGO sector and the mass of Romani European communities themselves (cf. Guy 2009).

The interdisciplinary scope of this thesis raised many questions concerning the post-socialist human rights movement for Roma both in Hungary, and more broadly, in the CEE region. The NGOs run by human rights entrepreneur's penetrated and shaped Romani ideological forms and advocacy culture in key ways, and a more detailed examination of this should constitute the subject of future research.

One way forward is to discuss the intricacies and fallacies surrounding discourse generation on Romani human rights issues in public forums. For example, in the summer of 2006, with the assistance of the Centre for the Study of Human Rights at the LSE, as well as the student Praxis Society and Central London Europe Group (CLEG), an evening discussion with speakers entitled *Citizens or Denizens? The 'integration' of Roma in Europe* was organised. It was quite possibly the first time in the history of the London School of Economics that Romani activists were invited to share a platform with academics and politicians at the Old Lecture Theatre (see attached video of the event, on cd-rom). Speakers attempted to break the silence on the contemporary paradoxes within the movement: progressive Romani activists Florina Zoltan and Angela Kóczé, political scientist Martin Kovats, and human rights lawyer Barbora Bukovská all participated, along with Liberal Democrat MEP Baroness Sarah Ludford who gave the keynote address, and is known for her support of the rights of Roma in Europe, along with other minorities. Held at the prestigious LSE, it was an occasion to 'speak truth to power' in the Foucauldian sense, and to air the debate publicly, contesting the conventional wisdom on Romani issues before an audience of future European (and global) power elites, that is, LSE students, as well as Baroness Ludford.

Can human rights discourses and organisations still be empowering and transformative ?



My own answer would be a qualified 'yes' - human rights continues to be a salient principle and *can be* meaningful in the lives of subaltern communities such as European Roma if it can be redefined and liberated from its current neoliberal straitjacket. The thesis provides conclusive evidence on the status quo of the hailed neoliberal approaches and triumphs in 'Roma rights' as being complicit in the reproduction of power asymmetries. For the generation of real change, much more has to be done at the community level through self-empowerment of Roma, as opposed to a focus on changing the attitudes of 'white Europeans' which has been the approach thus far of many 'multicultural-type' European programmes.<sup>108</sup>

As detailed above, the INGO-led civil rights movement in the region, and in this particular case, in Hungary, has in many ways not addressed the core socio-economic issues of the Romani communities in part because neoliberal conceptions around which contemporary human rights issues are framed in post-socialist Europe have neglected (and in some cases, been dismissive of) the importance of economic justice. Keynesian theories, which responded to classic Marxist problematisations of inequality, were dethroned after the 1970s by neo-classical liberal models which emphasised equality of opportunity, but regarded inequality of outcome as 'natural.' In contemporary post-socialist Europe, such models demand that citizens of Romani background play in a game whose rules were written for others, and thereby exclude them from empowering themselves. Imported discursive practices channeled by Western INGOs to their NGO counterparts in Hungary are a case in point, and these could not adequately articulate the variety of east European perspectives and interests, and the multiple levels of neo-colonial relations which imbricate the post-socialist landscape (cf. Trehan and Kóczé 2009).

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<sup>108</sup>See for example the *Dosta Programme* at [www.dosta.org](http://www.dosta.org).

In contrast, progressive activists within the women's global emancipation movement have emphasised that "gender, race and class analysis is...essential to both understanding the impacts of neoliberal policies and for developing alternative policies that put sustainable development and human rights ahead of profits" (AWID 2005). A similar intersectional approach towards social justice for Roma is currently being articulated by Romani feminist scholars and activists such as Alexandra Oprea (2004), Angéla Kóczé (2009) and Gregory Kwiek (2008) who see the their communities power, potentialities, and pitfalls from the inside. Perhaps their roles as moral entrepreneurs will become more visible in the years to come.

As a result, what may be needed is to take forward the holistic analysis begun in this thesis, an analysis of the rights movement that both accounts for Romani diversity in Europe and privileges local level knowledge, as well as the recognition of socio-economic justice as a central pillar within a contemporary human rights framework. This could in turn contribute to informing policy decisions with the input of Romani citizens themselves in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, and childcare – all socio-economic areas where the human rights movement for Roma could yet have an emancipatory and transformative impact if material economic realities as well as political and cultural rights were to be addressed.

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Act LXXVII/1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities.

Act CXXV/2003 on the Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities.



## LIST OF KEY INTERVIEWEES\*

	Name	Date	Position/Affiliation at the time of interview
1	Fitsum Alemu	November 18, 1999	Human rights lawyer, consultant with NEKI; trained in Hungary, originally from Ethiopia
2	Gabriella Bényi	February 14, 2000	PHARE (EU funded) programme manager for Hungary
3	Gábor Bernath	September 8, 1999	Director, Roma Press Center
4	Bea Bodrógi	Summer 2002	Human rights lawyer, NEKI
5	Claude Cahn	January 2001	Publications Director, ERRC
6	Antonia Hága	Summer 2000	Former SZDSZ MP; director of Ariadne Foundation; consultant with Partners Hungary, a US-based INGO
7	Aladár Horváth	June 26, 1999	Former SZDSZ MP, Founder and Director of Roma Foundation for Civil Rights (RPA)

8	Imre Furmann	June 26, 1999	Director of NEKI, Legal Defence Bureau for Ethnic Minorities, a human rights NGO
9	Jim Goldston	September 21, 1999	Legal Director, ERRC (my former supervisor)
10	Edina Kisonthyi	Summer 2005	Hungarian-American employee of CEU Archives; filmmaker and psychologist
11	József Kólómpár	June 2000	Hungarian Romani economist; worked for OFA (National Employment Foundation)
12	Angéla Kóczé	June 2004	Sociologist, former Executive Director of ERIO and educational programmes director at ERRC
13	Ferenc Kőszeg	August 31, 1999	Chairman of Hungarian Helsinki Committee and official Hungarian founder of ERRC
14	Blanka Kozma	September 22, 1999	Director, Association of Romani Women

**Participating in Public  
Life**

- |    |                    |                    |   |
|----|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| 15 | Erika Lencses      | Summer 2002        | Hungarian Ministry for<br>Social Affairs, Department<br>for EU Accession  |
| 16 | Christina McDonald | December 12, 2000  | Senior Manager, OSI-<br>Roma Education<br>Initiative  |
| 17 | Gábor Miklosi      | June 25, 1999      | International<br>Representative, Roma<br>Press Center   |
| 18 | Agnes Ósztolykán   | May 2000           | Romani youth activist;<br>university student  |
| 19 | Éva Órsós          | January 2001       | Former Head of the<br>Office of Ethnic and<br>National Minorities,<br>Director of the 'Mediator'<br>Foundation and co-chair<br>of the Board of the ERRC |
| 20 | Dimitrina Petrova  | September 24, 1999 | Founder and executive<br>Director of ERRC   |
| 21 | Imre Pózsgay       | September 7, 1999  | Former Head of the<br>Patriotic National Front,<br>affiliated with MDF  |
| 22 | Erika Schlager     | April 19, 1999     | Lawyer, Commission for  |

			<b>Security and Co-operation in Europe (part of OSCE)</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>István Szikinger</b>	<b>January 2001</b>	<b>Legal expert and human rights activist</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>Rumyan Russinov</b>	<b>October 27, 2000</b>	<b>Director, Regional Roma Participation Program</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>Ákos Tarkányi</b>	<b>August 1999</b>	<b>Hungarian social policy researcher</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>Debbie Winterbourne</b>	<b>February 18, 2000</b>	<b>Acting Legal Director of ERRC; formerly of the Refugee Legal Centre (UK)</b>

**\*In addition, I conducted numerous informal interviews and conversations which are recorded in my fieldnotes.**

## APPENDICES

### Appendix #1

**A brief chronological overview of Romani contributions to the Hungarian labour market (data extracted from Csalog 1994: 1-4; Kemény 2005; Teichmann 2001)**

#### 1300s – 1600s

Upon their arrival to central Europe, Romani peoples practice traditional crafts which remain outside the protection and regulation of the medieval guild system; whereas for peasants of the time, cottage industry work is a supplementary source of income, for Roma it is the sole source of income. The pressures of market restrictions compel Romani families to travel to other markets, thereby maintaining a semi-nomadic way of life, which encouraged a diasporic mode of existence. Roma continue to work as coppersmiths, tinkers, blacksmiths, as well as in other trades. Bondage and slavery in Transylvania is less severe than in Moldavia and Wallachia, and is abolished completely at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Romani slavery is introduced in Wallachia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and in Moldavia in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and continues well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 1700s-1800s

Roma continue to work in traditional craft professions, including adobe brick-making; by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Romani musicians begin to gain a niche in the entertainment market, and the most successful amongst them work for aristocrats in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Sinti were peddlars and street performers, and there was a variety of other professions. Roma are generally excluded from land ownership and use, those that are, likely become assimilated. Thus, Roma were always marginal actors in the economic system of Austro-Hungary during feudal times. In 1844, Count Kogalniceanu, a humanist writer and aristocrat inspired by the ethos of the French Revolution, begins an active campaign for abolition of slavery in Romania, with the publication of *Desrobirea Țiganilor* ("The Liberation of the Gypsies"). Romani slaves are emancipated in Moldavia and Wallachia after a contentious struggle with the boyars or land-holding aristocrats, in 1856, leading to a large migration (in waves) of freed Romani slaves to Hungary and other parts of Europe and the world. Those who remained were levied with taxes, and large numbers – having no other option - continued to be employed by their former owners.

### **Early 1900s -1940s**

The market for traditional Romani craftwork declines precipitously with the rise of modern industrial systems of production, which favoured mass produced goods. Romanies experience rapid downward social mobility, with many falling into conditions of 'extreme poverty'. Their historically accumulated 'capital' evaporates. Roma join the lot of Hungary's 'three million beggars', and the drop in their economic situation coupled with low social prestige paves the way for their genocide during the Holocaust. Csalog emphasises that the "mass deportation of Gypsies to Nazi death camps with the indifferent assistance of Hungarian society only happened because the majority of society perceived Gypsies as useless parasites incapable of carrying out a day's work, and as potential (if not active) criminals. An estimated 60,000 Hungarian Roma perished or went missing at the hands of the Nazis and their allies.

### **1950s-1960s**

Ambitious and extensive industrialisation programme commences under the new Communist regime in Hungary, which by this time, has also confiscated peasant lands, resulting in radical agrarian reform and a redistribution of land. The creation of jobs in the construction sector, factory work, mining, and in public works projects such as the sanitation sector, lead Roma to join the modern employment market.

### **1970s-1980s**

Romani men are fully integrated – albeit at the lowest levels – of the Hungarian economy, with employment rates matching those of others by the mid-1970s. Half of all working age Romani women also become employed by the early 1980s.

## **Appendix #2**

### **Chronology of NGOs working on Romani issues (1970s-present), expanded and updated from Trehan (2001).**

#### ***1970s and 1980s***

Possibilities for 'quasi-civil society' formations in various state socialist countries, including Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia. The International Romani Union (IRU) is founded in London in 1971. Roma participate in many cultural and youth groups at this time. Some Romani leaders participate in the *Charta 77* movement in the Czech Republic, and similarly throughout the region in diverse progressive organisations. Roma in Yugoslavia organise their own political parties.

#### ***1989-1993***

Throughout the CEE region, states are in decline, and began to embrace a package of economic 'reforms' along neoliberal lines monitored by the IMF and World Bank. States are characterized by shrinking budgets, periods of increasing unemployment and political uncertainty. The first domestic NGOs are created by former dissidents and intellectuals. Intellectuals and activists (primarily non-Roma) develop contacts with foreign donors, laying the ground for a third sector, a sector whose putative purpose is to enhance the empowerment of Roma.

#### ***1993-1997***

Numerous NGOs and associations founded by Romani activists in the fields of culture, education, politics, sport and increasingly, human rights. General optimism in the non-governmental sector; more philanthropic as well as governmental bodies support human rights and 'democratisation' programmes in the region. NGOs evolve into credible 'partners' for human rights policy-making on Roma, both domestically and internationally.

#### ***1997- 2004***

Increasing institutionalisation of NGOs, professional human rights and development 'technocrats' begin to emerge. Human rights entrepreneurs become increasingly powerful. Rising cynicism amongst Romani intellectuals about the third sector, emergence of the 'Gypsy industry' (state and third sector), phenomenon of 'Romanisation' of programmes, whereby special projects begin to focus on the Romani community. 'Ethno-business' is in full bloom.

### *2004 - present*

European Union integration fuels further Romani projects and policies on Roma in the region. Launch of the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion' (2005-2015) spearheaded by Open Society Institute, the European Union, the World Bank and European Roma Rights Centre, along with other partner organizations. Critical activists begin to point to gap between goals of the Decade, and actual programmes on the ground, pointing to lack of transparency and participation of grassroots Romani NGOs, and a disconnection between rising socio-economic marginalisation of Roma and programmes to ameliorate the situation.



## Appendix #3

### Interviewing Victims of Traumatic Human Rights Abuses\*

(extracted from Media Diversity Training Institute's website 'Practical Material/Practical Tools for Journalists', see full document at the link

[http://www.mediadiversity.org/articles\\_publications/interveiwing%20%20victims.htm](http://www.mediadiversity.org/articles_publications/interveiwing%20%20victims.htm) )

by Jack Saul, Ph.D.

Director, International Trauma Studies Program

New York University

[www.nyu.edu/trauma.studies](http://www.nyu.edu/trauma.studies)

Romani victims are generally objectified within the human rights arena, and there is a lack of awareness of the psycho-social needs of Roma who have undergone trauma (cf. Bukovská 2005). Little sensitivity training is actually given to human rights campaigners, researchers, and lawyers who approach them for information, and very little psycho-social support is offered to them before or after interviews are conducted about the human rights abuses they underwent.

The extract below is from the *Media Diversity Institute*, and provides suggestions for journalists conducting interviews with victims of human rights abuses. Organizations such as *Human Rights Watch* and the *European Roma Rights Centre*, as well as domestic human rights NGOs across Europe should take seriously the implications of the trauma their Romani clients have undergone as well as the risks of continuing post-traumatic stress disorder, and hence move towards implementing appropriate preparation and training measures for human rights researchers who interview Romani victims. Such practices working towards *placing the needs of the victim of human rights abuses at the centre of human rights interventions* should become the norm, rather than the exception.

#### I. Common psychological after-effects of Trauma

##### A. Post traumatic stress disorder

1. Re-experiencing (intrusive symptoms)
2. Avoiding (numbing and denial)
3. Increased arousal

##### B. Other psychological disorders

1. Anxiety
2. Depressive reactions
3. Somatic complaints
4. Substance abuse
5. Sexual disorders
6. Organic impairment

##### C. Other difficulties experienced as a consequence of torture and political violence

1. Alterations of identity and confusion in relation to reality
2. Survivor guilt and the problem of complicity
3. Disruption of capacity to adequately assess danger
4. Difficulty modulating affect and impulses
5. Social isolation
6. Interruption of the symbolizing process

## **II. Conducting interviews with victims of human rights abuses**

### **A. Preparation**

1. Anticipate and address possible barriers to effective communication
  - a) environmental - privacy, comfort of setting, adequate amount of time for interview, gender of interviewer (particularly in cases of sexual violation)
  - b) Physical/psychological barriers - physical pain and discomfort, fatigue, sensory deficits, psychological disorders, cognitive deficits
  - c) Sociocultural barriers - cultural differences, language issues, the use of interpreters
  - d) Make efforts to minimize aspects of the interview situation which may mimic the abuse situation
2. Prepare social support for the informant during and after the interview if necessary

### **B. The interview**

1. Explain the process of the interview, give the informant control, and the right to place limits, recognition of difficulty speaking about the abuse
2. Establish rapport, respectfulness, connection to the person beyond the violation
3. Good listening skills - allow victim to tell story at first with as few interruptions as possible, use of open ended questions, showing acknowledgement, communicating empathy and concern, allowing for silences
4. Pacing - adjusting to the informant's readiness to speak about certain aspects of his or her experience
5. Mimesis - adjusting to informant's style of expressivity
6. Giving opportunity for informant to ask questions
7. Confidentiality and security

### **C. Informant's experience during the interview**

1. Recognition of informant's life situation, safety issues, living situation, basic needs, is person participating freely?
2. Be aware of the variability of emotional expression of trauma survivor - demeanor may not match the person's suffering, cultural variations in emotional expression
3. Re-experiencing of feelings related to the traumatic situation. Common emotional responses - terror, shame, despair, rage, confusion, humiliation, powerlessness
4. Psychological reactions that can present obstacles to the interview process - memory and concentration difficulties, dissociation, somatic complaints - pains and headaches, sleep deprivation, traumatic triggers

## **III. Interviewing strategies and reactions to interview**

### **A. Interview Strategies**

1. Sensitivity to informant's emotional responses during interview, emotional changes and cues to stop
2. Knowing when enough detailed information about traumatic experiences is enough, looking for details to establish consistency in more neutral areas
3. Use of group interviews to enhance data collecting, shared memory and promote bonding with other members of the group
4. Use of non-verbal modalities (drawings and dramatic enactments) to bridge language

and culture gaps

5. Interviewing children

B. Interviewer reactions - secondary or vicarious traumatization

1. Trauma is contagious - interviewer may experience PTSD reactions
2. Trauma stories may revive personally traumatic experiences in the interviewer
3. Feelings of helplessness and rescue fantasies
4. Shattered world assumptions
5. Having to come to terms with one's own capacity for sadism and evil
6. Witness guilt

C. Coping with vicarious trauma reactions

1. On-going supportive environment
2. Debriefing after hearing trauma stories
3. Anticipation of vicarious trauma reactions
4. Taking care of oneself
5. Use of humour
6. Avoiding repetition of visual traumatic imagery
7. Relaxation, taking periodic breaks or vacations from work

D. Creating a safe and supportive work environment

1. Working with trauma can cause ruptures in organizations
2. Reactions are anticipated and normalized
3. Risks of vicarious traumatization are discussed - an organizational plan to support staff is developed
4. Regular opportunities to meet and talk about how one is affected by the work
5. Debriefing of information as well as emotional experience

#### **Appendix #4**

##### **Letter from Géza Jeszenszky, Ambassador of Hungary to the US to the Washington Times editorial pages, July 12, 1999**

Posted on ROMNET listserve in July 1999 by Erika Schlager, a legal counsel at the US Helsinki Commission.

On July 4, 1999, the *Washington Times* (and it appears, the London-based *Financial Times* on or about the same date) ran a story by Financial Times writer Max Easterman under the title "Hungary's second-class citizens; Ethnic Magyars make life hard for the Gypsies." The Hungarian Ambassador wrote a rebuttal to the *Washington Times*, which was printed on July 12. In advance of getting the letter published, it was circulated to some Hungarian Americans by the Hungarian Embassy with the note: "An increasing number of misinformed reports comes out in the international press about the situation of the Gypsies (fashionably named Romas). This is the response the Embassy has prepared to a particularly foolish piece which appeared in the Financial Times and in The Washington Times. I enclose it for your information."

##### **Story on Hungary 's Gypsies 'ill-informed, malicious' July 12, 1999, The Washington Times, Page A14, Commentary, Editorials, Opinions**

I realize that the July 4 article on Hungary in your paper ("Hungary 's second-class citizens," World) was not the product of your own journalists. Nevertheless, I wish one of your editors had read it before you published such an ill-informed, malicious and dilettantish piece.

Before you think that, as the ambassador of Hungary, I feel compelled to whitewash the problems in my country, let me state a few facts. Hungary has a large Gypsy minority with serious social problems deriving mostly from poverty, poor education and, in many cases, an inherited lifestyle that lacks any incentives to break out and do better. It also is a fact, however, that the Hungarian government, and society in general, recognizes this problem and accepts responsibility for its amelioration.

The reporter blames "institutional racism" for the problems of Hungarian Gypsies. I find it reassuring that he cannot provide a shred of evidence to prove this point. What is "institutional" in Hungary is that we have a national government agency established specifically to deal with the problems and aspirations of national and ethnic minorities. It spends most of its budget on programs for the Gypsies, our largest minority. It is presently headed by a member of our Bulgarian minority. Earlier, however, its head was a highly educated woman from the Gypsy minority. Hungary has one of the most enlightened minority laws in the world. This makes it possible for Gypsies to elect their own self-governments, even in those places where they are dispersed among the general population and, consequently, cannot form a majority.

Since the political changes of 1989-90, several Gypsies were elected to the national Parliament, where they vigorously pursued the betterment of their group. Gypsy social and cultural organizations, including political parties, number in the hundreds.

The ignorance and superficiality of this reporter would be humorous, if it were not so sad to read this tripe in a respected newspaper. The insinuation that Gypsy musicians "have to play Hungarian music and pretend" is inane. Far from being oppressed or intimidated, skilled Gypsy musicians are the toast of the entertainment society in Hungary. Gypsy orchestras in restaurants rarely play any kind of folk music. They play songs written by professional composers of light music, the most popular of whom had been the Gypsy bandleader Pista Danko, who lived a century ago.

It also is the height of ignorance to draw a parallel between the urbanized elite of Gypsy musicians and the impoverished rural Gypsies. It is like reporting on the impoverished black towns of, say, Mississippi in the 1950s, and then add "of course, Duke Ellington and Miles Davis are the lucky ones. They have jobs." Finally, I don't know what to make of the Gypsy girl whose IQ was tested at 68 but proved to be more competent than that. The charge is that "The tests are language-based and heavily slanted toward home life." Horrors. But exactly on what would you test schoolgirls - nuclear physics?

Let me point out that schoolchildren's IQs are not routinely tested in Hungary, and they are certainly not carrying a low rating through life as some kind of scarlet letter.

Let me also reveal that my government regularly supports Gypsy cultural, folklore and literature programs, but Gypsy - which includes two distinct dialects - is not a modern written language. To assign Gypsy children to a life in that language would do precisely what my government tries hard to avoid - to perpetuate their disadvantaged status. The educational debate in this country on the benefits of ebonics or black English was a very short one, wasn't it? No disadvantaged underclass ever emerged from its status due to the efforts of social workers assigned to it by the government.

Education, jobs, opportunity and incentives are my government's guiding principles in its treatment of our fellow Hungarians of Gypsy background. I would welcome your reporting on what really goes on in this field in Hungary. The ignorant article that you published just misleads your readers without benefiting anyone.

**GEZA JESZENSZKY, Ambassador**  
**Embassy of the Republic of Hungary**  
**Washington DC**

## Appendix #5

### United States Mission to the OSCE Statement on Tolerance and Non-discrimination: Roma/Sinti

As prepared for delivery by Erika Schlager, U.S. Helsinki Commission, to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw, September 28, 2005, see online at [http://osce.usmission.gov/archive/2005/09/HDIM On Tolerance and Non-discrimination 09 28 05.pdf](http://osce.usmission.gov/archive/2005/09/HDIM%20On%20Tolerance%20and%20Non-discrimination%2009%2028%2005.pdf)

Mr. Moderator, let me begin by thank [sic] the Romani non-governmental organizations here and the Office of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti for the Romani-related side events that have been organised throughout the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

They have effectively mainstreamed Romani issues and enriched our work. I'd also like to encourage my colleagues here to see the exhibits on the 2nd floor related to the Romani side events if they have not already done so.

Mr. Moderator, 2005 marks the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, an event which has prompted a mix of celebration and introspection. This year is also the 15th anniversary of the adoption of Copenhagen Document. Presaging truly historic changes, that groundbreaking document was the first international human rights agreement to recognize the human rights problems faced by Roma.

"The participating States clearly and unequivocally condemn totalitarianism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds. In this context, they also recognize the particular problems of Roma (gypsies)" - *Excerpt from the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (1990)*

Since then, there have been many other "firsts." The OSCE held its first seminar on Romani human rights issues in 1994. Among those present at that meeting were a Sinto survivor of the Holocaust and a young woman who had been widowed by the violence in Hadareni, Romania. In 1999, the OSCE appointed the first Romani advisor to the OSCE and in 2000 the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities published his seminal report on Roma. At the 2003 Maastricht Ministerial, the OSCE participating States adopted the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area.

"We deplore violence and other manifestations of racism and discrimination against minorities, including the Roma and Sinti. We commit ourselves to ensure that laws and policies fully respect the rights of Roma and Sinti and, where necessary, to promote anti-discrimination legislation to this effect. We underline the importance of careful attention to the problems of the social exclusion of Roma and Sinti. These issues are primarily a responsibility of the participating States concerned. We emphasize the important role that the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues can play in providing support. A further helpful step might be the elaboration by the Contact Point of an action plan of targeted activities, drawn up in co-operation with the High Commissioner on National Minorities and others active in this field, notably the Council of Europe."

*- Excerpt from the Istanbul Summit Declaration (1999)*

Elsewhere in the OSCE region, other international organizations have also advanced the cause of human rights for Roma during the past 15 years. The first case in which a Romani plaintiff successfully brought suit before the European Court on Human Rights was decided in 1998. The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights issued in 2003 an important report on sterilization without informed consent of Romani women in Slovakia and another report on the general situation of Roma this year. Progress for Roma has been marked in many other ways. The U.S. Delegation is particularly heartened by the development of Romani news organizations, by the growth of grass roots Romani non-governmental organizations, and by the increasing political empowerment of Roma. Indeed, thanks to the participation of the first Romani Members of the European Parliament, that body adopted a resolution on Roma in April of this year that rightly identifies key areas where much work remains to be done.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities, in his 2000 report on the situation of the Roma and Sinti, observed that "... the rich diversity among Roma within the OSCE makes all but a few general conclusions inappropriate. One, however, is plainly warranted: discrimination and exclusion are fundamental features of the Roma experience. Ten years after the iron curtain fell, Europe is at risk of being divided by new walls."

As if to underscore that point, this year began with a pogrom against Roma in the Siberian village of Iskitim, where an estimated 400 Roma were driven from their homes while the local authorities reportedly looked on. In a number of OSCE countries, such as Greece, continued evictions threaten to turn a new generation of Roma into unwilling nomads, and in Belgrade, community protests against municipal efforts to provide housing for Roma who currently live under a bridge illustrates the depth of prejudice Roma continue to face. In Bulgaria, Sofia municipal authorities demolished many unlawfully constructed houses in Roma neighborhoods on August 31, 2005. This action left hundreds of Roma homeless, and directly contradicted the government's 1999 Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society, which requires the legalization of the Roma neighborhoods and of the property in them. Six years after Bulgaria adopted the "Framework Program," little has been done to implement it, and Roma and other minorities are still addressed under the demeaning rubric of "demographic issues."

Mr. Moderator, several governments around this table are participating in the "Decade of Roma Inclusion." It seems what we are really embarking on, 15 years after the Copenhagen Document, is a decade of rising Romani expectations. When governments adopt anti-discrimination legislation, Roma are right to expect it to be meaningfully implemented. And when the OSCE participating States adopt an Action Plan on Roma and Sinti, Roma are right to expect action. Mr. Moderator, I am reminded of what a Romani activist said at an OSCE meeting a few years ago: "We won't be satisfied with a few state subsidies for folk festivals any more."

At this juncture, there are a few areas where my delegation believes more concerted action would be constructive. First, national political leaders should speak out on Romani human rights issues. While we note the response of a relevant government agency to the anti-Roma manifestations at soccer matches in Bucharest in April, we regret that no senior political leaders in Romanian publicly condemned these acts.

Moreover, the U.S. remains concerned by the phenomenon of political anti-Romism – the practice of appealing to anti-Roma prejudice as part of a political campaign. With local and national elections scheduled in the next year for several OSCE participating States with significant Romani communities, including Slovakia, we urge these States to take an active approach to combating this problem. We appreciate the comments from the delegate from Slovakia recognizing the desirability of increased Romani political participation.

Finally, governments should re-double their efforts to examine and revise outdated textbooks that either do not reflect Romani history at all or that include bigoted or prejudicial reflections of Roma. In this regard, it is particularly important that the experiences of Roma during the Holocaust are taught and remembered. The U.S. commends the Hungarian parliament for adopting a resolution on the Holocaust that acknowledges the crimes committed against Roma and Jews. We also commend the Czech parliament for hosting a photography exhibit about the Lety concentration camp this year.

Thank you.



## Appendix # 6

### Extracts from Advertisements for Jobs in the 'Roma rights industry'

#### 1. Administrative post, European Roma Rights Center (ERRC 2007)

##### ERRC

##### Job Description

Post Title: Legal Administrator

Reports to: the Legal Director

Annual gross salary: 3.400.000 - 3.700.000 HUF (approximately 19.000 – 20.500 US Dollar) plus benefits

##### Areas of Responsibility:

##### *Responsibilities related to legal work:*

- Administering the legal defence grant programme including:
  - Maintaining case files
  - Maintaining and updating the legal database and indexes
  - Administering applications for legal support
  - Administering consultancy and other contracts
- Supporting the organisation of workshops and training programmes with legal components
- Supporting the development of submissions to intergovernmental structures
- Legal or other research as requested by the Legal Director

##### *Responsibilities related to administrative support of the Legal Department:*

- Providing administrative support for the legal intern programme and occasional recruitment and selection exercises
- Supporting the preparation of financial reports to donors
- Reviewing local partners' financial reports
- Initiating money transfers for project partners and consultants
- Supporting the preparation of narrative activity reports for the legal department
- Arranging travel for the legal department's staff
- Other administrative assistance as required by the legal department
- Other tasks as assigned by the Legal Director

**Essential and desirable requirements for the post are outlined in the person specification and need to be read in conjunction with the tasks listed above.**

*Last modified: 03.07.2007*

## 2. Executive level post, ERRC, 2007

### ERRC

#### Job Description

Post Title: Programme Director

Reports to: Executive Director

Member of: the senior management team

Supervises: programme department staff members, external consultants, researchers, trainees, assistant(s) and project coordinators (approximately up to 12 persons on full or part time basis)

Annual gross salary: 12.400.000 – 12.900.000 HUF (approximately 68.000 – 72.000 US Dollar\*) plus benefits, depending on experience

#### Areas of Responsibility:

##### *General tasks:*

- Developing in cooperation with the Executive Director and senior staff team a policy and advocacy strategy for the organisation
- Supervising the implementation of these strategies in cooperation with programme department staff
- Ensuring high quality and timely delivery of work in programme department in accordance with the strategic plan and annual work programme
- Constructively contributing to the work of the senior staff team
- Contributing to ERRC budget plan preparations
- Staying abreast of developments in human rights and Roma rights developments internationally

##### *Research, policy analysis and HR training:*

- Analysing the situation concerning Roma in the wider European region and advising the Executive Director in taking appropriate advocacy measures
- Supervising the research and capacity building/HR training activities of the organisation
- Supervising the production of ERRC research reports and contributing to research where appropriate
- Coordinating field missions where appropriate

##### *Advocacy:*

- Undertaking advocacy work towards the UN, CoE, OSCE and other relevant non-EU structures and communicating with these structures as appropriate
- Coordinating the submission of policy statements to intergovernmental structures and instruments concerning Roma
- Proposing and ensuring delivery of advocacy work directed to state authorities
- Representing the organisation towards state authorities and intergovernmental institutions as appropriate

*\*Figures stated in US Dollar are only an indication and do not constitute a legal obligation for ERRC.*

### **3. Advertisement for Educational training consultancy job, Roma Education Fund/OSI (source: Roma Virtual Network 2009)**

#### **Roma Education Fund/Scholarship Programs (REF/SPs) Terms of Reference Roma Health Scholarship Program *Training Organization***

Duration: Up to 14 months

Daily Rate: TBD

Time Period: 14 months

The Scholarship Programs as a part of Roma Education Fund (REF) promotes equal access of Roma to appropriate and quality higher Education in the Program Countries of South Eastern, Eastern and Central Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine), by providing scholarships to Roma University students.

In order to address the needs of developing a professional medical staff among Roma minority REF and the Open Society Institute (OSI) run scholarship schemes for Roma Students pursuing degrees for Medical Nurses and/or Medical Doctors at state accredited/recognized Medical and Medical-Vocational schools in Bulgaria.

Given the complexity of entry examinations in Bulgarian Medical Universities, the REF Scholarship Programs wishes to arrange Preparatory Courses for the Roma youth interested to take these examinations and enrol in Medical Universities in Bulgaria. The course would be for pupils in their final year/s (11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades) of high school.

Roma Education Fund Scholarship Programs therefore is seeking applications from Training Organizations or Higher Education establishments that have capacity and previous experience in organizing Preparatory Courses for entry examinations in Universities and/or similar academic preparation courses.

#### **Objective:**

The Training Organization would be responsible for:

- preparing and implementing an out-reach plan in order to identify the youth interested and eligible to pursue such preparatory courses in close cooperation with Roma NGOs, municipalities and schools.
- selecting candidates for the courses; the Program's goal is to have 30 participants in preparatory courses. The selection will be based on the results of the candidates' high school diploma and the grades for the relevant subjects (chemistry and biology).
- defining and implementing a curriculum for the preparatory courses in subjects like Chemistry, and Biology.
- assessing the progress of each individual student on a regular basis and providing an individualised programme of study. Regular 4-month reporting to the REF Scholarship Programs Officer on the progress of the students.
- organizing preparatory courses in several or all of the following towns in Bulgaria where there are selected students:
  - Shoumen/Razgrad/Provadia
  - Sofia/Kyustendil/Blagoevgrad
  - Sliven/Bourgas
  - Vidin/Montana/Vraca/Lom

- Plovdiv/Stara Zagora
- Prepare an intermediary and final evaluation scheme for participants at the preparatory courses.

**Requirements:**

- The Training Organization should have at least 3 years experience in the organization and provision of preparatory courses for entry examinations in Universities in Bulgaria or similar academic courses
- Be familiar with the curricula of Medical Universities in Bulgaria as well as with the requirements for the entry examinations of the latter
- The Training Organization should have the capacity to compile a Preparatory Course for candidates who wish to pass entry examinations in Medical Universities in Bulgaria
- The Preparatory Courses should be delivered by qualified teachers
- Demonstrated ability to outreach to the Roma communities. Knowledge of Roma Education issues represents an advantage
- The Training Organization should have the capacity to hold the Preparatory Courses for 10 consecutive academic months
- The Training Organization should be able to organize preparatory courses in all or several of the above listed towns.

**Output:**

A project concept for the Roma Health Scholarship Program Preparatory Course. The document should be of about 5 pages. Separate documents to be sent: Executive summary, Presentation of the portfolio of the organization and the CV of the Manager/Director as well as the CVs of the trainers/teachers. The project concept should focus on the following:

- Preparation of the curricula/teaching plan and the process of selection of teachers/trainers (with teaching experience of at least 3 years);
- Specific activities, including the roles and responsibilities of all key players, a time bound action plan, and a staffing plan;
- Estimated costs of the proposed action plan. Proposals should include a description of 'incentive payments' whereby the fees paid are based on the performance of the students in the examination. Proposals should indicate the fee for students who: (a) registered; (b) attend all courses; (b) take all the examinations; and (c) are admitted to the medical universities. The proposals should also include an estimate of the number of students in each category.
- Identification of key challenges that would need to be overcome
- Geographical mapping

The Project Concept should be prepared in English.

**Task management:**

The REF Scholarship Programs Officer will be responsible for managing this task. The eligible Organizations should send the project concept along with the requested documents to Rodica Moroi at [rmoroi@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:rmoroi@romaeducationfund.org) by May 30, 2009.

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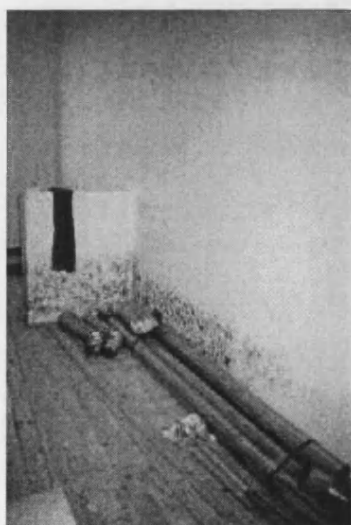
## Appendix #7 - Snapshots from around Europe

### Leading Hungarian politicians deny Romani problems

Social and Family Affairs Minister Péter Harrach said on August 5, 2000, regarding Roma from the central Hungarian village of Zámoly seeking refugee status in France, that "some were going abroad to discredit Hungary, not only demanding compensation but making groundless allegations against the state and government." On August 9, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán backed Mr Harrach's statement in an interview on Hungarian Radio, suggesting that Hungarian Roma should "try to study and work more."

These comments followed the flight of several families of Hungarian Roma, totalling approximately 50 people, to France in mid-July. The families have been without a secure place to live and have repeatedly been forced to move since the local government destroyed their homes in Zámoly in 1997. While still in Zámoly, they received numerous oral and written death threats. From late 1999, they were housed in Budapest, where they lived until April 2000 in one very small flat, not capable of adequately housing the group. Following their move to Budapest, the mayor of Zámoly attempted unsuccessfully to have their official address removed from the Zámoly town records.

In April 2000, the Zámoly Roma were again forced to move, this time to the village of Csór where, with the assistance only of a relative, they were sheltered in a basement garage, a coal cellar and a furnace room with no heat, lighting or warm water. Mr Dezső Csete, the mayor of Csór, was widely quoted in the Hungarian press after, in direct reference to the Zámoly Roma, he stated on national television on April 27, 2000, "At the present time, I believe that the Roma of Zámoly have no place among human beings. Just as in the animal world, parasites must be expelled." Mr Csete has to date suffered no negative consequences as a result of his statement. The village of Zámoly sanctioned the construction of substandard housing at the edge of town, in a low area plagued by flooding. On February 21, 2000, authorities issued an occupancy permit for the houses in Zámoly, despite the fact that the houses did not meet the habitability requirements established by law. As of August 31, 2000, the habitability requirements still had not been fulfilled. The ERRC has awarded a grant to an attorney to represent six Romani families from Zámoly in their complaint against the Mayor of Zámoly. A complaint was filed on June 15, 2000, with the Székesfehérvár Municipal Court, and was later removed to the Fejér Country Court. The first hearing in the case has been scheduled for October 31, 2000.



The ERRC held a press conference in Zámoly on August 31, 2000, (i) to clarify the facts and underlying legal bases for the complaint lodged by the Zámoly Roma, in response to the lack of accurate and objective information made available to the public on the case; and (ii) to express concern at the quality and tenor of public statements made by Hungarian officials, including high-ranking members of the government, about the Zámoly case, which may have exacerbated an already tense situation vis-a-vis Roma in Hungary. (Agence France Press, ERRC, Radio Free Europe, Roma Press Centre)

*Housing on the outskirts of Zámoly, central Hungary, August 2000, for Roma from the town. The black marks are mould caused by flooding. The local government has authorised the houses as ready, despite their evidently uninhabitable state.*

