

'BAD GYPSIES' AND 'GOOD ROMA': CONSTRUCTING ETHNIC AND  
POLITICAL IDENTITIES THROUGH EDUCATION IN RUSSIA AND HUNGARY

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: ‘Bad Gypsies’ and ‘Good Roma’: Constructing Ethnic and Political Identities through Education in Russia and Hungary

This dissertation seeks to unpack how the two dominant images—‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’—developed and are mobilized in formal and informal educational institutions in Hungary and Russia and how those are perceived by Roma/Gypsies themselves. The former ethnic category has evolved over centuries, since Gypsies were increasingly defined as the quintessential ‘Other’, associated with resistance to authority, criminality, lack of education and discipline, and backwardness. The latter image has been advanced over the last few decades to counter negative stereotypes latent in the ‘Gypsy’ label. Various non-state actors are promoting a new image, that of proud, empowered, and educated ‘good Roma’. Mobilization of both images is distinctly recognizable in schools—it is in formal and informal educational institutions where the ‘bad Gypsy’ image is most visibly sustained and reproduced, while these sites are also supposed to be indisputable tools of empowerment and positive identity building.

Relying on approximately 12 months of fieldwork in Hungary and Russia, the study pursues three goals. First, it examines the origins, institutionalization, and deployment of ethnic labels used to categorize Roma. I show that two images, ‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’ that are contradictory in content, were reified and

essentialized. Second, it investigates the mechanisms of imbuing Roma youth with normative values of these ethnic labels in formal and informal educational institutions through school instructions, curricular and extra-curricular activities, disciplinary practices, and discourse. Third, it assesses Roma response and techniques of coping to the given essentialized images about their group identity.

Overall, the dissertation is composed of two sections: a historical and contemporary examination of Roma identity formation and ethnic labeling practices. I interrogate issues of nationhood, belonging, and identity politics surrounding the Roma minority by in depth study of identity formation and construction of exclusionary nationhood in Russia and Hungary. Any attempt to understand contemporary European political, economic, and social conditions cannot ignore the Roma, an issue that requires an urgent sustainable solution. Improving Roma living conditions and elimination of prejudice against Roma requires a holistic approach and a comprehensive understanding, which is the ambition that this study pursues.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### Case Study and Arguments

*“Where we are now, is that we get immediately stamped and from then on, everything is determined: if you are a Roma, that must mean you are a murderer, serial killer, burglar... even though they might be normal people. Not much, just half an hour [is what Roma must spend with non-Roma]... and then we would understand a lot about each other.”*

- Young man from a Roma settlement<sup>1</sup>

This study explores Roma identity formation and contestation across contemporary Europe and the former Soviet Union. I show that there are two dominant images about the group – the ‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’. The former ethnic category has evolved over centuries, since Gypsies were increasingly defined as the quintessential ‘Other’, a threat to the nation, criminals, uneducated, undisciplined, and backwards. The latter image has been advanced over the last few decades to counter negative stereotypes latent in the ‘Gypsy’ label. Various non-state actors are promoting a new image, that of proud, empowered, educated ‘good Roma’.

Mobilization of both images is distinctly recognizable in schools—it is in formal and informal educational institutions where the ‘bad Gypsy’ image is most visibly sustained and reproduced, while these sites are also supposed to be indisputable tools of empowerment and positive identity building. Consequently, this dissertation project is driven by the following inquiry: *how the two dominant images—‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good*

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<sup>1</sup> Fieldnotes from November, 2012, Hungary.



*Roma*<sup>2</sup>—developed over time, are mobilized in formal and informal educational institutions, and perceived by Roma/Gypsies themselves in Hungary and Russia?

To answer this leading question, I interrogate issues of nationhood, state power, belonging, and identity politics attempting to elucidate Roma identity formation. These topics, thus, emerged as critical context of my principal inquiry into identity formation. Any attempt to understand contemporary European political, economic, and social conditions cannot ignore the Roma. They have become one of the most pressing issues in the region. A rancorous debate among politicians regarding the “Roma question” has intensified in Europe, accompanied by protests, evictions, and deportations.<sup>3</sup>

Building on approximately 12 months of fieldwork in Hungary and Russia, the study pursues three goals. First, it examines the origins, institutionalization, and deployment of ethnic labels used to categorize Roma. I show that two ethnic categories with normative connotation, ‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma, are not only contradictory in content, but also were reified and essentialized. Second, the study investigates the mechanisms of imbuing Roma youth with values of these ethnic labels in formal and informal educational institutions through school instructions, curricular and extra-

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this dissertation I use ‘Gypsy’ (*cigány* in Hungarian, *tsygan* in Russian) never in a derogatory way, although acknowledging the unfortunate negative connotations of the word, its origin as rooted in mistaken label considering Roma as Egyptians, and current agenda of pro-Roma movement to replace the term Gypsy with that of Roma. In this project I am particularly concerned with discourse, labels, and meanings of categories, especially in relation to ethnic identities. Consequently, I strive to employ terminology to reflect its original use by target populations. Also, the word ‘Roma’ is seldom used in general Russian discourse and my attempts to use it during fieldwork caused confusion (leading non-Roma informants to believe I inquire about Romanians or Romanian Roma). In effect, I argue that it is the content of the word that is harmful, not the word itself, and replacement of terminology does not sufficiently address the problem, but changes its nature. When describing general issues, I use ‘Roma’.

<sup>3</sup> Among many more, the explosion of a group of Romanian Roma from France in 2013 or deportation of the Kosovo Roma girl from France are one of the most recent and widely publicized cases. See for example report by BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11020429>), The International (<http://www.theinternational.org/articles/476-french-divided-on-roma-expulsion>) or NYTimes ([http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/world/europe/france-says-deportation-of-roma-girl-was-legal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/world/europe/france-says-deportation-of-roma-girl-was-legal.html?_r=0)).

curricular activities, disciplinary practices, and discourse. Third, I assess the bottom up response from Roma youth and their techniques of coping to the given essentialized images about their group identity.

I posit that historical and contemporary definition of nationhood, which is a direct outcome of state building and enduring nation building efforts, is necessary to understand how these exclusionary practices towards Roma evolved and recently met with resistance from non-state actors. Consequently, Chapter II and III provide the necessary historical background, while the rest of the chapters discuss contemporary issues. Importantly, my usage of Gypsy and Roma as ethnic labels should imply no pejorative overtones<sup>4</sup>; I am concerned with understanding the history and deployment of these categories from top down and perception of these from bottom up.

The dissertation shows that starting with the earliest phases of state consolidation, Roma were seen as outsiders, not contributing to society, but disrupting order and national coherence. State-led politics of “Otherness” generated negative stereotypes about Roma, forming the ‘bad Gypsy’ image, which was slowly absorbed and institutionalized, manifesting in hidden and overt state practices. This centuries-long progression of identity politics led to an ethnic hierarchy, positioning Roma on the bottom, and has become an integral and often unquestioned guiding force instructing attitudes towards Roma. In the recent decades, counteracting this centuries-old process, a pro-Roma civil

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<sup>4</sup> I argue in my dissertation that Roma/Gypsy identity is increasingly politicized, and siding with one label or another often carried important messages during fieldwork. When I discuss the minority group in general terms, I use Roma. An abstract can’t have a footnote, and I think this is an important point, so move it up! Usually dissertation abstracts are also longer—a few pages that make clear the contribution.

society emerged, initiating a new discourse that rests on the image of ‘good Roma’ in order to counteract negative stereotypes and stimulate transnational Roma nationhood.<sup>5</sup>

Efforts to displace the ‘bad Gypsy’ image with that of ‘good Roma’ had more complex consequences than their proponents had foreseen. My analysis shows that promoting and maintaining these conflicting messages unintentionally contributed to distrust and alienation between educated and non-educated members of the community, as well as failed attempts at integration. Roma often find themselves estranged in their countries of residence, while also struggle to find their place in a yet incomplete Roma transnational movement. Majority society’s increased frustration with the West/EU, due to criticism regarding discriminatory practices against Roma that is perceived as hypocritical, and imperious promotion of ‘good Roma’ image, further deepens the problem.

In studying how ethnic labels and accompanying normative messages unfolded and transformed, it is important to clarify that stigmatization may exist without different ethnic labels (i.e. Gypsy and Roma). I pay attention to how these categories evoke certain feelings, are employed, and rejected or accepted by Roma and non-Roma alike in order to understand the role ethnic labels play in marginalization or empowerment.

### Comparative Analysis: Hungary and Russia

This dissertation examines Roma identity formation in two countries, Hungary and Russia. A Hungary-Russia comparison provides a helpful context in which to display

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<sup>5</sup> I define “pro-Roma civil society” after Kóczé and Rövid (2012) as “special microcosm [that] has developed within global civil society that is specialised in the so-called ‘Roma issue’, comprising non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations, expert bodies, foundations, activists and politicians.” The authors place the founding moment at the 1971 World Romani Congress in London.

state-society dynamics. The two countries share many similar characteristics, and yet there are major differences, providing fertile ground for testing the impact of various players and assessing their role on Roma identity formation. In particular, the two countries resemble in that 1) both developed and institutionalized the ‘bad Gypsy’ image through actively excluding Roma; 2) both have similar political legacies (i.e. empires and Socialist countries in the past); and the two differ because 3) in the 1920 USSR uniquely institutionalized Roma culture as part of the Soviet social fabric; 4) today Russia continues consolidating the powers of the state and eliminating non-state actors, especially in the realm of dealing with ethnic minorities, while Hungary hosts many international institutions.

More specifically, both Russia and Hungary share empire legacies, but after the collapse of empires, the Soviet Union uniquely implemented a Nativization period during early Communism (from 1917 until the end of 1930s) with a state-managed Roma identity project. Promotion of minority cultures served the purpose of educating subjects on dogmatic principles of Marxism-Leninism and ultimately building a post-ethnic Communist society. This unique phenomenon can serve as a parallel to present efforts of pro-Roma civil society in creating a Roma transborder national identity within the framework of a multi-ethnic European Union.

The two countries endured state Socialism after World War II with a relatively similar approach towards the Roma minority, both went through regime change and attempted to build a new democratic society, to only drift back to authoritarianism.

Viktor Orbán, the current Hungarian prime minister, is often referred to as the “Vladimir

Putin of his country.”<sup>6</sup> This most current political resemblance is surprising considering that Hungary was one of the most promising countries after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and was among pioneers in joining international institutions, switching to a free-market economy, and moving along the path towards democracy. Despite comparable authoritarian tendencies, Russia’s intolerance of non-state actors is increasingly draconian, while Hungary’s membership in the EU since 2004 ensures a more peaceful presence of NGOs.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Budapest-based actors, such as the Open Society Foundations, Decade of Roma Inclusion, and the EU Roma Framework Strategy, have been the most influential in advancing the pro-Roma movement (Kóczé and Rövid 2012).

Table 1 below is a concise summary of the main actors in Hungary and Russia, the way education is employed to construct a certain image of Roma, and the normative discourse it generates regarding the group. The table shows the critical similarities and variations between Hungary and Russia. For instance, while Russia, with a small Roma minority, has a strong authoritarian state and weak presence of non-state actors, which are perceived as threat to the state, Hungary, with a significant Roma minority, tolerates non-governmental organizations while still sliding towards authoritarianism. In both countries, however, non-state actors strive for Roma empowerment, positive identity building, creating a political elite, mobilization, and transborder nation building, focusing on the youth. Consequently, incorporated in the content of education that non-state actors

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<sup>6</sup> See for example The Telegraph (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/hungary/10373959/Viktor-Orban-interview-Patriotism-is-a-good-thing.html>), NYTimes (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/world/europe/07iht-hungary07.html>); or various Hungarian sources, such as Origo (<http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20131012-orban-van-ra-esely-hogy-olyan-autoriter-legyek-mint-putyin.html>).

<sup>7</sup> See for example their most recent “Foreign Agent” law, which hit hundreds of NGOs; consider Human Rights Watch report: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/26/russia-foreign-agents-law-hits-hundreds-ngos-updated-december-26-2013>

support are symbols of the Roma nation, teaching of Romani language, and aspects of Roma culture. The accompanying discourse represents that of ‘good Roma’. In the meantime, the long-standing stereotypes that permeated state schools reproduce damaging stereotypes, current nationalist curriculum continues marginalizing Roma, and leads to ‘bad Gypsy’ portrayal. Roma negotiate the two sets of discourse in their everyday subsistence in varieties of ways, but the essentialized, reified, and homogeneous view of Roma fails to grasp the existent intra-group diversity and forms of affiliation that are local or community-based.

Table 1: Russia and Hungary Comparison

Actors	Non-State		State		Roma/Gypsies <sup>8</sup>	
	Russia: weak or non-existent sector	Hungary: strong sector	Russia: strong and authoritarian	Hungary: increasingly powerful, but there is competition between state and non-state	Russia: small minority	Hungary: the most visible minority
<b>View of Roma</b>	Empowerment, creation of ‘transnational Roma nation’ and proud Roma		Disadvantaged, marginalized group in need of integration and assistance		Ethnic or village-based affiliations	
<b>School</b>	Focus on higher education—Roma elite/educated class, and extracurricular activities		Nationalist curriculum, militarization of schools, focus on patriotism		Little support from home, but desire to be educated	
<b>Content or effect of education</b>	Roma national symbols, standardized Romani language, political mobilization and representation		Reproduction of stereotypes		Negotiation of identity: resistance, internalization, performance, assimilation	
<b>Goal</b>	Political empowerment Transnational nation-building		Integration/assimilation		Varies	
<b>Normative Discourse</b>	<i>‘Good Roma’</i>		<i>‘Bad Gypsies’</i>		<i>Crisis of Belonging</i>	

<sup>8</sup> While I acknowledge that discussing Roma/Gypsies as one homogeneous group does not do justice to the diversity of the group. Yet, for simplicity sake, in this table I refer to majority Roma/Gypsies, not the thin layer of Roma elite. The latter, especially those who have been exposed to teachings and values regarding the pro-Roma movement may indeed develop a transnational sense of belonging.

## Theory and Contribution

*“Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty.”*  
- W. Connolly (1991, 64)<sup>9</sup>

While this is a historical and grounded study of the role educational institutions and school discipline play in Roma identity formation, the case study is instructive for scrutinizing various phenomena central to political science, signifying the dynamic and shifting nature of even the most entrenched concepts, such as power, nation, state, and identity. To understand the issue at hand, I draw on theories of nation and state building, state control and discipline, and ethnic labeling. The key contributions that come out of this multidisciplinary study are multifold. Nation building is an ongoing process, which does not necessarily involve the state in the modern world, but non-state actors can take a lead. Education remains critical in these efforts. Values of historical nationalism and modern sense of multiculturalism are clashing in the post-Socialist region, placing minorities such as Roma in the middle of the battleground. Ethnic labels tend to generalize and homogenize populations, while in reality diversity manifests in many aspects, resulting in negotiation of top down images of the group, and bottom up realities. Schools are vital in constructing new national identities, as well as sustaining exclusionary sense of nationhood.

In other words, I ask in this dissertation if and how schools and education are used in the post-Socialist region to continuously categorize Roma as the quintessential “Other.” Relatedly, how and with what success non-state education, led by international institutions, NGOs, and activists have successfully inflicted values of multiculturalism

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Neumann 1999, 207.

and advanced Roma transnational identity, promoting a positive image of the group? Subsequently, how do Roma react to the constructed images about their group identity and relate to state and non-state educational institutions and projects? Finally, as a consequence of schooling, how does the relationship between Roma and state, Roma and non-Roma, and among subgroups of Roma change and evolve?

Roma are often described in incongruous ways and the endurance of incompatible narratives about them clearly indicates the non-static meaning of these concepts: Roma are EU citizens “everywhere in the European Union”<sup>10</sup> and yet they are “Europe’s largest stateless minority,”<sup>11</sup> they are marginalized and being empowered, discriminated and integrated, diverse and united, traditional and modern. The present study uniquely focuses on the very process of change, by looking at the sources of these narratives, importance of ethnic labeling, the role of education in constructing Roma/Gypsy images, and the way Roma engage with these ethnic categories.

This dissertation is interdisciplinary and builds on various central themes in the field of Political Science and beyond. I contribute to the following theoretical debates and questions: 1) Is the post-Socialist region characterized by homogenizing and nationalizing states (e.g. Brubaker 1996; 2009; 2011), or is a multicultural and transborder “emergence of a mass European identity” increasingly the tendency (Bruter 2005)? 2) Pertinently, does the state still enjoy monopoly on critical functions such as

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<sup>10</sup> Writes the Berlin daily, Der Tagesspiegel, quoted in The Spiegel (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-world-from-berlin-the-roma-are-eu-citizens-everywhere-in-the-european-union-a-715900.html>), but see also Roma Education Fund (<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/frequently-asked-questions-european-roma-population>) describing Roma as EU citizens.

<sup>11</sup> From the Economist (<http://www.economist.com/node/16943841>), but see also UNHCR’s report (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4e12db4a6.html>) describing Roma as stateless.



education of its subjects/citizens (e.g. Mitchell 1988; Boli 1989), or are non-state actors slowly challenging this authority as a process of “NGO-ization” of previously state-dominated services (e.g. Jakobi et al. 2010)?<sup>12</sup> 3) Postulating that schools are the primary site of educating national values and principles, does top down disciplinary power (e.g. Foucault 1975 [1997]) meet with any response of resistance or challenge from the bottom up (e.g. Scott 1990; 2009)? 4) How do top down ethnic labels and categories evolve, change, and interact with identity formation of the target population (e.g. Starr 1992; Lucassen 1997; Mamdani 2002)?

*State and Nation Building: Nationalism or Multiculturalism?*

After the demise of multinational empires, nationalism and national self-determination redrew the borders of Europe and restructured social organization, including ethnic relations, for decades to come. Nationalism is a modern phenomenon, which is tightly related to state and nation building efforts. Cultural homogenization, described as a core aspect of nation building, is a “state-led policy aimed at cultural standardization ...[and] top down process where the state seeks to nationalize the ‘masses’” (Conversi 2010, 719). Ernest Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism* argued that cultural homogenization is the inescapable product of industrialism, where nationalism is a central component (1983). Furthermore, if “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them,” they must share a common national identity in order to “imagine a community” in which they live (Anderson 1983, 6). With print-capitalism and in specific newspapers reassuring that “the

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<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon is not limited to education, but in other realms as well, such as environment protection, social movements and alike.

imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life...nation-ness [became] the most universally legitimate value in the [modern] political life” (ibid., 3, 36).

Furthermore, as states modernized, national standardization was once again essential and “hard-wired into the architecture of the modern state[s]” (Scott 2009, 4). James Scott maintains in *Seeing Like a State* that “[m]odernization required, above all, physical concentration into standardized units that the state might service and administer” (1998, 231). Such standardization was driven by “logic of homogenization and the virtual elimination of local knowledge” (1998, 302). Similarly, McVeigh argues that the “obsessive desire to control” motivated projects of assimilation, or even extermination in some instances (1997, 20). Eradication of misfits and disorder were seen as necessary for a modern society, and the “affinity of modernity with the nation-state” made the abolition of “unwanted elements” even more urgent (ibid.). In other words, a modern state strove to create “standardized...metric world of facts” with a “mass society” by “regrouping [the population] in the internally fluid, culturally continuous communities” (Gellner 1983, 22).

Modernization thus entails standardization, which in turn targeted minorities, including the Roma. Industrialization and modernization continued with new momentum during Socialism in the region, but the society was built with a different ideology. A system of “moral economy”<sup>13</sup> imposed a sense of obligation, which in turn was necessary for the construction of a less-critical audience and implementation of large-scale coercive projects intended to industrialize the country (Brooks 2000, 16). Communist ideology assumed the creation of class-less political communities based on work-ethic and Marxist

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<sup>13</sup> Brooks used this term to describe “the official effort to represent economic relations as moral relationships...[where] Soviet authorities shaped economic life with appeals to moral incentives” (2000, xv).

belief, rather than nationalism or race. Nations were to become passé. Lenin launched a brief but very important Nativization program, which meant the state was to promote minority cultures and endorse native cadres into leadership positions. “‘The Great Transformation’ of 1928-1932 turned into the most extravagant celebration of ethnic diversity that any state had ever financed,” writes Slezkine, and although it was followed by the “Great Retreat” starting in the mid-1930s, this period left a major imprint on majority-minority relations (1994b, 395).

After Lenin’s death and particularly following World War II, when Eastern Europe was locked up behind the Iron Curtain, from advancement of local cultures in the name of Communism a clear ethnic hierarchy with Russians on the top was established. “Forging of Soviet citizens” (Fitzpatrick 1999) implied obligations to the state, but even without a concept of race, racial politics existed (Weitz 2002). Towards the last decades of Socialism in the region, nationalism became a “sacred principle of Marxism-Leninism” (ibid.) and not surprisingly contributed to the demise of USSR and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (Beissinger 2002). However, the brief Nativization program unique to the early Socialist phase in Soviet Union, with its multicultural undertones, had a lasting effect and a network of institutions that endured.

Today, the creation of a European community, based on values of multiculturalism and attachment to the idea of European regional identity, is founded on supranational political organization as an alternative to ethnic nationalism.<sup>14</sup> However, in recent years, Europe has seen the unambiguous rise of the far right and popularity of the

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<sup>14</sup> As a long-standing concern for political scientists, a remarkable body of literature emerged on the topic of regional integration and European Union (e.g. Haas 1958; 1971; Deutsch 1969; Parsons 2003 and more). This literature is not discussed further in the dissertation as it is not the focus of this study.

EU has dramatically declined. Roger Brubaker argues that Eastern Europe today is characterized by ethnocultural nationalism, a modern form of politicized ethnicity, which are byproducts of nationalizing states (Brubaker 1996; 2009; 2011).<sup>15</sup> Non-territorial claims of Roma self-determination emerged, which can easily contribute to further ethnicization of the issue, depressing inter-ethnic unity (Rövid 2013b), but also “challenging the so-called Westphalian international order and providing a more adequate model to ‘the globalized world’ than that of the nation-states” (Rövid 2013a).

It remains to be seen whether the post-Socialist region will be submerged under cultural pluralism, celebration of diversity and multiculturalism, or will return to exclusionary ethnic nationalism. This dissertation makes a twofold contribution to our understanding of state and nation building: first, treatment of Roma is a direct indication of whether Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union can set the foundation of multiculturalism or will tend to fall back to ethnonationalism. Second, while nation building is characterized as state-driven projects in the existing literature, I discuss how the current non-territorial pan-European Roma nation building efforts orchestrated by non-state actors pose a challenge to the prevailing concept of state-led nation formation.

### *Managing and Ordering the Population: Schools and the State*

Another central body of literature for the dissertation is theories of population manageability—standardization, categorization, and grouping—and disciplinary institutions where bodies, minds, and souls are ordered (Foucault 1975 [1997]). Social categories are filled with meaning. I unpack this meaning and the way labels objectify,

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<sup>15</sup> Nationalizing-states are characterized by a sense of ownership of the state by the majority and use of state powers to promote this particular culture (Brubaker 1996, 431).

order, reify, and essentialize ethnic and political identities in the most suggestive disciplinary field—educational institutions.

State and nation building are inseparable developments that were linked together by mass education (e.g. Boli et al. 1985; Boli 1989; Meyer et al. 1979; Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006), and public schools were a key institution and the primary homogenizing tool of the state (Gellner 1983; Foucault 1995 [1977]; Mitchell 1988). In other words, “the state contributed to the unification of the cultural market by unifying all codes...and by effecting a homogenization of all forms of communication. [...] Through classification systems inscribed in law through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures, and social rituals the state molds mental structures and...contributes to the construction of...national identity” (Bourdieu 1999, 61).

In essence, schools are usually described as the “monopolistic, centrally controlled communication network” of the state (Azrael 1972, 318) and “the most important socializing institution” (Nogee 1972, 315). With centralized and state-approved core curriculum, internalization of attitudes towards the authority and teaching discipline are perennial goals of the state. While universal schooling has been historically the mechanism “generating citizens” and managing identities through political and cultural socialization (Boli 1989) and “the road leading towards the eradication of non-conformity” (Crowe 1994, 76; also see Kendall 1997), it was also a site where attitudes and beliefs were “re-enacted and came into conflict” for minority groups like Roma (Liégeois 1987, 140).

Schools are thus “functional sites” where through “distribution of individuals in space” and teachers’ “ideological power,” identities are disciplined and ordered, and

where disciplinary power, which “is exercised through invisibility [...], impos[ing] on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility,” indeed produces a certain “ceremony of objectification” (Foucault 1975 [1997]). Due to deep-seated societal discrimination and coercive environment in schools, earlier studies demonstrate that Roma families consider schools an alien institution and are distrustful of them (e.g. Liégeois 2007, Demeter et al. 2000, Messing 2012, Neményi 2007).

Consequently, as the primary homogenizing tool of the state, schools were viewed by Roma communities as “unsuitable institution[s]” where the youth are particularly at risk “to be imbued by a value system that is not theirs and that they have no wish to acquire” (Liégeois 2007, 186; also see Liégeois 1987; Demeter et al. 2000). Yet, today education is widely considered as the most important tool of empowerment. Meanwhile, Romologists, argue that “crisis of legitimacy [of Roma identity]” is a consequence of exclusion of the educated upper- and middle class Roma who “no longer live in traditional conditions” (Gheorghe 1997, 157; Ladanyi et al. 2006; Koulis 2005). Schooling, then, poses an important site of tension: do schools empower the marginalized, or standardize the population into manageable units?

In addition, while schools have been historically a formal state institution, today non-state actors are gaining momentum in challenging state monopoly, providing alternative and non-formal education. Transmitted values and messages often differ: state schools reportedly marginalize Roma minority, but non-state actors seek to empower them; state policies follow integrationist discourse and assimilationist actions, while pro-Roma NGOs seek to promote transborder Roma nationhood and empowerment of the minority. What are the consequences of these competing forces on Roma identity

formation, including relationship between Roma and non-Roma, Roma and their respective states, and among various sub-groups of Roma? In addition, while existing literature often considers standardized education and school discipline as homogenizing, few have studied various responses to top down order and attempts to manage the population.<sup>16</sup>

I fill this gap in literature and combine top down and bottom up analysis. I maintain that education remains vital – it can be a critical tool for assuring citizenship rights, empowerment, and integration, but can adversely serve as a tool of marginalization, an instrument of homogenization, and an apparatus to discriminate. I embed my study in the ongoing process of changing power structure in the post-Socialist world, where the state actively competes with non-state actors, and how this struggle transforms top down images of Roma people. I assess how Roma children in schools and settlements act in the context of essentialized identities – the ‘bad Gypsies’ as historically constructed by the state, and the ‘good Roma’ as recently advanced by non-state actors. Notably, I do not suggest that these sets of actors are either homogeneous or singularly responsible for transmitting these images; I instead study how these images were generated, are employed, mobilized, and produce a certain response through education.

Finally, homogenization in state institutions is not totalizing. Few studies assess the bottom up response to imposed conformity: whether these are “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990), performance of identities (Pusca 2013), or any other form of “negotiation of Roma identities” (Silverman 1988).

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<sup>16</sup> See an excellent example by Petra Margita Gerart; in her PhD dissertation (titled “Learning Music, Race and Nation in the Czech Republic,” 2010) she examines how Roma students socialize through music instructions in Czech public schools.

### *Ethnic Labels and Regulating Identity*

Codification and stigmatization of Gypsy travelers, among other “outsiders,” emerged with state consolidation and “nationalistic fever” (Lucassen 1997, 84). Studies have shown that certain state institutions—especially police and schools—were critical to this process. Top down categories or labels are imbued with meaning, evoke emotions, and are vital to the construction of social identity (Starr 1992), while categorization also implies high level of generalization (Matras 2003). There is a need to problematize and understand how authorities labeled populations, especially traveling people, and it is important to embed those in a longer historical span (Lucassen 1997). In addition, it is imperative to supplement our understanding with bottom up responses from the actors (Roma) to these imposed categories. It is wrong to assume that “people subsumed under [one] label form a homogeneous ethnic group” and subscribe to that very label, since labeling does not necessarily conform to the self-definition of the people categorized (Lucassen 1997). This dissertation addresses both concerns.

Various “accounts of power institutions to create, shape, and regulate social identities” through ethnic labels contributed a great deal to this dissertation (Ferguson 2001, 2). Ferguson’s study of African American boys in the United States education system is a superb example of how black stereotypes influence teachers’ treatment of pupils, and how the boys in turn construct a sense of self under these circumstances. Ferguson impressively demonstrates that schools are where discipline becomes a “powerful occasion for identification” (ibid.).

Mahmood Mamdani shows the process of essentialized ethnic labeling through “culture talk” in his excellent book, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (2002). “History of the



modern state,” he writes “can also be read as a history of race...[with] internal victims of state building and external victims of imperial expansion” (ibid., 5). Mamdani assesses the relationship between cultural and political identity through an in-depth analysis of cultural framing of group identities. “Culture talk” resulted in two political identities—“good Muslims” and “bad Muslims”—where the latter became synonymous with backwardness and fanaticism.

“Culture talk”—or “predilection to define cultures according to their presumed ‘essential’ characteristic,” Mandani writes, is especially troubling because it encourages collective discipline and punishment (2002, 766-7). It also implies a static culture of the “impenetrable Other,” which is constant and exists outside of history, because “if labeled ‘bad’, this badness becomes essentialized as part of the inherent make up of...race, ethnicity and backwardness” (Khan 2006, 149; Mandani 2002; 2005).

In short, classifications even when referring to the same ethnic group, “may suggest entirely different attributes, [and] they often trigger the damages or advantages that categories bring” (Starr 1992, 282). States categorize to draw a line between types of people, to manage, and order society, even if categorization introduces high levels of abstraction, reduces complexity, and often essentializes these categories (e.g. Starr 1992; Scott 1990, 1998, 2009; Mamdani 2005). For instance, during the 2011 census The Hungarian Central Statistical Office only allowed a common 'Gypsy / Roma' category and listed merely ‘Gypsy language’, thus making Boyash and Romani (including the various dialects) inseparable and undistinguishable (Arató 2013, 45).

My examination of how ethnic images or labels are deployed and mobilized combines top down and bottom up analyses, thus providing a complementary and holistic understanding of the process of identity formation.

## Methodology

This dissertation is a qualitative study of identity formation in the context of nation building efforts in the post-Socialist region. I primarily rely on historical analysis and fieldwork data, which was collected between August 2012 and September 2013 in Hungary and Russia, with approximately 2.5 months spent in the latter country. Data collection mainly involved semi-structured and open-ended interviews, archival work, content analysis of textbooks and media sources, discourse analysis,<sup>17</sup> as well as participant observation in various educational institutions. I conducted approximately 130 semi-structured interviews, asking local Roma about their every-day experience with the local school, teachers, community, and larger society. In addition, I also conducted surveys,<sup>18</sup> as a participant observer attended classes, taught in formal and informal educational settings, and had enriching conversations with NGOs, politicians, charities, and teachers. Appendix 1 contains more information regarding conditions and realization of surveying with Roma communities I studied. I was exposed to diverse Roma groups (Romungro, Vlach, and Boyash in Hungary; Kalderash in Russia) in rural slums and villages, as well as urban ghettos.

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<sup>17</sup> I use discourse analysis as a methodology to study the usage, content and meaning of words.

<sup>18</sup> Semi-structured questions for the survey interview, along with survey data is presented in Appendix A and B.

Participant observation proved to be the most rewarding and challenging data-collecting method and deserves some discussion; it clearly revealed my positionality regarding the subject population of this study, and located me, as a researcher, in the web of power structure and existing hierarchy in research sites.<sup>19</sup> Embeddedness and trust were absolutely central for this study of marginalized and discriminated Roma group, and my in-group status was a prerequisite to some of the most illuminating conversations I have had with non-Roma, while established trust was critical to honest conversations with Roma.<sup>20</sup> Throughout my analysis, I will be discussing my position where relevant—non-Roma, Russian and Hungarian, coming from US-based academia—as it played a critical role in how the respondents related to me, what initial assumptions they held talking to me about topics of race and discrimination, and what immediate boundaries and hierarchies I entered based on my position in a given society.

The study relies on interpretivist ontology and uses ethnographic data-collection because it is most sensitive to 1) “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990) or covert ways of resisting; 2) negotiation of ethnic identities (Silverman 1998) and performance “as a specific logic of interaction” (Wedeen 2006, 77; also see Wedeen 1999) to the specific worldviews of the people studied (Schatz 2009, 4) social construction of reality (ibid., 13; Berger and Luckmann 1967) meaning-making and differences in meaning attributed to the same concept through immersion<sup>21</sup> (Emerson et al. 1995; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea

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<sup>19</sup> On positionality and ethnographic research see Madison 2012.

<sup>20</sup> After months spent at the same field site, there were definitely comments about me “becoming a Gypsy.” Whether a trivial comment or not, I believe an in-group status to a certain degree developed.

<sup>21</sup> Emerson et al. define immersion as the act when “the field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so” (1995, 2). However, “immersion is not merging” and the ethnographer remains an outsider through field work (ibid., 35).

2006); and 5) role of researcher, allowing for reflexivity<sup>22</sup> (see for example Emerson et al. 1995; Schatz 2003; Pachirat 2003; Shehata 2006).

Ethnographic research is “empirically sound, theoretically vibrant, epistemologically innovative, and *normatively grounded* study of politics” (Schatz 2009, 4; emphasis mine). I put the normative aspect at the forefront because every interaction I had during field work with teachers, activists, Roma or non-Roma students, Roma families and others, affected me and my perceptions greatly. Roma integration is overly politicized and in schools one of the hardest issues, evoking strong feelings and reactions. When hearing stories either from those whom some tend to label as “racists” or those labeled as “marginalized and discriminated,” problems become deeply embedded and contextualized in a complex web of human lives, emotions, families, hardships, survival techniques, bitterness, and anger. Practicing empathy and sympathy for everyone who was open and brave to share their story led me to consider the current disconcerting treatment of Roma as a societal and structural issue; finger pointing at groups of people, particular establishments or individuals does not treat the problem at its roots, but tries to eliminate the outcomes. In that process, there may be adverse outcomes that are often ignored in the name of fighting for Roma rights and equality.

### Fieldwork

In both countries, in depth field data was collected primarily in one community. This allowed a deeper immersion and more nuanced understanding of identity negotiation. These deep processes should be observed over time, through

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<sup>22</sup> Timothy Pachirat defines reflexivity as “ explicit attention to the role of the ethnographer in the ethnography” (2003, 144).

interaction, conversations, and participation in local life. Often when I visited sites for a brief period of time, school classes were “set up” a certain way to project a certain false image for the visitor, and community members were reserved and withdrawn. Adversely, this study should not be generalized until contrasted with similar studies, conducted in other parts of the country or region, to compare the outcomes. Especially the Russian case study, where I was exclusively studying one relatively homogenous Roma community, and unlike in Hungary did not have the opportunity to even visit other sites, findings should be treated with modest scope and application. I am hopeful that other young scholars will take up the task of grounded inquiry into Roma identity formation, especially in the post-Soviet world.

I spent more time in Hungary and had a chance to visit other settlements, broadening my view and understanding of the issue at hand. The Russian case study is more limited to 2.5 months and the settlement was less accessible for an unmarried, young, non-Roma woman. My conversations with community members were primarily in my local research assistant’s house, who conducted interviews and surveys on my behalf. The research assistant was a well-known and respected local Roma figure and had access to all households. Both settlements were in near proximity to major cities, and hardships resembled neither urban ghettos, nor village poverty, but somewhere in between. Below is a brief description of fieldwork sites.

In Hungary the settlement, which resembled a slum, had a rapidly increasing population of about 500 people in 2013. Survey data was similarly collected through a research assistant, but I accompanied her several times and was allowed and welcomed in homes. According to the data compiled by a local charity, the average age in the

community was approximately 20 years, which should indicate high birth rates and poor health standards. A sixth of all households had running water inside houses. The population was rather diverse and conflicts rested on a generational divide, inter ethnic tensions, and anxiety between newcomers and established residents. Very few, and mainly elderly members, spoke Romani.<sup>23</sup>

The school nearby was integrated, but within classes education was segregated. Skepticism was high upon my arrival; however, due to the larger proportion of Roma in the country, the question is intensely debated in public and was not new to teachers. Teachers had various trainings regarding the topic and had experience with interns who attended their institution. I was fortunate to become close to one teacher, who was not only a passionate educator, but also an excellent writer and published studies on education and Roma. Our long conversations, his enthusiasm to change the situation, and his critical views strongly influenced my perception of Hungarian Roma.

I took various other trips in Hungary and attended schools in the capital, as well as villages. I spent a considerable amount of time with Boyash children in a Catholic school, in an alternative school in the capital, in various other state schools in the capital, in addition to non-mandatory educational institutions for Roma after post-elementary school age. While not each school is described in this study, all observations informed my understanding and argument.

In Russia, there were approximately 2000 Roma living in the settlement, with a similarly young population. The settlement is on the edge of a small town, completely segregated. The school was completely segregated as well, with two different buildings,

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<sup>23</sup> In the survey many reported they spoke Romani; among the younger generations, I suspect that knowledge of even a few words led respondents to claim knowledge of the language. Almost no one besides the eldest could maintain a conversation in Romani when asked.

the “Russian school” and “Gypsy school.” The community was Kalderash and most, if not all, spoke Romani at home. This posed challenges in the school, as many children didn’t have sufficient conduct of Russian upon beginning their studies, but also resulted in closer ties among community members.

Regardless of the place, children’s curiosity and utter honesty was invaluable to contextualize and grasp their experience in the settlement, school, and their relation to non-Roma. Parents were doubtful, but when approached with kindness and a positive attitude, they showed unconditional love towards their family and outsiders, including me. I was invited in to houses and always offered a coffee (and cigarettes). With little means, they were creative in making ends meet. I do not intend to romanticize neither poverty, nor the “Gypsy lifestyle”; the Hungarian settlement was permeated with such a level of misery, that disregarding that was arduous. Yet, this was one necessary condition to pursue fieldwork – seeing beyond unbearable conditions, bitterness, anger, at times even violence and profanity, and instead seeing the person, the family, and community was undeniably key. Finding happiness and dignity under such conditions requires a strong character. Not all could do so, but all tried.

#### Chapter Outline: Roadmap to the Dissertation

This chapter has presented the broad purpose of the study, importance of the topic, research question, along with methodological and theoretical frameworks. My intention here was to introduce the reader to the broader study, methodological approach, and set the stage for consecutive chapters.

My theoretical contribution is threefold: First, I supplement the top down theories with bottom up perspective in assessing agency of Roma and consequences of scientific classification on the classified population itself. In other words, I assess identity formation from both sides, top down and bottom up. Second, I contest the static nature of these labels and monopoly of state in producing those; non-state actors (philanthropies, major NGOs, and EU) are assuming a role in rearrangement of classifications, in promoting the ‘good Roma’ image instead of ‘bad Gypsies’. I argue that changes in the practices of institutional classification are reflecting a political and social change in the region. Third, pro-Roma discourse with explicit efforts of political mobilization and trans-border nation building efforts are a unique phenomenon, which may assume a civic nature as part of a broader European civic identity, or an ethnic nature, imitating increasingly widespread ethno-nationalist political tendencies in the post-Socialist region.

In Chapter II, “Nation and State Building: ‘Bad Gypsies’ in Historical Perspective,” I discuss the Roma as perpetual outcasts by analyzing nation and state building efforts in Hungary (Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Russia (Russian Empire). Through an historical analysis, this chapter promotes the following arguments: 1) given the phase of state building explains how the state defined the nation—including its boundaries and meaning of a proper citizen—, and consequently states construed minority policies, often assimilating those through educational institutions; 2) since Roma were perennially viewed as a non-modern, backwards group, assimilation of an “undesirable other” was (and continues to be) paradoxical; 3) anti-Gypsyism and the ‘bad Gypsy’ image was gradually institutionalized and internalized at this time.



This chapter provides the critical historical background to denote the deeply-rooted anti-Gypsy sentiments in the region. In addition, I buttress my argument regarding entwined essence of state consolidation, nation building, and construction of Roma identity. Remarkably, today's discourse about 'bad Gypsies' follows a similar pattern of marginalization, which is why historical background is key to understanding the path dependent nature of institutionalized exclusionary practices.

Chapter III, "Nation Building as an Ideological Project: Roma under Various Phases of Socialism and Legacies" builds on archival work and describes the early Soviet Union (1920s and 30s) during Nativization [*korenizatsiya*]. At this time minority cultures, including Roma, were institutionalized in order to teach values of Marxism-Leninism and incorporate those into the Soviet/Socialist nation, transcending ethnic boundaries. I discuss how schools were used to mold "appropriate" Roma through textbook content analysis.

I continue my historical assessment with later phases of Socialism, which evolved after World War II in both, Russia and Hungary. Stalin's perception of nationhood differed from that of Lenin; Stalin assumed that the elimination of backwardness was necessary for modernization and industrialization, and Roma were proletarianized by stripping them of their cultural heritage and ethnic identity. I then concisely discuss the legacies of this period. In later chapters I return to the lessons learned from this unique historical phenomenon of ideologically motivated nation building efforts and top down framing of Roma identity.

Chapter IV, "'Bad Gypsies': Boundaries of Belonging and Negotiation of Identities in Primary Schools" expands on the insights of the previous chapters. Namely,

policies towards Roma that followed the characteristics of nation and state building efforts. Accordingly, in the context of current post-Socialist nation building in Hungary and Russia, in which both countries strive to “reimagine” a true Russian and Hungarian nation in exclusionary and non-civic ways, Roma once again found themselves unwanted. After analyzing post-modern nation building in both countries and increasingly nationalist political tendencies, I examine the way in-class disciplinary practices visibly recreate the image of ‘bad Gypsies’. I am concerned with diffused, social forms of power and assess how teachers discipline bodies and discourse, relying on dominant negative stereotypes, which often do not correspond to reality. Western criticism (including promotion of the ‘good Roma’ image) is often viewed as hypocritical and presumptuous. Deeply seated and institutionalized, the ‘bad Gypsy’ image and routine of racial hierarchy is intrinsic in many practices, in and outside the school system. The image of ‘bad Gypsies’ is not solely generated and maintained by the school system, but by other formal and informal institutions as well. As discussed in the chapter, even well-meaning charities may produce such images unintentionally.

Chapter V, “‘Good Roma’: Reconsidering Boundaries of Belonging and the Role of Pro-Roma Civil Society” discusses the deployment and social effects of Roma as an ethnic category and accompanying ‘good Roma’ discourse, which emerged as opposition to the ‘bad Gypsy’ image. I first examine roots and goals of the pro-Roma civil society. I show the historical background of the pro-Roma movement and its emergence in reaction to the deeply seated negative stereotypes. This movement has non-territorial nation building characteristics tied to the Roma global community, rather than any state. Then I build on fieldwork findings to demonstrate how the pro-Roma discourse is applied and

utilized in Hungary and Russia.<sup>24</sup> I point out a critical disconnection between Roma elite or pro-Roma NGOs and majority Roma/Gypsies. In turn, this split and distrust, results in a “belonging crisis” and meager results towards integration.

In this chapter I examine various projects to illuminate what mechanisms are implemented in order to promote self-esteem or positive self-identity. I group such non-state projects of Roma identity formation through education into the following four categories: 1) supplementary education (usually after-school programs or extracurricular activities for elementary school level), 2) alternative education (usually for high school education, supplementing state approved curriculum with classes about Roma culture), 3) elite-making projects (aiming at Roma university students with the goal of raising a generation of leaders), 4) and elitist projects (for leaders of organizations). Building on fieldwork observations and interviews, I discuss in depth examples for each, excluding elitist projects.

Having been defined by more powerful forces, involving state and non-state players, in Chapter VI, “Roma and Gypsies: Bottom Up Identity in the Making” I discuss how Roma define their own group identity and relation with the state, majority society, other Roma subgroups, and the international community representing their interests. I unpack the critical role of education in the crisis of belonging that young educated Roma experience, rootedness of Russian Roma compared with Hungarian Roma, and destructive politicization of Roma/Gypsy identity labels.

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<sup>24</sup> I discuss examples of a Russian NGO’s involvement in local elementary school (supplementary education), a Roma high school in Hungary (alternative education), and a Hungarian organization providing scholarships for Roma university students along with mandatory monthly seminars (elite-making). The final section provides an assessment of outcomes and limitations.

In other words, this chapter is the culmination of previous chapters: I deconstruct ethnic labels and examine how Roma themselves negotiate and interpret the two dominant images, ‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’. I consider the effects of classification on those who are classified. I conclude that while the community I studied in Russia felt more rooted in the society, had a positive view of the future, and saw improvement in life, the community in Hungary was distrustful of the state and the majority society, was pessimistic about the future, and saw negative stereotypes as more ingrained in their ethnic identity. A core problem in Hungary was the lack of community bonds, little solidarity, and sense of lowliness. Often Roma youth in the settlement was either paralyzed by their perceived ineptitude and internalized negative stereotypes, or wanted to assimilate.

In the final Chapter VII, “Conclusion: Best Practices and Moving Forward,” I revisit core claims of the project and synthesize findings based on presented arguments. I transform theoretical and empirical findings into constructive policy criticism and recommendations. To achieve that end, I discuss individual-level initiatives, their impact, and critical support from NGOs. In both countries I observed that the most impressive results of elevating Roma living standards, creating a community, and simultaneously promoting positive identity was done by local individuals who were driven by either a particular problem, or offered an opportunity for pastime to local Roma youth.

In particular, I present an example from each country and argue that it was critical to involve local members as they helped generate an internal debate within their own communities regarding integration, belonging, and modernization. It was equally important to assure that the nature of such projects is voluntary and not ethnically-

defined. I wished to finish this project on a positive note, and having presented best practices, I ensue with my hopes about better future for Roma and non-Roma alike, which can only be done through peaceful coexistence and respect of one another.

CHAPTER II  
NATION AND STATE BUILDING: ‘BAD GYPSIES’ IN HISTORICAL  
PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

*“The indisputable truth [is] that a whole could never be perfect if the parts remained in disorder and disarray”*  
- Catherine the Great [1761-1796]<sup>25</sup>

This chapter lays the foundation of anti-Gypsyism. The ‘bad Gypsy’ image that still dominates Eastern Europe must be understood in its historical context and as an outcome of the state and nation building processes. It would be fallacious to disregard the historical roots and path dependency of an institutionalized exclusion of Roma in Europe, if one intends to comprehensively outline any aspect of current Roma marginalization.

The state building process had distinct phases, and each phase had its goals, visions of nationhood and appropriate subjects/citizens, and consequently differing policies towards Roma. In this section, I engage key debates on the subject of state and nation building, and advance a more narrow discussion about the way these arguments inform the development of a ‘bad Gypsy’ image. I distinguish five phases: pre-modern, early-modern, early Socialism (Nativization), state Socialism, and neo-modern. Anti-Gypsyism develops and takes root as an outcome of nation building projects in the first two initial phases, since Roma were excluded and perennially viewed as non-profitable,

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Slezkine 1994, 67.

undesirable, and backwards. Roma were not the only a ‘deviant’ group at this time, but others also fell under this category and were subject to assimilationist policies.<sup>26</sup>

Table 2 below comprehensively summarizes the phases of state building and its relationship to creating or including minorities, in particular Roma. In this chapter, I am concerned with the two early phases because those formed the foundation of an enduring ‘bad Gypsy’ image. I continue discussing the rest in consecutive chapters.<sup>27</sup>

Table 2: Phases of State Building

Phase of State Building	Pre-modern <i>17<sup>th</sup> &amp; 18<sup>th</sup> c. - mid-19<sup>th</sup> c.</i>	(Early-) Modern <i>Mid-19<sup>th</sup> c. - WWI</i>	Early Socialism <i>1920s-30s, USSR</i>	State Socialism <i>1940s-1990</i>	Neo-Modern <i>1990-Present</i>
State and its goals	Loose state, indirect rule; Extraction of taxes and profit-making	Consolidation of state, direct rule; building a corresponding nation	State should wither away; building Communism internationally	Stalinism, strong authoritarianism; total control of subjects	Re-nationalizing state <sup>28</sup>
What is a nation	Agrarian society, “low culture” <sup>29</sup>	Homogeneous citizens, “high culture” <sup>30</sup>	Socialist workers - globally	State-abiding Socialist workers, within one country	Homogeneous
Appropriate citizen	Tax-paying, useful, profitable subjects	Homogeneous (language, religion etc.)	Class-conscious Communists	Working class, class conscious proletariats	Patriotic
Policies towards Roma	Sedentarize and extract profit, <b>modernize</b> , “ <b>humanize</b> ”	<b>Homogenization</b> (Russification, Magyarization)	Nativization – <b>Roma identity as part of Soviet nation</b>	<b>Modernization and assimilation into the working class</b> (proletarianization)	State: <b>assimilation</b> Non-State: <b>Roma identity</b>
Tool/s of nation building	Limited tools (no central authority), no definite nation	School, church, and army	School	School, Labor	Formal and informal education

To distinguish between state and nation building, I use the definitions proposed by Olsen (2004). He maintains that “state-building refers to the process of building or developing a national political center with considerable resources...to penetrate and

<sup>26</sup> For example, minority groups in the North of Russia (Slezkine 1994).

<sup>27</sup> More precisely, Chapter III discusses early Socialism in more depth, while I strive to draw comparison to current non-state led transborder Roma nation building. Chapter IV begins with discussion about post-Socialist nation building, to contextualize contemporary contestation of Roma identity and my fieldwork findings.

<sup>28</sup> Brubaker defines nationalizing states as “states that are conceived by their dominant elites as nation-states, as states of and for particular nations, yet as ‘incomplete’ or ‘unrealized’ nation-states, as insufficiently ‘national in a variety of senses” (Brubaker 1996, 411).

<sup>29</sup> I.e. folk transmitted culture (see Gellner 1983).

<sup>30</sup> I.e. literacy carried culture (see Gellner 1983).

control a territory and its population,” while “nation-building refers to a process of cultural standardization and homogenization within national borders, and differentiation from the rest of the world” (2004, 146). In order to foster a common sense of national identity many states used mass education and socialization in schools to breed “new citizens” through the “ritual ceremony” for an ultimate construction of a “modern society” (Boli 1989). The pursuing sections assess pre-modern and early-modern state and nation building efforts.

### Early State Building: Normalizing ‘Bad Gypsies’

In the time of early eastern-European empires, a pre-modern state was not yet fully consolidated and the focus was on profit-making (i.e. tax extraction). In order to increase revenue, the state must manage the population by imposing taxes and enforce tax collection. Besides manageability, the state also took on a goal of modernizing its population. This was the time of early empires: Habsburg Empire 1804-1867 and early Russian Empire 1721-mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> The turning points came with the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise and for Russia, a series of uprisings and war losses in 1800s, more definitely after the Polish rebellion of 1863—these events marked the beginning of a more pronounced and severe Magyarization and Russification of minorities, including the Roma.

Importantly, in pre-modern agrarian societies the state had no interest in promoting cultural homogeneity as the cultural differentiation ensured a society where “below the horizontally stratified minority at the top, there [was] another world, that of

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<sup>31</sup> My claim is not that homogenization of minorities has not happened in pre-modern times; however, intensified and more pronounced Magyarization and Russification begins after certain historical events, which I place at mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century.



laterally separated, inward-turned [communities], tied to the locality by economic need” (Gellner 1983, 10). Instead, the state was interested in “extracting taxes, maintaining the peace, and not much else” (ibid.). The goal was to have control over the entire population, through various means. State control over subjects was important for modernization as well.

### *Roma in Early Russia*

Ethnographic studies of the time also support a state’s dual-goal of profit maximizing and modernizing: scientific inquiry aimed at discovering “if foreigners in question possessed anything of value” to make annexing the new land profitable for the state (Slezkine 1994, 38). Nomadic groups in the Russian North, for instance, were subjugated to paying a tribute and were considered “foreigners” until they took “a solemn oath of allegiance” (ibid., 18).<sup>32</sup> Foreignness, therefore, was defined in terms of obedience to the state and profitability. State-policies “were based on the understanding that the Russians would uphold the local customs...[a]s long as the iasac [fur tribute] kept coming in” (ibid., 30). Furthermore, “the natives who agreed to pay iasac received royal protection and the title of ‘peaceful,’ but they did not become Russian” (ibid., 43).

Similarly in the case of Roma, the central goal was bringing them under state control, hoping to “turn Gypsies into human beings...and then keep them within the state as useful subjects” so they can lead “productive and settled lives” (Crowe 1994, 76, 156). Roma in Russia were ordered in 1733 by Anna Ivanovna “to pay taxes to help form a military regiment” (Crowe 1994, 154). In the Ukrainian territories Roma were regarded

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<sup>32</sup> Also known as “Peoples of the North,” which refers to the indigenous groups in the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East.

as “unpleasant” and were ordered to pay “a fixed tax into the Military Treaty of Little Russia” (ibid.). Later under Peter the Great the Russian Senate oversaw the administration and collection of taxes, and issued decrees regarding Roma settlement; in 1766, the Senate imposed a 70-kopek tax on Gypsies (ibid.). Starting with 1803, Roma were settled in government villages, for better control (ibid., 158). Nicholas I [1825-55], for instance, settled 752 nomadic Roma families in two villages in Bessarabia (today Moldova), with houses and fertile land; by 1880s, these villages ceased to exist and Roma families burnt down their houses (Kalinin and Kalinina 2001, 243). In the Polish territories, a prefect arrested a Roma man, against whom no offense had been proven, simply because “from [his] way of life there is no profit” (quoted in Crowe 1994, 160).

In an anthropological review written in 1877, Bogdanov concluded that the backwards lifestyle of Roma—nudity or inappropriate clothing, holding on to old habits, resistance to modern practices, such as going to school, living in permanent houses, or holding a profession—explains their “low development.”<sup>33</sup> Although “naturally good singers and beautiful people, with fiery black eyes,” they hold on to their traditions despite decades of contact with other nations. In Moscow, as we learn from archpriest Rudnyev, these “aliens” initially received some privileges and were “equaled with Russians” [*uravneny s russkimi*]; they were Orthodox and practiced religion “no worse than Russians”; one hardly heard about burglary among them. They are described as “loud and cowardly,” who neither educate their children, nor allow them to schools. “As hard as I tried, only one Gypsy widow agreed to send her child to the ‘shelter’ [*prijut*, where children were educated to grammar, religion, and handcrafts],” remembers

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<sup>33</sup> The text was acquired through archives of Russian State Library, Moscow in February and March, 2013.

Rudnyev (Bogdanov 1877). Modernization, the study implies, could elevate them: Gypsies are “not without brain” – there is a Gypsy doctor (who nevertheless still has a Gypsy accent) in Romania and Gypsies living in villages and cities are “less dark” than those living in the forest, and are already somewhat mixed with the Caucasian race. The study concludes with the importance to understand “the mixing of Russian and Gypsy race” – “will their physiognomy become more right, gentle?”

### *Roma in Early Hungary*

In Hungary under Maria Theresa (1745-65) some Roma communities were expelled from the Habsburg Empire due to their unacceptable transient lifestyle (Koulis 2005, 313). Many Roma children were kidnapped to be “re-culturated,” were placed in foster homes to be turned into “good Hungarians and Christians,” and were to be called “new Hungarians” or “new peasants.” Furthermore, Maria Theresa issued a proclamation in 1773 to demolish all the Gypsy huts and imprison those Gypsies who abandon their new homes (Wagner 1987, 34). The Empress’s son, Joseph II, ordered Roma groups to settle in villages, which were closely watched and controlled by government officials (Koulis 2005, 313). It was Joseph II who recognized the value of education, targeting the youngest generation, in order to settle nomadic groups and make their communities manageable. He issued a decree to force each Roma child to enroll in state-owned educational institutions (Wagner 1987, 39). However, with no enforcement mechanism, many of them ran away.

As a consequence of modernization and desire to manage the “deviants,” there were feelings of fear and distrust. Petrova identified “the formative historical event that

forged the core of the anti-Gypsy stereotype [as] the fifteenth-century encounter of the nomadic Roma with Western European civilization[; i]t was in fifteenth-century...that the poisonous tincture of anti-Gypsism was concocted” (2003). However, no serious organized action could be taken because anti-Gypsy laws were not enforced centrally, as law enforcement primarily depended on local lords (ibid.). Decrees, as a result, had to be reassured many times and their effect was limited.

“With time, however, repression strengthened and anti-Gypsy laws began to be implemented more strictly and uniformly across the territory of sovereigns, in line with the process of nation building in modern Europe,” writes Petrova (ibid.). I identified this time as mid- to late Imperial periods in Russia and Hungary. Legends from the time speak about “Gypsies deserting to the other side” and “betraying secrets” and as a result executed by Tsar Peter the Great (Crowe 1994, 153). Under Peter the Great [1682-1725], who significantly expanded the Empire and focused on Europeanization and modernization of Russia, the non-European “foreigners” of the newly annexed lands had much “catching up to do” (Slezkine 1994, 47). Their ‘deviancy’ was described by a minister in Lithuania (under Russian control): “Gypsies in a well-ordered state are like vermin on an animal’s body” (quoted in Crowe 1994, 157).

It is only after “normalizing” and “civilizing” the “savage Gypsies” there are more explicit efforts of homogenization, primarily through state institutions such as schools. However, it took a relatively consolidated state to “fabricate” a fairly homogenous population, either assimilating or excluding groups of people. The next section considers this successive historical phase.

## Early Nation Building: Homogenizing ‘Bad Gypsies’

Hungary and Russia were part of multi-ethnic empires that formed *before* the emergence of national consciousness. Nation building was a phenomenon that manifested itself in Central Europe around the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Characteristic to this phase of state building was the “affinity of modernity with the nation-state,” which made the abolition of “unwanted elements” even more urgent (McVeigh 1997, 20). The goal, therefore, became to create a “standardized...metric world of facts” with a “mass society” by “regrouping [the population] in the internally fluid, culturally continuous communities” (Gellner 1983, 22). Increasingly, direct rule substituted intermediaries and indirect rule (Tilly 1992). At this time, “[i]n one of their more self-conscious attempts to engineer state power, rulers frequently sought to homogenize their population in the course of installing direct rule” (ibid., 106-7). This ensured loyalty, more effective communication and easier administration. *Systematic and centrally enforced* cultural homogenization was an essential component, which enabled states to create not only a manageable and legible population, but also a coherent nation that would correspond to the territorial borders.

Systemic Russification and Magyarization had cultural as well as administrative components. Cultural homogenization was a “state-led policy aimed at cultural standardization ...[and] top down process where the state seeks to nationalize the ‘masses’” (Conversi 2010, 719). It is a core aspect of nation building with nationalism as its central component (Gellner 1983). In the context of consolidating European nation-states and the rising power of nationalism, both empires struggled to maintain their sovereignty. Soon the non-titular groups came to be regarded as sources of “discordance,

weakness or outright treachery” (Polvinen 1995, 19). Schools were critical to the nation building process: “[e]ducation by the institutions of the sedentary society can be viewed as a vehicle by which the cultural norms of the dominant group are imposed on the marginal group” (Kendall 1997, 86). Since schools remove the children from their cultural milieu, “education can be perceived as a form of cultural assimilation... [and] form of social control, fostering assimilation” (ibid.).

Forceful Magyarization in Hungary started after the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise (For example, see Bancroft 2005 for placing the time of Magyarization at this event).<sup>34</sup> After World War I, when Hungary became a more homogenous state, the Magyarization campaign became even more powerful (Vermeersch 2007). Fierceness of enforcing Magyarization from this time manifested in draconian assimilation and deportation of Roma who couldn’t prove their Hungarian citizenship (Human Rights Watch 1996, 9). The Nationality Law of 1868 declared Hungarian as the state language, and education policies were used as vehicles of Magyarization, making Hungarian a compulsory subject in schools and mandating all teachers to speak the language.<sup>35</sup>

Russification intensified in the Russian Empire around the same time: “strictly the policy of ‘Russification’ can be spoken of as the government’s official line only after the Polish rebellion of 1863” (Polvinen 1995, 18; also see Weeks 1996). M. N. Katkov<sup>36</sup> aptly described the position of Russia at the time: “Russia needs a uniform state, and a

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<sup>34</sup> The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 marked the beginning of dual monarchy and partially restored the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hungary.

<sup>35</sup> Although these rules were sabotaged in some schools, nevertheless the imbalance between developing Hungarian and non-Hungarian cultures was heavily shifted towards the former (see, for example, Maracz 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Katkov was an eminent ideologue of the time who also served as editor of *Moskovskie Vedomosti* between 1863 and 1887, was known as the “unofficial voice of Russian government” and had personal influence over Alexander III (Polvinen 1995, 25).

strong Russian nationality...we must create such nationaity among the whole population on the basis of one language, one religion, and the Russian village community. We will crush all who resist us..." (quoted in Polvinen 1995, 20-21).

As both Russians and Magyars were believed to be "Great Nations" and the only historic nation of their land, "history itself would guide the natives toward a union" with the superior nation—was a common belief (Slezkine 1994, 92). The overall goal, consequently, was to unite the entire society as a nation and the "replacement of diversified, locally-tied low cultures by standardized, formalized and codified, literacy-carried high culture" (Gellner 1983, 76). Similarly, in the Russian Empire immediately after the Polish rebellion, a thorough Russification of the school system ensued (Polvinen 1995, 19).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the formation of nationhood should not be disconnected from state development. Hobsbawm claims that "it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to [a certain kind of modern territorial state, the 'nation-state']" (1992, 9-10). Ernest Gellner, too, suggests that what separated an agrarian from an industrial society was that states were inescapable in the latter period, to which nationality was central (1983). In other words, with the consolidation of the state a new social order was established, in which nationalism could be rooted (ibid.). Central to the modern state and a corresponding nation was a standardized and homogenous society and schools transmitted a uniform culture (linked to the state), a common language, societal norms, and reproduced obedient citizens.

Building a unified nation was an important goal at this time. In Russia, after 1848 "the marriage of progress with Russian messianism" were announced and under

Alexander III [1845–1894] the official state policy was “the equation of Russian state with Russian nationality” (Slezkine 1994, 120; also see Polvinen 1995). The same period in Hungary was also characterized by a nationalist revival. After the 1848 Hungarian revolution, which was sparked by the cultural and political oppression of Magyars by their Austrian counterparts, new Hungary was re-conceptualized as “one nation in one state.” The subsequent Compromise (1867) that restored peace with the Habsburgs and created two internally sovereign kingdoms, in essence left minorities defenseless against “Hungarian hegemonist ambitions” (Crowe 1994, 82). Consequently, Hungary was to be “a unitary Hungarian national state, where the ideas of state and nation were to be equal” (ibid.). Assimilationist policies often took the form of “grammatical Magyarization” through education, which was “the most important means of culture and social development” (ibid, 82, 84-5). As a consequence, the ‘bad Gypsy’ image was further preserved and reinforced, justified not with humanizing and modernizing efforts, but a necessity to homogenize a nation corresponding to the state.

## Conclusion

Several lessons can be drawn from this historically early discussion of the Roma population in Hungary and Russia. First, I showed that the transition to the modern world initially implied scientific progress and “humanizing of the backward”; progress and modernization required a basic administrative framework with clear categories measuring the “degree of backwardness” of various groups (Slezkine 1994, 88). The concept of backwardness was introduced at this time in the official discourse and enabled a more scientific description of the subjects, in an effort to render “filthy aliens” or “the



provincial and undeveloped” groups “totally and permanently transparent” (Slezkine 1994, 55, 115). As Slezkine aptly put it, “just as all the sciences can be ranked according to their usefulness...so could customs and religions” (ibid., 57). Nomadic groups were viewed as “non-civilized” and “savage,” but “ignorance and foolishness...could be overcome through education” in order to move “from infancy to maturity” (ibid.). Due to this approach to scientific progress, gradation of society according to social and ethnic hierarchy resulted in marginalization of Roma and successive formation of the ‘bad Gypsy’ image. Second, in the next phase of state building, when “at the base of the modern social order [stood] not the executioner but the professor” (Gellner 1983, 34), Roma identity was seen as incompatible with the narrow vision of national identity, and consequently they had to be assimilated.

Therefore, this chapter traced the deep historical roots and progression of anti-Gypsyism, which involved the formation of the ‘bad Gypsy’ image. Importantly, the content of Gypsy as an ethnic label was increasingly filled with negative characteristics and attributes, such as foreign, backward, uncivilized, unproductive, uneducated and alike. This negative content and accompanying marginalization emerged alongside consolidation of state and nation building. Anti-Gypsy policies, attitudes, discourse, and state orders were steadily built in to the fabric of society and incorporated into the institutional landscape, to remain intact for many more centuries. The next chapter extends the historical analysis and introduces a distinctive mode of nation building, which in theory was not ethnically based, but tied to larger ideological projects.

CHAPTER III  
NATION BUILDING AS AN IDEOLOGICAL PROJECT: PHASES OF SOCIALISM  
AND LEGACIES

Introduction

In this chapter I continue assessing how nation and state building efforts informed policies towards Roma, and consequently how they were defined and managed by the state, primarily through schools. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: theoretical and historical. On the one hand, I examine the logic behind a unique form of nation building, which was ideologically motivated, rather than ethnically or racially. I suggest that the current efforts to construct a regional European identity, in which the Roma movement is embedded, may be informed by certain lessons from the early USSR's experience. I briefly allude to it in the concluding section of this chapter, in order to return and explore this topic more in Chapter V. In addition, I complete the historical analysis of state and nation building in this chapter to dissect how Socialist era informs our understanding of Roma identity formation.

More specifically, I focus on the early USSR's Nativization policies, which laid the foundation of institutionalizing Roma culture as part of the Soviet society. I present archival findings and look at how Roma were civilized, normalized, and educated through the school system at the time. I show that the Roma way of life was to be corrected and adjusted to the values of Communism. I continue with a chronological description of post-WWII policies towards Roma, where Hungary and Russia converge

on their treatment of minority groups. At this time, it is not the Roma way of life, but the very existence of the group that signified backwardness and needed to be corrected.

With this chapter I also intend to finalize the historical analysis launched in the previous chapter, in addition to assessing a unique form of engineering a society. Consequently, I supplement Roma-focused discussion with broader historical description of the era and nation building efforts, which provide the context and complete the historical evaluation. By deconstructing how nationhood, belonging, and citizens/subjects were conceptualized during each phase, I demonstrate that past treatment of Roma planted the seeds of the currently dominant ‘bad Gypsy’ image. Further analysis of Roma identity formation after transition in the remaining chapters relies heavily on my fieldwork observations.

#### Nativization: 1920s and 30s USSR

*“[T]he language of Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dobroliubov, Chemyshevskii is great and powerful...we want, if possible, a closer cooperation and fraternal unity to emerge among the oppressed classes of all the nations living in Russia. And we advocate, of course, that every inhabitant of Russia should have the opportunity to learn the great Russian language.*

*There is only one thing we do not want: the element of compulsion. We do not want to drive people into Paradise with a stick. We think that no one need study the great and powerful Russian language under the threat of a cudgel (iz pod palki).”*

*- V. I. Lenin<sup>37</sup>*

This section looks at the Soviet state’s motivation behind promotion of minority cultures, in particular that of the Roma, and shaping a “nested identity,” which would be

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<sup>37</sup> Excerpt from Lenin’s article titled "Should There Be a State Language?" (*Proletarskaia Pravda*, 8 January 1914), quoted in Bilinsky 1981.

part of a utopian Communist society.<sup>38</sup> This process involved standardization of cultures and without refusing ethnic identities strove to incorporate groups into the fabric of Soviet society. The Roma, similar to other minorities at the time, were to be educated in Roma schools in order to instill Marxist-Leninist values through their own cultural channels. I commence with the historical context and continue with an emphasis on the Roma.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “the virtues of the periphery and non-Russian nationalism were being loudly proclaimed by increasingly self-assertive ethnic elites” in places such as the Russian North (Slezkine 1994, 129). Instead of repressing this national revival, the “revolutionary regime called on the former exiles to perform the task [of representing their nations]” (ibid.). Lenin launched a brief but very important Nativization program, according to which the state was to promote minority cultures and promote native cadres into leadership positions. The Roma minority found themselves in this new framework of national policy in the early Soviet context, while in Hungary, no such promotion of minority culture existed. As a result, Russian authorities assisted the revitalization of the Romani language and culture, among others, albeit for a short period of time. “Marxist schools would have the same curriculum irrespective of their linguistic medium”—was the attitude at the time (Slezkine 1994, 142).

Cultivation of national identity was necessary because the previous Russian exploitation of minorities could only be “undone” by establishment of national governments, which through cultivation of their own lifestyles would “direct at the dark masses a ray of enlightenment” (Slezkine 1994, 136). To achieve Communism, everyone

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<sup>38</sup> I borrow the concept “nested identity” from other scholars, who have used it in their works, such as Herb and Kaplan (1999) or Schatz (2000).

needed “special guidance” from a “special communist party,” which had to reach all groups in their native language (ibid., 142). Thus, while national cultures were promoted, the goal remained to modernize nations, as only modern, class-conscious groups can develop further into Communist and Soviet men and women.

Importantly, top down management of group identities during this period also involved a form homogenization and standardization into distinct groups, which resulted in reification and essentialization: one Romani dialect (Xaladitko) was pronounced as standard language and consequently taught in Roma schools (Kalinin 2000). Standardization based on such criteria was far reaching, and even “Gypsy-like nomads” like the Liuli in Central Asia had to learn this selected dialect (ibid.).

These policies were not without unintended consequences. The nationality paradox, namely celebrating nationalities with the vision of erasing those, and inconsistencies had several sides: on the one hand, those endorsing independence among minority groups were persecuted, while the formation of autonomous regions based on ethnic groups was the official state policy (Slezkine 1994, 142). On the other hand, ethnic consciousness was cultivated and institutionalized, but it was done with the utopian view of eventual elimination of all ethnicities and amalgamation into Soviet people. Furthermore, non-Russian nationality continued to be equated with backwardness and Soviet policies aimed at “eliminating the backwardness...that the nationalities inherited from the past” (ibid., 144).

Nevertheless, Lenin’s regime was arguably known by the Russian Roma community as “the beginning of civil rights for Roma in USSR” (Crowe 1994, 174). There were attempts to involve Roma as a national minority in building Communism and

thus treat them as equals. In 1925 the Soviet government recognized Roma as a national minority and besides granting them the right to be educated in Romani language, the Pan-Romani Union and Romani Congress were organized, and Romani collective farms were established in 1926-7 (Kalinin and Kalinina 2001, 244).

The described tension between seemingly minority-friendly nationalist policies and promotion of Roma culture coupled with the goal to “revolutionize” groups. For instance, the unique Romen Theater, shown in Figure 1 below and built in 1931, is until today considered the cultural center of the Russian Roma, employing Roma actors and performances in Romani language. However, while it helped preserve Roma culture, the theater was created to help assimilation, sedentarization, education, and “transform[ation of] Gypsies from wild parasites into productive workers” (Lemon 2000, 130-1). The directors in the theater changed plays “to fit within both Euro-Russian theatrical expectations and the bounds of socialist realism” (Lemon 1998, 150).



Figure 1: Romen Theater, Actors, Performance  
Romen Theater (left) employs Roma actors (middle) and many performances are in Romani language.

This paradox clearly manifests in educational realm. Schools were continuously used to manage group identity, but the goal was to change the content of ‘Roma’, rather than eliminate the category. Roma had to be modernized and civilized, and those very Roma could then be liberated by the values of Communism, join the Socialist working

class, and enjoy equality and freedoms of that system – that was the logic behind education. Below I consider examples from textbooks at the time, translated from Romani language to English.<sup>39</sup>

Other scholars have inquired about Romani-language textbooks of the time, but to the best of my knowledge, an in-depth analysis of textbook content was not yet done.<sup>40</sup> For instance, Crowe describes that Romani literacy books “including articles explaining the new land tenure system, the five year plan...how to become atheists, live in houses and go to school...[while t]he alphabet books...tell the parable of a family who starves because their only means of subsistence is fortune-telling, until they change their ways and go to work in the factory” (Lemon, quoted in Crowe 1994, 177). Furthermore, there were “lesson[s] [that] accompanie[d] each letter of the alphabet: ‘work’, our work’, ‘Masha works’, our Romnia [feminine plural] don’t work but tell fortunes’, ‘I want to work’” and alike (ibid.).

Below I present my own archival work and show excerpts from Romani language textbooks with translated passages, and the way those, through educating basic grammar to children, sought to alter their identities from “unsettled fortune-tellers” to working Roma. Figure 2 depicts examples of cover pages from Romani language textbooks, with images resembling typical Roma (i.e. darker complexion, dark hair). Figure 7 is the first page of a Romani textbook, showing a Roma house (top) as disorganized, undisciplined, dirty, and chaotic, and a school (bottom), as orderly, disciplined, clean, and neat. It was the Roma way of life that was incompatible with the goals of the state. Roma progress

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<sup>39</sup> Translation was done with the help of a fellow graduate student; hereby I thank Kirill Kozhanov, a linguist from Russia, for his kind assistance.

<sup>40</sup> The most notable and outstanding works about Russian and Soviet Roma are by Alaina Lemon, who is currently associated professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan and Brigid O’Keefe.

was often stressed through juxtaposition of old, pre-revolution life of oppression, and new, Socialist life characterized by equality and work.

It was the school, in other words, that allowed Roma to transition into the new, desired lifestyle. Figure 3 reads:

“Masha doesn’t have a father. The school gives food to Masha. Masha is given shoes and clothes. Masha goes to school.”

“My mother was a fortune-teller. My father was a trader. Now my mother is no longer a fortune-teller. My father does not trade. I go to school. My mother works in a factory. My father works in a factory. Find your happiness in work.”

Through education and work Roma were supposed to be liberated from their backwards habits and ultimately join the Socialist masses. Socialism, therefore, was the emancipation and empowerment Roma needed. Excerpts from Figure 4, 5, and 6 read:

“Those who work, eat. We won’t sit hungry, we are working Roma.”

“Under the Tsar, Roma were not considered people, they did not work, were not taught...now they live like any other worker.”

“Under the Tsar women’s lives were bad. The women were oppressed. Now the woman can depart from her old life.”

“Masha works in a factory. Her husband works in a factory. Their children go to Roma kindergarten.”

“Our economy grows fast. Lifestyle changes fast. Roma understand well that the house is better than the field.”



Figure 2: Front Covers of Romani Textbooks  
Primarily in the 1930s textbooks were published in Romani language to educate the Russian Roma population in their own language.





Figure 3:  
Page from Romani Language  
Textbook #1



Figure 4:  
Page from Romani Language  
Textbook #2

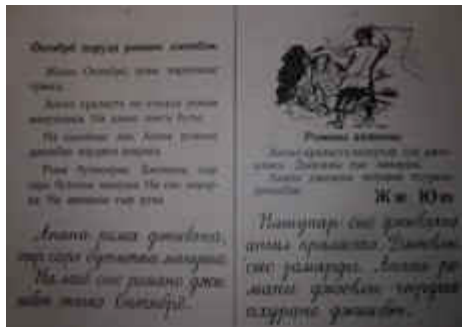


Figure 5:  
Page from Romani Language  
Textbook #3

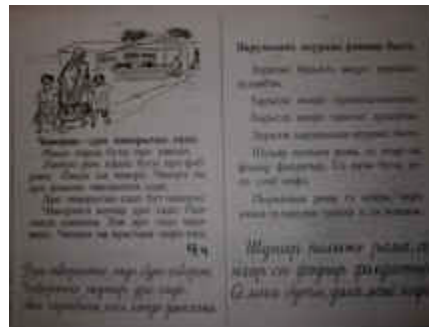


Figure 6:  
Page from Romani Language  
Textbook #4



Figure 7:  
Page from Romani  
Language Textbook #5

Theoretically, once Roma, or other ‘backwards groups’ for that matter, reach the desired mentality, they will blend in to the working class. In the end, all ethnic or national differentiation was expected to disappear, according to the popular rhetoric of the time. “Oppressed nation nationalism” was not supposed to pose a challenge to the Soviet state as it was expected to “eventually lead to...the end of nationalist paranoia and therefore to the end of national differences” (Slezkine 1994, 142). This was necessary to the withering away of the state, the last stage of Communism. Lenin believed that the lack of national tension and national distrust would draw people together until the state fades away (ibid., 143).

The civilizing mission of the state at this time, in a sense, resembled enlightenment ideology: top down efforts to reform a traditional society and promotion of rational, scientific progress. For instance the “civilizing work” in schools was coated in sensitivity towards native cultures, while in fact the goal remained “to ensure correct progress through education,” training of native Communist intelligentsia, and preventing “depopulation of strategically important areas” due to a “hasty assault on backwardness” in schools (ibid., 157). Just like the natives of the Russian North, the ultimate objective was to “ensure smooth transition...to Communism” (ibid., 158). In addition, settled lifestyles remained important for the new “civilizing mission” of the state. Some of the early sedentarization legislations directed at the nomadic Roma in the USSR were accepted in 1926 and 1928 by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union and the Council of People's Commissars of USSR, “On Measures for Aiding the Transition of nomadic Gypsies to a Working and Settled Way of Life” [O merakh sodeystviya k perekhodu kachuyuschih tsygan k trudovomu obrazu zhizni] and “On the Allotment of

Land to Gypsies for the Transition to a Working and Settled Way of Life [O nadelenii zemley tsygan, perehodyaschih k trudovomu i osedlomu obrazu zhizni],” respectively (Crowe 1994, 175). This included incentives for a settled lifestyle, such as state-guaranteed land and monetary assistance for the first period of time (Demeter et al 2000, 203). Most “Gypsy kolkhozy” that were established by 1938 (Demeter et al 2000, 203), were abandoned by the beginning of WWII (Kalinin and Kalinina 2001). The experiment briefly continued when secretly in 1937 over 1500 Roma families were forcibly transformed and settled in wooden huts in Siberia in order to form the autonomous “Romanistan” (ibid.). This attempt also proved unsuccessful.

The national minority status of Roma in USSR (along with national schools, newspaper and alike) was withdrawn in 1936, and the “Theater was simply a rather small hangover of the Bolshevik legacy” (Stewart 2001, 74). By 1938, a secret resolution discontinued (minority) national education and national classes for the Roma (Demeter et al. 2000, 207). The Pan-Romani Union lasted until 1928.

Nevertheless, the project promoting “socialist content” in “national form” likely had long lasting consequences: arguably Russian Roma are a symbol and model for all Roma in their Romani commitment and dedication to the Romani customary code” (Kalinin 2000, 140); also, during my survey<sup>41</sup> nearly all respondents considered Russia as their homeland and themselves as *rossiyane*.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, not all Hungarian Roma consider themselves Hungarian—this aspect of belonging is described in more detail in Chapter VI. A stronger sense of belonging and rootedness in Russia has been

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<sup>41</sup> See more in Appendix A.

<sup>42</sup> Laitin described identity categories and the distinction as *rossiyane* – members of the Russian state and *russkiye* – ethnic category of Russians (1998, 265-6).

demonstrated by Alaina Lemon also (1998; 2000), but absolutely needs to be researched more before any general or definite argument can be posited.

In sum, this section discussed the unique Nativization policies in the USSR. I began by laying out the historical context of the time, stressing that cultivation of national identity was necessary to establish a native group of revolutionary vanguards. Establishment of cultural institutions, especially schools, required standardization of national cultures, and through textbooks and school discipline Roma children learned how elements of their culture were incompatible with values of Marxism-Leninism and needed to be corrected. This minority policy was not without paradoxes, and these aftereffects are valuable learning lessons for today's efforts towards Roma inclusion on a European Union level. I return to these lessons later in this chapter. In short, Nativization was a unique policy of the Soviet Union, while other Eastern European countries, including Hungary, established their Communist Parties only after World War II. The next section looks at this period and the similarities between Socialist states on how they treated Roma.<sup>43</sup>

### Meanwhile in Hungary...

The previous section focused on a Russian case study in order to examine a unique form of nation building and incorporation of the Roma into an ideologically-defined society. This phase was absent in Hungary. Briefly, at this time in Hungary there

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<sup>43</sup> While the Holocaust was an extremely significant historical development, in this dissertation I do not discuss it, as there are many in depth studies about "Porajmos," or destruction, as the Holocaust is known in Romani. In short, Roma were considered "social outcasts" or "asocials" and were exterminated en masse. As the Roma minority was more visible and concentrated in the smaller Hungary than in the vast USSR, their deportation was logistically easier. Nevertheless, it is important to note that much extermination in the Soviet territory was done by the Einsatzgruppen (moving killing squad) and documentation of the victims was undeniably harder; for instance, Snyder suggests there were at least 8000 documented Roma victims of ethnic cleansing by the Einsatzgruppen (2010, 276).

were also experiments with policies of “sensitive assimilationism,” but these were nevertheless dominated by Magyarization efforts, especially considering that Hungary lost 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of its territory having signed the Trianon treaty in 1920, becoming almost purely ethnically Magyar. Hungary became almost purely a Magyar state, with only 833, 475 residents out of 7.6 million claiming their mother tongue as other than Hungarian, having lost 60% of its total population (Crowe 1994, 86).

Still in the atmosphere of prewar educational policy, the first Roma school in Hungary was established in 1935, but “could not overcome the powerful force of Magyarization that insisted that to achieve ‘completely equal membership in Hungarian supremacy,’ one had ‘to accept the Hungarian way of life’” (Crowe 1994, 87). Such schools originally were government initiatives to allow elementary schooling in native languages.

It was after the Trianon treaty when national minorities were increasingly regarded as the cause of the unfavorable treaty and the country’s dismemberment, and consequently these minority policies were compromised by Magyarization. Ethnic entrepreneurs quickly recognized the beneficial consequences of nationalism. During this time the state enjoyed a virtual monopoly on culture, and the “culture-mediated nationalism” became “pervasive in the society” (Gellner 1983, 138-140). Groups “distant from the more advanced centre suffer[ed] considerable disadvantages” at the time and official minority status was denied to Hungarian Roma (Crowe 1994, 85).

In addition, after economic depression swept through Hungary as the aftermath of World War I, nationalist sentiments grew and Roma were increasingly excluded. Hungarian politics advanced towards fascist Italy and Nazi Germany at the time. Donald

Kenrick writes that “apart from the musicians, Gypsies have been viewed with mistrust[, and from] the mid-1930’s, calls were made in the Hungarian Parliament for the internment of Gypsies in labor camps” (2007, 117).

Importantly, there is a striking contrast between the two countries, which is at the center of this chapter: Russia has emerged out of the USSR, a multi-ethnic society where initially Socialism takes form resembling a civic society, albeit undemocratic and with strong ideological foundation. In Hungary, in contrary, assimilationist focus was exacerbated not only due to the political framework and ethnic homogeneity, but also the losses after World War I. Hungarian Roma never experienced anything similar to the Soviet Nativization policies.

#### State Socialism: 1945-1989

*“A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture...”*

*A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism...*

*The final disappearance of a national movement is possible only with the downfall of the bourgeoisie.”*  
- J. V. Stalin<sup>44</sup>

While the Soviet Union had been building Socialism for approximately 30 years by the time WWII ended, Hungary embraced (as a result of Soviet liberation and consequent occupation of the country) the Socialist ideology when it became a Soviet satellite state in 1947. United by the same ideology, the two countries’ attempt at assimilating Roma “misfits” merged in many ways. After Lenin’s death, Stalin approached minorities with a radically different idea. From cultivating national cultures,

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<sup>44</sup> From essay “Marxism and the National Question” accessed from <http://www.marxists.org>.

Stalin turned to fierce assimilation. In this section I analyze these efforts and inquire about policies towards Roma during post-WWII Socialism. The purpose of this chapter is to complete the historical assessment and further demonstrate how conceptualization of state and corresponding nation drove policies directed at Roma. In addition, Socialist-era policies had significant consequences and legacies, which I also discuss. The section is broader in nature due to similar treatment of Roma across the region, in addition to several excellent and nuanced earlier studies published on this period (e.g. Barany 2000; 2002; Stewart 1997 and others).

The similarity between Socialist policies towards minorities across countries stems from those being decisively shaped by the Leninist-Marxist doctrine, and more specifically by Stalin's interpretation of Marxism in his "National Colonial Question" (Stewart 2001, 71). Stalin's vision of the state and subjects motivated policies towards Roma. To transform the entire society, besides collectivization and industrialization, a cultural revolution was needed, which would replace the "antiquated customs" with "scientific ideology" (Slezkine 1994, 219). Backwardness was a "swamp" and "one drop of backwardness was enough to poison the barrelful of modernity" (ibid., 220-223).

In his multi-volume *Sochineniia* Stalin wrote that Socialists are sensitive to the small peoples of USSR and "not at all against" them forming together into a state; however, he was not at all sympathetic to the "fragmentation" of USSR into small states, as large states are the only ones capable achieving Socialism (Stalin 1946). Various Communist Parties openly talked about "natural assimilation of Gypsies" (Marushiakova and Popov 2011). As Zoltan Barany put it, "by the mid-1950s 'what to do with the

troublesome Gypsies?’ became an important question across Eastern Europe [and t]he main goal (assimilation) was the same [across countries]” (2000, 424).

Systematic assimilationist campaigns were directed at Roma across the Communist bloc, which were intended to correct for legacies of capitalist past that left this group marginalized, poor, and consequently unproductive – was a popular belief at the time (Stewart 1997, 5-6). Roma represented a challenge on many levels: first, their lifestyles made a centralized decision-making more difficult; second, they did not fit “Stalin’s mechanistic model of what constituted a nation and posed a continuous challenge to Communist thinking” (Stewart 2001, 71).

In the USSR, the turning point was the 1952 census, when the authorities had to face the fact that there were “still” 33,000 nomadic Roma in the USSR (Stewart 2001, 81, also see Marushiakova and Popov 2011). Nomadism was seen as incompatible with collectivization—a crucial goal of the state’s industrialization effort (Slezkine 1994, 188). Collectivization was also considered an easy way to manage the “backwards” peoples, as it required nothing but strength and determination, to teach economic rationality and modern technology (ibid., 205). This shortly led to the state’s more conscious efforts to eradicate this form of “backwardness.”

The critical time came on October 5, 1956, when the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree on “The inclusion of the itinerant Gypsies in labor activities” [“O priobshchenii k trudu tsygan, zanimayushchikhsya brodyazhnichestvom”] (Stewart 2001, 81). This decree “defined a crime on the basis of nationality” (N.G. Demeter quoted in Crowe 1994, 188). Many other Eastern European countries soon followed suit (for example Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania). This decree also



ordered all Roma into wage labor, and some 10,000 were moved to Siberia where labor was needed (Stewart 2001, 81). “The result of the 1956 law was great hunger,” recalled a victim of re-settlement process, “soldiers with guns rounded up all those in camps” (author’s interview 1991, quoted in Lemon 2001, 233).

This period also coincided with some of the biggest Socialist industrial projects, for which a large workforce was needed. “Everything remotely resembling economic development was of special importance to the state” in the heat of industrialization (Slezkine 1994, 273). In the Russian North, for instance, if certain groups were not efficient in industrial labor or large-scale food production, their land often was considered vacant and thus their very existence denied (*ibid.*, 274). Roma were also targeted to the industrial labor force (The Save the Children Fund 2001, 113). Labor was the sole source of value and a requirement to becoming an acknowledged member of society.

The aim of the 1956 decree, thus, was also “to recruit all Roma into full-time employment in standard occupations” (Kalinin and Kalinina 2001, 244). Prolitarianization and collectivization of Roma (or other minority groups, for that matter) was a forced state-led process with no regard to their culture and traditions. These measures often destroyed the foundation of many local native groups, such as tribes of the Russian North, turned them into dependents of the state, and deprived them of their livelihood (Slezkine 1994, 194, 197, 215). Many Roma slowly lost their roots: only 59.3% chose Roma as their native tongue during the 1959 census in the USSR, compared with 64.2% in 1926 (Crowe 1994, 189). This drop was undoubtedly related to “the lack of Romani language publications...and ongoing pressure to settle and assimilate” (*ibid.*).

Similarly, the turning point for Hungarian Roma was the 1961 resolution of the Central Committee. In comparison with the Soviet Union, where the sedentarization program was preceded by revealed numbers of nomadic Gypsies, in Hungary the 1961 resolution was preceded by acknowledgment that 40% of the Gypsies were illiterate and a negligible percent completed the basic school leaving exam (The Save the Children Fund 2001, 121; Helsinki Watch 1993, 7). Proletarianization had to start with the spread of socialist ideas. Perennially and the most effectively it was done through education; early socialization in schools, propaganda, and mandatory school activities ensured the construction of loyal proletariats. Nomadism was not the motivating factor in Hungary because it was eradicated during the post-Trianon Magyarization campaign, at times using draconian measures (Helsinki Watch 1993, 4).

According to the Hungarian Communist Party, in “policies towards the Gypsy population we must start from the principle that despite certain ethnographic specificities they do not form a ‘national minority’” (quoted in Stewart 2001, 83). The need to bridge the gap between Roma and non-Roma was acknowledged, but solutions were seen in complete assimilation and abandonment of a lifestyle that “causes” these conditions. Even under the Kádár-era (1965-88) Roma attempts at developing ethnic identities were not tolerated (Fehér et al. 1993, 7).

In other Eastern European countries, such as in Czechoslovakia, during Stalinist times the term “Roma” was banned; instead, the officials used “population of Gypsy origin” (Siklova and Milusakova 1998, 59). The Socialist assimilation policies, which included education opportunities, housing, and employment, were somewhat successful, but at the same time created a paternalistic system, where the poor, disproportionately

represented by the Roma, heavily relied on the state (Ladányi and Szelényi 2006, 87-88). In addition, a 1961 resolution included the elimination of cigánytelepek (Gypsy settlements), although the housing provided to Roma was poor, inadequately small, and often in shortage (The Save the Children Fund 2001, 113-7). Roma, who settled in various farms, resisted by adapting their new lifestyles to resemble their traditional way of life: changed their homes to resemble tents, changed the furniture to fit their traditional living spaces, or showed “deep contempt towards furniture” (Crowe 1994, 188).

There were efforts to uplift Roma communities and remedy their impoverished living situations. For instance, the 1948 welfare policy in Hungary created selective funding of cultural projects, while the housing program in 1964 envisioned the liquidation of 2,500 Roma settlements (Marushiakova and Popov 2011). Bulgaria also designed various policies to “reform” Roma lifestyle and “develop” their culture, which all meant prohibition of various aspects of Roma traditions (especially after 1984) and fostered the assimilationist campaign (Barany 2000, 425). These arguably benign measures nevertheless had serious negative consequences: namely, they reinforced marginality and negative stereotypes. Roma families received apartments in cramped and poorly constructed housing projects (labeled as “csökkent értékű” or reduced value in Hungarian), expecting them to “destroy the available amenities in any case” (Barany 2002, 131). Similarly in Slovakia, Roma tended to receive the inferior quality apartments, and Roma families from rural areas were moved to urban apartment with no preparation for this new lifestyle (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2012). In Slovakia, “makeshift accommodation in Roma settlements” and “overcrowded settlements” became common (ibid., 159). Often Roma families across the region moved

back to ghettos (and their old apartments). Segregation by the 1960s increased and was more concentrated (Barany 2002, 131-2).

Branding of Roma as “untrustworthy citizens” (Stewart 2001, 74) or people who needed “special attention” or “social cases” (Siklova and Miklusakova 1998, 58) had severe consequences in institutionalizing discriminatory practices and reinforcing stereotypes. Data collected by state officials allowed the authorities to publish racialized criminal statistics, and there were specialized police units responsible for the elimination of “Gypsy crime.” Similarly, in Czechoslovakia, while “Romani nationality was not officially recognized...the state officials [nevertheless] maintained detailed files on ‘the population of Gypsy origin’, labeled according to skin color” (Siklova and Miklusakova 1998, 58). Roma, consequently, were a group whose identity was denied, but who were nevertheless easily distinguishable and identifiable (ibid.).

During this phase of Socialism, schools continued to play a central role in creating a manageable “cohesive social whole,” which can be more effectively directed by the “all knowing government agencies”(Stewart 2001, 78), and possess the necessary class-consciousness. The compulsory nature of education was important to “overcome considerable resistance” especially in more remote areas of Russia (Slezkine 1994, 224).<sup>45</sup> “Education involves considerably more than the developing of skills...it involves ‘molding the new Soviet man’...[and] pedagogic techniques are designed to foster discipline and respect for authority,” writes Noguee (1972, 315). There was “no education for the sake of education,” as Slezkine aptly put it, instead the “emphasis was on practical skills and ideological correctness” (1994, 222). The educational system “helped socialize

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<sup>45</sup> Education became compulsory in early Socialism, with the Soviet successful (state-run) *likbez* campaign (liquidation of illiteracy) in the 1920s and 30s, and with the 1946 Hungarian government’s decision, making education free, secular, and mandatory.

a predominantly tradition-oriented population into the cultural patterns of an industrial society” (Azrael 1972, 327). Schools were mobilized as a tool for the state, where the students were taught “how to detect backwardness in economic, social, domestic, and spiritual life...and then go back home and pull their kinsmen out of the proverbial swamp” (Slezkine 1994, 222).

Labeling permeated the school system and affected disciplinary practices. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, each Roma child was documented in schools as a “social case,” that is a case requiring social work and more management; furthermore, Roma students who refused to attend school were forcibly placed in foster homes and separated from their families (Siklova and Miklusakova 1998, 59). Tensions between state schools and Roma families became increasingly disparaging.

Roma were not unique in being targeted at the time. Schools generated some of the most bitter responses; for instance Nenets families expressed the following feelings: “I’ve got kids who are school age, but I won’t let them go to school, only when they shoot me dead will they be able to take them”; or Koriak parents stating that “we obey the authorities but we aren’t sending our kids to no school” (quoted in Slezkine 1994, 237-8). Local primary schools or boarding schools for children caused bitterness, hostility, resistance, and defiance among non-Russian communities; parents of the Russian North feared losing their children and regarded the role of the school as turning out little Russians (ibid.). Children were not passive either, but through everyday forms of resistance were agents of their own fates: children, following their parents resistance, missed classes, did badly in national exams, and did not enroll in schools (ibid., 244).

Furthermore, the language of instruction was also to remain that of the core nation; for instance in Hungary the common attitude was that encouragement of Romani language in schools would “prevent the progress of Gypsies, because it would lead to harmful separation of them [from others], and it would encourage the conservation of an anachronistic lifestyle whose time has passed” (Erdős 1960, quoted in Stewart 2001). In Russia, too, minority students often felt unwelcome as the “schools were intended for Russians” (Slezkine 1994, 223). Even scholars who specialized in Romani language were sometimes forced out of their universities (see for example Milena Hubschmannova’s case in Czechoslovakia, discussed in Siklova and Milusakova 1998, 59).

This section, in sum, was concerned with post-WWII Socialist policies towards Roma. I began with a general discussion about minority approach at the time, which was defined by the dominant state building ideology: modernizing the society, proletarianization, and industrialization. I showed that “Stalinist internationalism...branded emphasis on ethnic identity as a form of ‘bourgeois ideology’,” discouraging minorities, including Roma, to voice their ethnic preferences (Crowe 1994, 92). The “Gypsy problem” was considered in the light of defining Roma as a group that fell victim to capitalist oppression and excluded by a capitalist society. Various policies that aimed at improving their living conditions, as a result, aspired to assimilate Roma communities into the (Magyar/Russian) proletariat. Often Roma did not “measure up” to “national minority” status according to Stalin’s definition.<sup>46</sup>

Assimilation into the larger society, thus, remained the only and best solution to the “Gypsy problem,” in contrast to the brief Nativization phase. In both cases the Party

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<sup>46</sup> Czechoslovakia, for example, denied the very existence Roma minority, proving on “scientific grounds” why they would never become a nationality and thus assimilation is the only correct policy to pursue (Barany 2000, 422).

made decisive steps to eliminate the practices, which they saw as reproducing an undesirable way of life. In other words, since “Gypsy identity was irredentibly linked to negative attitudes, prejudice could only be overcome by eliminating that which ‘provoked’ it” (The Save the Children Fund 2001, 117). In both, the USSR and Hungary, Roma communities constituted a “layer who needed to be drawn into the proletariat” (Stewart 2001, 72). Proletarianization of the society meant a creation of a homogenous working class. Any deviation from the envisioned unitary working class was viewed as a social problem and a threat.

To tie the two sections together I showed that the important difference between the two phases of Socialism was the role of the state. During Nativization in the USSR, a Communist Soviet society was the primary goal. Reaching this utopian society was the outright objective. After WWII, however, the ambition was to modernize the society through industrialization and proletarianization and Roma fell victims of assimilationist campaigns. Hungary participated only in the later phase of Socialism. Nomadic lifestyles were seen as incompatible with collectivization and industrialization efforts, compared with the earlier phase, when they were seen as obsolete lifestyles that needed to be reformed. Elimination of backwardness remained important for both phases, but the means were different.

### Legacies of Socialism

Socialist-era social engineering had lasting legacies. In this section I look at these legacies and argue that regime change in the end of 1980s and early 1990s ended a paternalistic system, cut off state benefits from recipients, and economic as well as

political change brought with it major social adjustment. Roma were concentrated in unskilled labor force and were disproportionately hit by the transition. Broken ethnic ties and little cohesion prevented any unified and organized response to the crisis. In addition, institutionalized segregation practices continued.

Today, it is a widely accepted fact that Roma constitute the biggest losers of the political and economic liberalization (see, for example, Goldman 1997; Ladányi and Szelényi 2006; Koulis 2005; Szalai 1999; Barany 2002). Overall, since “Soviet Roma lacked both territory and the administrative structures to make themselves heard” (Lemon 2001, 228) after regime change, “not one school for Roma exists in Russia, nor is there a single newspaper, radio or TV station,” claimed the leader of Council of Roma NCA (National Cultural Autonomy), Georgiy Demeter (Bowrig 2002, 243). In Hungary, Roma cultural self-representation was considerably better than in Russia; nevertheless, it did not relieve the tensions among Roma and non-Roma, and intensified violence in recent years.

The collapse of Socialism with its paternalistic system represented the end of state-provided security. Lacking housing and withdrawn state benefits lead to homelessness, re-ghettoization and tumbling living standards (Stewart 2001, 87; also see European Union of Fundamental Rights 2012; Helsinki Watch 1993, 6; Wagner 1987, 37). Cohesion among Roma dropped due to enforced re-settlement campaigns under state Socialism, and after regime change the situation turned irredeemable: social ties were broken due to resettlement, and institutionalized dependency of Roma on the state was abruptly ended, generating an enormous difficulty for the minority.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For instance, around urban areas in Russia, where many Roma settled, the construction boom of the 1950s led to state-led forced re-settlement of the Roma communities. Roma families living in “barracks” were placed in various districts, often far away from each other (Demeter et al. 2000, 213). As a consequence of dispersing Roma families, social cohesion dropped, the youth increasingly forgot Romani



Since Socialist-era education policies contributed to hostilities between schools and families, attendance continued dropping after regime change. While penalties were imposed for non-attendance, intra-school segregation has been institutionalized as “special education” and “Gypsy classes” were established. In such classrooms, teachers were often assigned “as a form of punishment” (Fehér et al. 1993, 7). In Russia, Roma parents believed that if they “send their children to schools, it can lead to the end of their traditional mode of life” (Demeter et al. 2000, 239). The next chapter shows that this practice of segregation continues virtually unchanged.

After regime change, debate about national identity and nationhood occupied a central role in political discourse in the two countries, as both Russia and Hungary engaged in renewed efforts of nation building. In the next chapter I also demonstrate that both countries should be understood as nationalizing-states, characterized by a sense of ownership of the state by the majority and use of state powers to promote this particular culture (Brubaker 1996, 431).

### Conclusion and Lessons Learned

In summary, this chapter analyzed Socialism-motivated nation building efforts in Russia and Hungary, and how those defined attitudes towards Roma. I first looked at the novel nationality policy that the early Soviet vanguards experimented with, known as Nativization, and proceeded to post-WWII Socialist periods in the two countries.

I argued that conceptualization of the state, even Socialist state under Lenin and later Socialist state under Stalin, implied different approach towards building a society,

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language, and meetings were virtually limited to various ceremonies and celebrations (ibid.). Cherenkov argues that very recently with the liberalization of the housing market, Roma in Moscow were trying to reform Roma districts by moving closer to each other (2011).

and consequently distinctive policies towards Roma. Under Nativization the logic was that “being an equal member of the family of Soviet peoples entailed an equal responsibility to the Soviet state,” and thus everyone was expected to contribute to the universal progress towards Socialism (Slezkine 1994, 303). In order to construct a Communist society, the Russian intelligentsia assumed the responsibility in promoting economic and cultural advancement of previously backward peoples, which among other measures included construction of schools (Kammari et al. 1957). Roma, along with other groups, would belong to the complex and multinational Soviet nation. Later Stalin assumed that elimination of backwardness was necessary for modernization and industrialization, and Roma were proletarianized by stripping them of their cultural heritage and ethnic identity.

My primary goals were, on the one hand, to complete the historical examination of the way state and nation building, along with the desire to manage society and incorporate or exclude minorities explain policies towards Roma. Consequently, an expansive historical analysis of the previous chapters lays the necessary foundation for a more focused assessment of Roma identity formation in present-day Russia and Hungary, which is the topic of consecutive chapters.

The lessons learned from this unique historical phenomenon of ideologically motivated nation building efforts and top down framing of Roma identity could provide ground to better understand how Roma transborder identity is constructed on the level of the European Union. The international (NGOs- and EU-led) Roma movement is concerned with incorporating Roma under the European common identity, similarly conceptualizing belonging along regional and ideological themes. While USSR and EU-

level policies are radically unlike, nevertheless I return and revisit the theoretical findings of this chapter in Chapter V, where I look at how EU-level discourse portrays Roma as a European minority and an intact part of the multicultural European society. This discourse was incorporated by the pro-Roma movement and forms the foundation of the ‘good Roma’ image.

I proceed in the next chapter with an assessment of the current political climate and present fieldwork findings regarding how the ‘bad Gypsy’ image is mobilized and reproduced in the school system. I first show that after the collapse of Socialism, most countries renewed their efforts of nation building and should be regarded as “re-nationalizing states.” Barany suggests that due to the “unhealthy moral transition” post-Socialist countries became even more intolerant of national and ethnic diversity (1995, 192). The social legacies of early state-building policies and Socialism across the region, as well as their effects on identity formation, are still unresolved and require more research (Wolchik 1995, 174).

## CHAPTER IV

### ‘BAD GYPSIES’: BOUNDARIES OF BELONGING AND NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

#### Introduction

*“Hungarian nation has a weak [meggyengített] culture; after the USSR’s humiliation we tried to search for national values and that is what is important... What makes a Hungarian - Hungarian? That he or she considers Hungary their home and does something about it! The ‘does something about it’ is important here! We don’t need parasites and leeches! If one has an accent but is not a parasite, that person is Hungarian! [...] The school gave [Roma] an example of self-restrain and discipline... Their parents often can’t take responsibility for themselves, let alone their own children... But the person is worth as much as it contributes to the society. The Gypsies are useless individuals if they just have to be supported... It’s like: ‘don’t plant anything in saline soil.’”*  
- Elementary school teacher<sup>48</sup>

In the previous chapters I compared state-led identity politics directed at Roma in the past decades and centuries. Historical examination showed that policies defining nationhood and delineating boundaries of belonging were dependent on the characteristics and particular phase of state building, conceptualization of society or nation, and consequent policies towards minorities, including the Roma. While ‘state’ and ‘nation’ are not concepts with fixed meaning, but rather contingent on historical, cultural, and social contexts, education system remained a constant tool of defining and redefining these notions. Importantly, the preceding chapters showed that anti-Gypsyism was formed in the early stages of state consolidation and nation building, and became an integral part of social consciousness and permeated state institutions.

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<sup>48</sup> Personal interviews and conversations in the Fall, 2012 in Hungary.

This chapter starts from these observations and presents how the current exclusionary state building effort in Russia and Hungary are in the process of redefining the meaning of state and nation once again, how those meanings are conveyed through the education system and beyond, and in turn affect Roma ethnic and political identity. Even though most post-Socialist countries acknowledged and many even codified Western discourse on multiculturalism, without well-functioning institutions<sup>49</sup> and, critically, lacking corresponding values among the majority society, these policies remain mostly “window dressing” and lip service to the West.

Roma are clearly and visibly represented as unwanted and outsiders by the media, they have limited possibilities in the labor market, as well as inadequate access to health care, education, and other services. Roma are not passive observers, however, but their response to the explicitly and implicitly incorporated messages of inferiority varies between internalization of stereotypes, performance of Gypsiness, assimilation, or rejection of their identity, or some combination of these. This chapter explores the construction of the ‘bad Gypsy’ image, considering the context of renewed nation building efforts. It unfolds the following way: In the first section I present the political context of current exclusionary nation building in both countries. There are explicit efforts at mobilization of educational institutions in order to raise a patriotic future generation imbued with certain national values. Encompassed in these values is a strong

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<sup>49</sup> See for example A. Kudrin’s sobering assessment, who was Minister of Finance in Russia between 2006 and 2011, suggesting that human rights protection must go beyond state discourse, but rely on appropriate institutions, which Russia lacks. Article accessible at <http://www.forbes.ru/mneniya-column/vertikal/245090-novyi-povorot-kakuyu-natsionalnuyu-ideyu-putin-predlozhit-rossii-na-v>

sense of exclusionary nationhood and growing emphasis on compulsory nature of elementary schooling that manifests in “militarization” of the education system.<sup>50</sup>

In the second section, I show how the ‘bad Gypsy’ image is disseminated and reproduced as part of formal and informal educational practices. I suggest that increasing Western criticism in the name of promoting multiculturalism, often perceived by teachers as imposed without consideration of local realities, results in hiding actual problems of exclusionary practices, picking up a new discourse but following old habits. Segregation in schools is observable and creative, while such discriminatory practices are not communicated properly to those outside the school, and instead hidden due to taboos and secrecy.

The third section focuses on in-class disciplinary practices, which visibly recreate the image of ‘bad Gypsies’. I assess how teachers discipline bodies and discourse, remaking stereotypes dominant among majority society, which often do not resemble the characteristics of the actual Roma community. The last section discusses the dangers regarding banality of racial hierarchy that is intrinsic in many practices, in and outside the school system.

I conclude with lessons learned from this chapter, including the banality of anti-Gypsyism, which is hidden or even denied in the name of conforming to multicultural expectations. I show that anti-Gypsyism over centuries was built in and penetrated not only state institutions, but became part of national perceptions and narratives. Schools are embedded in and reflect exclusive national cultures, in which teachers socialize as well. In addition, the image of ‘bad Gypsies’ is not solely generated and maintained by the

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<sup>50</sup> Pages below explain ‘militarization’ in the school system in depth.

school system, but by other formal and informal institutions as well. Even well-meaning charities may produce and perpetuate such images unintentionally. These images are also working in tandem with the dominant nationalist and xenophobic discourse in Russia and Hungary that is generated by the political elite and is undoubtedly reproducing marginalization of Roma.

### Strong State with a Strong Nation: Neo-Modern State Building and Nationalizing States

*“How we bring up young people determines whether Russia can preserve... itself [and]...whether she loses itself as a nation...We must build our future on solid foundations. And such a foundation is patriotism. We need to make full use of the best practices of education and enlightenment from the times of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union...Therefore, questions about the future of our educational system is particularly important...Schools and universities, in fact, create new citizens and form their consciousness.”*  
- V. V. Putin<sup>51</sup>

The goal of this section is to examine the characteristics of current state and nation building efforts in Hungary and Russia, and shed light on how those affect the dominant view regarding Roma. I then inquire about how educational institutions participate in “othering” Roma children and reproduce stereotypes. I deliberately trace the two cases studies together to stress similarities in how schooling instills a certain type of patriotism in both countries.

Whether Russia can be a “modern, forward-looking, [and] developing” country with an “integral nation in the contemporary world” depends on patriotic youth; since “real patriotism is educated patriotism,” schools take up a special role in constructing this

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<sup>51</sup> Speech delivered by V. V. Putin in September 2012 (Krasnodar) as part of the meeting with public officials on patriotic education of youth. Speech is accessible at <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/16470>.

new, loyal society, according to Russia's president, V. V. Putin.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile in Hungary there is a political discourse on reincarnation of the country as the motherland for external ethnic Hungarians. Even the prime minister, Viktor Orbán has difficulty conceptualizing what the Hungarian nation means, let alone defining it for the rest of the world.<sup>53</sup> What he is certain about is Hungary's responsibility towards all Hungarians, even beyond borders.<sup>54</sup> He furthermore considers "the most significant political, economic theory and economic debates of the next five to ten years [in the country to be] conducted in the context of European Union *versus* national sovereignty."<sup>55</sup>

Both countries introduced in their national curricula mandatory classes promoting "national consciousness," moral principles, usually taking the form of religious education, and patriotic upbringing.<sup>56</sup> For instance, all Hungarian schools celebrate a new holiday – National Unity Day – and organize trips to *küllhon*, which means "outer home," or trips to Hungarian-populated areas outside Hungary. Mass schooling, as earlier chapters suggested, has always been central to reproducing national subject/citizens in through the content of their curricula, discipline, displaying national paraphernalia, and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Speech delivered by Viktor Orbán at Conference entitled "National Interest in Focus" in May 2013, accessible at <http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/the-prime-ministers-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-conference-entitled-national-interest-in-focus>

<sup>54</sup> In his most recent speech from February 16, 2014, equivalent to the "state of the union," Orbán claimed that one of his goals is ensuring quality education for all young people "from Cluj Napoca (Romania), through Budapest and until Subotica (Serbia)," using the Hungarian equivalents for the cities. Full speech is accessible at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGMG2M5wqRE>.

<sup>55</sup> Speech delivered by Viktor Orbán at the 12th Meeting of the Hungarian Standing Conference in November 2013, emphasis mine; accessible at <http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/the-prime-ministers-speeches/viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-12th-meeting-of-the-hungarian-standing-conference>

<sup>56</sup> See the official Hungarian National School Curriculum accessible at [www.ofi.hu/nat-2012](http://www.ofi.hu/nat-2012); see also Russian National Program on Patriotic Education, accessible at [http://archives.ru/programs/patriot\\_2015.shtml](http://archives.ru/programs/patriot_2015.shtml)



incorporating national ideology into school life. Figure 8 shows examples of such national symbols and persons displayed on school walls from fieldwork sites.



Figure 8: National Symbols in Schools

National symbols, persons, and paraphernalia in Hungarian and Russian schools.

The two countries, Hungary and Russia, fit well under Brubaker’s framework of “nationalizing states,” which are “states that are conceived by their dominant elites as nation-states, as states of and for particular nations, yet as ‘incomplete’ or ‘unrealized’ nation-states, as insufficiently ‘national in a variety of senses” (1996, 411). Regime change left an ideological vacuum—countries in the region embarked on post-Socialist state and nation building that often evoked strong nationalism, national unity, and loyalty to the state. Political elite in both countries largely represented the core nation, and “the new state [came to be] seen as having the right, indeed the responsibility to protect and promote the cultural, economic, demographic and political vitality of the core nation” (ibid. 432; Brubaker 2009, 203).

In such nationalizing states non-core nations are often not acknowledged as belonging to the nation. Consequently, minorities, and Roma in particular, are becoming more alienated politically and culturally, as state-power is almost exclusively deployed to promote the language and culture of the core nation, which is seen as state-owning and distinct from the rest of the citizens (Brubaker 1996, 431; Brubaker 2009, 204). The

nationalist discourse often draws on primordial conceptualization of nation, such as “a true Russian have Russian blood ‘boiling’ in his veins” (Slezkine 1994, 85).

Since Roma were perceived as a group without national identity, after the regime change they continued to represent a “threat to national identity” and people “lack[ing] state loyalty” even despite their official minority status (Kendall 1997, 73). Race was deployed to make sense of economic and political changes and Roma were used as scapegoats across many countries (Lemon 2000, 58, 67). Social tensions grew as a “self-selected cadre of communists-turned-capitalists enriched themselves at the expense of the wider population[, and] the poorest sections of society, such as the Roma, were hit worst.”<sup>57</sup> The Roma’s status as absolute losers of regime change is widely acknowledged by the scholarly community.<sup>58</sup>

Brigit Fowler<sup>59</sup> divides post-communist Hungarian political elite into two camps: those concerned with ‘progress’ and the ‘national camp’. Fowler argues that the ‘national camp’

feels that a national revival is in order. The focus of some 'national' elites on reasserting Hungarian national identity as Christian is wrapped into a broader campaign across the 'national' camp to achieve adequate nationhood as part of the transition from communism. The 'national' camp has therefore been engaged in a long-running effort to remake the state as a 'more national' one that can deliver on this project, an effort in which the millennial commemorations represented the latest episode. In its efforts to act on and through the state to overturn perceived communist legacies and advance the cause of a putative nation, Hungary's 'national' camp can be placed alongside nation and state builders in newer and more ethnically heterogeneous post-communist states (2004, 77).

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<sup>57</sup> The Economist, "Hungary's Plan for the Roma" 8/4/2011. Accessible at [http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/04/europes\\_roma](http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/04/europes_roma)

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Ivanov 2003, Szelényi and Ladányi 2006, and others.

<sup>59</sup> Centre for Russian and East European Studies, European Research Institute, University of Birmingham.

National revival is undoubtedly being attempted. The ‘national camp’ with Viktor Orbán’s leadership in Hungary and Vladimir Putin’s in Russia enjoys virtually unchallenged power in today’s political climate.

Patriotic education is a critical component of creating new national citizens. The State Secretary for Education in Hungary, Rózsa Hoffmann, during a conference in 2010 stated that “it is important that the minds of students living within *political limits* of Hungary be rectified, and the knowledge corrected that is confused or lacking.”<sup>60</sup> In order to increase the “knowledge of Hungarian-ness” (*magyarságismeret*) it will include aspects such as celebration of Hungarian unity day in Hungarian schools and school trips to *külhon* (“outer home” or Hungarian-populated areas outside Hungary). Hoffmann continued that “the tragic history of Hungary is that the Hungarians were broken up at the beginning of the twentieth century,” referring to the Trianon peace agreement after WWI. Hungarian identity, she stressed, will revive again. Importantly, it is through teachers that they hope to reveal to the students “the fundamental truth that ‘there can be a lot of homes, but only one Hungarian nation, and the Hungarians living anywhere in the world belong together’” (ibid.). The Hungarian National Assembly on October 18 accepted the resolution about the introduction of “National Unity day” in schools, school trips to *külhon*, and the establishment of the House of Hungarians<sup>61</sup>, an educational and cultural institution.

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<sup>60</sup> Népszabadság, 26 October 2010 “Hoffmann: alapvető fontosságú a magyarságismeret az iskolákban.” Available at [http://nol.hu/belfold/hoffmann\\_alapveto\\_fontossagu\\_a\\_magyarsagismeret\\_az\\_iskolakban](http://nol.hu/belfold/hoffmann_alapveto_fontossagu_a_magyarsagismeret_az_iskolakban)

<sup>61</sup> It would be more precise to translate it as the House of Hungarianness [Magyarság Háza](Magyar-Hungarian, magyarság – Hungarianness or all Hungarians, referring to those living outside of Hungary).

Particularly alarming is not only the deliberate indoctrination, introduction of nationalism into schools, but also the “militarization” of schools. The Hungarian Spectrum<sup>62</sup> recently reported that:

Orbán's regime is embarking on something similar [to Soviet regime's attempt at creating a superior Soviet man], and naturally it will be the schools that will be responsible for educating this new patriotic, religious, moral Hungarian breed. Today's western culture is rotten to the core: secular and immoral. However, a few years of Hungarian schooling will produce an entirely different Hungarian population. These new Hungarians will be the perfect products of the newly introduced school system where children will have to take either religion or ethics classes in addition to classes on the traditional virtues of courtship, family life, rearing children, and learning to be faithful to one's spouse "till death do us part." In addition, the whole educational system will be permeated with "patriotism." ...In plain language, it will be saturated with nationalism...[In addition,] military training and horsemanship in schools is enthusiastically supported by Csaba Hende, minister of defense. He is reinstating military high schools and according to plans high school students can even matriculate in the subject.

These policies clearly revive state-sponsored nationalism and unambiguously focus on schools and the youth.

The trends in Russia are very similar: “as Russia loses its role and its self-perception as the leader of other nations, it will develop a new form of patriotism which is not pluralist and multiethnic, but one which is resentful, closed and ethnically based” (Lieven 1999, 67). This kind of nationalism “driv[ing] out people who do not fit into the vision [of a country that is their own]” (Fairbanks, quoted in *ibid.*). After regime change nationalism was also promoted to the point of an “official national policy of the state,” and it was used as a tool of nation building and cohesion mechanism (Molchanov 2000, 263). Moreover, ethnicity became politicized and employed as a political resource (*ibid.*).

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<sup>62</sup> Hungarian Spectrum is published by Eva Balogh, who is the former Professor of History and Dean of Morse College at Yale University. The content of the blog was cited by several leading academics and newspapers. The article is accessible at <http://esbalogh.typepad.com/hungarianspectrum/2012/02/the-new-hungarian-schools-and-their-products.html>

Nationalism was dominating political discourse, and nationalists have been securing an increasing number of political positions. National identity redefined along ethnic and religious lines.

A consideration of the Russian “Patriotic reeducation” government program illustrates this argument.<sup>63</sup> The state program Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2011-2015 is in fact a continuation of the state program Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2001-2005 and Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2006-2010. The goal is “further development of patriotic consciousness of Russian citizens and to promote the unity of the nation,” as the document suggests. It is worth quoting the language of the program at length:

The program includes a set of legal, regulatory, organizational, teaching, research and information nationwide and interregional activities to further develop and improve the system of patriotic education of citizens, aimed at the establishment of patriotism as a moral basis for the formation of their active life position. Implementation of a unified state policy in the patriotic education of citizens of the Russian Federation shall ensure the achievement of the objectives of patriotic education through planned, continuous, and coordinated activities of state bodies, local authorities and public organizations...Carrying out of military-sports games and other activities aimed at the military-patriotic education of youth shall be resumed... [To achieve these goals, it is necessary to] enhance the role of state and public structures in the formation of high patriotic consciousness in the citizens of the Russian Federation...; formation of positive attitudes toward military service...The end result of the implementation of programs assume positive growth of patriotism in the country, the increase in social and labor activity of citizens, especially young people, their contribution to the development of the main spheres of life and activities of state and society, to overcome the extreme manifestations of individual groups of citizens and other negative phenomena, the revival of spirituality and social and economic and political stability and strengthening national security.

Closely resembling the Hungarian attitudes towards replanting patriotism and nationalism that was lost during Socialism, Russian state policy is also highly centralized

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<sup>63</sup> The full text of the program in Russian can be found here: [http://archives.ru/programs/patriot\\_2015.shtml](http://archives.ru/programs/patriot_2015.shtml)

and openly targets youth in schools. Similarly, it is alarming that the current patriotic school program includes instructions and preparation for the military (consider some of the main executors of the Program: the Ministry of Education and Science Federation, Russian Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Defense, Russian State Military). Books for school children combining military and patriotic education are widely available.

In summary, these national trends form the broad background of this project's more focused fieldwork. Namely, populist and nationalist political parties, economic crisis, and discriminatory discourse all contribute to the marginalization of Roma (Pusca 2012). Ivan Krastev<sup>64</sup> describes it as *demographic imagination*, instead of *democratic imagination*, where the majority population, feeling betrayed in the increasingly globalized world, become more favorable to populist movements and turn increasingly hostile towards minorities (2011). Thus although regime change brought economic liberalization and some democratization, corresponding values of multiculturalism, respect for diversity and human rights are largely lacking, and have been only deteriorating in the recent past. In addition, this nationalist discourse is also reflected in schools, through disciplinary practices and changing content of textbooks. I demonstrate above that state schools are explicitly endorsed in their capacity to construct the new national citizen, while the Roma remain in the margins.

The rest of the chapter directly builds on fieldwork data, collected in various elementary schools in Hungary and Russia with both Roma and non-Roma students. I

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<sup>64</sup> Krastev holds several academic (e.g. permanent fellow at the IWM Institute of Human Sciences in Austria) and non-academic positions (e.g. Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Bulgaria; founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations) and contributes to scholarly and applied research alike.

discuss teachers' attitudes, disciplinary methods, and discourse – how interactions in educational institutions form and construct Roma identity and how the 'bad Gypsy' image is reproduced in these institutions.

### Schools and 'Bad Gypsies'

*“Integration happens through schooling. If they [Roma] are not educated the only attitude is ‘give me what I want or go to hell’ [adj vagy rohadj meg]. Through school, they become useful citizens and can earn their own living, can have clean apartments... At home they don’t learn self-discipline and without that it is hard to integrate... Of course all of them come with malleable and good brain to the world, but the parents ruin this...They bring home the free book because they need paper for cigarettes!”*  
- Elementary school teacher<sup>65</sup>

This section looks at the mechanism of segregation. The purpose of this section is to provide a context and introduce the players: schools, non-state actors involved, Roma community, teachers, and children. As I employ Foucauldian analysis in this chapter, a particular nuance must be foregrounded regarding the power of the state and extent of homogenization through education. Primary education is indeed mandatory, and Roma as well as non-Roma children are obliged to attend primary school. The state has powers to enforce this requirement for instance through police. The conversation with the director of the school in Russia reveals this matter:

*Director:* [When Gypsy children came to our school for the first time] we [leased a building from the Military that functions as the Gypsy school today] and there were 35-40 students in total, who went to classes. They attended school irregularly, and their intellectual level was similar, regardless of age... Now there are more children who attend to school. Many children used to go fortune telling with their mothers... Parents simply thought that education was not important...

*Me:* Why did it change?

*Director:* It changed when they were forced to attend. We involved the local authorities, police... we went from house to house! Importantly we had a list of all students of school age, we looked at their academic potential...We dragged

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<sup>65</sup> Personal interviews and conversations in Fall, 2012 in Hungary.

[vytaschili] them all out to school. Every single one goes to school now. Of course there might be a few...but almost all go to school. When children are born, there is a record created for them, and we have these lists about each child. In May, we go to the 'tabor', take the list with us, go into each house according to the list where 6 year-old children live. We talk to the parents, take a copy of the birth certificate...

This conversation explicitly discloses the powers of the state school working cooperatively with other branches of the state, such as the police. Some Roma children undoubtedly see school attendance as nothing but an obligation; consider the following conversation in the same school:

*Teacher:* Global warming is nothing but a headache for our society!

*Roma Student:* Is that good or bad?

*Teacher:* What is good about a headache?

*Roma Student:* I wouldn't have to go to school!

Nonetheless, inside classrooms, as this chapter discusses later, "normalization" and homogenization of Roma students is not as apparent. I will discuss clear instances of resistance to teachers' authority from Roma students on one hand, and on the other teachers themselves were disinterested in educating those whom they perceived as irredeemable.

### Segregated Education for the 'Bad Gypsies'

Segregation is justified by stereotypical representation of Roma: poor hygienic standards, little interest or ability to learn in school, early marriages and laziness. In the meantime, parents clearly see schools as vital institutions, where they experience day-to-day contact with non-Roma and where they can access necessary knowledge to improve their conditions. The next sections focuses on how the 'bad Gypsy' image is employed and guides attitudes towards Roma.



Both Russia and Hungary have nominally inclusive education systems and intentional segregation is not permitted. Behind school walls, however, I observed creative ways of segregating Roma students. Teachers who are also products of profoundly discriminatory social systems embody and transmit the image of a stereotypical ‘bad Gypsy’ in classrooms. I also show in this section that schoolteachers and staff are keenly aware of Western criticism of Roma discrimination in their countries and view this judgment as hypocritical, imposing, and insensitive. Sometimes schools pick up a new discourse with coded words, but old practices of ethnic differentiation secretly continue. Resulting taboos only blanket real problems, which continue to proliferate, and prevent open discussion about challenges faced by all sides, teachers, students, and local communities alike. “Be very soft on the facts and feel free to tweak the real percentage of Roma attendance, make it sound lower” – was a very revealing first request of a school director.<sup>66</sup> “If you notice anything, tell me, only me, I know there are issues in this school” – was a similar request of another director.<sup>67</sup>

In Russia, segregation was explicit. Roma children were completely isolated: brought in by a separate bus, they studied in a separate building—the “Gypsy school”—with adjusted curriculum, and altered methodologies.<sup>68</sup> The “Russian school” was in an historical building that served as the village hospital until the end of World War II. The two schools and the Roma settlement are shown in Figure 9 below. The “Gypsy school”

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<sup>66</sup> Personal interview, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2013, Hungary.

<sup>67</sup> Personal interview, January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, Russia.

<sup>68</sup> My observations are based on one Roma community, whose children attend a nearby school in a village approximately an hour away from a major city. I do not intend to make general claims about the entire Russian education system, or even other regions’ treatment of the Roma minority in the Federation. In fact, an employee of an NGO, closely involved in human rights advocacy in that very school, warned me that the situation in the school described is likely worse and more embarrassing than in other places in the country.

was across the road in a barrack-like building, which was used by the Soviet military stationed in the town, previously known as a military town. Children were brought here with an old Soviet school bus, usually at 10am, but never punctually. “They like to sleep in, they rarely wake up in time, so starting the first class at 8am is futile” — was the common belief among teachers. The mood in the classrooms was that of despair, apathy, and lethargy. Neither Roma children nor the teachers knew why they were there. Both were forced, to some extent.

Roma rarely met non-Roma children. One teacher informed me of the etiquette: “even when they come for technology class to the computer room we don’t let them out during breaks because otherwise there are conflicts with Russians... In 5/a we can do a lot more in classes...they are the Russian kids and these are the Gypsies. M<sup>69</sup> is the best student here but even his grammar is rather bad...I won’t even talk about the rest!” The teacher continued: “we can’t even let them out to eat with everyone because there are conflicts...so they [the Gypsies] go out during class time [and Russian kids go during break].”<sup>70</sup> School rules were just like described by the teacher, and Roma students no longer questioned the normalcy of it. One day a Roma boy even repeated it, internalizing the rule: “we don’t leave the classroom when Russian children do, we fight with them, this is why!”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> No real names are used to protect identities.

<sup>70</sup> Personal conversation, January 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Fieldnotes, winter 2013 Russia.



Figure 9: “Russian School” and “Gypsy School”  
“Russian school”(left) and “Gypsy school” (middle): both students and teachers referred to the buildings based on the ethnic composition of students. Roma children come from a nearby camp (right) and study in 2 sessions since their building does not have the capacity to fit all of the pupils at the same time.

Segregation was seen as necessary almost by all parties: Russian parents did not want their children exposed to Roma, and the school staff assumed that Roma must want to be together for cultural reasons. Local anti-discrimination NGO’s director suggested that self-segregation might be a protective mechanism by the Roma community.

Everyone wanted to avoid conflicts and protect their children.

The “Gypsy school” discontinues education at 7<sup>th</sup> grade<sup>72</sup>, while the “Russian school” went until 9<sup>th</sup> grade. “They get married by the time they are in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, there is no need for more education” – a teacher revealed when describing the “Gypsy school” to me during my first visit. Her calm and confident voice implied that this was an established practice in the school that all parties were comfortable with. This was further proved when a month later, as a consequence of my conversation with the director, I doubted the assumed mutual consent to this set up. The director proposed a “spontaneous survey” walking in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom with a prepared question: “Girls, all of you will get married soon, probably this or next year, is that right?” The girls nodded without eye

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<sup>72</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders study in the same classroom, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades are absent from the Gypsy school.

contact, while playing a cooking game on computers. Boys did not pay attention to the question.

An anti-discrimination NGO was involved in this school's life, for instance, providing supporting materials to teachers about Roma language and culture, supplementing textbooks with Romani grammar books, working with volunteers, organizing school trips, and initiating conversations with the school regarding the intolerable conditions of Roma children.<sup>73</sup> There was a clear discomfort even at the mention of the NGO: they were accused of “creating artificial problems” by one teacher, which “stood between” teachers and I.<sup>74</sup>

The school became more wary or even unwilling to accept volunteers locally or from abroad, which was a common practice in the past. Arranged by the NGO, these volunteers assisted in the “Gypsy school.” “Don’t you see? We teach them, just like the Russian children! Did you see any conflicts in my class? There aren’t any! Why create an artificial problem then?”—complained one teacher with zeal. The director added that until Roma children are clean, without lice, with brushed hair, and own a pair of inside shoes, it is even hard to find a teacher who is willing to instruct them. Those criticizing don’t understand these hardships, she implied. Indeed, teachers were progressively uncomfortable with my presence. “They ask why you keep writing and don’t help them discipline,” she continued. One day cornered by the two main teachers of the “Gypsy

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<sup>73</sup> I discuss the role of this NGO in more depth in the next chapter; here I focus on teachers’ reaction and perception to non-state actors and Western discourse.

<sup>74</sup> In addition, my presence was interpreted as representing Western position of human rights protection and critique of Russia. Fieldwork, consequently, was arduous due to the immediate distrust and taboos around Roma issues.

school,” they exclaimed with surprise wondering why the West<sup>75</sup> cares so much about the Roma, whereas it is them, the teachers, who need protection. The newly hired school guard overhearing the conversation stood nearby wildly nodding in agreement.

An informal survey conducted during fieldwork<sup>76</sup> among local Roma revealed that the school and education was definitely a critical issue for the community and over half of the respondents named it as one of the most important challenges. Parents complained: “we can only dream about a normal school”; “our children have to take the bus to school, it is too far away”; “while many difficulties are slowly improving, the school remains an issue”; “we don’t have a school nearby and it is especially difficult to get to the school in the winter”; “school is in a very bad condition”; “the school is too small for this many children.”<sup>77</sup> Poor quality of education was critical; most saw the source of improvement in life with increased education and access to work for women. Support for education was overwhelming among parents, although most adults had negligible formal education themselves.

Based on the survey, on average, adults (those 15 years of age or older) finished 4.2 grades, but some people were illiterate and never went to school. The highest achievement was six grades of education. Reasons for low school attendance in the past were duties at home (taking care of younger siblings usually), being on the road, as well as distance between school and home. Most expressed their regret about low education and their content with children's success in school and regular attendance. Assumptions I

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<sup>75</sup> Referring to my host academic institution in the US, presumably.

<sup>76</sup> See Appendix A for more information on survey results; Interview questions available in Appendix B.

<sup>77</sup> As revealed earlier, the survey was done with a research assistant in Russia due to cultural reasons, and these comments were recorded by her; unfortunately, I can’t provide the context for these commentaries.

heard in the local school regarding Roma living in that particular community and their indifference towards education is simply ill-founded.<sup>78</sup>

The reasons of school segregation were seen as the result of poor academic achievement, bad clothing, inadequate Russian knowledge, bad hygiene, dissatisfaction of Russian parents, as well as lack of mutual understanding. Many expressed their hope that these reasons are temporary and Roma children will catch up with Russians. Their optimistic expectations coupled with perceived improvement in lifestyle, which most expressed. Namely, there is less fortune-telling and moving around.

In Hungary, Roma integration and inclusive education receive more attention, considering they are the largest minority in the country. Official state policy is following the EU democratic guidelines of equal treatment. Yet, realities do not conform to these official lines in Hungary either. Studies prove that instead of improvement, segregation in the last decade has increased.<sup>79</sup> However, while segregation was explicit in Russia, it was implicit in Hungary.

I witnessed “integrated schools” with segregated classrooms and segregated schools that function as “dumping schools” for nearby towns and villages, where the ‘bad Gypsies’ are transferred. Ethnic school statistics are illegal, and yet secretly some schools have careful data: “we know these students and their families, if they have even a drop of Gypsy blood, they’ll be marked as Gypsies” – said a principal in a school. Many children come to school from nearby poor settlements. Figure 10 below depicts such living conditions and selected examples of segregated schools.

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<sup>78</sup> While I am wary of generalization based on this one community, I believe it is likely that a larger scale research into Roma interest or disinterest in education would reveal similar results.

<sup>79</sup> See for example Babusik 2004; Havas & Liskó 2004; Havas & Zolnay 2010.



Figure 10: Roma in Hungary

Roma children go to school from poor slums with inadequate housing conditions (left) and study in segregated schools. Some segregation is the result of non-Roma parents withdrawing their children en masse the more Roma students attend the school (middle), some schools should officially close, but Roma parents continue bringing children, forcing the establishment to function with small classrooms (right).

One of the schools, which was church-based until 1948, then turned over to the state under Socialism, and finally given back to the church after 1990, saw drastic changes in student composition after they opened their doors to Roma children of nearby villages. Some students might have followed their teachers who wished to teach no longer in a religious institution, but most parents were not satisfied about the increasing number of Roma. Without explicit policies the school now teaches almost entirely Roma students. “We tried to convince the parents to stay...but you know what happens when Gypsy children are in this [high] ratio...” —shared the director with increasing discomfort just naming racist practices—“do you really want to write this down? You know what kind of society it is, when someone claims that this is what happens as a consequence of many Gypsies in the classroom...it is a fact of course...”<sup>80</sup>

Very clearly there is a taboo around the topic. Most children here are classified as “with disadvantaged background” [hátrányos helyzetű] and are “thrown out of other schools nearby, ending up here,” the director suggested. The school, in order to keep its doors open, needs students. Non-Roma don’t come, so teachers recruit Roma children

<sup>80</sup> Personal interview, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2013, Hungary.

living in nearby villages. Interestingly, because the student body consists of almost entirely Roma students, there arose an interest in catering cultural classes towards the students. The director is even thinking to introduce a Roma language and culture class to make it more attractive and suitable.

In another school in Hungary, where attendance is comprised of both groups, within grades students are divided into “advanced” and “beginners,” for subjects such as math, Hungarian grammar, and English. Roma students are almost all in the latter group. In lower grades, when English is a selective subject, the head teacher explained that only 2 pupils attend foreign language classes, because “the rest are Gypsies.” Another teacher shared that her stronger classes have none or only few Roma students.

All teachers were keenly aware of existent practices of segregation, similarly to Russia, but banality or ordinariness of racism likewise created conflicts in the context of outside criticism of the Roma’s treatment in the country. Similarly agonizing conversations unambiguously proved this point: “there are people who come in to schools to pick on teachers and ‘observe Roma students,’” one teacher confronted me with my perceived role in the school, “they are condescending and demanding...they look at Hungary as a rotten country, as if this country needed to be slapped, and part of this rottenness is the way we treat Gypsies, is their view...teachers don’t want to be the prey of such studies, they don’t want to be the target...we are all ‘utterly racist’ here, we know that’s our reputation in the US.” The European Union was equally called out as hypocritical: “France discards Gypsies, but it is only the East who can be criticized, right?” – was another distressed opinion among teachers. Evidently, the topic of Roma provoked strong emotions, none of which have an outlet in a society where issues of



racism are often taboos, generating fear and secrecy, while institutions embody much of racist practices. The few cases of school closure or punishment for such unacceptable practices contributed to anxiety.<sup>81</sup>

Segregation, once again, was seen as necessary: teachers and non-Roma parents complained about Hungarian students being “Gypsified” and so “develop backwards,” or in other words pick up behavioral patterns, dressing and speaking style from Roma classmates. Likewise, the common belief was Roma indifference towards education. Teachers complained that “family pulls them back”; “they can’t sit still and lack discipline”; “they leave to start a family when barely turning 14”; “they just don’t care.”

A similar informal survey<sup>82</sup> among one Roma community in Hungary also showed overwhelming support for education, comparably to Russia. Parents clearly wishing their children to have a better future saw the answer in education: “I don’t want my son to be garbage like his father”; “my parents thought that I, a woman, should not go to school, but I demand that my daughter doesn’t skip a single class”; “I wish for my children to go beyond elementary education and improve their lives.” Overall pessimism, however, was more noticeable among Hungarian Roma, who almost without exception believed that their conditions are deteriorating. Regardless of education, some said in despair, they would not get a job. Still encouraging their children, parents had little confidence in the future.

Surveyed adults approximately had 6 years of schooling. Most were disappointed in their own lack of education, which they explained with poverty, troubles and

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<sup>81</sup> See for example the case by Chance for Children Foundation closing a segregated school (read more at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26390357>).

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix A.

alcoholism in the family, their parents' disinterest, or duties around the house. The oldest generation was the most likely to be illiterate, but they were also the only ones still speaking their dialect of Romani language, whereas none of the children in this community did. "It is not cool any more," said the young parents of these children. All, young and old alike, perceived their future in negative terms, with little improvement in life, and many named despair and continued unemployment as major stumbling blocks. However, indifference towards education was once again ill-founded.

In sum, this section showed how stereotypes, or the 'bad Gypsy' image, guided certain disciplinary practices in classrooms. The underlying assumption among teachers were the animosity between Roma and non-Roma, as well as early marriages, lacking hygiene, disinterest in school, laziness and bad performance in school. Segregation and special treatment of Roma children was seen as necessary. I resume the assessment of recreating 'bad Roma' through discipline in the next section.

### In Classrooms: Disciplining and Constructing 'Bad Gypsies'

*"Sometimes people describe them as 'buffalo-natured': you know, like the buffaloes Gypsies sleep when it is cold and they are in the dirt when it is hot outside, but not much work is done. How can they be useful for the society like this?"*  
- Elementary school teacher<sup>83</sup>

In this section I look at how disciplinary practices shape and reinforce the Roma ethnic identity guided by the 'bad Gypsy' image. I begin with general Foucauldian analysis of schools discipline in Russia and Hungary and proceed complementing that with description of how 'bad Gypsy' image controls teachers' perceptions and attitude towards children. I point out and explore several points of contention: the role of Roma

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<sup>83</sup> Personal interviews and conversations in Fall, 2012 in Hungary.

parents, the role of the Roma community, oversexualized Roma female bodies, and the role of Roma culture in the context of national culture taught in school. Besides discipline, schools adjusted the curriculum to correct for “objectionable” traits, also stemming from the reified stereotypes about Roma. I come to the conclusion that although segregation is more explicit and the NGO sector is weaker in Russia, community was more involved in school matters.

Building on Foucault’s argument, I observed how discipline inside classrooms usually took the form of body discipline, verbal discipline, and ordering space and objects. Disciplinary practice as a mechanism was applied to unpack objectification and subordination of “the other” in colonial context (Mitchell 1988), as well as reproduction of class, gender, and racial hierarchy in public schools of the US (Ferguson 2000). Schools are “functional sites” where through “distribution of individuals in space” and teachers’ “ideological power,” pupils are disciplined and ordered (Foucault 1995, 141, 143, 187). However, discipline is not unambiguously internalized, but at times might be resisted, rejected, or even performed. I scrutinize in more detail the bottom up formation of Roma group identity and their response to various top down images in Chapter VI.

Disciplinary power, which “is exercised through invisibility[, but] at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility,” indeed produces a certain “ceremony of objectification” (Foucault 1995, 187). Below I describe examples of such rituals inside classrooms. While admittedly teaching discipline is a general task of any school, I point out and assess practices that were used specifically and exclusively with Roma children, making them stand out as different, undesirable, and backwards in the background on normalcy. Figure 11 below shows examples with

description how school discipline is bended to correct for specific Roma behavior or adjusted to it.

Almost every class I attended was characterized by strict Prussian discipline: at the beginning of class one or a couple of students on duty report about missing classmates, sometimes report on the weather outside, the teacher glances through to check order on desks, praises those with sharp pencils, chastises those with dirty notebooks, points out students with straight backs, and finds inappropriate behavior to identify bad examples.

Sharp distinction between accepted norms in the school and assumed lack of norms in Roma households was revealed many times. Teachers in both countries claimed that unpleasant and undisciplined behavior only “belongs to the Gypsy slum/tabor/village” and should be kept for their parents. Disciplining, however, happened among students also, often between Roma themselves. “Don’t act Gypsy,” “don’t be a Gypsy,” “don’t talk like a Gypsy” – were typical exclamations among Roma children in Hungary. Negative self-perception was more evident in Hungary, however, due to more intra-group diversity and intra-communal conflicts, as well as stronger internalization of negative stereotypes without the counteracting sense of pride in their own group identity, which was more characteristic in Russia.<sup>84</sup> I discuss this more in depth in Chapter VI.

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<sup>84</sup> In Russia, almost the entire Roma community was Kalderash, whereas in Hungary most of my sites comprised Roma from various groups, such as Boyash, Vlach, Romungro, etc. Chapter VI contains more information regarding pride in group identity and affiliation with the country where Roma live.



Figure 11: Discipline and Education

Discipline in schools takes various forms: as a punishment for “wasting and not appreciating school resources,” Roma children are not allowed to take textbooks home in the Russian school (left); charts of proper sitting (middle) are common in most of the schools in Russia and teachers take special effort at ensuring appropriate postures during class-time, which is more pronounced when disciplining Roma children. Other educational institutions follow school-like disciplinary practices, too: during a summer camp organized primarily for Roma children, children ate from carefully arranged identical plastic dishware (right), while teachers and staff ate different food from non-plastic dishware at a podium-like space in the front of the spacious dining room; when children complained about food, they were called out once again as never appreciating what is given to them, and teachers brought the issue amongst themselves to the broader problem of the Roma living on government subsidies. Then, charity-operated after school program (bottom) carefully organized study rooms to resemble a classroom to help Roma children from the slum do their homework. Because Roma are believed to be undisciplined, after-school program together with the school are taking on a role of compensating for lacking education from home.

In a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class dominated by Roma students, the head teacher liked to distinguish appropriate school conduct from behavior outside the school: “Sit as if you were in school,” she chastised, juxtaposing lacking discipline at home and strict discipline in school. One day, a serious young Roma boy responded, sitting side-ways on his chair: “But I am in school!” Creating divides between the Roma home community and the school led to a false sense of competing values.

The universal assumption in most schools I visited was the critical role of the institution to teach discipline to Roma children. Whereas non-Roma pupils learn similar behavioral patterns at home as in the school, teachers explained, Roma lack any order in their homes. The school, consequently, must take on the role of bringing up these children appropriately. “There are two Armenian students in our school and one has poor understanding of Russian” – shared a teacher in the Russian school—“but they are capable of studying with Russian children because they are not Gypsies and have similar values like us.” Consequently, Roma children needed a special approach, unlike other minority groups.

Disciplining Roma students’ bodies followed the assumption of lacking hygiene and over-sexualized traditions that were seen as characteristic, especially of Roma girls. In both countries I witnessed “hands checks,” when teachers examined Roma pupils’ hands before distributing books. “My pen doesn’t work anymore...it is because my hands are dirty,” said a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Roma boy during our tutoring session in the Russian school, apparently internalizing these messages.

Oversexualized traditions in Roma communities, teachers believed, are partially responsible for high drop-out rates and births at young age. Roma girls were especially targeted to correct for this undesirable behavior. One Hungarian school purchased backpacks at the beginning of the school year: “Roma girls come with purses, pretending to be grown women,” complained the principal. A month later, the principal proudly showed a new purchase: makeup removal. The jewelry of Roma girls was at the center of the Russian teachers’ attention. There is a wide-spread stereotype about Roma women wearing excessive jewelry.

Indeed, adult-like duties and corresponding responsibilities at an early age are often part of the every-day realities Roma youth face. Other scholars noted as well that Roma youngsters lack a distinct phase of childhood.<sup>85</sup> Girls miss classes because they learn how to cook, wash clothes in their houses without running water, and care for several younger siblings, while boys are missing during spring cleaning and cold winters, when they accompany their parents to collect wood. Ildikó Menyhért<sup>86</sup> calls this phenomenon of missing childhood “partnerification and parentification,” when parents treat their young children as partners in sharing work and co-parents in bringing up younger children. I did not observe similar treatment of other minority groups.<sup>87</sup>

The role of parents was definitely brought to my attention many times. In both countries, teachers assumed the same apathy and disinterest. However, in the Russian school Roma mothers were more involvement in their children’s education, and yet it continued to be a source of anxiety for teachers: some believed these women sit in classes to “stay warm” and “kill time.” According to this logic, school still did not serve the role of educating, as stereotypical Gypsies don’t value education, but they used the establishment during winter to keep warm. In fact, I saw mothers mediating between teachers and students, assisting their children with language barriers, and sometimes even learning along with them. By contrast, in Hungary Roma adults rarely got involved in

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<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Stewart 1997, 52-7.

<sup>86</sup> Menyhért Ildikó is a Romungro woman, teacher by professional, published works on education and Roma integration, as well as the author of *Zöld az erdő*, a book that in 1999 officially received the title of Roma ethnographic textbook; she is also the leader of Utolsó Padban Egyesület [From the Last Row Organization]. Her standpoint is not without criticism, however, see for example Szuhay 2003.

<sup>87</sup> As I discuss above, in Russia, teachers explicitly used the example of Ukrainian, Armenian and other students, who can study with Russians because they have similar values. Roma were signaled out as having very different traditions. In the Hungarian school that I describe there were no or very few non-Roma minority students. Teachers mentioned one Jewish boy, to my knowledge, and no one else besides Magyars and Roma.

school matters. Teachers comparably assumed apathy among parents, however. “These [Roma] parents are partners in [their children] skipping classes...Where would the child learn self-discipline? They stay on infantile level this way, they don’t know how to wait, how to be patient, and all these are needed for personal development,” said a Hungarian teacher. Undoubtedly poverty is a factor in Roma children’s lack of success in school, as Figure 12 depicts, but it does not translate into disinterest in education.

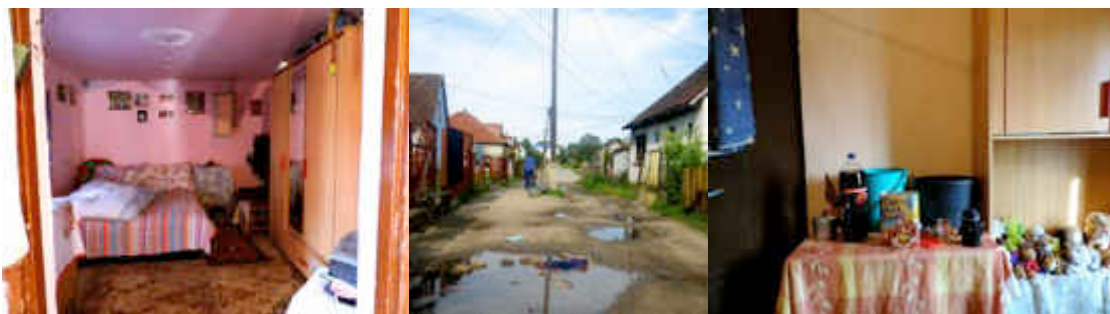


Figure 12: Roma Poverty

Despite poverty and inadequate housing, many Roma families did try to keep their households orderly and clean. There are, indisputably, problems with in-door smoking, garbage disposal, alcoholism, unemployment and other related issues, which keep some community members from providing adequate environment to their children, but that need not be seen as a Roma-specific problem, rather resulting from poverty.

Comments and judgments regarding Roma students’ private lives were common in both countries. “Gypsies will stay Gypsies: like they steal, they will continue to do so, like they married their own cousins, they will continue doing so...we see it in this school,” complained a Russian teacher. The issue of Roma incest was an outrage in Hungary, most explicitly voiced by Roma intellectuals and activists, with the “Jeszenszky affair.”<sup>88</sup> Teachers in Hungarian schools were more apprehensive about large Roma families with increasing number of children: “they birth out their own possibilities”; “it is

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<sup>88</sup> Jeszenszky’s book, *The New (Post-Communist) Europe and Its Ethnic Problems*, used as a textbook in a university course, contained a sentence explaining mental disability among Roma as a consequence of culturally acceptable incest. Subsequently, Eotvos Lorant University in Budapest organized a round table conversation on November 22, 2012, inviting Jeszenszky and various experts (geneticist, historian, psychologist, sociologist, and Romologist), who with no further doubt proved the statement wrong.



not natural birth rate, but multiplication like cancer growth”; “they get together like animals, and Gypsy girls have so many boyfriends like shoes” – were some of the comments. No surprise the school takes on the responsibility to wash off Roma girls’ makeup. Upon returning home from school, these girls were on the street with eyeliners even darker and lipstick even redder.

The role of Roma culture, traditions, and language was yet another source of dispute and opportunity to place the Roma in a hierarchy. Verbal and lingual discipline was equally powerful. “These children speak in Gypsy during Hungarian classes,” complained one teacher, “and their linguistic disadvantage is huge...their language lacks proper grammar and that is why they can’t follow Hungarian grammar classes and mathematics, since they can’t think logically.” An academic study, conducted in the same region of Hungary, proved the contrary: Hungarian language instruction is not an obstacle for these children, and their socio-economic background is significantly more detrimental (Derdák and Varga 1996).<sup>89</sup> In Russia children were also repeatedly asked to only speak Russian. Older students sometimes took on a role of translators and mediated between the teacher and rest of the class. Even during break-time, teachers continued managing their speech: “This is my ‘skamin’!” – yelled a student, to which the teacher, chastising the boy, explained that he must have said ‘stul’ [chair], not ‘skamejka’ [bench]. The teacher concluded that he didn’t comprehend simple words, lacked grammar, and didn’t know the gender rules in Russian. In fact, the student’s only fault

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<sup>89</sup> There are also several studies suggesting that bilingualism, simply put, makes people smarter; see for example NYTimes “Why Bilinguals Are Smarter” [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-benefits-of-bilingualism.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-benefits-of-bilingualism.html?_r=0)

was that he called the chair its Romani equivalent, which is indeed ‘skamin’, resembling the Russian word for bench.

Slight accents or dialects were also pointed out and recurrently corrected during classes. One day, after repeated corrective efforts, a frustrated student powerfully rejected the discipline: “that is what I said several times in a row!” Language does offer a protective barrier and an alternative site of resistance, especially if the same dialect is shared by all Roma students in class. “We don’t want our teachers to understand us” – a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student shared in a Hungarian school, who speaks only Boyash at home.<sup>90</sup> When children spoke their Kalderash dialect in the Russian school, it was only the teacher who did not understand: language gave them the power to position the teacher as the outsider, even if only temporarily. Powerless, teachers often left the classroom or resorted to futile punishment, encouraging students to misbehave even more. It was almost an every day occurrence that teachers’ request (in a form of shouting) to Roma children to hold their tongues met with even more shouting and disruption. At times teachers simply left the classroom, giving up, and sometimes increased their voice, to no avail again.

Reproduction of stereotypes was not only through direct discipline, but also adjusting curriculum to something “fitting for the Gypsies.” During a computer science class that I sat in during my first week of visits, the Russian teacher proudly pointed out the topic of the last class: “in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Gypsies had a presentation about narcotics.” I inquired where such topic originated. With even more satisfaction and slightly beating his

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<sup>90</sup> The question about Romani/Boyash languages is another complicated debate, which deserves a study of its own. Some of the critical questions are: Should there be one Roma language uniting all Roma groups? Should that language be taught in public schools? Since none of the dialects were modernized and codified until recently, there are also several ethical issues involved. I discuss these topics at some length in „Töprengés egy kisvárosi iskola cigány diákjainak táborozásakor” [Some thoughts from a summer camp for Roma children] in *Új Pedagógiai Szemle* 5-6 [New Pedagogical Review], pp. 80-90, 2013.

chest, he pointed his finger at himself. “I had them do a power point presentation and it was very interesting...of course this all was done without proper grammar,” he continued.

In Russia, one of the most widespread stereotypes is that Roma are drug dealers. The current Russian “war on drugs” internal security policy is directed at the “typical drug dealer, namely the Gypsy.”<sup>91</sup> The official website of the Federal Service of the Russian Federation for Narcotics Control states that the “most active criminal groups are those composed of persons of the Tajik and Azerbaijani nationalities and ethnic Roma... [while] the Roma specialize in selling drugs, using methods of network marketing.”<sup>92</sup> Explicitly connecting narcotics trade with Roma, this government program not only targets the group as the most likely suspect of criminal behavior, but also reinforces a negative image of Roma as outside the law and immoral. In this “labor” next to the school, there are no drugs, no drug dealers and almost no use of drugs, according to the studies and survey of a local NGO; they make ends meet from scrap metal mainly.<sup>93</sup>

Comments reflecting stereotypes of Gypsies stealing, not appreciating, and living wasteful, parasitic lives were common during classes. Teachers claimed that there are no more pens because “Gypsies stole them all,” asked Roma students whether they are “capable of appreciating anything at all the school gives them,” or outright claiming that they don’t deserve the services provided. Antagonism is so elevated that a girl refused to

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<sup>91</sup> See European Roma Rights Centre Country Report on Russia: <http://www.errc.org/article/errc-country-report-roma-rights-in-russia/2246>

<sup>92</sup> The official report can be accessed (in Russian) at the following link: <http://fskn.gov.ru/pages/main/prevent/3939/4052/print.shtml>. Translation by the author.

<sup>93</sup> Personal interview with the director of an anti-discrimination center, January 2013.

accept pain medicine from a teacher, although struggling with headache, fearing she was going to be poisoned.

In summary, this section was concerned with disciplinary practices that recreate the ‘bad Gypsy’ in classrooms. I showed various points of contention to illustrate my argument, centering on the role of Roma families, community, and women in schools, the appropriate place of Roma culture in classrooms and particular adjustments to teaching that reflect stereotypes about ‘bad Gypsies’. This section was primarily focusing on top down discipline, while bottom up responses were sporadic. Chapter VI focuses on how Roma negotiate their identity in the context of imposed labels, images, and stereotypes.

#### Who to Blame? Routine of Racial Hierarchy

*“We must bring in the conversation [about race and Gypsies] into classrooms...of course the antagonism is fed from both sides. They see things differently...and we absolutely need to get to know their culture...”*  
- Elementary school teacher<sup>94</sup>

Previous sections showed that powerful and damaging characteristics about the Roma are built in to the fabric of society and transmitted through schools, among other institutions. If societal expectations are low and the dominant image of a stereotypical Gypsy is a negative one, how can we expect these ‘bad Gypsies’ to act good? If children are told that bad behavior, stealing, swearing, fighting, and other forms of misconduct are allowed in their families and communities, how does one presume the opposite conduct in classrooms?

This section’s goal is twofold. First, I show how reproduction or challenge of the ‘bad Gypsy’ image happens in unexpected places, whether it is a sole teacher in a state

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<sup>94</sup> Personal interviews and conversations in Fall, 2012 in Hungary.

school trying to present Roma culture in a positive light, or well-meaning charities unintentionally reinforcing the cycle of dependency. Neither the state, nor non-state actors are uniform, and when considering actions on the ground, realities are more complicated and fuzzy than a linear explanation of state segregating and non-state players fighting marginalization. Second, the banality of racial hierarchy is entrenched to such level that penetrating it, let alone altering and challenging these assumptions about Roma identity, will require a long-term and holistic approach, capturing all sides of the problem. I return to this point in the concluding chapter of the dissertation.

I observed a captivating example of genuine desire to see change in the Hungarian state school. Efforts to change the ‘bad Gypsy’ image at times meet with or even get shattered by the ingrained discriminatory attitudes. One of the most dedicated teachers I’ve encountered lamented:

in my literature class with the 5th grade<sup>95</sup> I made an attempt to read a Gypsy tale and planned to ask my students write about their image of Gypsies, compared with the one discussed in the tale. Eventually I had to withdraw this assignment. This class, you see, is divided into 2 parts: I have the ‘better students’ and there are only 2 Gypsies, D and another person who doesn’t even call himself a Gypsy...I wanted to have them read this tale, I wanted to have a conversation with them about it. The class started on the ‘Gypsy rhetoric’ [cigányozás] the moment I mentioned the assignment. They immediately replied: ‘but they are over in another classroom!’ referring to their classmates in the other group. I clearly couldn’t single out D, she would have hated me for that, she would have felt embarrassed right away...and the other student doesn’t even claim that identity... the class completely failed.

This attempt is particularly revealing of a critical issue at hand: Roma culture is not seen as worthwhile studying or understanding by these students, and not regarded as a component of Hungarian culture. If Gypsies are bad, their culture is bad also, their

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<sup>95</sup> This was a large class with segregated groups; Hungarian literature was one of the classes that was divided between “advanced” (i.e. non-Roma) and “beginner” (i.e. Roma) groups. The class mentioned was the “advanced.”

language is backwards and their traditions are obsolete. This subordinate view of Roma culture is particularly destructive.

In Russia, I initiated a similar conversation with non-Roma students about their Roma schoolmates. The attempt was to discuss issues of diversity and ethnic conflicts with the oldest students in the school, 14 year-old 9<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>96</sup> There was not a single Roma student in the classroom. Yet again, the conversation was instructive of strict hierarchy in the classroom, taboos and discomfort surrounding the issue of Roma, and banality of anti-Gypsyism:

*Me:* What ethnic groups live in your town?

*Students:* Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Finns...

*Me:* Anyone else? Maybe surrounding towns?

*Students:* Tsygane! [The class begins to laugh.]

*Me:* Is there any conflict with Roma/Gypsies?

*Teacher #1:* yes there are, children tell her!

*Me:* I want to hear from you, students, what conflicts may you have, not your teachers, not your parents, but what is your experience here, day to day?

*Teacher #1:* V, as a student, do you experience any inter-ethnic conflicts at all?

*V:* no!

...

*Teacher #2:* I was born here and grew up here; I definitely didn't experience any conflicts. Not at all! But what do we mean by nationalities? They are all Russians here, or let's say 90% Russians, and 10% rest. Gypsies are different...there are Gypsies in each nationality. It's a special category, it's not a nation... There are also Tajiks, but they are not immigrants, rather guest workers. They come to make some money... there are Dagestani people also...but very small percentage. Don't confuse immigrants with guest workers. And Dagestan is part of our country, and we must respect that! I don't tolerate such conflicts, we must respect each other...this is the former Soviet Union! Dagestan, moreover is part of our federation...

*Me:* Does anyone have friends who are Gypsies?

*Students:* No! [Everyone unanimously shakes their head.]

A [pointing a classmate]: B, you always play soccer with them. [The class starts laughing at him.] They are your friends [ridiculing the student].

*Teacher #2* [intervenes]: Why are you laughing at him?

[B slouches his head and blushes in embarrassment.]

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<sup>96</sup> Fieldnotes from February 2013, Russia.

*Teacher #1:* Well, what he wants to say is that friendship is one thing, and playing soccer is another. He has different friends, but Gypsies are acquaintances. M, call them your comrades! Comrades, but not friends. You are just acquainted with them, so it's ok!

*Me:* Nobody has friends who are Roma, why?

*Students:* They smell "tasty" [laughs]; they smell bad; they don't wash; they lack hygiene.

*Teacher #1 [intervenes]:* They represent different values!

*Teacher #2:* D, for example do you have any friends? What nationalities?

*D:* Russians and Armenians, Ukrainians.

*Me:* Gypsy friends?

*D:* no

*Me:* Why?

*Teacher #1 [intervenes with increasing annoyance and great discomfort]:* They don't distance themselves on purpose...

*Teacher #2:* Gypsies have a different order of life [порядок жизни], you must understand!

*Teacher #1 [turns around the question with intonation that suggests distrust]:* Did you go to school with Gypsies at all? Do you know Gypsies and are you friends with them?

The ubiquity of discriminatory attitudes was stunning and impenetrable, shielded by unbridgeable distance between the two groups. Quality and voluntary interaction between Roma and non-Roma is very limited.

As suggested earlier, it is not exclusively the schools' responsibility that negative stereotypes are recreated and mobilized in attitudes towards Roma.<sup>97</sup> Schools are an obvious site where those images are reenacted. In the meantime, schools are expected to be the sites of empowerment for the marginalized. Schools, so tightly related to the state, however, often cannot represent an alternative value system from the dominant society, albeit it certainly exists.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Most evident targeted institutions where similar disciplinary practices can be observed besides school are hospitals and prisons (Foucault 1995; Mitchell 1991). Schools, however, are perennial and critical sites of creating citizens, as the previous chapter argued, and are the only mandatory institution that everyone must attend.

<sup>98</sup> During my visit to an alternative school in one of the poorest districts of Budapest for vulnerable, primarily Roma children, there was a sharp difference in treatment and upbringing of students. For instance, desk organization did not follow Prussian order, but group-work and project-based tasks were encouraged,

The banality of racial hierarchy and prevailing negative image of the Roma follows the young generation of Roma children nearly everywhere, as Figure 13 shows as well: after school classes, upon returning to their slums and villages, many spend the remaining day and weekends in social places, such as charities and NGOs. These usually function as informal educational institutions, offering after-school tutoring services and holding various youth events. With no doubt, these institutions strive to help “the helpless,” but few scrutinize the effects of such assistance. Unfortunately, some services tend to conserve the sense vulnerability and dependence on outside aid. “The charity took over the local government’s responsibilities...now the local town people don’t even have to face the ‘dirty Gypsies’, because their documents, IDs, and everything else is arranged at the charity, or the slum...I sometimes wonder to what extent we conserve segregation, but given the shameful situation at this slum, I don’t know what would work...”- shared an NGO employee.<sup>99</sup>

Children learn that they are different from normal; they get broken chocolate for Christmas (also as a donation), they get used clothes, their parents are loud, their presence in school and larger society is ambiguous. The sense of shame and anger fuses and manifests in their behavior: a Roma 12 year-old girl yelling at her mother and siblings to “leave her alone” asked for my confirmation that her “mother is ugly and toothless, and there are too many siblings, right?” In the meantime, passersby’s stereotype of boisterous Roma was validated.

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and students were permitted to use informal language addressing their teachers. However, the school visibly struggled with funding and other related issues.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with a young Roma woman who wished to stay anonymous; she works for a foundation promoting civil society among marginalized Roma through empowerment and mobilization of local available resources.





Figure 13: Charity in Roma Settlement

A charity located in a Roma village distributed used clothing to children—the event turned out to be chaotic, with some clothes pushed on to children and their relatives, who were given garbage bags and potato bags (left) so they can bring a large quantity of clothes home; another charity in a slum nearby a town arranges mobile medical screening tests (middle) for local Roma, who no longer need to visit the town for such services; Roma youngsters play and socialize in various institutions where donations come in large garbage bags (right), sometimes with clothes, and often with impractical objects, such as leftover wedding invitations.

In conclusion, this section showed that the ‘bad Gypsy’ image and identity is reproduced in a variety of places, as well as possibilities to challenge it and introduce new content to the same ethnic label. Deeply-seated discriminatory practices, however, are not easy to penetrate, and the next chapter is concerned with the most organized effort to contest and replace negative content. Instead of ‘bad Gypsies’, there is a movement to re-conceptualize the group as ‘good Roma’.

### Conclusion: Can ‘Bad Gypsies’ Act Badly?

*“In class sometimes when we give them a bad grade, some ask if it’s because they are Gypsies...but they clearly haven’t studied for it! At my university, the few Roma students are ‘taken through fire and water’ with good grades they don’t deserve, just because the university needs those students, they must show support...So what is happening in our school, should not be seen as bad intentions, rather bad experience...Otherness is sharper here, maybe people in Budapest are ready for change, but not villagers.”*  
*- Elementary school teacher<sup>100</sup>*

In this chapter, I investigated how a particular group identity, the ‘bad Gypsies’, are reproduced in formal and informal educational institutions. I began with a general

<sup>100</sup> Personal interviews and conversations in Fall, 2012 in Hungary.

discussion about current nation building efforts to demonstrate state's approach towards minority groups in the two countries. Both Hungary and Russia, I argued, are nationalizing states, in which the interest of core nations is posited against minorities. Both countries follow a strategic youth policy in redefining an exclusionary sense of nationhood through education. Complementary to exclusionary nation building are deeply seated negative attitudes towards Roma, guided by negative stereotypes and an inferior view of the group.

Roma once again are targeted and marginalized. Often these problems are hidden or disguised; by creating taboos around the topic, schools learned to camouflage realities, blanketing those in new vocabulary (such as “children with disadvantages” or “learning difficulties”). Not many teachers in schools knew anything about Roma culture, language or traditions beyond the stereotypes. These stereotypes were, however, utilized, acted on, and even incorporated in the school curriculum, specifically for Roma children.

I preceded analyzing the role school discipline plays in managing Roma identity, and in particular reproducing the stereotypical ‘bad Gypsies’ image. From the surveys and fieldwork observations, we can draw several conclusions. There is overwhelming support for education among Roma, despite the prevailing stereotype that parents hold children back. In classrooms, the image of ‘bad Gypsies’ was a prism through which teachers disciplined and ordered Roma children. Often a false sense of competition between the Roma community and the school—to bring up the children with appropriate values and norms—created an artificial battle in which children had to chose their affiliation. Roma youth learned that they are undeserving, inept, and strangers to the Russian or Hungarian society. Outside the school, they sensed their community's

helplessness, dependence on others, and undesirability. Not surprisingly, many children internalize and act on these negative images.

Building on Foucault's concept of power and discipline normalization, I argued that not only bodies and souls, but also group identities are disciplined in schools. Discourse and disciplinary practices, based on societal negative image of Roma, generate a special discourse in classrooms, which reproduces the stereotypical 'bad Gypsy'. I discussed the diffused mechanism of power, which not only "framed the everyday life of individuals" but also reconstructed their group identity (Foucault 1995, 77).

I continued with presenting particular examples from fieldwork, and finally complicated our understanding regarding the players involved by showing that it is not only state schools that reproduce this image, and even within state schools the image can be challenged.

Overall, one of the major conclusions is that integration or inclusion of Roma youth, consequently, is happening in the context of exclusionary societies, and has adverse effects in the end. Interrogating or challenging the status quo, or banality of racial hierarchy, would likely entail "thinking outside the box," which is not encouraged in systems fostering such strict Prussian discipline and order. In schools, the negative image of who Roma are, guided disciplinary measures directed at them and reconstructed the image of 'bad Gypsies'.

A new discourse, however, introduced and maintained by NGOs and Western institutions, promotes a positive image, that of 'good Roma.' Incorporation, mobilization, and dissemination of this new image is the subject of the next chapter. The question

remains: can the new positive image replace negative stereotypes? In the meantime, do we allow “bad Gypsies” to act badly?

## CHAPTER V

### ‘GOOD ROMA’: RECONSIDERING BOUNDARIES OF BELONGING AND THE ROLE OF THE PRO-ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY

#### Introduction

*“A critical problem is the mixing of poverty, criminality, and ethnicity – this is something the local government is simply incapable to deal with... and since the majority of the poor are Roma, the problem gets a strong ethnic face.”*  
- Local government employee<sup>101</sup>

In the previous chapters I showed how the image of ‘bad Gypsies’ has been constructed over time: historically as an outcome of state consolidation and nation building efforts, the negative content of ‘Gypsy’ as an ethnic category has been reinforced through institutionalization and internalization of its connotations. Today, many in the region associate ‘Gypsy lifestyle’ with criminality, breaking laws, parasitic lifestyle, and backwardness. Media often reinforces this image. Even political groups “frame the Roma issue in terms of problems, for example, that the Roma are dominant in using (and also misusing) social welfare provisions” (Mirga 2014). Preceding chapters set the stage for the topic of the current one, which discusses the materialization of a counteracting discourse, replacing negative undertones of ‘being Gypsy’ with the positive connotation of ‘being Roma’. A new ethnic label was introduced in part to offset centuries-old negative stereotypes, along with corresponding discourse and ethnic identity, which I refer to as the ‘good Roma’.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Personal interview in Budapest, December 2012.

<sup>102</sup> As already mentioned on p. 5, stigmatization may exist without different ethnic labels (i.e. Gypsy and Roma). In this chapter I look at the role of the NGO sector and various identity-building and empowerment

This chapter analyzes the deployment and social effects of the Roma as an ethnic category and the accompanying ‘good Roma’ discourse.<sup>103</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to explore the success and limitations of non-state actors to instigate a change in institutional classification, replacing the ‘bad Gypsy’ discourse with that of ‘good Roma’ through educational practices. The chapter proceeds in three steps. The first examines roots and goals of the pro-Roma civil society. I show the historical background of the pro-Roma movement and its emergence in reaction to deeply seated negative stereotypes about Gypsies in the entire region. This movement has non-territorial nation-building characteristics tied to the global Roma community, rather than any state. The second section builds on fieldwork findings to demonstrate how the pro-Roma discourse is applied and utilized in Hungary and Russia. I discuss examples of a Russian NGO’s involvement in a local elementary school (supplementary education), a Roma high school in Hungary (alternative education), and a Hungarian organization<sup>104</sup> providing scholarships for Roma university students along with mandatory monthly seminars (elite-making). The final section provides an assessment of the outcomes and limitations. I point out a critical lack of connection between the Roma elite or pro-Roma NGOs and

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projects; I use ‘good Roma’ for analytical purposes to discuss the accompanying discourse and normative ethnic label.

<sup>103</sup> In this chapter I discuss “Roma discourse” in connection with “ethnopolitical practice” surrounding the “Roma issue”; emergence of Roma activism, along with pro-Roma NGOs intensified after regime change in the region, but many see the 1971 World Romani Congress in London as the founding moment (Kóczé and Rövid 2012). In other words, it is a discourse that has been developing over the last few decades. I acknowledge that the term was used before as self-identification, since ‘Rom’ means man or person in various dialects of Romani. In addition, there were previous bottom up attempts in history to unite all Roma people, which often were either not recorded, or simply failed to achieve their goal on a mass scale (see Hancock 1991, 256-7). However, I am concerned with the discourse that emerged as a consequence of the most recent Roma movement.

<sup>104</sup> Romaversitas was founded in 1997 in Hungary, but today with the help for Roma Education Fund (REF), operates in other countries, such as Serbia and Macedonia, with plans to expand beyond these countries. See REF report available at [http://romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9348\\_file12\\_the-role-of-scholarship-and-mentorship-in-tertiary-education.pdf](http://romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9348_file12_the-role-of-scholarship-and-mentorship-in-tertiary-education.pdf).

majority Roma/Gypsies. This split and distrust, in turn, results in a crisis of belonging and meager results in successful integration.

Numerous scholars have already demonstrated the importance of social classifications on managing population and shaping identity (see discussion in Chapter I). However, categories are not fixed and “social classifications are subject to regrouping and rearrangement as a result of changes in culture and social structure and a collective mobilization of...interests” (Starr 1992, 265). In this chapter, I am focusing on such a rearrangement which is currently at play. I inquire how and with what success non-state actors are striving to replace the label Gypsy with Roma. I argue that changes in the practices of institutional classification are reflecting a political and social change, and states are no longer the exclusive actors responsible for patterns and practices of social classification. For instance, the former Socialist states’ domination on educating citizens—a monopoly that crystallized during the Socialist past—is now challenged by non-state actors.

To assess the effects of the ‘good Roma’ labeling, I examine various projects to illuminate what mechanisms are implemented to promote positive self-identity. I group such non-state projects of Roma identity formation through education into the following 4 categories: 1) supplementary education (usually after-school programs or extracurricular activities for elementary school level), 2) alternative education (usually for high school education, supplementing state approved curriculum with classes about Roma culture), 3) elite-making projects (aiming at Roma university students with the goal of raising a generation of leaders), 4) and elitist projects (for leaders of organizations). Building on fieldwork, below I discuss in depth examples for each,

excluding elitist projects.<sup>105</sup> I supplement my analysis with assessment of individual-level impact, which often involved one charismatic person's actions with unexpectedly significant positive impact. In both countries, most impressive results of elevating Roma living standards, creating a community, and simultaneously changing the content of identity was done by local individuals who were driven by either a particular problem, or offered an opportunity for pastime to local Roma youth.

It is important to stipulate the purpose of this chapter upfront and foreground a disclaimer: I study the role of the NGO and related sector's efforts in Roma empowerment and positive self-identification in order to offer constructive criticism, rather than condemn or blame the sector for unsuccessful Roma integration. Although Roma marginalization continues to persist across the region, the pro-Roma movement is still embryonic and exists in the context of deeply entrenched racist practices, institutions, and attitudes. The goals and objects anticipated by the NGO sector may require a longer time, perhaps generations, and there are more challenges and obstacles than envisioned. The 'bad Gypsy' image is reflected not only in the state institutional landscape, but has also permeated the entire society. The majority population, subjected to remarkably few educational projects regarding Roma, has been holding on to negative stereotypes about the Roma almost unchallenged. Consequently, following the lead of the NGO sector in

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<sup>105</sup> Elitist projects usually happen on the highest level, combining high-ranking officials, policy-makers and politicians in forums such as workshops and other venues where accumulated knowledge and experience can be shared. For example, the European Commission regularly organizes Roma Summits, which is intended to "bring together high level representatives of EU institutions, national governments and civil society organisations from all over Europe" (see [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/roma-summits/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/roma-summits/index_en.htm)). If the transparency and responsibility is lacking between "high level representatives" and the very community they represent, such meetings remain posh gatherings between highly ranked politicians and policy makers, and result in no change for the community itself. Consequently, such meetings have been often criticized by activists as a waste of money and activities completely unattached from realities of Roma people.



treating Roma with respect and dignity, the end of the dissertation offers policy advice and hopes for ways to move forward. I endorse their normative ambition.

### Categories and Meanings: Pro-Roma Civil Society's Roots, Goals, and Tools

*“The Roma Education Fund has developed effective methods of educating Roma children and strengthening their Roma identity at the same time. If this were done on a large-enough scale it would destroy the hostile stereotype that stands in the way of the successful integration of the Roma. As it is, educated Roma can blend into the majority because they don't fit the stereotype but the stereotype remains intact.”*  
- George Soros<sup>106</sup>

Originally, the word Gypsy evolved as a misnomer, mistaking Gypsies for Egyptians, and soon it was synonymous with resistance to authority, unsettled lifestyle, and distrust. Over time, fusion of poverty, criminality, and backwardness with ‘Gypsiness’ has become astoundingly destructive. Deeply seated, institutionalized, and internalized by the society, the meaning of this category turned into a lens through which Gypsies/Roma are seen, determining for instance disciplining practices in schools. “The resultant shared exposure to hate and harassment...binds our peoples, and should of course strengthen the bonds of solidarity,” writes Damian Le Bas.<sup>107</sup> In the face of racial discrimination against Gypsies, non-state actors have stepped in with the clear goal of redefining the category and imbuing it with positive attributes. I look at the roots of this movement in this section.

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<sup>106</sup> Full article accessible at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/apr/24/future-europe-interview-george-soros/>.

<sup>107</sup> Damian Le Bas is an artist with Irish Traveler roots, is also known for his publications on Roma issues. Full article available at <http://romediafoundation.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/first-strip-the-words-of-their-meaning-then-strip-the-people-of-their-rights-2/>.

The term Roma “has come to dominate the official political discourse...and has acquired the legitimacy of political correctness” (Dimitrina Petrova, quoted in Vermeersch 2006, 2). Replacement of the term Gypsy with Roma, therefore, “represents an attempt to break away from social stigmas and reproduce a more positive, more neutral, and less romanticized image...and closely connected with the process of Romani political mobilization” (Vermeersch 2006, 13). Many see the 1971 World Romani Congress in London as the founding moment of this movement (e.g. Kóczé and Rövid 2012).<sup>108</sup> Besides a new label, national paraphernalia was approved during the Congress: the international Roma flag was agreed upon along with “Gelem, Gelem” as the national anthem. Zeljko Jovanovic, director of the Open Society Roma Initiatives, called participants of the Congress the “founding fathers of April 8<sup>th</sup> [International Roma Day]” during the most recent celebration of International Roma Day in Budapest, Hungary.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, he pointed out, since Roma nationhood is not related to any state, there is no enforcing mechanism and consequently pro-Roma organizations and civil society must take up a special role.

In addition, “at this Congress, the use of all ethnic labels for the Roma of non-Romani origin, such as Gypsy, Zigeuner, Gitano, etc., was condemned; the organization itself was renamed the International Roma Committee,” from International Gypsy

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<sup>108</sup> There were earlier attempts, albeit not as significant. For instance, during an international conference in the 1930s, United Gypsies of Europe with the leadership of Gheorghe Nicolescu proposed the establishment of various institutions representing their interests, an early flag was adopted, and plans made to strengthen trans-border solidarity (Hancock 1991).

<sup>109</sup> Full speech available at <http://roma.idebate.org/news-articles/constant-battle-self-definition-and-we-are-resolved-win-it-long-we-live> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_lvArILXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_lvArILXQ).

Committee (Hancock 1991, 262).<sup>110</sup> The Roma anthem and flag became usual components of various projects and events, displayed and performed at venues such as exhibitions, cultural events, and as symbols of various institutions. Figure 14 provides some examples of such cultural display and incorporation of Roma national symbols. Furthermore, as part of EU and NGO-funded integration projects, the pro-Roma discourse has seeped in to some state institutions to various degrees and with limited success, especially if funding was available.

It is important to note that I discuss “Roma discourse” in connection with “ethnopolitical practice” surrounding the Roma issue; discourse that has been developing over the last few decades as a consequence of more recent Roma activism and mushrooming of pro-Roma organizations (see for example Kóczé and Rövid 2012). I acknowledge that the term was used before as self-identification, since ‘Rom’ means man or person in various dialects of Romani. In addition, there were previous bottom up attempts in history to unite all Roma people, which often were either not recorded, or simply failed to achieve their goal on a mass scale (see Hancock 1991, 256-7). However, I am concerned with the discourse that emerged as a consequence of the most recent Roma movement.

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<sup>110</sup> The roots of the pro-Roma movement contained noteworthy bottom up efforts, but this chapter is concerned with deployment and appropriation of this new discourse by NGOs and various educational projects to disseminate this new ethnic label.



Figure 14: Roma Paraphernalia during Social and Cultural Events

“Aroma—Colors, Pictures and Faces from the World of Roma” - is an exhibition displaying many pro-Roma images, funded by Open Society Foundation and Budapest Roma Education and Cultural Center (FROKK).

Photos by Tibor Balogh “Gypsy Elvis” 2012 (top right); Maksym Flora “My flag! And Roma children” 2010 Romania (bottom left).

Gandhi High school for Roma youth also displays Roma paraphernalia on its walls (bottom right).

“Si love is love”(bottom) is a Roma music and art festival that used the motto “Big, Sexy and Gypsy.” It popularizes Roma culture, by inviting local and international performers and holding round-table discussion, which in 2013 all revolved around European values.

The Roma movement consists not only of international and supranational organizations, but also of activists and grassroots organizations, and academics who have participated in building the discourse and the movement. Nicolae Gheorghe and Thomas Acton are just a notable few (Vermeersch 2006, 13; Hancock 1991). Yet, some major

players came to dominate the discourse with their agenda, and the “Soros Empire with his lieutenants” are clearly critical players.<sup>111</sup>

Table 3 below depicts some of the major pro-Roma NGOs, along with their stated goals, sources of financing and most important projects, which are particularly active in the field. Table 4 underneath shows budgets and expenditures for some of these organizations. Indeed, Open Society Foundations (previously known as Soros Foundation) is directly and indirectly financing a significant number of programs and projects. Figure 15 shows examples of OSF funded institutions, projects, and intellectuals involved. As philanthropy, OSF is motivated to correct and fight violation of human rights and perpetual marginalization of Roma across the region.<sup>112</sup> Goals of these and similar projects clearly indicate the purpose of creating “identity-taking” Roma, role models, empowered and educated Roma citizens. “Projects” column in the table below also suggests that identity building and empowerment projects indeed promote their messages through education, formal or informal likewise.

Education has been prioritized by EU officials and other major players as the primary solution and tool of empowerment. “Providing quality education for all is not only a question of human rights. It is the only way out of poverty and exclusion for millions of Roma,” said Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture,

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<sup>111</sup> Based on Skype interview with Andrew Ryder on April 10, 2014, and personal conversation with various Roma organizations. Andrew Ryder is currently a Fellow at the School of Policy Studies at Bristol University, Visiting Professor at the Corvinus University of Budapest, and an Associate Fellow at the Third Sector Research Centre (University of Birmingham), and has a long history of work with and for Gypsy Roma Traveller communities. Read more at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/people/andrew-r-ryder/index.html>.

<sup>112</sup> In addition, there are likely personal motivating factors also, such as G. Soros’s Jewish background and upbringing in Hungary.

Multilingualism and Youth.<sup>113</sup> Education is also claimed to be a priority for OSF<sup>114</sup> and links between education and maintaining cultural identity have also been stressed by various studies published by OSF,<sup>115</sup> in addition to George Soros himself stating that Europe needs educated Roma.<sup>116</sup> Soros writes that “the key to success is the education of a new generation of Roma who do not seek to assimilate into the general population, but deliberately retain their identity as Roma. Educated, successful Roma will shatter the prevailing negative stereotypes by their very existence.”<sup>117</sup>

While the pro-Roma movement has an ambition to unite the Roma across countries, territorial autonomy has never been a demand, and not been a threat to territorial integrity of any state (Vermeersch 2006, 2). Despite its global scope, the movement remains embryonic, with segments of the Roma population outright rejecting this label. For instance, the Boyash (or Beás), residing in the Southern regions of Hungary and Northern territories of Romania and Croatia<sup>118</sup>, openly refuse to be associated with the term Roma (e.g. Binder 2009; Hegedűs 2007).<sup>119</sup> However, as the Roma movement is in its nascent stage, it is still uncertain whether it will be rooted

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<sup>113</sup> Read full article at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-14-370\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-370_en.htm)

<sup>114</sup> See the following report: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/education-policy-2012020228.pdf>

<sup>115</sup> See for example Balogh 2012.

<sup>116</sup> Read full article at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jan/13/roma-discrimination-eu-economy>

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> According to Hungarian–language literature, there are also Boyash residing in Bulgaria, Bosnia and Serbia, but much information is missing regarding Boyash within the listed countries, or in others (Arató 2013, 45).

<sup>119</sup> Binder’s full article accessible at: [http://www.hhrf.org/kisebbszegkutas/kk\\_2009\\_02/cikk.php?id=1711](http://www.hhrf.org/kisebbszegkutas/kk_2009_02/cikk.php?id=1711); Hegedűs’s full article accessible at [http://epa.oszk.hu/01200/01259/00029/pdf/belivek\\_21-23.pdf](http://epa.oszk.hu/01200/01259/00029/pdf/belivek_21-23.pdf).

among all Roma, Gypsies, and Boyash in the future or not. Most recent studies and observations based on extensive fieldwork by young emerging scholars demonstrate that certain symbols are accepted even by the Boyash: the flag seems to serve as a unifying symbol, while the anthem remained a dividing line between Boyash and Lovari/Vlach, and other Roma groups (Binder 2009).<sup>120</sup>

In summary, this section presented the origins of Roma movement, along with the major players associated with it. I showed that there is an explicit effort by non-state actors to replace negative stereotypes associated with Gypsies by a new discourse, stressing Roma culture and traditions, as well as creating cross-border bonds among all Roma people. In contrast to earlier periods, this is a new phenomenon and may be a new form of contemporary nation building, not tied to any state, but rather uniting communities across borders, and led by non-state actors. This movement is still embryonic and predicting its outcomes would be premature.

The rest of this chapter examines mobilization and adoption of the ‘good Roma’ image and attempts at altering the Gypsy/Roma identity primarily through informal or non-mandatory educational projects. I discuss examples collected during fieldwork in Russia and Hungary. In both countries, the ‘bad Gypsy’ image is rather durable. I argue that there is less pro-Roma discourse and institutions in Russia primarily because NGOs are perceived as a threat to Putin’s monopoly on power and decreasing political freedoms in Russia constrain and limit any discourse generated by non-state actors.

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<sup>120</sup> Just like the Roma movement is in embryonic stage, local communities, such as the Boyash, have seen their identities revived; the Boyash language, for example, has been developed over the last quarter of a century into a literary language that is growing in importance. See an excellent study by Hegedűs (2007).

Table 3: Pro-Roma Organizations (selected)

Name of the organization	Goal	Source of financing	Projects
Open Society Institute (OSI) – Roma Initiatives <sup>121</sup>	“We strive for equality, integration, and empowerment of Europe’s largest and most excluded ethnic minority.”	OSI	“The Roma Initiatives Office provides grants, fellowships, and training to stimulate Roma community participation and active citizenship, empower Roma women and youth, and combat anti-Roma discrimination.”
Roma Access Program <sup>122</sup>	“The Roma Access Programs (RAP) is an externally funded unit at Central European University, Budapest that helps young Roma students to progress in their academic and professional careers. The long-term goal of RAP is to prepare young, outstanding Roma students to conduct local and international academic and advocacy work and to serve as role models and leaders for the Roma community overall.”	OSI, VELUX Foundations, REF	Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP) and Roma English Language Program (RELP)
Romaversitas <sup>123</sup>	“The Romaversitas is the training and scholarship program of Roma youngsters in higher education. Our goal is that our students would become well-balanced, identity-taking, responsible professionals.”	OSI, REF, US Embassy, British Council, and more	“We...give scholarships and various services, but also try to create space for vibrant social life.”
Roma Education Fund (REF) <sup>124</sup>	The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.	OSI, WB <sup>125</sup> , UNICEF, OSCE, EU, and others	“The organization supports policies and programs which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems”
Gandhi Secondary School <sup>126</sup>	Training Roma students who are “open-minded, responsive to sciences and bantered to their people and mother tongue. Furthermore, we try to grant them such training as their non-Gypsy peers...”	Bogdán János Foundation	“The purpose of our pedagogical and professional activities...is to...make [students] receptive to new knowledge, to teach them how to learn and accept the values of different cultures, how to assertively promote the Gypsies’ interests and how to strengthen their roles in society”

<sup>121</sup> Official website: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/roma-initiatives-office>

<sup>122</sup> Official website: <http://rap.ceu.hu>

<sup>123</sup> Official website: <http://www.romaversitas.hu/>, see also <http://civiceducationproject.org/legacy/countries/hungary/romaversitas.html>

<sup>124</sup> Official website: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/program>

<sup>125</sup> The World Bank also has an agenda in promoting Roma rights in Eastern Europe, see <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2014/04/10/promoting-roma-inclusion-in-eastern-europe>.

<sup>126</sup> Official website: <http://gandhi.dravanet.hu/beiskolazasa.php>



Table 4: Expenditures of Pro-Roma Organizations (selected)

Name of the Organization	Expenditures
OSF/Roma Initiatives <sup>127</sup>	\$6,150,000 (2012)
OSF/Making the Most of EU Funds <sup>128</sup>	\$3,322,000 (2012)
OSF/Roma Education Fund <sup>128</sup>	\$7,035,000 (2012)
REF/Hungary <sup>128</sup>	€964,533 (2013)
REF/Romania <sup>129</sup>	€3,662,996 (2013)
REF/Switzerland <sup>129</sup>	€6,512,507 (2013)
Romaversitas <sup>129</sup>	€130,815 – 140,250 (€2565-2750/student with 51 students)

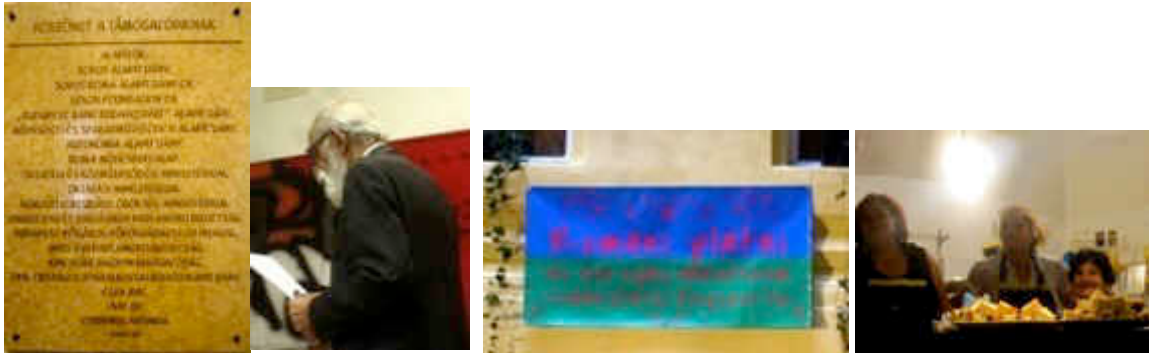


Figure 15: Pro-Roma Institutions, Intellectuals, and Projects

Open Society Foundations is one of the major sponsors of pro-Roma events and institutions, such as the Kalyi Jag Secondary school for Roma youth, which lists all sponsors and founders on a board at the entrance of the school, including Soros Foundation (left); OSI and REF are also major funders of Romaversitas, a scholarship program for young Roma students in universities, where Choli Daróczi József (middle left), a renowned Roma writer, poet, translator, teacher, public educator, and journalist teaches Roma poetry; Romani Platni (middle right) is an anti-discrimination project funded by OSI, fighting marginalization of Roma through the concept of „flat restaurant,” also uses the colors of Roma flag and employs local Roma women (right) to cook tradition food served to guests.

In Hungary, while NGOs operate in a more unrestricted environment, nevertheless the pro-Roma movement along with Western criticism of Hungary’s treatment of Roma often meets resistance from the majority of the population, in the midst of anti-Western political climate in the country. Relatedly, financial assistance

<sup>127</sup> Source:

<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/2012ExpendituresTotalFoundationsPrograms-20140113.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Source: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref\\_2013\\_annual\\_report\\_2.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_2013_annual_report_2.pdf).

<sup>129</sup> Source:

[http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/romaversitas\\_monitoring\\_study\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/romaversitas_monitoring_study_en_0.pdf).

from NGOs and EU towards integration feeds the regrettable view of Roma/Gypsies as undeserved favorites, unintentionally fueling discriminatory attitudes. These conclusions also demonstrate the astoundingly thick “walls” that the NGO sector encounters, and support the proposed effort to include the populace in improving the image of Roma and simultaneously reduce their marginalization. A wider societal attitude transformation is necessary for sustainable change to take roots.

### Outreach and Efficacy under Various Regimes: Making ‘Good Roma’ out of ‘Bad Gypsies’ through Education

*“What is wrong with the word Gypsy? Because that’s what people call themselves in settlements here [in Hungary]!”*  
- Michael Simmons<sup>130</sup>

This section discusses particular education-related projects and initiatives in Russia and Hungary. Although both countries have been showing authoritarian tendencies, the political climate in Russia is undeniably more restrictive than in Hungary, especially Putin’s intolerance of non-state actors. I argue that social categories are not only “shaped, manifested and entrenched through the state” (Starr 1992, 285), but non-state actors are increasingly indicative of change. I interrogate the extent of their effectiveness, along with the resulting constructive and damaging outcomes. I present examples of projects aimed at reconstructing Roma identity on various levels: First, I look at supplementary education in a Russian elementary school, then proceed with

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<sup>130</sup> Michael Simmons was one of the invited guests for the discussion on the topic "Emancipation struggles, empowerment experiments: lessons from the United States, Catalonia, and Romania" that was held on 25 March 2014 in Budapest, Hungary, and organized as a joint event of the Roma Research and Empowerment Network and “Helyzet” Working Group. Michael Simmons is a veteran of the US civil rights movement and has been involved in various Roma rights programs in the last two decades in Hungary.

examples from Hungary, discussing Kalyi Jag, providing alternative education to Roma high school students, and Romaversitas, holding monthly lectures and offering stipends to Roma university students, with an explicit goal of forming a group of Roma elite.

The scope of potential for NGOs and civil society, dynamics of “incorporated associations,” as well as state-society relationship under authoritarian regimes and those in transition is a burgeoning body of literature and central to political scientists. While these non-state players may forge linkages with the state in order to achieve their own goals (Foster 2001), in relating to the state they “do not seek to win control over or win a position within the state” (Diamond 1999, 223). Non-state actors, in other words, adapt and alter their functions according to the limitations or freedoms of the political and social context (ibid., 230). To what extent are non-state actors necessary to bring about change and what are the potential adverse consequences of NGOs’ involvement in the context of non-democratic or transitional countries? I examine the involvement of non-state actors in education, an arena traditionally controlled solely by the state, in challenging the existing image of Gypsies and replacing that with Roma.

### *Roma Community in Russia*

In Russia, Putin openly hijacks the agenda of NGOs’ and subordinates non-state organizations that might be receiving any funding from non-Russian sources. The resulting “Foreign Agent” law is the clearest example of this battle, in which the state reaffirmed its absolute power over any non-state actor. Hungary, on the other hand, is still a hub for many human rights and pro-Roma organizations, although Orbán’s government has been allegedly sliding towards authoritarianism. The recent election in

the country again resulted in absolute majority of Fidesz, Orbán's political party, indicating no move towards democracy in the foreseeable future. Orbán's recent scandalous vow to make Hungary an "illiberal state" received wide coverage and criticism,<sup>131</sup> while some sources called him "Hungary's Mussolini" for this.<sup>132</sup>

ADC Memorial Anti-Discrimination Center<sup>133</sup> in Russia is a prime case for the arduousness of functioning in an increasingly authoritarian climate. As a result of numerous interactions with the organization during fieldwork, as well as witnessing their work and cautious contribution in reducing discrimination against the Roma, I concluded that rather than directly confronting the existing power structures, they strove to complement those with alternative perspectives and supplemental materials with the aim to increase awareness about Roma culture and change attitudes. Figure 16 below shows examples of ADC Memorial's work and projects.

The organization published literature for teachers and the Roma community on topics of Roma culture, language, traditions and alike, organized trips and various events to provide meeting ground for Roma and non-Roma communities. "Teachers work in a context of racism and our office has shown many years of resistance to this system," said Olga Abramenko, the director of ADC Memorial.<sup>134</sup> Concerned about segregated

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<sup>131</sup> See, for example, Wall Street Journal (<http://online.wsj.com/articles/hungarys-illiberal-turn-1406829873>), NY Times ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/02/opinion/a-test-for-the-european-union.html?smid=fb-share&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/02/opinion/a-test-for-the-european-union.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0)), Huffington Post ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-a-lees/orban-designs-to-turn-hun\\_b\\_5634255.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-a-lees/orban-designs-to-turn-hun_b_5634255.html)), Bloomberg (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-28/orban-seeks-to-end-liberal-democracy-in-hungary.html>), and others.

<sup>132</sup> See for instance coverage by the Newsweek, accessible at <http://www.newsweek.com/hungarys-mussolini-vows-make-eu-member-illiberal-state-262127>.

<sup>133</sup> See short description here: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/droi/dv/4\\_3\\_antidiscrmemorial\\_/4\\_3\\_antidiscrmemorial\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/droi/dv/4_3_antidiscrmemorial_/4_3_antidiscrmemorial_en.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> Personal interview on January 21, 2013 in Russia.

education in a nearby school, Abramenko shared, “we organized and paid for a trip for the school; we hired an expensive bus and we paid for it; we thought this would be a good time for the two groups to get out together...when we came, we were told that all the Russian kids got sick, all of them... the next time all the Roma kids got sick... all of them.”<sup>135</sup>



Figure 16: ADC Memorial (Russia)

ADC Memorial (left) is an anti-discrimination center, whose functions included printing and disseminating educational materials to local schools and Roma communities, for instance the Tales book (left middle) in Romanes (Kalderari dialect), bi-lingual (Russian-Romanes) ABC book (right middle), and Short Instructions on Gypsy Language (right). The latter publication was part of the “Overcoming segregation and structural discrimination of Gypsy children in schools through education of Russian and Gypsy languages” project. Besides, they printed monthly journals and organized various trips and events in local schools.

ADC Memorial first has gone through administrative prosecution<sup>136</sup> and harassment<sup>137</sup>, officially declared as a “foreign agent”<sup>138</sup> on December 12, 2013, and shortly afterwards was forced to shut down.<sup>139</sup> There have been an increasing number of

<sup>135</sup> Personal interview, January 21, 2013, Russia.

<sup>136</sup> For example see the following report: <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/24430>

<sup>137</sup> For example see the following report: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/526102c011.html>

<sup>138</sup> For example see the following reports: <http://www.fidh.org/en/eastern-europe-central-asia/russia/14381-russian-federation-adc-memorial-officially-declared-a-foreign-agent-by-the> or <http://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/2013/12/russian-federation-adc-memorial-officially-declared-a-foreign-agent-by-the-court/>

<sup>139</sup> For example see the following report: <http://stpetersburg.nlconsulate.org/news/2014/january/adc-memorial-is-forced-to-shut-down-following-the-court-decision.html>

non-governmental organizations in Russia that were met with the same fate. In addition, there are more explicit moves to reposition issues such as human rights protection under sole state authority, excluding any potential non-state actor. There is a strong message of depoliticizing human rights protection<sup>140</sup> and regulating human rights protection and activism, on state-led normative, moral, ethical and financial grounds.<sup>141</sup>

The organization, based on the words of one of the former employees, has generated fear among the teachers and school director, who might have neglected their teaching responsibilities even more without the organization's presence, and created positive memories for Roma children about trips and volunteers teaching. While the organization's work and goals to end segregation and mistreatment of Roma children brought the issue more to the surface, the previous chapter discussed the taboos, fears, and animosity that their interference provoked among school employees. One pioneering member of the local Roma community, a woman with children and grandchildren of her own, known as "Baron in skirt"<sup>142</sup> has been active in promoting change.

Barons, according to Mariushkova and Popov, are mystified and stereotype-based authoritative institution of Roma, produced not only by non-Roma, but often by Roma themselves (2007, 71). However, historical sources mention Barons as typical authoritative figures of Roma, as the central person that Roma were "answerable to...all matters save offences carrying the death penalty" (Liégeois 1994, 19) and "chiefs [who] guided women and men of all ages" (Marzo and Turell 2001, 216).

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<sup>140</sup> For example see the following article: <http://izvestia.ru/news/563957>

<sup>141</sup> For example see the following article: <http://izvestia.ru/news/564485>

<sup>142</sup> Personal interview with a volunteer, winter 2013, Russia.

This community had two authority figures, the conservative Baron and progressive “Baron in skirt.” The Baron was an elderly man, whose conservatism was described to me as “he doesn’t really understand what’s happening in the world...he is conservative in a way that he thinks [Roma] children do not need to study.”<sup>143</sup> For instance, teachers liked to quote the Baron when justifying their neglect towards educating Roma children, asking why they would demand anything of these children if Roma don’t want education. I also heard teachers mention the Baron during “lineyka” – a disciplinary performative activity, when students line up and their school achievement is evaluated. One teacher shouted at students for the misbehavior, threatening to get the director for “lineyka” next time, “but maybe we will get even the Baron.”<sup>144</sup> The “Baron in skirt,” on the other hand, had progressive views and sought out ways to improve the living conditions of her community. One of the best outcomes of ADC Memorial’s involvement was empowering this woman and recruiting her as an employee.<sup>145</sup> I return to this example in the concluding Chapter VII, when I discuss best practices and way forward.

During my survey the Baron’s attitude was clearly not reflected among the community. As the previous chapter demonstrated, education was central to nearly all surveyed parents. Although most parents had very little formal education themselves, everyone supported their children's education. Most explained that their own parents did not understand the importance of education and took them out of school early or never

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<sup>143</sup> Skype interview on April 16, 2013 with a former employee of ADC Memorial and volunteer with the local Roma community, consequently with a good grasp about internal functioning of that group.

<sup>144</sup> Fieldnotes from February 5, 2013, Russia. More about “lineyka” see in Chapter VI.

<sup>145</sup> During conversations at ADC Memorial’s office, this woman was referred to as “sotrudnica,” or employee/collaborator.

even allowed schooling. Traveling lifestyles also prevented many from finishing more than a few grades in the school. One parent said: “I very much support my children’s education because I know this will determine their future.” All hoped that their children will study further and get jobs, one hoped for university diploma, and all agreed that with education their children and grandchildren should have a better life.

Undoubtedly, both the NGO and “Baron in skirt” had the same vision: empowering their community through quality education, and in the process strengthening Roma identity, substituting negative content (illiteracy, backwardness, disorder and alike) with positive one, and in particular strengthening the importance of Roma culture. With a shared vision, both players had challenges—conservative Baron and authoritarian state—and limitations to their achievements. Yet, close cooperation yielded the best results.

### *Roma Communities in Hungary*

In Hungary, in comparison, there are a plethora of organizations with an outreach beyond national borders, aiming at Roma empowerment, equal access to education and other services, striving to diminish marginalization of Roma.<sup>146</sup> Most have a component that goes beyond ending discrimination: building a strong identity, inflicting pride and constructing trans-border nationhood. For instance, to qualify for the Roma Education Fund’s (REF) scholarships, applicants must “declare themselves as Roma; declare as willing to appear publicly as Roma,” among other stipulations.<sup>147</sup> Romaversitas strives to

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<sup>146</sup> I.e. European Roma Rights Center, Roma Education Fund, Open Society Institute’s Roma Initiatives and others.

<sup>147</sup> See the official Roma Education Fund website: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/program>



raise a generation of “identity-taking”<sup>148</sup> youth who will assume Roma identity and responsibility for their ethnic kin.<sup>149</sup> Kalyi Jag Secondary Schools in Hungary are another clear attempt to reshape and reinterpret the meaning and content of ethnic labeling used for this marginalized ethnic group. “We need to give them [Roma] back their prestige and identity,” Gusztáv Varga, the founding president claimed, and besides conventional classes, students take subjects on Roma culture, music, and history.<sup>150</sup>

Kalyi Jag Roma Secondary School opened its doors in 1994 in Budapest; the founder, Gusztáv Varga, a Roma musician, established the institution with a sense of responsibility to provide education to his people with a Roma cultural component. Despite early criticism and doubts, several campuses opened in the country, besides the one in Budapest.<sup>151</sup> Fieldwork observations in the school revealed the conflicting content and tension between the two ethnic labels, Roma and Gypsy. Namely, some Roma intellectuals who belong to the old (‘pre-Roma discourse’) generation and strive to recompose the meaning of Gypsy, educate students that they are not ‘bad Gypsies’, but ‘good Gypsies’. Responses are instructive: most students regard ‘Gypsy’ as a negative concept.

Gusztáv Nagy, depicted on Figure 17, one of the more known and established Roma poets and translators teaches a Roma ethnography class in the school. Nagy

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<sup>148</sup> See the official Romaversitas website <http://www.romaversitas.hu>

<sup>149</sup> <http://www.hrportal.hu/c/uj-igazgato-a-romaversitas-alapitvany-elen-20090217.html>

<sup>150</sup> Personal interview with Gusztáv Varga, December 2012, Budapest; also see <http://www.sosinet.hu/2010/11/16/a-kalyi-jag-iskola-celjai/>. See further information about Kalyi Jag on their website: <http://www.kalyi-jag.hu>.

<sup>151</sup> Being aware of many issues and problems surrounding this school, I do not discuss them here as I am solely concerned with the content of education.

explained during class to his students: “This school came into existence...so that it can teach Gypsy children in order to keep their own identity! So that you all can keep your identities! [...] In another school, let’s say a normal Hungarian school, and then a university, in 7 years you can lose your identity because you only learn Hungarian culture and you simply put aside the Gypsy culture.”<sup>152</sup>



Figure 17: Kalyi Jag Secondary School  
Gusztáv Nagy (left) instructing his students during class in Kalyi Jag Roma High School (right). In 2013 the President of Hungary awarded the Gold Cross medal [Magyar Arany Érdemkereszt kitüntetés] to Nagy for his pedagogical, literary and linguistic contributions Romani language.<sup>153</sup>

Nagy pointed out to his students that in order to learn the norms of the society, Gypsies need to be educated, adapt, and yet not lose their identity. “If a Gypsy person loses his or her identity, that means: they don’t care about the culture of their people, they forget their own, and take on a foreign nation’s culture and want to represent that culture, rather than their own.”<sup>154</sup> Students add that perhaps some Gypsies look down on their own culture. “We shouldn’t be ashamed of where we come from,” Nagy retaliates, “don’t you think that Gypsy is one who is grungy and dirty [taknyos, retkes, piszkos], that’s not a Gypsy, Gypsies are as valuable as any other nation!”

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<sup>152</sup> Fieldnotes from December 6, 2012 Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>153</sup> More information about the award here: <http://www.sosinet.hu/2013/04/15/az-egesz-ciganysag-kituntetese---nagy-gusztav/>.

<sup>154</sup> Fieldnotes from December 6, 2012 Budapest, Hungary.

Indeed, Nagy explicitly named the problem: young Roma come to these schools representing the majority opinion about their ethnic kin, which is filled with negative stereotypes. At times it is even hard to accept that being Gypsy might mean good qualities: “Gusztai bácsi<sup>155</sup>, I was in the store the other day and I wanted to pay with 10 thousand forint bill [approximately 45 USD] and the clerk asked me if the family support arrived [implying that Gypsies only have money from family support]; I didn’t say anything and didn’t even start yelling at him, but the money was from my father who works!” The class sat in silence as the student continued with swelling emotions: “but seriously, they look down upon us, but why?” The response, dry and sharp, came from a classmate: “Because you are Gypsy!”<sup>156</sup>

Nagy is from a generation when the term ‘Roma’ was not charged with the same meaning as it is today. In another class, however, a young Roma teacher, Alíz Balogh, who benefitted from a Roma identity-building and educational program herself,<sup>157</sup> addressed the question of an identity label directly in her classroom: do students prefer Roma or Gypsy? The answers are quoted below:

*Student 1:* I prefer Roma – Gypsy is an ugly word! [Teacher: But I heard you use it yourself!]

*Student 2:* I think we should use the word Roma, but many use Gypsy instead...

*Student 3:* I’m used to saying Gypsy...

*Student 4:* I’m used to Gypsy, too.

*Student 5:* Definitely Gypsy!

*Student 6:* I don’t care!

*Student 7:* Gypsy.

*Student 8:* Roma...when I am surrounded by non-Roma people; but when I am around Roma people, I say Gypsy... it’s because Gypsy is an uglier word.

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<sup>155</sup> Bácsi means uncle or man, used to refer to teachers in schools along with their first names.

<sup>156</sup> Fieldnotes from December 6, 2012 Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>157</sup> Balogh is a graduate of Romaversitas herself.

*Student 9:* I don't even understand why we have to be called 'minority'. I don't like that, and that is ugly also.

*Student 10:* About myself, I'd say Gypsy. If someone else talks about me, [pauses to think]... they can use Gypsy also.

*Teacher:* I noticed when we say something positive, we use the word Roma, and just by listening to you all talk about this topic, I noticed the same pattern: you use the word Roma when you want to say something good; however, when you say something negative, then you all used the term Gypsy instead of Roma....

The last point Balogh highlighted is spot-on and corresponds to my observations in other contexts in the country. For instance, the verb 'elcigányosodik', or gets 'Gypsified' is almost exclusively used in negative context. Teachers use it for students who change from good students to bad students. Roma students use it to describe non-Roma who become similar to them. That day, students left Balogh's class with an ad hoc homework assignment: to think about when they use Roma vs. Gypsy, and what feelings do the two words evoke.

Unfortunately, very few sources inform us about Roma culture, and the most accessible is the biased media. Many people have negative personal interactions in various social institutions, which contributes to antagonism between Roma and non-Roma. Roma culture is largely omitted from mainstream education also. Therefore, schools like Kalyi Jag are not simply bringing Roma culture into the curriculum, but consciously fight existing negative stereotypes associated with Gypsies, with efforts to cultivate a positive identity.

Those few Roma students who successfully finish high school and are admitted to universities have opportunities to participate in eminent trainings, which can bring about prestige and prominent jobs in the future, forming the Roma elite on a national and international—mainly European Union—scale. Some of these are funded by influential

philanthropies, branches of the EU or even state bodies. Roma university students, who are meager in numbers,<sup>158</sup> have a good likelihood in participating in at least one of these educational projects.

For instance, Romaversitas offers scholarships to Roma students and has an unequivocal goal to create an autonomous Roma intellectual elite “committed to the advancement of Romani population” (Friedman and Garaz 2013, 154). The organization started by offering summer university courses in 1997 and steadily grew and became an independent foundation since 2001. Romaversitas has been rather successful in its years of operation: studies report that as a result of training Romaversitas provides, its students’ Roma identities were strengthened and they had a higher likelihood of finishing university (ibid., 154; see also Arnold et al. 2011). The program’s contribution to intergenerational change is also documented, as students are first-generation college graduates (ibid.).

Another established Roma intellectual, Choli Daróczi József, a writer, poet, translator, public educator, and journalist, offers classes on Roma poetry to Romaversitas students.<sup>159</sup> “The biggest tragedy...is the loss of belief in community. You hang in the air...you have no ground...you don’t know who you are and you don’t know what it’s like to belong to a community...you have no idea where you are coming from,” he explained to students who elected his class. “There is a wall that surrounds you. Why?

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<sup>158</sup> According to a recent study, in Hungary university attendance rate among non-Roma is approximately 40%, while it about 1% among Roma youth (Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium 2010, 137).

<sup>159</sup> Choli Daróczi József was the first one to translate parts of the New Testament to Romani language and famously said that “there is no national literature without a national language, or a nation strives in its language”; see more about him here: [http://www.romnet.hu/kikicsoda/choli\\_daroczi\\_jozsef/75](http://www.romnet.hu/kikicsoda/choli_daroczi_jozsef/75); read about his opinion regarding Romani language literature here: <http://www.krater.hu/krater.php?do=3&action=a&pp=20352&PRINTING=1>.

Because you are surrounded by values of another culture, where you cannot open up; the school is alienating... and here is Romver [Romaversitas], which bridges our family values and the school values,” he continues. Students sat silently, listening with strong emotions on their faces. Choli bácsi, as he is known among the students, carried on lamenting about changing times: “in 1971 I was the only Gypsy university student, I was an exotic beast, but you are not exotic beasts any more.”<sup>160</sup>

Monthly lectures at Romaversitas are thematic: during my visits<sup>161</sup> topics of discussion included development of presentation skills and unpacking issues of poverty. The latter was particularly useful in discussing certain false beliefs and stereotypes, claiming the Roma are well off because they live parasitic lifestyles, relying on welfare with their large families. Students have a chance to meet not only renowned Roma intellectuals, Roma and non-Roma scholars, but also get closely acquainted with the network of pro-Roma programs and organizations.<sup>162</sup> Importantly, Romaversitas provides the venue for socialization, while sharing experience and learning valuable tools to succeed in the labor market. Indisputably there is a strong community-building component and students consistently voice their contentment.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Fieldnotes from December 7, Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>161</sup> November and December 2012.

<sup>162</sup> During my visits, there were discussions about opportunities offered for Roma youth from the United States (mainly mediate through US Embassy in Budapest), and Autonomía Foundation, which promoted civil society development with special interest in Roma issues.

<sup>163</sup> Some students’ comments are published on Romaversitas website (<http://www.romaversitas.hu/node/82>), but personal conversations revealed the same patters: students seem to succeed in future due to 1) professional training and 2) community aspect the organization provides.

While there are more Roma students in universities today<sup>164</sup> and the number of self-identifying Roma intellectuals and professionals is increasing,<sup>165</sup> it nevertheless did not immediately translate into either successful representation of their impoverished ethnic kin, neither led to significant changes in living standards and marginalization. Critical to the later analyzed belonging crisis is the common occurrence that “ties to local Romani communities are weakened in the process of becoming a self-identifying Romani intellectual and/or professional” (Friedman and Garaz 2013, 154). This disconnect, however, may be amended over time, with appropriate acknowledgment and approach to the issue.

In summary, these examples demonstrate that there is a conscious effort, mainly by non-state actors, to bring about meaningful change in the marginalization of Roma. Through education, there are projects promoting pride, teaching self-respect, and raising a group of “identity-taking” Roma intellectuals. Since “it is impossible to see Gypsiness in positive light today in Hungary” as L. Ritók Nóra<sup>166</sup> suggests, some programs appropriated the internationally acceptable ‘Roma’ as ethnic label, instead of the negatively charged ‘Gypsy’. Not surprisingly, more explicit identity forming education starts beyond elementary education; as one young educated Roma woman said, “I was

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<sup>164</sup> In 1996/7, 0.22% university students were Roma, in 2001/2 the number grew to 0.6%, later in 2010 to approximately 1.3-1.5%, and with this increase by 2020 there might be 2.1-2.5% university students who are Roma (Polónyi 2004, 20).

<sup>165</sup> It is hard to have an estimate of self-identifying Roma intellectuals, but several reports indicate that with “increase in numbers of young, educated Roma, we are observing a qualitative change in Roma civil society” (Mirga 2014).

<sup>166</sup> Director of Igazgyöngy Foundation, with teacher training, frequent guest at various round-table conversations and workshops regarding education of Roma children, L. Ritók Nóra also writes a blog, “Nyomor széle” [“Edge of Poverty”]. Népszabadság conducted an interview with her, which is accessible at the following website: [http://nol.hu/archivum/20140118-a\\_ciganysagot\\_nem\\_lehet\\_ma\\_buszken\\_megelni-1438737](http://nol.hu/archivum/20140118-a_ciganysagot_nem_lehet_ma_buszken_megelni-1438737).

aware of differences as a child, but only in high school did those differences became more conscious and I started questioning my own belonging.”<sup>167</sup>

### Outcomes and Limitations of Pro-Roma Projects

*“I am also particularly hurt by the fact that we are announced to be racists here, whereas in France, they get rid of all those Gypsies who dared to cross their border, or look at Canada that tightened up its visa regulations because Gypsies go to their country... Then who is racist here? Is it really us? Us, who have lived with them, in relative peace, I would say? This is terrible, simply terrible!”*  
- Non-Roma elementary school teacher<sup>168</sup>

In this section I summarize why the pro-Roma civil society have not achieved major progress in turning ‘bad Gypsies’ into ‘good Roma’, albeit the pro-Roma movement may potentially lay the foundation for broader discourse change. In addition, there are clear benefits of empowering and strengthening identities; while several Roma students shared their enriching journey of perceiving their own culture in a positive light, the ultimate price many paid is increasing disconnection with their own communities. Constraints that many projects face, which if addressed could lead to improved outcomes, are threefold: 1) non-state actors are increasingly scrutinized in non-democratic environments with a robust anti-Western discourse, which is strongly felt in Russia, and increasingly present in Hungary, especially in the realm of education; 2) there is a limited linkage between pro-Roma NGOs and the majority of Roma; 3) empowered and educated Roma also have a limited connection with their marginalized ethnic kin, which contributes to a belonging crisis. Importantly, I return to the conclusions from Chapter III, and highlight the lessons learned from the failed effort of early USSR policies

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with a young Roma teacher, December 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>168</sup> Fieldnotes in Fall 2012, Hungary.



towards the Roma. My goal is to offer constructive analysis for enriched understanding of the issue.

To begin, it is instructive to go back to the previous chapter's argument and revisit the context in which pro-Roma civil society subsists: both Hungary and Russia, I argued, are nationalizing states, in which the interest of core nations is posited against minorities. In addition, both countries follow a strategic youth policy in redefining an exclusionary sense of nationhood through education. The anti-Western approach of power is intertwined with nationalist pride, and the two together form the foundation of Putin's Russia and Orbán's Hungary today.<sup>169</sup> Some observers rightly pointed out the connection between Orbán's pro-Russian policies and popularity of the Jobbik, a far-right anti-Semitic and anti-Roma political party.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, within the European Union, there is now a country developing a populist, right-wing political model close to and close with Russia. While it would be naïve to call Russia a democracy with any adjective, Hungary may still be described as a "borderline democracy,"<sup>171</sup> democracy that is "slip-sliding

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<sup>169</sup> Anti-Western approach of power is criticized in many sources; e.g.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/why-it-is-time-for-germany-to-stop-romanticizing-russia-a-963284.html>.

<sup>170</sup> See for example <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/04/10/viktor-orban-is-the-real-danger-not-the-hungarian-far-right/> or <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/09/hungary-election-europe-prime-minister-viktor-orban>.

<sup>171</sup> See for example <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/andras-schweitzer-factors-that-made-hungary-a-borderline-democracy-and-are-likely-to-stay/>.

away,”<sup>172</sup> or “backsliding democracy.”<sup>173</sup> Both countries, however, may soon become a new political model, postmodern dictatorships.<sup>174</sup>

Tightening control of educational institutions and incorporating normative messages in mandatory textbooks is one clear indicator of top down reinterpretation of history in a way to support the guiding nationalist anti-Western ideology. In Hungary examples involve various ethics textbook with anti-Roma comments;<sup>175</sup> centralization of textbooks under exclusive state authority without transparency or consultation with experts are characteristic of both countries.<sup>176</sup> Putin has been vocal about the need for a unified and standardized history textbook,<sup>177</sup> and he “is convinced that history textbooks should be aimed at the formation of common civic values, uniting the Russian nation.”<sup>178</sup>

Complementary to exclusionary nation building are deeply seated negative attitudes towards the Roma, guided by negative stereotypes and an inferior view of the group. Since pro-Roma NGOs are regarded as representing Western values, accusations

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<sup>172</sup> See for example <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/12/democracy-hungary-0>.

<sup>173</sup> See for example <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/01/what-america-can-learn-from-hungarys-backsliding-democracy/251701/>.

<sup>174</sup> The term is based on “Russia: A Postmodern Dictatorship?”, a paper by Peter Pomerantsev (<http://www.li.com/news-events/events/2013/10/09/default-calendar/russia-a-postmodern-dictatorship-london>). Most recently series of discussions and round table conversations have been debating this topic in connection with Russia; see for example Institute of Modern Russia (<http://imrussia.org/en/imr-news/565-russia-a-postmodern-dictatorship>).

<sup>175</sup> The textbook for example qualifies Roma life as ‘barely living’ and mentions ‘reproduction of multitude Roma children’; see <http://romasajtokozyont.hu/ciganyozo-etika-gyerekeknek/>.

<sup>176</sup> See for example interview with Laszlo Arato, President of the Hungarian Association of Teachers <http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/az-ember-allamositasa-arato-laszlo-a-tankonyvbotranyrol-89676>.

<sup>177</sup> See for example <http://www.aif.ru/society/education/40737>, [http://lb.ua/news/2014/04/10/262724\\_putin\\_schitaet\\_prisodinenii.html](http://lb.ua/news/2014/04/10/262724_putin_schitaet_prisodinenii.html) or <http://grani.ru/Politics/Russia/President/m.211808.html>.

<sup>178</sup> See for example <http://www.aif.ru/politics/world/271308>.

of hypocrisy, as the previous chapter suggested, accompanied by fears and taboos are commonplace. Attitudes and irritation of teachers, fueled by what they see as EU and Western imposition on their countries and national values, without an understanding of internal dynamics, were frequent: “There is money and financial assistance to Gypsies, and yet we can’t call them that, we can’t have statistics, we can’t have official count of them! We simply can’t talk about them based on what their name is!” said an infuriated teacher. As one teacher vehemently expressed these sentiments, more joined the circle: “everybody wants to get rid of them and simply throws them back to us [Hungary]...look at western Europe or Canada...of course they don’t want them either and then they turn it around and call us fascists.” While all nod in agreement, another teacher finished the thought: “We are the racists because we have a race?!”<sup>179</sup>

Those exposed primarily to the every-day Roma people, living in impoverished and isolated environments, have little hope for the success of replacing ‘bad Gypsies’ with ‘good Roma’. Figure 18 depicts a similar environment: an impoverished village with exclusively Roma living in it, where children occasionally participate in projects promoting their culture, have access to some tutoring services and handouts through a charity, and yet very few succeed in studying beyond elementary school. Distortion, confusion and meaningless use of pro-Roma discourse among Roma communities is evident: Mátyás Arató, a young emerging Romologist and linguist, started noticing an attitude of “if Gypsy is bad and Roma is good, I’ll be Roma!” during his fieldwork.<sup>180</sup> My own observations similarly confirm the general disillusionment among the Roma in

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<sup>179</sup> Fieldnotes from Fall, 2012 in Hungary.

<sup>180</sup> On-line interview in March, 2014.

settlements, villages and urban ghettos about all Roma or non-Roma politicians, organizations and bureaucrats.



Figure 18

#### Roma Village and Roma Culture Projects for Youth

As part of a one-day camp to promote equality and Roma culture, children had an opportunity to bake ‘punya’, traditional Boyash bread (top left), wicker baskets, which was a traditional occupation for Boyash (top right). Most children with their families live in isolated poor villages with high unemployment (bottom left). Often there is an after-school center where they have access to tutors and hand-outs (bottom right). On the picture clothes are distributed in return for tokens that Roma youth received for completed homework. Very few, if any, study beyond 8 elementary classes from villages like this.

Disillusionment in pro-Roma organizations, pro-Roma movements and initiatives was echoed among the most marginalized and some educated Roma as well. At the core of disappointment was lacking trust in institutions and deficient political identities. “Just because we have signs about Roma or Gypsy self-government,” complained Choli Daróczi József, “there is still the same ignorance and recklessness without a functioning class of intellectuals.”<sup>181</sup> While in the poor settlements, many residents complained: “it

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<sup>181</sup> Field notes from November, Budapest, Hungary.

doesn't matter if we are represented by Gypsies or non-Gypsies, they're all the same, searching for their own benefit...look, if I steal a chicken, I'm a criminal and get 5 years [in jail], but if you [pointing at me, the only non-Roma in the room] misappropriate 5 million forints, you'd get at most suspended."<sup>182</sup> The message was clear: one must not trust bureaucrats and politicians. The response to whether the Roma flag or anthem was meaningful, I often received frustrated and annoyed responses: "I don't know it and I don't care." These are clear signs of failure to penetrate such settlements, where the majority of Roma reside.

The identity-building objective of pro-Roma institutions indisputably has an impact to a certain extent. One participant of Romversitas learned about the Roma anthem and flag as part of the training: "My identity was certainly affected [by the program], I realized that what the Roma anthem stands for is also who I am...now I know the Roma and Hungarian anthems," he shared.<sup>183</sup> This young Roma university student also claimed that neither him, nor his community use the term Roma: "I am Gypsy...I didn't even know the term Roma until I came to the capital, I probably heard it from the TV first... nobody in my community, nor my parents affiliate with this term." He added that his peers in his native village when addressed as Roma, continue using Gypsy as self-identification. This student uses Roma as self-identification increasingly when applying for various pro-Roma grants, fellowship, internships and other opportunities.

Identity struggles are well illustrated by the story of a young Romanian Roma woman, a participant in the Roma Access Program:

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<sup>182</sup> Personal interview, September 2013 in Hungary.

<sup>183</sup> Personal interview, Budapest 14 March, 2014.

I had a different attitude but the same identity as Roma... I realized...that everything is about how you feel, how you behave. If you put your head down and swallow everything that others say without defending yourself, others will see you as a victim, as stupid, and like someone who is a loser. But if you put your head up, straighten yourself and look them in the eyes, they will accept you and respect you. You have a personality, you know what you want, you know who you are...

And now, related to my community, I want to say that it all depends how they see themselves and how they perceive themselves and how they perceive others. If you are dirty, but you are smart and you know what you want, and you look at them, saying that you are not different, you are not an alien, then they will think about you another way!<sup>184</sup>

Although still harboring a fear of rejection by her own community, where having completed high school she was regarded as “less of a Roma,” many of her peers could no longer relate to her, and Roma men her age refused to date her, this courageous young Roma woman returned to make a difference. She completed the Roma Access Program, mainly funded by the Open Society Foundation, that aims to “prepare young, outstanding Roma students to conduct local and international academic and advocacy work and to serve as role models and leaders for the Roma community overall”<sup>185</sup> without a clear understanding of how it can apply to the context of her local community; nevertheless, she did not lose faith. Rejection of educated Roma by their own communities is largely due to internalized negative stereotypes, a theme that I develop in the next chapter.

These success stories demonstrate that change, albeit small, is noticeable. As the pro-Roma movement is still in a nascent stage, the question remains whether it will be rooted among all Roma/Gypsies, or will remain a disconnected movement affecting only

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<sup>184</sup> Personal interview, Budapest 13 June, 2013 with Romanian Roma, participant of Roma Access Program at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>185</sup> <http://rap.ceu.hu>; she finished The Roma English Language Program (RELP), which is a 9-month preparatory course for talented Roma youth to improve their English skills to enter the workforce in positions that will make a difference to their home communities. RELP is funded by the Roma Initiatives Office of the Open Society Foundations.

the top circles of the society. Andrew Ryder suggests that slowly there is a change in discourse, and in the EU Roma framework there is increasing stress on partnership with and empowerment of local actors and initiatives, although the language does not always translate into actions to this day.

### Learning from a Failed Effort – European Union and Roma Inclusion

“What is the difference between the EU and the Soviet Union? The EU is more deliberative and it’s less efficient,” shared a Roma researcher and scholar.<sup>186</sup> Perhaps said with a level of sarcasm, but the very comparison of the EU and Soviet Union is a fruitful way to look at a distinct form of building a society that is comprised of multiple groups and nations. To compare the current Roma identity-building project with that of the USSR’s Nativization policies, I wish to signal the purpose of such appraisal forthright: my intention is solely to examine the logic of building a society comprised of multiple nations and explicitly including Roma. In contrast, nation building projects in contemporary European countries are increasingly ethnic-based and consequently exclude Roma minorities.

While the comparison is provocative, the goal remains to shed light on how a sense of belonging based on ideological and regional principles (i.e. non-ethnic) affects the Roma ethnic and political identity formation. I identify three themes that are discussed: modernization of Roma, standardization of culture, and raising a group of native leaders.

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<sup>186</sup> The quote is from Iulius Rostas, and the entire roundtable conversation is accessible at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-uOCk6q9tQ&feature=youtu.be>

This section draws a parallel between building a Socialist society under the early USSR and constructing a regional European identity in the EU, and how the resulting minority policies affect the Roma. The Socialist dream collapsed rather quickly, first with the tumbling of the Berlin Wall, then the Iron Curtain, and finally the dissolution of the USSR. The utopian dream of Communism, with an equitable society comprising of solely the working class regardless of nationality, mother tongue or ethnicity, has failed along with it. However, there were not only lasting legacies of that type of social engineering, but there are valuable lessons to learn.

In the early USSR, the Roma national identity was nested in the larger Soviet working class (albeit with a vision to become obsolete). The European Union discourse similarly positions Roma as a European nation, implying a nested identity within a broader framework of European multiculturalism. For this society to materialize, what efforts are pursued by non-state actors, often funded or supported by EU institutions?

The discourse at the EU level conceives the Roma as a European minority, presuming some sense of European solidarity and integrity. For instance, on various EU forums we read that “the European institutions and every EU country have a joint responsibility to improve the lives of the EU’s Roma citizens”<sup>187</sup> or that Roma were and remain an “integral part of European civilization.”<sup>188</sup> There are new institutions and research centers opened to assess and monitor progress, new reports and warnings to

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<sup>187</sup> See the European Commission’s website at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm).

<sup>188</sup> See the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’s website at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>.



governments that don't comply, and yet little progress has been achieved.<sup>189</sup> For example the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' report explicitly considers EU law as the protector of the Roma, Europe's largest minority.<sup>190</sup> There are also efforts to organize forums and platforms to empower non-state actors fighting for Roma rights. The European Roma Summit, for example, is one of the most important forums, where "around 500 representatives of EU institutions, national governments and parliaments, international organisations, mayors, civil society organisations (including Roma organisations) and local and regional authorities were invited to express their views on how to deliver further on the implementation of an EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies."<sup>191</sup> Among those invited was also George Soros, whose Open Society Foundations is a major player in the pro-Roma civil society (more on this in Chapter V).

Zeljko Jovanovic, director of the Open Society Roma Initiatives, pointed out, since Roma nationhood is not related to any state, there is no enforcing mechanism: "They [the founding fathers of Roma nation] knew that the answers [to fundamental questions every nation faces at a certain point] they gave will not be imposed on us by any governmental decrees, history classes, monuments, museums, memorials, or military parades...Nothing else obliges us to mark April 8<sup>th</sup> as the most important day for us collectively, but the moral imperative and hunger for self-definition. This is our Day of

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<sup>189</sup> See Joanna Kostka's report on why EU initiatives failed to generate sustainable success at <http://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/roma-rights-2013-national-roma-integration-strategies-what-next/4238/5>.

<sup>190</sup> See report at <https://www.fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2012/situation-roma-11-eu-member-states-survey-results-glance>.

<sup>191</sup> See more information at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/roma-summit-2014/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/roma-summit-2014/index_en.htm).

Flag. This is our Day of Republic. This is our Day of Independence.”<sup>192</sup> The speech in fact pointed out the most inconclusive elements of a new phenomenon, indicating a new form of contemporary nationhood: are Roma a transborder nation? European citizens? State-constituting minorities? Roma Hungarians or Roma Russians?

Effectively, Nativization policies of the USSR in the 1920s and 30s explicitly incorporated all minorities into the fabric of a society, defined by Marxist-Leninist ideology, using national cultures as means. The Roma had to be modernized in order to join this utopian society. It entailed, for instance, that children had to be educated in their mother tongue to understand the core principles and foundation of the leading ideology, all Roma had to learn discipline, often through work and school, and join the working class.

Another example, as shown in Figure 19 and 20 below, was empowerment of women. Roma women in textbooks from the Nativization era were portrayed as equal to men, assuming similar responsibilities driving tractors and working in factories. Those were the modern Roma women that shed antiquated and backwards habits. The EU and other non-state actors are also concerned with empowerment of women, organizing various workshops and venues to discuss and promote related issues, and portraying Roma women as professional, modern, and European women.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Full speech available at <http://roma.idebate.org/news-articles/constant-battle-self-definition-and-we-are-resolved-win-it-long-we-live> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_lvArILXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_lvArILXQ).

<sup>193</sup> Therefore this is not a gender argument or claim that either the USSR or the EU being pro-feminist or against; this is simply an example of projects elevating the Roma to certain standards and teaching values envisioned as core for the society.



Figure 19: Representation of Roma Women in Nativization-Era Textbooks  
Representation of Roma women in Romani-language textbooks, published in 1930s: women are portrayed assuming jobs that were previously man-dominated or working alongside men.



Figure 20: Council of Europe’s Empowerment of Roma Women  
The Council of Europe is also concerned with empowerment of Roma women: Round table on empowerment of Roma women in Moldova (left), 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Roma Women (middle), and preparatory meeting for the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference (right), all in 2014.<sup>194</sup>

Another aspect of this process is cultural standardization, which may be necessary for a stronger union among all Roma, however diverse this group is. For instance, Romani language standardization has been one of the goals of the permanent secretariat of the International Roma Committee (Hancock 1991, 262). Many Roma communities do not speak any dialects any more as a consequence of linguistic assimilation.

In addition, just like there was a need for native vanguards in the USSR, there are efforts to educate a Roma elite today that will lead their ethnic kin (Chapter V discusses elite-making projects in more detail). Similarly to Nativization policies, cultivation of Roma cultural identity happens today through various institutions, promoting Roma

<sup>194</sup> Photos taken from the Council of Europe’s website, which also states that the “Council of Europe has reconfirmed its support in facilitating the preparation of the conference through both technical and financial support.” Website can be accessed at <http://hub.coe.int/roma-women>.

language, along with various cultural and traditional values. The goal, once again, is empowerment. Can we expect similar paradoxes will arise today, as were characteristic during the early USSR?

Answering the above question might be premature as of now, but familiarity with Nativization policies in the USSR might suggest some caution. I tentatively suggest that there are several lessons to learn: First, top down uplifting of a selected national elite does not necessarily imply proper representation or trust between the elites and masses. Second, vernacular literature for educational or other purposes requires standardization of the language and culture, which involves necessary costs for an extremely diverse Roma population. However, it might be a necessary and unavoidable cost to pay for national unity. Furthermore, to advance the new, standardized version of the Roma language and national culture, the Soviet state relied on schools as compulsory institutions. The European Union or other non-state actors do not have such mandatory institutions.

In summary, the following conceivable lessons surface from the comparison: top down nation building efforts attempt to create a Roma elite (The Roma revolutionary vanguard under the USSR), which nevertheless remains disconnected from the rest of the society. There are no effective links between the Roma elite and a population that is largely not mobilized politically. Additionally, lacking unity and solidarity among the Roma subgroups continues to pose a principal challenge, and unlike under the early USSR, where compulsory education included identity-shaping normative content, the EU does not have such mandatory institutions and homogenizing tools.

Overall, the pro-Roma movement, generating a positive Roma identity and the ‘good Roma’ discourse, the accompanying claim of non-territorial nationhood,

international collaboration for the cause, and consequent challenge to existing discriminatory structure by itself is an important step. There is a strong potential that a unique, non-territorial Roma nation may be under formation in the European Union. Roma national identity can be nested within the European regional identity, reflecting the centuries long coexistence. But cautionary signs should be taken into consideration for more successful outcomes. By better understanding the nature of the pro-Roma movement, the accompanying discourse, as well as outcomes, limitations, and consequences, it is probable that the crisis of belonging might affect one generation powerfully, and will subside with time, as a result of more coherent, strong, and positive self-identification among Roma.

### Conclusion: The Future of the Movement

*“One of the worst things that can happen to a grassroots organization is to get too much money...it has to be an organic, slow development. It will take a long time. And I do think schools have a role to play. Because this is an institution in which perhaps results can be achieved, relationships can be formed between the children, teachers and others. So I think schools can be a key arena to change...but it will be some time.”*  
- Andrew Ryder<sup>195</sup>

In summary, in this chapter I commenced with the argument that social categories and classifications reflect the existing social structure (Starr 1992, 266-7), and can be changed with shifting power structure. Official classification is a political choice that has consequences, as those are “not merely categories of thought, but often the shape of political alliances and coalitions, social movements, and interest groups” (Starr 1992, 273-4, 280). Subsequently, conflicts over classification reflect an imperative change in social structure, power relations, or even an introduction of a new dominant actor. The

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<sup>195</sup> Skype interview with Andrew Ryder on April 10, 2014.

battle over categorizing the Roma as a national Gypsy/cigány/tsygane minority, as a transnational Roma group, or as European citizens is indicative of political struggles and desires to change the social and institutional landscape of the region.

I looked at the roots of the pro-Roma movement, and analyzed the tools used to disseminate the “good Roma” image. These tools are suggestive of a transborder nation building ambition, but remain in an embryonic stage. Educational projects strive to alter the negative content of the Gypsy identity, but are often met with considerable obstacles: without trust, the Roma discard top down assistance as self-serving institutions or politicians playing “big games” while not helping the poor Roma meet their every day needs. Sometimes selective assistance, due to limited means, deteriorates and deepens existing inter-ethnic divide among Roma communities.

Overall, education very explicitly served as a marker or potential bridge between the ‘good Roma’ and ‘bad Gypsies’, between the majority of society and Roma/Gypsies. I often heard the term “studied out” as in studied out of the (Gypsy) community, potentially then “studying in” to another (Roma) community.

Some observers are concerned with the focus on elite-making by many pro-Roma projects. In addition, because of the missing links between grand NGOs and the grassroots organizations or communities, Gypsy communities often do not affiliate with or remain uninformed of the movement. Leila, a 25 years old young woman aptly stated: “They don’t even dare to say the word Gypsy [cigány], whereas I am much bothered by the word Roma, I hate it. I am a Gypsy.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Leila was one of twelve young Roma women participants, aged 16-22, at “Buvéro” media summer camp organized by Romédia Foundation in the summer of 2013. Roma young women acquired media skills to be able to represent their own community in the future. Full article in Hungarian about the camp can be accessed at [http://index.hu/kultur/media/2013/08/02/utalom\\_azt\\_hogy\\_roma\\_en\\_cigany\\_vagyok/](http://index.hu/kultur/media/2013/08/02/utalom_azt_hogy_roma_en_cigany_vagyok/).

Critical observers, such as Michael Simmons, who is a veteran of the US civil rights movement and has been involved in various Roma rights programs in the last two decades in Hungary, claimed that “there is no Roma movement in this region [Eastern Europe]” and that the “Roma movement today is 10-15 organizations floating around Europe, mainly in Brussels, but also elsewhere.”<sup>197</sup> Importantly, he pointed out, there is negligible, if any impact from the movement on the communities around the country and the region. “Big funders are often interested in high-power politics” and some lack transparency, said Andrew Ryder.

Nevertheless, the pro-Roma discourse and non-state actors are no doubt the strongest counterbalance to the still dominant ‘bad Gypsy’ image, and consequently have the best chances of changing attitudes. I drew several lessons from the experience of early USSR policies towards the Roma and identified three challenges: modernization of Roma, standardization of culture, and raising a group of native leaders. These challenges, if met with appropriate knowledge and sensitivity, will greatly improve the likelihood of the pro-Roma movement to succeed.

A “truly radical rethink”<sup>198</sup> or paradigm change might be necessary to effectively address the “Roma question.” If pro-Roma educational projects have had limited success, the question may not be “how to make good Roma out of bad Gypsies.” Instead, using

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<sup>197</sup> Michael Simmons was one of the invited guests for the discussion on the topic "Emancipation struggles, empowerment experiments: lessons from the United States, Catalonia, and Romania" that was held on 25 March 2014 in Budapest, Hungary, and organized as a joint event of the Roma Research and Empowerment Network and “Helyzet” Working Group.

<sup>198</sup> Skype interview with Andrew Ryder on April 10, 2014.

Choli Daróczy József's words: "How can we make a proper, good Hungarian citizen from such distorted identity?"<sup>199</sup> This question is precisely where the next chapter departs.

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<sup>199</sup> Field notes from November 16-18, 2012, Hungary.



## CHAPTER VI

### ROMA AND GYPSIES: BOTTOM UP IDENTITY IN THE MAKING

#### Introduction: Bottom up Identities

*“Wherever I go or wherever I am, I am always a Gypsy.”*  
- K., 30 year-old man<sup>200</sup>

So far I have shown that historically, Gypsies were the quintessential “Others,” viewed as barbaric, backwards, irredeemable, and unwanted. Over time, their identity has been essentialized into ‘bad Gypsies’ and disseminated through various state institutions, such as schools. Disciplinary practices in formal and informal educational establishments clearly reflect and reinforce this dominant view even today. States, however, have been losing their domination by categorizing and disciplining groups through their monopoly on education. In the last few decades, supported by external actors, a pro-Roma movement challenged this centuries long negative image of ‘bad Gypsies’ by cultivating a new trans-border identity of ‘good Roma’. The ‘good Roma’ are European citizens, educated and valuable members of society. To cultivate this new identity, alternative sites of education are used to counteract biased practices in state schools. Thus, ethnic identity has been essentialized into ‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’.

This chapter explores the formation of these competing identities and is anchored by two key questions. One is how do Roma define their own group identity and relationship with the state, majority society, other Roma subgroups, and the international community representing their interests? The second is what role does acquiring education play in changing identity and shifting these ties?

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<sup>200</sup> Personal interview, April 2013 in Hungary.

To answer these questions, this chapter focuses on the bottom up perceptions and definitions of the Roma ethnic identity based on my fieldwork data in Hungary and Russia. I argue that significant internalization of negative stereotypes and the ‘bad Gypsy’ image explains why lacking education and lacking discipline came to define the Gypsy identity. Consequently, the critical task and source of tension becomes understanding how this identity changes after youth are educated and empowered.

I proceed the following way: First, I examine how the essentialized ‘bad Gypsy’ image manifests itself, how negative attributes have been internalized and acted upon, how those often subsist in the background of all actions, hopes, future plans, and relationships that Roma experience in the settlements that I visited. I show that education emerges clearly as the bulwark in Hungary: if lacking education is part of the Gypsy identity, how does identity change after having successfully completed education? In addition to the astoundingly destructive and tainting nature of stereotypes, in Hungary the homogenous view of Roma people and culture disregards and contributes to numerous intra-ethnic conflicts. In Russia, however, education was not seen in such cautionary terms, I argue, due to their close community ties and rootedness in Russian society.<sup>201</sup>

Second, I discuss the contemporary Roma/Gypsy ‘belonging crisis,’<sup>202</sup> which stems from the incongruity of policies aimed at Roma empowerment through education along with the new pro-Roma movement and deeply rooted and internalized stereotypes

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<sup>201</sup> In addition, as Chapter I shows, in Russia the Roma educated class emerged during the 1920’s Nativization policies, making ‘educated Gypsies’, especially among Russka Roma, not so out of the ordinary.

<sup>202</sup> Belonging crisis is a topic discussed by several Romologists, some refer to it as identity crisis. Namely, “crisis of legitimacy [of Romani identity]” is a consequence of exclusion of the educated upper- and middle class Roma who “no longer live in traditional conditions” (Gheorghe 1997, 157; Ladanyi et al. 2006; Koulis 2005).

regarding uneducated Gypsies. I present powerful personal journeys of those children in the settlement who consciously reject their identity and those who succeeded in overcoming such daunting conditions and became “dangerous educated Gypsies.”<sup>203</sup> I have not witnessed such stark differentiation between educated and non-educated members of Roma in Russia.<sup>204</sup>

Finally, I analyze the lacking social ties in Roma communities,<sup>205</sup> especially in Hungary, and nascent efforts to foster such bonds. Stronger community and pride in their culture in Russia was for instance noticeable by pupils’ collective resistance to authority in school. In Hungarian communities, intra-ethnic animosity was all too common. Projects that treat the Roma as homogenous, therefore, are predestined to fail, and efforts at Roma empowerment, let alone mobilization, without communal ties and some sense of solidarity are simply impossible. I show that social spaces, usually offering informal education services, where interaction (among sub-groups of Roma or between Roma and non-Roma) does not reinforce objectification of ethnic identities were the most successful efforts to improve living conditions, social status, and create kinship bonds.

It is important to reiterate that for the Hungarian case study I had wider access to participating in and observing community life outside the school. The Russian case study is confined to school observations. An important disclaimer must also be signaled on the onset: findings are solely based on the few communities in Hungary and one community in Russia. None of the findings should be interpreted as general and applicable to all the

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<sup>203</sup> Even the title of Ian Hancock’s new edited book is very telling: “Danger! Educated Gypsy” (2010).

<sup>204</sup> Although my observations are significantly more limited in Russia than in Hungary, even my short time spent with the Hungarian community revealed an existence of this crisis, and none of the conversations I had in Russia indicated its existence.

<sup>205</sup> Social divisions existed on various grounds: intra-ethnic, linguistic, generational and other. However, intra-ethnic divide seemed to have generated the deepest divide.

Roma in a given country. Acknowledging these limitations, studies similar to this one should serve as explorations and preliminary findings, hopefully inspiring future and more in depth or broader projects that explore this topic.

### Being a Gypsy...

The very first day I set foot in a Roma settlement in Hungary was eye-opening. The charity was a site of self-validation and self-deprecation, a site where services were distributed, stereotypes performed, and ethnic identities exposed. This was one of the few places Roma and non-Roma interacted on a daily basis. This was also a site where the everyday realities Roma faced were unambiguously exhibited.

I entered the charity building on the edge of a poor Roma settlement, which was filled with flies. It was a hot August day. Everyone noticed my presence and evolving conversation between locals clearly were done in the context of a non-Roma outsider watching them. Two men were talking while waiting to use the one communal phone at the charity:

*Man 1:* [says something in Romani to Man 2]

*Man 2:* [very uncomfortably, looking periodically at me] Speak like a normal person, come on! Who is a Gypsy here? Not me!

*Man 1:* Not me either! One was made by Turks, the other by Russians [perhaps referring to his parents]. I am also Jewish a little bit, too, which is why I always think at the market: should I bargain or just steal. [Both laugh.]

A woman likely in her early 30s entered the room. She complained she needed clothes for her school-aged children and other utilities, such as school backpacks and clothes for physical training classes. She explained her children lost/damaged the ones from last year that she bought herself. The charity manager diligently recorded the need while educating the woman on how she needs to raise the children to value their belongings, that when he was in school his backpack lasted for 6 years and there is no way the organization can supply school stuff every year. The woman silently listened, trying to make excuses every now and then. The woman also asked for bathroom items. Another man came in, announcing happily and proudly he has a job now, but needs documentation about his elementary school. He asked that the charity arrange it through fax or Internet. He needs it because he got a job, he repeated several more times. A real job. This was about 10 minutes of just a usual day for the charity.

I was immediately struck by several discoveries: being Roma was not preferable even in a Roma settlement; speaking Romani language was indicative of being Roma and consequently was also not desirable; reliance on the charity was near absolute; the charity was also a disciplinary site; receiving a job as a consequence of one's own efforts is a panacea. I proceeded looking at how exactly the 'bad Gypsy' image influenced and guided perception of group identity in the two communities in Russia and Hungary.

Through a series of informal semi-structured interviews with local residents in the settlements, I collected adjectives respondents used to describe their own identity.<sup>206</sup> As Table 5 below shows, the most frequently mentioned attributes used to define the self, which was most often in opposition to others, non-Roma Russians or Hungarians. It was clear that negative stereotypes are internalized. Lacking discipline and deficient education has emerged in both countries as one of the primary depiction of ethnic identity.<sup>207</sup>

When conversations began, Roma/Gypsy<sup>208</sup> ethnic labels received an immediate reaction: "Yes, I'm Gypsy, should I be ashamed of it?" – said one of the elderly members of the Hungarian community. "You are an intelligent and well-spoken woman, one can barely tell you are a Gypsy" – said one local woman to another during a conversation. "Yes, that's true, but I feel different: I don't drink, I am not a vagabond, I work, I've

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<sup>206</sup> See Appendix A and B about survey data and questions.

<sup>207</sup> Considering the different challenges conducting interviews and collecting data in the two countries, my interaction with local Roma in Russia was limited and therefore this chapter builds on mainly findings from Hungary and data collected by research assistant in Russia.

<sup>208</sup> All respondents described themselves as Gypsy, unless I initiated questions using Roma instead of Gypsy. Some respondents continued using Roma, others rejected it and implied that their embracement of the Roma would mean denial of their Gypsy identity. "Just say it, say Gypsy," one respondent said. Virtually no one in the settlement used Roma.

always been working, and I was married to my husband for 37 years,” responded the 52 year-old woman, who makes ends meet with public work and finished 5 classes all together. She wanted to be a hairdresser, but after 5<sup>th</sup> grade never returned to school because her parents decided to keep her at home and when she turned 16, her oldest daughter was born. She remembered her teachers coming to visit many times, trying to persuade her parents, but to no avail. She lived in the poor settlement for 25 years, until she finally moved out with her husband. “It doesn’t matter if somebody doesn’t have the education...but I had the stamina, the desire to make a change in my life,” she shared her determination.

It was evident that there is a certain set of expectations —the essentialized ‘bad Gypsy’ — which was the context of these conversations. When discussing their every-day lives, respondents often said that “*despite* being a Gypsy, I do work/I am educated” and others saw poverty as an important constituent of their identity, claiming that they were happy living poor and dying poor and would never want to be Magyars and live rich.

As Table 5 below demonstrates, besides cultural characteristics, most defined their ethnic identity in terms of lacking education, deficient discipline and uncleanness. Importantly, if these traits are eliminated and one becomes educated, disciplined and clean, does the ‘Gypsy’ category become obsolete or changes its content? I argue that the latter is increasingly impossible in Hungary because ‘Roma’ as a relatively new ethnic category is filled with that changed content, leaving ‘Gypsy’ largely unchanged with the same negative connotations. This is at the core of belonging crisis, and this is at the center of failed integration and empowerment policies through education.

On the other side, what do Gypsies have to do to maintain their identity, if it consists of internalized negative stereotypes? My fieldwork findings suggest that they are left with either conforming to those, performing those, or outright rejecting their identity, if that possibility arises. Essentially, they oscillate between two essentialized categories – ‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’, but the latter is accessible to very few, with weak or non-existent links to their own communities.

Besides internalized negative stereotypes, the table below also contains how Roma relate to their respective states. The two countries diverge, based on the results from the two settlements: Roma relate to their state somewhat favorably in Russia and spitefully in Hungary. Fieldwork surveys revealed that while in Russia my respondents looked at their group as nested within Rossiyane, in Hungary all saw their ethnic group identity in opposition with Magyars. In Russia the community was hopeful, identifying significant improvements (e.g. sedentarized lifestyle, working women, better schooling), while in Hungary almost all reported deteriorating conditions and expected worse future. In Russia all respondents claim to vote during elections, while in Hungary the most common answer was “why should I?” This finding is urgently important as the context of many problems that Hungarian Roma face: education becomes the “ticket” to a society that rejects Gypsies, integration policies meet a wall of exclusion, improvements in living conditions seem too distant, and hopelessness debilitates and paralyzes community initiatives.

Table 5: What Does It Mean to Be Gypsy?

What does it mean to be 'Gypsy'?	
Russia	Hungary
Lack of Discipline Laws, norms, traditions, culture <i>Illiteracy, lack of education</i>	
Language and accent Dress Skin color Eyes	Poverty Lack of "cleanliness" (in many meanings: doing "clean" work, skin color, hygiene) Skin color
Gypsies and Russian State	Gypsies and Hungarian State
Place of residence, homeland, "my country" Hopeful, visible improvements	Distrust, suspicion, dependency Hopelessness, no positive future

### Essentialized and Homogeneous Ethnic Identities

*"I'm a Gypsy, I was born Gypsy and I am proud of it. I am Gypsy, but I have never stolen anything, neither has my father. I'm light-skinned, thanks God, so no one can tell..."*  
- B., 22 year-old Roma woman<sup>209</sup>

Presumed homogeneity stemming from this essentialized view hardly reflected reality. Intra-ethnic conflicts were common in the Hungarian settlement. A 38 year-old Romungro woman from a mixed settlement lamented: "The truth is that I love Hungarians way more than Gypsies," said a 71 year-old Vlach woman. "I don't want to wait for more rights...but even if the situation changes, those Vlach Gypsies are so power-hungry, they want riches, they want millions."

In the homogeneous Russian Roma community and relatively homogeneous Hungarian settlements that I visited, conflicts were not as pronounced, but often when subgroups socialized with other subgroups, which most frequently happened in schools, fights could become destructive. In one school, the director complained that there are "conflicts between the Kolompar Gypsies and Boyash...children start fights, but parents

<sup>209</sup> Personal interview, April 2013 in Hungary.



also get involved...there is not much the school can do, we just try to calm them down but often don't quite understand the reasons of conflicts."<sup>210</sup>

In other words, in the face of perceived single Roma/Gypsy culture, there are numerous Roma cultures. This inconsistency introduced artificial competition, which led to a heated debate about who is a "real Roma/Gypsy" and who is not. In Kalyi Jag Roma high school, those who spoke Romanes (usually Vlach Roma) grouped together against their classmates, who did not speak the language (usually Romungro).<sup>211</sup>

*Teacher:* Who spoke Romanes at home?

[3 people raise their hands.]

*Teacher:* Do you find it a useful language?

*Student 1:* [...] One absolutely has to learn this language at home! It's our mother tongue, which we can't forget because otherwise it makes us Hungarians with darker skin.

*Student 2:* My grandmother spoke it, but I never had a chance to learn. Since I came to this school, I have a lot more interest in learning it.

[Students discuss why they haven't had a chance to learn Romanes growing up.]

*Student 1:* A 'pure Gypsy' speaks the language as their mother tongue! I will be honest, I am always honest: A Romungro is not a real Gypsy! They don't speak Romanes, they are just not real Gypsies to me! I don't think they should be grouped together with us.

[Class gets increasingly frustrated; teacher discontinues discussion and resumes the class. She begins with brief history of Hungarian Gypsies comprising three large groups, Vlach, Romungro and Boyash, all of whom are Gypsies, she repeats.]

Authenticity of the Roma/Gypsy culture was questioned not only along intra-ethnic lines, but many lamented about the youth losing sight of their culture: "Two Roma would relate to one another in a brotherly way...but unfortunately, now it is not the case...unfortunately our culture got tainted and especially the youth lives very

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<sup>210</sup> Interview with director of Baranya county elementary school in Hungary, July 2013.

<sup>211</sup> Romungro, or Hungarian Roma, most definitely "lost" their language after Maria Theresa's forced assimilation campaign and Joseph II's consecutive prohibition of Romani language in 1783. See Chapter I for more details.

differently. This is sad because they betray themselves with this,” complained a middle-aged man. I often heard complaints about “debauched morals” of the youth: “at least in my time we didn’t give birth at 13, look at the [Roma] girls now!” – said a mother of 5. In my observation, Roma youth are more likely to “perform Gypsy identity” or act upon existing negative stereotypes. Figure 21 below shows such examples.



Figure 21: Performance of Identity

Performance of identities was explicit when the youth posed for photos: almost all boys assumed “macho” or “gangster” positions, performing the “dangerous Gypsy.” For girls, they often reached out for somebody’s baby to hold when posing for pictures, or posed promiscuously and excessively feminine, which is what they are chastised for in the local school.

In sum, it is clear that the dominant image, that of ‘bad Gypsies’ has been internalized by many Roma. I found a critical difference in the consequences: in the Russian settlement, the relatively homogeneous Kalderash Roma were optimistic about their future and felt rooted in Russian society.<sup>212</sup> More precisely, to the survey question regarding how their life changed since regime change, all respondents said it changed for the better. Many hoped for more improvement, but overall the most frequent responses

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<sup>212</sup> Alaina Lemon also found that Russian Roma have a sense of belonging in Russia (2000). Besides, various reports about Roma families also demonstrated patriotic feelings towards Russia/USSR; see for example report about Pankova sisters <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/russia-romani-scientists-were-also-sisters>

were: better education and higher attendance in schools, more stable life, “deserving job” (i.e. respondents gave examples such as “we don’t beg any more”; “no more or rare fortune-telling”; “we strive to have jobs”), and change in thinking. To the question of how the situation will change in the future, there were either general answers of hope for the better, or optimism stemming from an increased education level and job opportunities.

In Hungary, on the other hand, internalized stereotypes greatly contributed to the failure of integration and empowerment projects through education, to a belonging crisis, which is discussed in the next section, and Roma communities were generally more pessimistic and hopeless. Most saw no improvement in life and saw deteriorating conditions since regime change. To illustrate this, consider the following responses from the elderly members of the community, to the question how the situation changed since 1989: “We did not see such high prices then as now! People are different, too! Everybody is looking after their own private gain; it has been much worse since regime change,” said an 83-year-old Roma widow. “Everything changed a lot. People are just looking at how to make some profit; there are scams and lies,” shared a Roma man, who worked as a mechanic and carpenter. “Back then it wasn’t a problem that I am a Gypsy...back then all Magyars loved us,” complained a 71-year-old Roma woman.<sup>213</sup>

Additionally, the survey (in Appendix A) also shows that to the question regarding the future of the (“desired employment”) Roma in Russia gave varieties of answers, indicating their hopes and desires for the future. In contrast, respondents in Hungary often either ignored the question, or shrugged as a response. This lacking

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<sup>213</sup> Personal interviews between October 2012 and May 2013, in Hungary.

interest clearly revealed hopelessness; why even think about the future and desired employment if they expect the situation to deteriorate?

Finally, false contest for one single definition of Roma culture and identity exacerbated intra-ethnic conflicts, which averted the formation of communal ties, which I discuss in the last section. Without some sense of solidarity, community, and social networks, there will hardly be a Roma civil society, which is the core foundation of successful representation (and thus bonds between educated Roma and their less educated peers), political awareness and eventual political mobilization.<sup>214</sup> I discuss the problem of lacking social networks and potential for change later in this chapter.

### Where Does Education Bring Roma?

*“I was proud of being Gypsy, I used to go to Gypsy parties all the time. It was a good thing. Only lately I started understanding how much Gypsies are looked down upon, and it makes me so sad that I don’t want to be called a Gypsy any more...I don’t even want to think about being a Gypsy, I am not a Gypsy!”*  
- E., 36 year-old woman, social worker

For the ‘bad Gypsies’ in the settlement, education meant “whitening out.” The manager of the local Hungarian charity explained: “A uniqueness about the Roma here is that they assimilate once they become more educated, they turn ‘whiter’ [kifehérednek].” The manager smiled, acknowledging how ludicrous this explanation might have seemed. In fact, it was accurate. A very small layer of Roma continues to identify with their ethnic kin after schooling, the manager complained, because their “identity of misery” [nyomorult identitástudat] precludes the existence of an educated class. A conversation

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<sup>214</sup> For critical importance of social networks to form viable civil society, active civil engagement and functioning democracies, see Putnam’s classic “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” (1995), but also Fukuyama (2001); Hooghe & Stolle (2003), and Edwards, Foley, & Dian (2001), among others.

between a Roma woman and a young man clearly revealed this reality: “you have rather dark skin, you are visibly Gypsy, but your education overshadows your skin color.” One concludes based on these answers that dark skin color and education stunt one another.

Rejection of such negatively viewed identity and desire to assimilate with Magyars was one response among Roma children: they were not bad, and since badness was synonymous with Gypsiness, they were not Gypsies. These children usually didn’t like to identify with other Roma children in the classroom, and visibly distanced themselves from everything associated with their ethnicity. Parents were well aware; a 41 year-old mother lamented that her children pretend to be Magyars. “They know that they are Gypsies, but they grow up denying this and I allow them to do this...Sometimes one can’t tell I’m a Gypsy also, my skin is rather light,” maintained the mother.

I witnessed a conversation between mother and daughter. The mother, E. is a social worker who was born and raised in the settlement, married a Vlach Roma man and moved out of the settlement to raise her two children. Her daughter, V. is 10 years old and openly rejects being Roma.

*V:* I hate Gypsies. I’m a ‘paraszt’<sup>215</sup>. The paraszt also hate Gypsies. Well, I don’t hate them, but I don’t like them. In the school, my classmates don’t consider me a Gypsy either, they told me that. Our teachers are racists too in school and they look at me like a Gypsy.

*Me:* What makes them racist?

*V:* They are greedy! They make us buy expensive books and supplies.

*E:* [Quickly corrects her daughter] No, they hate Gypsies!

*V:* Yes, they say things like “you won’t become anything anyways” and that Gypsies steal, are criminals, they are like this and like that...

*E:* I don’t consider myself Gypsy either... terrible to even think about being a Gypsy...I work with Gypsies as a social worker, it’s enough for me. When I go to the doctor to arrange medication for my patients, they never call them by name, like they call Hungarians, but instead say “Gypsy woman,” while other

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<sup>215</sup> ‘Paraszt’ in Hungarian means peasant: many Roma call non-Roma Hungarians ‘peasants’, which is often used as a derogatory term, but most likely has historical roots and this label has carried on until today (see Pusko 2005, especially p. 119).

patients are Edit, Zsuzsa, or you name it... we are all just Gypsies. But I don't like my daughter's attitude because if she hates Gypsies now, she will hate them later. But they [her children] can't be Hungarians, it is physically impossible. Their father is Vlach and I'm [Romungro] Gypsy.

This conversation was packed with meaning: the struggles and consequences of 'living in' certain ethnic categories defined their lives. "You can't have any goals in life, if you are a Gypsy. You don't gain anything from being a Gypsy," E. complained. Categories were fluid for those who could disguise themselves as non-Roma, or had lighter skin. V often said that she might "pass as a tan Hungarian." Skin color, rather than education or social status, was seen by many as a possibility to shed the 'bad Gypsy' image. In the settlement when I inquired about their ethnicity, skin color was immediately brought up: "I am so black, I'd never deny I'm a Gypsy." "From thousands of people there are few and far in between those who are like Z [who rose from the settlement and became involved with local Gypsy Self-Government]," I heard from E. His name is revealing of his ethnic background however, so if not for his job," E. maintained, "they would hang up the phone on him or send him to pick tomatoes also."

One can't plan to be like Z. But those few who attempt to study after elementary school, there is no doubt that education transforms self-image and possibilities for Roma. "Gypsies have to study so that it is not their names that matter but their professions," E suggested after thinking for some time. However, once the conventional 'bad Gypsy' image no longer applies, the next social category and label is ambiguous, especially in societies with low tolerance for diversity. Unique stories from those who "studied their way out of" being 'bad Gypsies' and have experienced first-hand this crisis of belonging

are revealing. There is a handful of such Roma intellectuals, some portrayed on Figure 22. For instance Angéla Kóczé<sup>216</sup> described her struggle:

I finished elementary school and it was absolutely a coincidence that I went to grammar school...In grammar school there were no Roma before or after me. I think that was the first time in my life that I really had to face the fact of who I am and where I come from... I knew something was not ok, people were watching me in an interesting way and particularly when we had the parents meetings...[my parents] were functionally illiterate...So it was truly a psychological issue for me and I could not discuss it with my parents or schoolmates...I finished the grammar school and of course had no encouragement to apply to university. None of my teachers supported me...They thought it is already a big deal [to finish grammar school as a Roma]...and it was enough. ... they had so many preconceptions [and those are also] entrenched in the Hungarian culture and system...I felt shame [about being Roma]...I wanted to deny my graduation ...It would be a big shame I thought for all the parents to see my father and all my sisters; my father was “black”... of course my sisters found the invitation letter in my [school] bag and it was a huge outcry in our family... they just didn’t understand my position, my own identity in a specific context. Also, none of my teachers were really open to discuss this issue...<sup>217</sup>



Figure 22: Roma Intellectuals

Some of the more known members of Roma educated class: Aladár Horváth (left) speaks in the Roma Parliament in Budapest, he was born and raised in Miskolc, one of the poorest industrial regions of Hungary and today is a known Roma politician; Angéla Kóczé (middle), addressing the audience as part of a panel analyzing the infamous Jeszenszky case, whose story is described above; and Jenő Setét (right) speaking up about Jeszenszky from the audience, who originally had painter vocational training, but got involved in community organizing early on. None of them were born in the capital.

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<sup>216</sup> Angéla Kóczé is a feminist Roma activist, Research Fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Affiliated Research Fellow at the Central European University, and the most recent recipient of the Woodrow Wilson International Center’s Democracy award.

<sup>217</sup> Personal interview, Budapest 23 November, 2013.

Similarly, a young Romanian Roma woman recalled her dilemma whether to enroll in high school: “my father told me that the moment I leave his house [to go to school] I will not be received the same way [by the community]... I did not know with whom to speak, what to do... Many of my friends were already married at 14 and I was the only one unmarried...” This very woman finished an English-language program, funded by OSF, and shared her even deeper despair and uncertainty regarding the practicality of her education in case she decided to return to her remote community in Romania. She aptly put it this way: “I am less of a Roma in my community, but more of a Roma outside, like in my school...In my community I was Roma 30%, in school, I was a Roma 100%.”<sup>218</sup>

Another young Roma, who teaches at a Roma high school, also shared her struggle:

I had issues of belonging during high school...I think I most have felt there was a difference, but only in high school did it became more conscious. We gathered together during big family events, all my peers were married, had children. They’d ask me why I study, point out that I am old... it is the same atmosphere today in my family. I stopped feeling comfortable at home, I felt like an outsider... I felt like an outsider here [home] and there [school].<sup>219</sup>

Statistical data also shows low educational achievement amongst Roma; while the majority still finishes elementary school, few study to grammar schools and even fewer participate in any higher education. For instance, Table 6 below shows the Roma/non-Roma ration of students in Eastern Europe in secondary education (from Kertesi and Kézdi 2013). The gap in access to education and performance is evident.

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<sup>218</sup> Personal interview, Budapest 13 June, 2013.

<sup>219</sup> Personal interview, Budapest 6 December, 2013.



Table 6: Roma and non-Roma in Secondary Education<sup>220</sup>  
 The percentage of 20 to 24 years old with upper secondary education. Roma and non-Roma respondents in the UNDP 2011 survey and population figures.

Country	Percentage of 20 to 24 years old with secondary education <sup>a</sup>			The ethnic gap	
	UNDP survey, 2011		National average	Non-Roma vs. Roma	National avg. vs. Roma
	Roma (1)	Non-Roma (2)			
Albania	3.1	43.5	22.6	40.4	19.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	15.8	86.2	n.a.	70.4	n.a.
Bulgaria	20.7	65.2	42.3	44.5	21.6
Czech Republic	30.1	76.1	79.0	46.0	49.0
Slovakia	18.1	48.0	42.5	30.0	24.4
Montenegro	7.0	79.3	n.a.	72.3	n.a.
Croatia	19.7	72.8	42.0	53.1	22.4
Hungary	21.3	62.0	70.4	40.7	49.2
Macedonia	19.1	82.5	n.a.	63.4	n.a.
Moldova	7.5	56.9	n.a.	49.4	n.a.
Romania	11.5	67.1	42.2	55.7	30.7
Serbia	12.9	82.8	41.2	69.9	28.3

<sup>a</sup> Upper secondary education (ISCED level 2) or vocational education .

In summary, the critical question in Hungary is where the educated Roma belong, if ethnic labels are dichotomous, and what is the link between educated and non-educated Roma, given internalized stereotypes. To tackle this intricate problem successfully, Choli József Daróczi believes “a real Gypsy class of intellectuals is needed, or young people who can think innovatively, who know the history and traditions and in an innovative way can adapt those.”<sup>221</sup> No one can expect to make “good Hungarian citizens” from “distorted identities,” he continued. Perhaps the Russian case can also serve here as a lesson: on one hand the Roma in Russia were aware and proud of their culture, which was not seen as mutually exclusive with Russian culture, and on the other hand the availability of “nested identities” and some sense rootedness are absolutely vital to create space to be filled after integrating Roma into majority society.

<sup>220</sup> Source Kertesi & Kézdi 2013, p. 7.

<sup>221</sup> Personal interview, Budapest, November 2012.

The Roma in Hungary are fragmented and impoverished.<sup>222</sup> Innovative youth, tied and inspired by their own community with a forward-looking vision, therefore, would be critical in building some sense of solidarity, community, and social networks. These are all building blocks for a viable Roma civil society, and the core foundation of a successful representation (and thus bonds between educated Roma and their less educated peers), political awareness and eventual political mobilization. With these lessons in mind, the discussion now turns to the role of informal social spaces and voluntary informal educational projects with non-ethnic membership as some of the most critical sites to bring about change in terms of quality of life for the Roma and improve their relationship with each other and the broader society.

### Empowering from the Top: From Hopelessness to Kinship

*“Despair is pervasive in this settlement. Everyone smokes, even pregnant women. They smoke visibly, almost inviting criticism and judgment from visitors, just to tell them off.*

*This is their settlement, they can tell people off here, rather than being told off themselves. H., a girl about 9 years old who repeated 2<sup>nd</sup> grade twice already, runs around and picks up cigarette butts. She asks me on every occasion if I have some cigarettes or money to buy her a pack.”*

*- Field notes, October 2012, Hungary*

The short excerpt above reflects hopelessness and desperation of such impoverished settlements, where women and girls of all ages smoke, alcoholism is rampant, and life expectancy is very low due to poor health conditions. It was hard to imagine anyone breaking out from such environments, although there were always stories about a few who did. In the Hungarian settlement where I spent most of my time, despair

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<sup>222</sup> Poverty of Roma population in Hungary and else where in Europe is widely documented. See for example reports by Social Watch (<http://www.socialwatch.org/node/13997>) and UNDP (<http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data/>) among others.

coupled with bitter fights among Roma residents, blaming the Vlachs, the Romungro, particular families, or newcomers. I heard nothing but problems: there was no functioning garbage disposal, communal baths ran out of water too often, the local charity gave selected help to “their protégés” as locals saw it, incomes were insufficient to sustain a normal livelihood, health problems, especially diabetes, were prevalent, living situations were miserable, and despair, hopelessness and a sense of feebleness was rampant. “What can we do?”- complained the program manager of the local charity – “we give money for rebuilding their houses, they spend it on other things; we install a new door, they burn it to heat the house!”

Visitors were not uncommon in the Hungarian Roma settlement where I spent my time: academics, NGO leaders, students, and volunteers all came to “learn” and “understand” what local Roma need to be elevated and integrated. I assisted two scholars, neither of whom spoke Hungarian, and one visited the country to gain comparative experience for the project. Youth gathered together in the charity’s social space to find out who the strangers were. We wanted to know about their leadership aspirations and desired tools of empowerment, especially for Roma girls and women. We wondered what they, young Roma people, needed, what was missing, what they hoped for. In other words, the question was what they thought would transform ‘bad Gypsies’ into ‘good Roma’?<sup>223</sup>

*Roma girl 1:* I would want to buy a new house and get rid of everyone else from this slum!

*Roma girl 2:* I would not accept a leadership role because I do not like the Gypsies.

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<sup>223</sup> Fieldnotes, May 2013, Hungary. Some description and quotes from this visit are also available in concluding chapter of *Hearing the Voice of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities: Inclusive Community Development* by Ryder et al. (2014).

*Why do you not like the Gypsies?*

*Roma girl 2:* Because they are rude, annoying.

*Roma boy 1:* It is impossible to lead the Gypsies to the right direction.

*Why?*

*Roma boy 1:* Because the Gypsies here are stupid and they don't listen to each other.

*If people worked together would there be any changes? What?*

*Roma boy 2:* Yes. But we would need some order!

*What is order, what kind of order?*

*Roma girl 3:* I don't know. [All sit silent and confused.]

*What are your future plans?*

*Roma girl 4:* Nothing! [Thinks for few minutes.] It's not true! I want to have a girl and a boy. I want to have a job. I want to be a waitress. I want to stay in the slum, this is where I grew up. I want to see some change in the slum, however, and the change should come from Gypsies themselves creating order.

*Roma boy 3:* I want to work. I want to be a carpenter.

*B (Roma girl 7<sup>th</sup> grade):* I want to have children, a boy and a girl. I want to be a cook and don't want to stay in the slum. I want to move to London, where my sister lives. She moved there half a year ago and she likes it there.

*Roma girl 5:* I want to have two children, both girls. I want to be a hairdresser. I would not move from here.

*M (Roma boy, 19 years old):* I want to have a good paying job and family, but not yet. I want to create an environment that is good and positive. For this environment one needs a good job, good house and a wife, then I would start a family.

*Would you allow your wife to be independent and make a living, participate in decision-making process?*

*M (Roma boy, 19 years old):* Of course, and I would work as well. I would listen to her if she made good decisions. I don't know if other people [in the settlement] would agree with me on this.

*What do you want to do [employment]?*

*Roma girl 6:* That does not even matter, any job.

*L (7<sup>th</sup> grade Roma boy, recipient of one of the scholarships for young Roma):* I want to go to a university and be an architect.

*M (Roma boy, 19 years old):* Because of the economic crisis in Hungary even Hungarians [non-Roma] have hard time finding a job.

*What is the role of women in the community?*

*Roma girl 7:* Being sluts!

*Roma boy 4:* Women with or without children? There is a difference. Women without children have to go to school and help out at home. Roma women with children have to raise those children. They should stay home at least while those children are small.

*Roma girl 8:* Women should not work, that's what the men are here for! Women should cook and clean.

*Roma boy 4:* After 3 children women qualify for subsidies so they should not work.

There are several lessons from this conversation, and three protagonists that emerge, whose pictorial description are shown in Figure 23. Disorder in the community is rife and damaging, but many want to see change. B, whose sister lives in London, is the most pessimistic: with a potential way out of her Roma settlement, she no longer identifies them as her community. I noticed that she tends to make friends with the non-Roma in school, doesn't do homework in groups during tutoring at the charity, and has rather negative attitude towards her peers at the settlement. L is a young man from a problematic family with 7 children. His father is a former alcoholic, who misused resources given by the charity and never built appropriate housing for his family. His oldest sibling, upon assuming employment moved out of the settlement, reportedly giving hope to the father, who with renewed efforts started caring for the rest of his family, including L.

M is a charismatic and sophisticated young man, portraying much maturity based on above responses and my interactions with him. Both M and L emerged as local "stars" in several realms, all involving social places that allowed talents to evolve: M is the most active member of the soccer team, exhibited his drawings during a small charity-organized exhibition, and showed his singing skills during a Talent Show, also at the charity, while L developed his music skills playing cello as extracurricular learning at the charity and performed at a small event in Budapest with

other local Roma children. L also received a scholarship to study in a high school after his elementary education.



Figure 23: Roma Children in the Settlement

L lives with his family, except the eldest sibling who moved out of the house (left and center left) in poor conditions. He benefitted from services and extracurricular activities the charity provided, as well as a state-sponsored scholarship for Roma students. He is about to move to a dormitory to start his high school studies. Many other children use communal spaces for homework (top middle), while lingering on streets is still commonplace (bottom). Playing soccer is a preferred activity for the boys, including M (top right), but no similar activity is offered for girls yet.

All three protagonists have very different connection to the community: L, given the scholarship, is leaving to study in another town, with high ambitions to then continue on to university and study architecture. There are certainly more scholarship possibilities ahead of him. His family is supportive and happy, while concerned to lose their son. B sees one sole goal in front of her: to leave the settlement and join her sister abroad. She is interested in education, but sees it as means to that end. M is not engaged in any formal education, but spends much time at the charity and feels deeply invested in his community. He volunteers his time and works to build communal places, identifies immediate needs and contributes to their solution (e.g. garbage disposal).

While adults were divided by intra-ethnic divisions and dissatisfied about selected help provided by the charity, the youth often found refuge and positive reinforcement in non-formal social spaces provided, especially geared towards uncovering and developing talents. Young Roma tended to see these spaces as a chance for Roma and non-Roma interaction and forming friendships during the various sports and cultural events offered.

*Why is this charity important? And what else would you want?*

*Roma girl 1:* We can come here to study.

*Roma boy 1:* To do homework here, to get smarter.

*Roma girl 2:* I like to fool around here.

*M:* They engage the very little kids here, they also have an Addiction Community Care Center, they help with paperwork and documents, have computer rooms, and organize various programs...people would otherwise hang around in the streets.

*Roma boy 2:* We also love soccer.

*Roma girl 3:* We want more computers.

*Roma girl 4:* I want other people, for example non-Roma to come here from Budapest.

*Roma boy 3:* I would also like non-Roma to come here but they do not need to come from Budapest.

*Roma girl 5:* I want to see something for the girls. Soccer team is only for the boys. I would like some dance classes for example”

*M:* Renew all houses, if money was not an issue. If the houses were not so ran down and there was running water, people would really appreciate it.

In Russia<sup>224</sup> the relatively homogeneous Roma community did not have the same extensive opportunities to develop talents and participate in extracurricular learning activities sponsored by non-state actors, but the sense of community was comparatively strong. As I've demonstrated above, while there are similarities in self-perception among Hungarian and Russian Roma groups I studied, there are critical differences also: among the Russian Roma there was a stronger sense of belonging in Russian society, a dynamic view of their culture, and optimism towards future. While many adults reported

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<sup>224</sup> My observations are more limited in Russia due to the shorter span of fieldwork.

improving conditions in the Russian settlement, their peers in Hungary were exceedingly pessimistic. Through my interactions with Russian Roma children in the school, “breaking out” did not mean leaving the community behind, but becoming more educated and more productive.<sup>225</sup> There were better off members in the settlement, such as the “Baron in skirt” and her family, but poverty was still debilitating in Russia as well as in Hungary. In the Hungarian case, those who could moved away from the settlement.

One way I observed stronger kinship ties in Russia was the children’s collective response to breaking school discipline or resisting what was seen as the teachers’ authority. In the “Gypsy school,” many classes proceeded in the most chaotic way, especially in higher classes (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade): sometimes students only got one book for each desk (for two students), sometimes two grades were combined and 3 students sat at each desk (which are meant for two people only), teachers took breaks during class time and did not return for over 10 minutes, and shouting was routine. One could easily hear the usual “Shut your mouth, sit down, face me, and quit it” from behind walls. Disorder was exacerbated by harsh discipline because students worked collectively: talking only in Romanes among each other, they asked questions just to provoke anger (“Do we all have to shut our mouths?” “What class is it even now?”). Often teaching could not begin even 20 minutes after beginning of class.

When I asked children about their future plans, they often answered in plural, as if speaking for their entire community. “We will work in the ‘Gypsy factory’ when we are done with school, that’s where our mothers work, too” - said one girl. “We want to work

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<sup>225</sup> The Russian Roma community was more protective and closed; due to their discomfort, I did not spend much time at the settlement and consequently confined my observations to Roma children in school and occasional tutoring sessions at the “baron in skirt’s” house.



there because wages are good” – continued her friend. Rule breaking, also collectively done, resulted in unified disciplining as well:

[During Lineyka<sup>226</sup>]

*Principal:* And now tell us about your behavior. M, you can start. How did you behave this week? Were you chastised by teachers?

*M:* Yes, I was.

*Principle:* R?

*R:* Yes.

*Principle:* A?

*A:* Yes [the class laughs and it angers the teachers present].

*Teacher:* What’s so funny about what A said?

*Principle:* L?

*L:* Yes.

*Principle:* D? K? S? Was S not chastised for anything? B? M?

*Children:* Yes! [all laughing again]

*Teacher:* Oh, so funny! [Sarcastic and furious]

*Principle:* Ok, my dear class, I gave you a week to improve...What should we do next?

[Children speak in Romani and continue laughing and misbehaving.]

*Teacher:* A, we did not hire clowns for here [yelling]!

[...]

*Teacher:* There are two teachers and in the [Gypsy] school and we can’t deal with you! Also, Mrs Principle, we have a problem with chewing gum. I don’t know what to do, each teacher must begin the class by ordering them to go to the garbage and spit it out...and after all that, they manage to blow balloons with the gum. [Children laugh.] It’s not funny! R why are you laughing? It’s insane, there are 17 people in the class, each with a gum...I’ve exhausted all the names I can call them!

I have not observed such unified response to school discipline and collective responses among Hungarian communities I visited.<sup>227</sup> Stronger communal ties and solidarity no doubt in part resulted from recognizing the worth of Roma culture by the very members of the community. For instance, children were particularly eager to teach me words in Romanes and share their culture, unlike the Roma children in the diverse

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<sup>226</sup> Lineyka is a weekly disciplining “show” when students line up and their school behavior is publicly evaluated, usually by the principal or director of the school.

<sup>227</sup> In the more homogeneous Boyash villages in Southern Hungary, where most children spoke Boyash in school and at home, children were more unified in their responses and community seemed stronger, but divisions still existed based on village-affiliation or sub-division within the Boyash group.

Hungarian settlement. Below are observations from Folk/National Art class on a day when Maslenitsa<sup>228</sup> was the topic:

[Discussion about Maslenitsa in a classroom located in the ‘Russian school’, when children interrupt and start speaking in Romanes among each other.]

*Teacher:* Can you please speak in Russian? And only speak when you are asked to? Also, don’t show your lack of culture/manners in front of outsiders.<sup>229</sup>

[The class listens to 3 Russian songs about Maslenitsa.]

*Teacher:* This was a fun last song about Maslentisa, next class we will listen to more songs.

*Students:* Can you sing *that* song again?

*Teacher:* Which song? Oh Nane Tsokhe<sup>230</sup> again?

*Students:* YES! [yelling collectively] Please!

*Teacher:* Get your belongings together at once [it’s the end of class]!

*Students:* Oh please! [They beg together.]

*Teacher:* It’s a class about Folk/National Art and I have to sing?

*Students:* Oh please, please!

*Teacher:* Calm down, get your belongings!

*Students:* Oh please, please!

*Teacher:* OK, I will sing it...

*Students:* Please do!

*Teacher:* But then you have to listen and sit back to your places.

[Teacher sings, the class is very animated, and teacher stops after 2 stanzas, half the song.<sup>231</sup>]

*Teacher:* And so on, and so forth!

*Students:* [very animated] BRAVO! [Applaud]

*Teacher:* [end of class] Don’t forget to leave your “bakhily” here!<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Maslenitsa is a folk holiday celebrated the last week before Great Lent.

<sup>229</sup> Note: The “outsider” clearly referred to my presence in the room; the Russian word *beskulturiye* verbatim means “without culture” but depending on context may mean lacking manners, culture or ignorance.

<sup>230</sup> This is a famous song from the most known film about Roma from Soviet times, *Queen of the Gypsies* (song here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiqXTqpBToU&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiqXTqpBToU&feature=player_embedded)). The film was arguably the most attended in the USSR after its release in 1976.

<sup>231</sup> Lyrics in Romanes and translation in English is here: <http://gypsylyrics.wordpress.com/nane-tsokha/>.

<sup>232</sup> Bakhily are plastic shoe-overs, usually used in the winter in public places (museums, hospitals, clinics, etc.) to keep the floor clean. Roma children wear these in the Russian school because they don’t have changing shoes.

During the song, students kept looking at me, glancing for approval, admiration, and appreciation of their culture, their language and their music. The sense of being Roma in this classroom, in comparison to Hungarian classrooms I visited, was more constructive.

In summation, non-state projects towards integration and empowerment through education were limited in Russia, resulting in fewer opportunities for talented Roma children to emerge within their community, although success here did not entail rising above and leaving their settlement. Importantly, while Roma groups in Russia and Hungary internalized similar negative stereotypes and face a similar essentialized ‘bad Gypsy’ image, Gypsies in Russia don’t feel as ‘bad’ as their peers in Hungary. I suggested there are two explanations: first, their community ties are stronger; and second, they have particular pride in their own culture, which is not merely a source of backwardness and poverty. As a reminder, I argued that this diversity has historical and social roots. Namely, Nativization policies (see Chapter III) have allowed a unique way of institutionalizing positive aspects of Roma culture, in addition to a more rooted and flexible view of ‘Gypsy’ (*tsygan*) identity in Russia (see sections above).

In Hungary, on the contrary, there is more abundant funding and a more widespread NGO presence, assisting gifted Roma children to break out of poverty. Nevertheless, disunity and divisions among Roma living together in one locality, hopelessness, and irreverence towards Roma culture had debilitating effects. Often high achievements in formal education did not elevate the community as a whole. Yet, NGOs provided critical space for socialization, developing talents in informal settings and increased self-esteem, which in turn planted the seeds of more community-oriented attitude among some of the youth.

## Conclusion

- *How would it be possible to achieve...equality in Hungary?*  
- *People should go to tanning booths so everyone is equally dark!*<sup>233</sup>  
- *Young Hungarian Roma man*<sup>234</sup>

As Mihai Surdu argues in his forthcoming book, “the interest in describing and representing Roma is both scientific and political: science presumes to represent Roma as a research object by constituting Roma group identity through its various disciplinary branches, while political entrepreneurs bolster their agendas by instrumentalizing the Roma as a political object.”<sup>235</sup> In the process, a homogeneous, inaccurate and incomplete image of Roma/Gypsies emerges, while “not all individuals judged by the researchers as being Roma think of themselves as such, [while] many stereotypes are created by outsiders, of which the academic establishment is just a part, and then internalized and reproduced by Roma themselves” (*ibid.*). The present chapter was concerned with amending this very flaw by focusing on bottom up identity formation.

While the majority of society treats the Roma similarly, viewing them through the prism of ‘bad Gypsies’, the community in Russia, I argued, retained a strong sense of community, pride in their culture, and felt rooted in Russia. In Hungary, however, the community was diverse, with many internal conflicts, generational divides, hopeless visions of the future, and an undignified view of their ethnicity.

In the context of this different relationship that evolved between Roma and state, their own community, and the majority of society in the two countries, in Hungary

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<sup>233</sup> Conversation with Roma youth from one community in Hungary.

<sup>234</sup> Fieldnotes, May 2013, Hungary.

<sup>235</sup> Mihai Surdu is a 2013 Roma Fellow for the Open Society Foundations, and his forthcoming book is *Expert Trademarks: Scientific and Policy Practices of Roma Classification* (CEU Press).  
<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/who-defines-roma>

the common response was rejection of the Roma identity and assimilation, internalization and performance of the 'bad Gypsy' identity, or merging towards the 'good Roma' identity. In the meantime, in Russia, the ethnic label seemed more fluid and open for change: residents reported improving living habits and many pointed out that fortune-telling is increasingly obsolete. In other words, they saw the content of 'being Gypsy' as changing over time, possibly soon incorporating 'intelligence' instead of 'lacking education'.

A core problem in Hungary was the lack of community bonds, which made many integration and empowerment projects predestined to fail: while in the local school all children from the settlement were 'bad Gypsies' (with a few rare exceptions), in the meantime according to Roma empowerment and integration projects, these communities we supposed to collectively rise with the help of education and assume the 'good Roma' identity. Realities "on the ground" were more complicated, with intra-ethnic divisions and conflicts, with no one "magic pill" to resolve these intricate issues.

All of this reveals that the institutional landscape, with state-led discourse on integration, and new, NGO-supported efforts of Roma empowerment, have had limited effects on reshaping the incentives on the ground. Even though a few break out from the desolation of settlements, overcoming negative stereotypes and discouraging family environment, no comprehensive or even sustainable change has been achieved. Roma youth in the settlement were either paralyzed by their perceived ineptitude and internalized negative stereotypes, or wanted to assimilate. József Choli Daróczi rightly asked the question: where should Roma integrate? He continued: "Gypsiness [cigánység] exists in Europe not because we want it, but because there wasn't anyone open to accept

us.”<sup>236</sup> In other words, if the ‘Gypsy way of life’ is backwards and obsolete, and Gypsiness is nothing but negative attributes, Roma are indeed interested in shedding this identity. However, there is very limited access to integrate in the majority society or become a “good Gypsy.”

Another Roma intellectual, Gusztáv Nagy aptly said to his students, that they may want to call themselves Magyars, but “when you walk on the street, you are still called a Gypsy...and if they call you a Gypsy regardless, you might as well commit to it.”<sup>237</sup> One should not commit to a negative image, he implied, but work towards improving it. In the meantime educating the non-Roma society about this positive image should be parallel to pro-Roma identity building projects. In the next concluding chapter, I revisit major arguments from this dissertation and advance some of my own hopes regarding finding a solution, which could inform policy making as well.

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<sup>236</sup> Personal conversation, Budapest, November 2012.

<sup>237</sup> Kalyi Jag High School, Budapest December 6, 2012. Fieldnotes.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION: BEST PRACTICES AND MOVING FORWARD

#### Covered Ground

This dissertation is comprised of two sections: a historical and contemporary examination of Roma identity formation and ethnic labeling practices. The two sections are tightly connected and build on one another. After the initial historical examination of state legacies and state institutions, I turned to contemporary non-state actors and bottom up identity formation in the second part of the dissertation. I took a holistic approach to look at how ethnic labels charged with normative content—‘bad Gypsies’ and ‘good Roma’—develop over time and are mobilized through formal and informal educational institutions in Hungary and Russia. This comprehensive approach included a deep historical excavation into the topic and ethnographic data collection during my year-long fieldwork.

I began this project in Chapter I with an introduction of the research question and the overall study. I argued that the Roma are a critical case to understanding phenomena such as the modern state, contemporary nation building, the role of education in constructing ethnic and political identities, and the significance of ethnic labels. I maintained that while a unique group, their distinctiveness indeed enriches our understanding of essential themes and contested arguments within the discipline and broadly Social Sciences. The study pointed out that there are important changes in power relations, such as loosening state control over education and the increasing role of non-state actors in utilizing education to alter and create political identities.

I argued that anti-Gypsyism developed and took root as an outcome of nation building projects, and consequently analyzed five phases: pre-modern, early-modern, early Socialism (Nativization), state Socialism, and neo-modern nation building in Chapters II, III and IV, in chronological order. The first two initial phases laid the foundation of historical development of anti-Gypsyism and the ‘bad Gypsy’ image. At this time, anti-Gypsy policies, attitudes, discourse, and state orders were steadily built in to the fabric of society and incorporated into the institutional landscape, remaining intact until today. Socialism provided a fruitful context to assess nation building efforts motivated by an ideology. First the USSR’s Nativization policies institutionalized Roma culture as part of the Soviet society. The Roma way of life was to be corrected and adjusted to the values of Communism, not entirely eliminated. Socialism after Lenin’s death and especially post-WWII treated them differently, assuming that the very existence of Roma signified backwardness and thus their identities were denied.

In the modern phase of nation building we see a return to nationalist tendencies, and patriotic education in schools increasingly excludes Roma. I turn to the contemporary analysis of the ‘bad Gypsy’ image and its reproduction through formal and informal educational practices in the second part of Chapter IV. Based on that analysis, I posed a question at the end: if Roma children are taught through their education what it means to be a ‘bad Gypsy’, can we expect them to act good? To answer my own inquiry, I proceed to Chapter V, where I assess the goals, roots, and educational projects that promote a positive image, that of the ‘good Roma’, as a response to the deeply rooted negative stereotypes, which were internalized by the majority and minority society alike. These projects are often supported and sustained by non-state actors.



Roma have to negotiate these two ethnic labels and the corresponding normative discourse, which I called the ‘bad Gypsy’ and ‘good Roma’ throughout my dissertation. I assess this bottom up negotiation in Chapter VI, and as a result, point out the conflicting content of these ethnic labels and the challenges those pose for fighting the discrimination and empowerment of Roma. First, internalization of negative stereotypes contributes to a belonging crisis, or rejection of educated members. Second, both images are essentializing and reifying a diverse and heterogeneous group. Third, the recent pro-Roma movement, while concerned with noble goals, fails to unite all Roma because of the lack of community ties.

#### Best Practices and Moving Forward

To offset the apparent pessimism that permeated this dissertation, I saved positive practices and examples for the end, encouraging optimism and confidence in finding a solution to end Roma marginalization. During time spent in the field, I remarked that it usually took small efforts, local initiatives, and creative people to bring about lasting and sustainable change. These positive practices were encouraged and supported by various sources, often non-state organizations, but realized by local communities, mobilizing and activating many members. I give some examples below.

#### *Example from Russia*

In Chapter V, I already introduced the “Baron in skirt,” the progressive thinking promoter of change in the Russian Roma community. Her confidence and determination stroke me immediately upon meeting her in her house. She was open to visitors, sincere

about her work, but cautious, guarded, and protective when talking about the community, especially to an outsider. I only understood the scope of her activism when during an international academic conference Roma presenters from Sweden talked fondly about this very woman to me, to our both stunning surprise that she was a mutual acquaintance.

The “Baron in skirt” was the necessary link between many parties involved: NGO and community, school and the community, local Roma and other Roma. The NGO treated her as an employee, supporting her own initiatives (e.g. teaching Russian at her home) and legitimizing their projects in the eyes of local Roma. She “actively participated in projects,” as one of ADC Memorial’s report states, and assisted with the yearly summer camps for the children, which strove to provide skills compensating for inadequate education in the segregated school.<sup>238</sup>

The “Baron in skirt” also spoke out against maltreatment and lack of respect her community faces. “She once gave an interview to one TV station about how bad the school is, criticizing it; the school director called the Baron...he took the director’s side, chastising this woman for making problems,” said a former employee of ADC Memorial and volunteer with the community, who had insight into the inner functioning of the local Roma community. This is an excellent example of internal debate within the Roma community, in which the Baron sided with the school, and “Baron in skirt” was supported by the NGO. Instigated by outside parties, the debate itself, critically, was inside the community.

Another memorable incident I heard from the NGO, were the efforts of the school and the “Baron in skirt” to place one of her younger daughters in study program together

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<sup>238</sup> I do not reference the report here to avoid identifying “Baron in skirt” and her identity.

with Russian children, becoming the first Roma to do so. ADC Memorial was supportive of this “experiment.” Accounts differ on both sides remembering what happened. The woman described it as negligence from the teacher’s side and Russian children’s prejudice, while the school director claimed that the Roma girl could read well, but nevertheless was slow understanding texts and couldn’t keep up with the rest of the class. The girl withdrew from the “Russian school” and returned to the “Gypsy school,” but this instance nevertheless generated a discussion and may have set precedence for future attempts at inclusive education.

#### *Example from Hungary*

Similarly to Russia, the best practice and most sustainable change that I observed came from an innovative and motivated young Roma man, whom I will refer to as C to protect his privacy. C, a meek-eyed young man with a few missing phalanges and particularly calm voice, was always smiling and ready to help all children. C shared with me his hope to be a “link,” assisting Roma in their integration. He grew up in an orphanage and in this institution, he continued, “Roma and non-Roma were together, we partied together, studied together... I was aware that I was Roma, but nevertheless spent much time in diverse company.”<sup>239</sup> C sees teaching sports as an important “field” where such interaction can happen between the two groups.

Originally hired by the charity as a tutor, he initiated a small soccer team, which expanded over time. In addition, C took up a role mentoring local children in helping them mediate family problems and school progress, and visited the school, similarly to

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<sup>239</sup> Conversation happened during a meeting at the charity between tutors, social worker and C, on November 20, 2012 in Hungary.

the “Baron in skirt” serving as a liaison especially for parents who could not meet with teachers themselves. He was vocal about his concern regarding the over-dependence of the local Roma community on the charity, repeating the importance of “destroying the wall of the Gypsy slum” and “bridging Gypsies with non-Gypsies.” He envisioned this through soccer. The importance of this pass-time for the community is also shown in pictures in Figure 24 below.



Figure 24: Voluntary Projects

The local charity assisted a young man with holding soccer trainings for local slum boys as pastime. Visitors to the slum are immediately taken to the charity to see various awards (top left) that are lined up above the “no sunflower seeds” sign (it is a common stereotype to describe Gypsies as eating sunflower seeds and carelessly throwing shells on the ground, and noticeably many especially girls were indeed doing that); boys practice soccer in their free time in the slum (left bottom), while other classes, such as Romani language through music (top middle) are not even nearly as popular. Sports, for example boxing in a Roma after school program in the capital, also unite many boys. As a result, stronger community bonds even among diverse Roma population allow the realization of communal projects (such as garbage disposal in the slum) and the charity relies on the soccer team for their help (bottom right).

C wanted to see sustainable, effective, and long-term change. “What will happen to the kids when the charity closes its doors in December [for holidays]?” he asked. The social worker became defensive when she heard this question, as if accused that she was not doing her work appropriately. C continued: “It is important to destroy the ‘walls’ of

the slum. We must bring them together with non-settlement kids, as soon as possible. I already began recruiting for the Gypsy soccer team in the school, and three non-Roma boys signed up. I hope there will be more joining, I just made a flyer for it.” C talks to the teachers in the school and reports back to the charity and tutors. “Teachers complain about K.D., he is violent with his peers, chastises teachers... I promised to discipline him more during soccer trainings, he is in love with soccer and I can motivate him to behave better because of that,” said C.

From this inspirational person I learned about the importance of sports in divided, marginalized, and impoverished communities: it builds community ties, improves health, it is rewarding, develops discipline, and adds routine to life.<sup>240</sup> Regular soccer meetings brought together not only Vlach and Romungro youth, but also non-Roma. This is an invaluable meeting venue due to its voluntary nature, and rather than advertising under the label of anti-discrimination or pro-Roma, these projects achieved the same goals through a medium of sports. Children receive donations as rewards for their achievements, and don't look at those as granted, deserving or simply given to them. They earn it.

### *Empowerment of Communities and Moving Forward*

Importantly, the nature of best practices with the most viable improvements are comparable across both countries: similarly to the “Baron in skirt” in Russia, a young Hungarian Roma man, organized and trained local Roma boys to play soccer. Both instances demonstrate how problem-oriented or recreational activities, none of which are

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<sup>240</sup> Fieldnotes from November, 2012.

prescribing ethnic identities, nevertheless promote equality, mutual respect, friendship, and a sense of pride. As a result of the *individual* and local efforts, the ‘bad Gypsies’ didn’t turn into ‘good Gypsies’ or ‘good Roma’, but rather formed a community, with a set of values, and the desire to help and strengthen communal bonds. Their ethnic identity did not stand ahead of their civic duty. I suggested that the most meaningful change came from personal initiatives, which are rarely recognized by outside observers, remaining invisible and undetected.

Moving forward in the most constructive way would involve two very critical lessons, which clearly emerged from this dissertation as a result of the deep historical analysis and comparison between Russia and Hungary. These lessons should be taken into consideration by policy makers, while the scholarly community has a responsibility to not only produce responsible and accurate scholarly work, but strive to bridge academia with applied policy making, to achieve the best results, most sensitive to all communities involved.

First, the current situation of Roma should not be considered in a vacuum, but must be contextualized in historical, economic, political, societal, and cultural milieu. It is dangerous to generalize until we understand the particularities. One contextual aspect is paying attention to what *kind of societies* the Roma are integrated into, which I assessed through analyzing the nature of nation building efforts. Exclusionary nations, strictly defined in racial terms, are not a feasible context for integration or inclusion. According to another contextual aspect, mindsets and attitudes develop over time and changing those must be a parallel goal towards any integration effort. Historical

examination showed that the negative attitudes towards Roma have become so ingrained, that they are seen as banal. This aspect must be addressed.

Second, an interesting parallel evolves when once again revisiting and combining the lessons learned from the USSR's "Nativization," the efforts of supranational organizations' to maintain a pro-Roma movement, and recently discussed best practices. The emerging themes are the following: 1) there needs to be a modernization of Roma traditions, but preferably as a bottom up movement and as a consequence of internal debate; 2) there is a need for unity among the Roma, which was historically achieved through standardization, but may be done through community bonds and solidarity; 3) in the modern non-state led nation building endeavors, when top down homogenization is not an applicable method of constructing a transborder nation, voluntary projects without subscribing to ethnic identities are key.

With these critical suggestions in mind, I propose the need for Roma, with the assistance of state and non-state actors, to re-imagine their own community, which will likely not be state-centric or ethnicity based. This endeavor may prove rather challenging if European politics drifts towards ethno-nationalism in the future, as context from the majority society must be nothing but respect, understanding and mutual appreciation.

#### Potential Policy Recommendations

When empirical findings and arguments are translated to policy recommendations, the following suggestions materialize: First, for a more sensitive approach, NGOs may find it effective to identify and work together with a local community leader, who is not picked by the NGO, but rather organically emerged as a

charismatic personality. These individuals can serve as the liaison between the organization and the community, enjoying the trust of their peers and capable of communicating the needs and cultural nuances of the community to the organization.

Second, any community development should be a bottom up endeavor, with the assistance and financial support of organizations, but preferably done by the community themselves. Such projects could build solidarity, cohesiveness, while also providing opportunity for non-formal education and training. Such programs often involve sports, music, arts, or alike. The youth-oriented, educational, and voluntary nature will reduce intra-community fights as a result of competition for NGO-distributed resources.

Third, it is absolutely critical to divert resources towards educating the majority society about tolerance and multiculturalism in general, and Roma culture in particular. The entangled view of Roma culture and the culture of poverty has been dreadfully damaging, in addition to negative stereotypes that are often unchallenged. I argued in previous chapters that efforts of pro-Roma NGOs are halted by increasing nationalism and xenophobia in the region, which puts Roma, along with many other minorities, in the crossfire.

The issue of anti-Roma sentiments in the context of European politics is well discussed by other scholars, such as in Michael Stewart's latest edited volume, titled *The Gypsy 'Menace': Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics*. Better understanding of the context and the popular anti-Roma culture is absolutely critical to address the problem.



## Conclusion: Normative Goals and Future Hopes

I wished to end this project on a positive note, as positive change is definitely possible and happening. In this concluding section I am also inclined to share my ideological biases, goals, and normative ambitions, which consolidated towards the end of my fieldwork period, and influenced my perception and writing. I hope to reach out to and engage academics, policy makers, and the general public alike. A grounded and comprehensive understanding is key to solving problems surrounding the Roma. All too often NGOs see their goal myopically, however noble that goal is, and many unintended consequences ensue. Finger-pointing and blaming is also common, unavoidably positing one side on the defensive. During my work, teachers immediately felt attacked, the moment I brought up the topic of Gypsy students.

A provocative article was published in a Hungarian political and cultural journal recently; the author gives a personal story of an elderly woman, suggesting that racism is a general tendency.<sup>241</sup> He concludes that disposing of it is a civilizational task and that no one stands above the collective to believe they are rid of this bias. Writing about anti-Gypsyism, the author calls for a paradigm change in how we think about racism. As a consequence we would learn how to treat problems associated with racism differently, he writes, if the tendency behind it was acknowledged as an objective. In other words, treating racist tendencies not as a sin, but as an issue to be solved.

The important message here is that anti-Gypsyism should be regarded as a societal problem, with long historical and cultural roots, as a culture of “Othering” in which generations have grown up and continue growing up. Sensitivity to this aspect is

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<sup>241</sup> The article, titled “Rasszistának lenni emberi dolog” [“It’s Human to Be Racist”] is written by Sándor Révész and accessible (in Hungarian) at <http://beszelo.c3.hu/blog/revesz-sandor/rasszistanak-lenni-emberi-dolog>

important, while not denying that anti-Gypsyism is tightly connected with simple ignorance and absent interaction between the Roma and non-Roma.

With no intention to reduce the complexity of the issue at hand, I hope for more communication between the two sides, between Roma and non-Roma, in all parts of the region. Honest, voluntary, unbidden and open interactions, whether in the form of soccer games, boxing training, or even simple conversations, all have made a tremendous difference in perceptions. As my own initiative, bringing relatives and close friends to meet or help at settlements, having had personal conversations and contact with local Roma changed their views entirely. “If I saw this man on the street, I’d certainly walk on the other side immediately,” said a surprised acquaintance having had a heartening discussion with a Roma man. This was the most effective and personal learning. If we don’t learn to live in peace with each other, we will become prisoners to our own biases (Figure 25).



Figure 25: Imprisoned and punished by biases

## APPENDIX A

### FIELDWORK: HOUSEHOLD STATISTICAL DATA

Collecting statistical data was not easy and whereas I believe numbers and survey results below show us one aspect of reality, I will illustrate why at times common categories and seemingly unambiguous questions showed how those are embedded in the Western tradition and modern understanding of family.

**Family:** For instance, during one question about the number of family members, the response took up almost the entire time of surveying. The woman, she explained, is approximately 15 years older than her youngest sibling, whom she raised as her daughter. The “daughter” was told when she turned 16 that she is in fact her “mother’s” sister, but continued calling her mother. In other families, children raised by grandparents or other relatives, eventually calling their “adapted” parents as mother and father shared their own confusion about what *I* meant as family. Consequently, I questioned my own usage of this word and meaning behind words, given a new cultural milieu, and questioned the validity of my survey.

**Ethnicity:** I had similarly long discussions at the outset of surveying regarding ethnicity. Sometimes we did not move forward from this one question. It clearly preoccupied many and they were all animated to talk about it. Once again, in the mixed settlements, many were wary placing themselves in one or another category. Other times the question itself, primarily in Hungary, evoked strong feelings and respondents had long tirades about how they are called a certain label, but feel another, or how discrimination affects them because they are Gypsies. One woman tried to hide her ethnic background and was neither accepted as Magyar, while among Roma she earned the “blond Gypsy” nickname. She told me her story at length when I inquired about her ethnicity.

**Language:** many in the Hungarian settlement reported to speak Romani, some even clarified which type. The numbers reported did not correspond to my observations, however. Very few, if any, young people spoke, the elderly said they never used it and forgot most of it. I suspect wither knowing a few words compelled them to report as if they speak the language, or this answer re-confirmed their sense of pride. Relatedly, during conversations with other scholars and local charity, all claimed there are no Boyash people in the settlement; yet quite a few reported speaking that language.

During surveying I often allowed respondents to take the question where they felt comfortable. Giving space to talk and express emotions on their own terms was important to earn trust, as they knew I was there to listen, and allowed a more profound understanding of problems. I believe that this unintentional method gave me an exceedingly sharper comprehension of the community, while making positivist survey results porous at times. I acknowledge and embrace this consequence.

## Russian settlement

The survey was conducted by a research assistant, who was a female Roma, well-known and respected by the community, over a period of approximately one month in February, 2013 in Russia. All questions were voluntary and data is self-reported; some unfilled parts were not answered by respondents or not recorded by research assistant. To protect anonymity of participants, family members are listed with numbers only. Some columns contain contextual information, not directly discussed in the body of the project. Income is listed in RUR (Russian Rubles); exchange rate at the time of the survey was approximately 30.2 RUR for 1 USD.

The research assistant surveyed households: a total of 25 households, which consisted of 149 people, 88 adults (15 years of age and older) and 61 children.

Abbreviations:

F – female

M – male

Mar. – married

Wid. – widow

Gr. – grades

Christ. – Christian

Constr. Worker – construction worker

Admin. – administrator

Mold. – Moldova

Household	Fam. Members	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Approximate income (RUR)	Attended kindergarten?	Number of school years finished	If elementary education unfinished, why?	Religion	Language	From where?	Current Work	Desired employment
1	1	45	M	Mar.	10,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, Moldovan	Mold.	smith	driver
	2	52	F	Mar.	5,000	No	6 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	teacher	
	3	22	M	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	driver	engineer
	4	22	F	Mar.	2,000	No	3 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	housewife	doctor
	5	11	F			No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			singer
	6	6	M			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	7	4	F			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
2	1	25	M	Mar.	15,000	No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	welder	
	2	26	F	Mar.	6,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	chef

	3	8	F			No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English			
	4	6	F			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	5	2	M			No			Christ.				
3	1	20	M	Mar.		No	6 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		occasional	locksmith
	2	18	F	Mar.		No	7 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		housewife	ballerina
	3	2	M			No			Christ.				
4	1	48	M	Wid.	20,000	No	3 gr.	never went	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.		
	2	20	M	Mar.	10,000	No	6 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		loader	lawyer
	3	21	F	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	doctor
	4	4	M			No			Christ.				
	5	1	F			No			Christ.				
	6	1	F			No			Christ.				
5	1	47	M	Mar.	25,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	welder	economist
	2	46	F	Mar.	10,000	No	0 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	housewife	seller
	3	29	M	Mar.	15,000	No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	driver	pilot
	4	27	F	Mar.	7,000	No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	packer	educator (kinderg.)
	5	12	F				5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English	Mold.		
	6	9	M			No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English	Mold.		
	7	4	M			No			Christ.				
6	1	35	M	Mar.	15,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		tinker	secretary
	2	40	F	Mar.	10,000	No	6 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		packer	boss
	3	18	F		10,000	No	7 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		packer	doctor
	4	15	M	Mar.		No	7 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		occasional	
	5	17	F	Mar.		No	6 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	2	M			No			Christ.				
7	1	36	M	Mar.	15,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	driver	doctor
	2	35	F	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		packer	in trade
	3	17	F	Mar.	7,000	No	7 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		teacher	lawyer

	4	12	M			No	6 gr.						
	5	3	M			No			Christ.				
8	1	35	M	Mar.	15,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	occasional	mechanic
	2	35	F	Mar.	12,000	No	3 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		packer	educator (kinderg.)
	3	18	M	Mar.	10,000	No	7 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English			
	4	16	F	Mar.		No	7 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English			
	5	15	F			No	6 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English			
9	1	45	F	Wid.	10,000	No	0 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	housewife	Fortune telling
	2	19	M	Mar.	15,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English	Mold.	loader	doctor
	3	20	F	Mar.	10,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English	Mold.	bird factory	artist
	4	17	M			No	7 gr.		Christ.		Mold.		
10	1	33	M	Mar.	20,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	driver	
	2	32	F	Mar.	10,000	No	3 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		bird factory	educator (kinderg.)
	3	16	F	Mar.	10,000	No	6 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		bird factory	teacher
	4	14	F			No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English			
	5	8	F			No	2 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	5	F			No			Christ.				
	7	3	M			No			Christ.				
11	1	25	M	Mar.	20,000	No	6 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	supplier	admin.
	2	23	F	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.			housewife	seller
	3	8	M			No			Christ.				
	4	4	F			No			Christ.				
12	1	45	M	Mar.	20,000	No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	driver	lawyer
	2	44	F	Mar.		No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	tailor
	3	25	M	Mar.	15,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		loader	machine operator
	4	21	F	Mar.	12,000	No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		bird factory	doctor
	5	18	M	Mar.		No	6 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		occasional	economist
	6	20	F	Mar.		No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		packer	tailor

	7	4	M			No			Christ.				
13	1	50	M	Mar.	22,000	No	0 gr.	no school available	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	occasional	manager
	2	52	F	Mar.		No	0 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	educator (kinderg.)
	3	25	M	Mar.	17,000	No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English		loader	doctor
	4	22	F	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		teacher (dance)	singer
	5	8	M			No	2 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	4	F			No			Christ.				
14	1	53	M	Mar.	15,000	No	0 gr.	no school available	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	tinker	constr. worker
	2	50	F	Mar.	10,000	No	0 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		bird factory	chef
	3	25	M	Mar.	12,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		driver	manager
	4	23	F	Mar.		No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	seller
	5	7	M						Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	3	F						Christ.				
15	1	43	M	Mar.	17,000	No	3 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	welder	machine operator
	2	40	F	Mar.	15,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		home teacher	fortune telling
	3	25	M	Mar.	13,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		occasional	constr. worker
	4	22	F	Mar.	7,000	No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	seller
	5	16	F			No	7 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.			
	6	8	F			No	2 gr.		Christ.				
	7	4	M			No			Christ.				
	8	1	M						Christ.				
16	1	50	M	Mar.	10,000	No	0 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	pensioner	locksmith
	2	51	F	Mar.	12,000	No	3 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		packer	educator (kinderg.)
	3	25	M	Mar.	20,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		supplier	turner
	4	23	F	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		fortune-telling	artist
	5	6	F			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	2	M			No							
17	1	50	M	Mar.	20,000	No	0 gr.	no school available	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	tinker	boss
	2	50	F	Mar.	5,000	No	0 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		pensioner	teacher
	3	26	M	Mar.	16,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		occasional	locksmith
	4	23	F	Mar.	8,000	No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	seller

	5	8	F				2 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	6	M			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	7	5	M			No			Christ.				
	8	2	M			No			Christ.				
18	1	35	M	Mar.	20,000	No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	occasional	locksmith
	2	32	F	Mar.	10,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		tailor	studio manager
	3	16	F			No	6 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	4	11	M			No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	5	2	M			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
19	1	30	M	Mar.	25,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	welder	lawyer
	2	31	F	Mar.	17,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	singer
	3	12	F			No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	4	10	F			No	3 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	5	5	M			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	1	M			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
20	1	30	M	Mar.	25,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	occasional	constr. worker
	2	31	F	Mar.	10,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	teacher
	3	12	M			No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	4	11	F			No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	5	8	F			No	2 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	6	F			No			Christ.	R Romani, Russian			
	7	3	M			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
21	1	43	M	Mar.	25,000	No	3 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	business	director
	2	42	F	Mar.	17,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		bird factory	foreman
	3	25	M	Mar.	15,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		occasional	locksmith
	4	23	F	Mar.	10,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian		cleaning	artist
	5	13	M			No	7 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.			
	6	6	F			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	7	3	F			No			Christ.				
22	1	43	M	Mar.	26,000	No	3 gr.	no school available	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	business	journalist



	2	45	F	Mar.		No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	educator (kinderg.)
	3	25	M	Mar.	20,000	No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian		welder	plumber
	4	23	F	Mar.	10,000	No	5 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.		packer	director of ensemble
	5	6	F			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	4	F			No			Christ.				
23	1	50	M	Mar.	20,000	No	3 gr.	school too far	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	occasional	locksmith
	2	48	F	Mar.		No	4 gr.	school too far	Christ.	Romani, Russian		housewife	doctor
	3	30	M	Mar.	15,000	No	4gr.	school too far	Christ.	Romani, Russian		welder	Journalist
	4	27	F	Mar.	10,000	No	5 gr.	school too far	Christ.	Romani, Russian		packer	dancer
	5	12	F			No	5 gr.	school too far	Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	6	10	F			No	3 gr.	school too far	Christ.				
24	1	36	M	Mar.	25,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	business	lawyer
	2	33	F	Mar.	17,000	No	4 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	packer	teacher
	3	18	M	Mar.	15,000	No	6 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.	Mold.	driver	translator
	4	19	F	Mar.	15,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.	Mold.	store-keeper	designer
	5	17	M			No	7 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.	Mold.		
	6	3	M			No			Christ.		Mold.		
25	1	27	M.	Mar.	20,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian	Mold.	welder	doctor
	2	27	F	Mar.	15,000	No	5 gr.	Family	Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.		housewife	singer
	3	10	F			No	4 gr.		Christ.	Romani, Russian, English.			
	4	6	F			No			Christ.	Romani, Russian			
	5	4	M			No			Christ.				
	6	2	F			No			Christ.				

### Hungarian settlement

The survey was conducted by a research assistant, who was a female Roma, well-known and respected by the community, over a period of approximately three month in March-May, 2013 in Hungary. I accompanied the research assistant several times. All questions were voluntary and data is self-reported; some unfilled parts were not answered by respondents, not recorded or asked by research assistant. To protect anonymity of

participants, participants members are listed with numbers only. Some columns contain contextual information, not directly discussed in the body of the project. Income is listed in HUF (Hungarian Forints); exchange rate in April 2013 was approximately 227HUF for 1 USD.

The research assistant surveyed individuals, rather than households: a total of 50 relatively complete surveys are below. This number is less than in Russia, although conducted for longer period of time for several reasons: surveying began later during fieldwork time; the research assistant spent considerable time with interview questions, which became her sole focus after some interviews; there are numerous incomplete surveys, which are not included in the table.

Abbreviations:

W – widow

D – divorced

In part. – In partnership

Number	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Approximate income (HUF)	Attended kindergarten? (If yes, # of years)	Number of school years finished	If elementary education unfinished, why?	Religion	Language	From where?	Current Work	Desired empl.
1	71	F	W	29000	No	0	Poverty	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani	Local	Subsidy	-
2	53	M	D	28500	No	8	-	Catholic	Hungarian	Local	-	-
3	52	F	D	41530	No	5	-	Catholic	Hungarian	Local	Public work	-
4	26	M	In part.		3	9	-	Free Christian	Hungarian	Local	-	-
5	22	F	In part.	815500	3	12	-	Christian	Hungarian	Budapest		
6	50	F	D	23000	No	3	Never finished	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani	Local	-	
7	41	F	Married		No	8	-	Catholic	Hungarian, Russian	Borsod county	-	
8	30	M	Single	67500	3	11	-	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani, Boyash, English	Szabolcs		
9	38	M	Single	0	No	8	-	Free Christian	Hungarian, Romani	Local	-	Leading position
10	50	F				8	-	Catholic	Hungarian	Nograd county	None	Any job
11	25	M				11		Catholic	Hungarian	Nograd county	Plumber	
12	41	M	In part.		No	8	-	Catholic	Hungarian	Local	-	-
13	38	F	In part.		No	6	Wasn't important	Catholic	Romani	Local	Disabled	None
14	32	M		0	2	8		Roman Catholic	Hungarian			President
15	30	F	In part.	150326	0	10		Roman Catholic	Hungarian			
16	28	F	In part.	143200	No	6	Early birth	Catholic	Hungarian	Local	Subsidy	Subsidy
17	67	M	In part.	69300	2	11		Catholic	Hungarian	Local	Retired	Wall

												painter
18	73	F	W	58320	No	2	Not allowed	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani, Boyash	Romania	Retired	-
19	20	M	Married	121000	3	12		Catholic	Hungarian, Romani, Boyash		Carpenter	-
20	21	F	Married	93210	2	12		Catholic	Hungarian	Local	Seller	
21	26	M	Single		2	13		Catholic	Hungarian	Local	Work with wood	
22	79	M	W	43210	No	0	[senile]	Catholic	Romani	Local	Retired	
23	39	M	Single	89320	2	11		Catholic	English, Boyash	Local	Painter	
24	82	M	Single	29100	No	0	WWII	Catholic	Boyash	Romania	Retired	
25	42	M	Married	28200	No	3	No desire	Catholic	Romani	Local		Meat factory
26	38	F	Married	43131	No	6						
27	35	M	In part.	25000	No	5	Lacking intelligence	Catholic	Romani		None	None
28	33	F	In part.	22500	No	3	Taken to institution	Catholic	Boyash	Unsure	None	None
29	87	M	W	56200	No	2	Army	Catholic	Romani (Vlach), Hungarian Boyash	Csongrad county	Retired	
30	31	F	D	109030	3	12		Katolikus	Boyash	Romania	Tailor	
31	59	F	Married	143230	No	11		Catholic	Romani, English	Local	Tailor	
32	61	M	Married	52109	No	11					Carpenter	
33	21	M	D	93200	2	12		Catholic	Romani	Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg county	Mason	None
34	39	F	D	51900	No	2	No memory	Catholic	Romani (Vlach), Boyash	Transylvania	Retired	-
35	23	M	Single	-	2	11		Christian	Hungarian, Romani	Local	-	-
36	29	F	Single	22300	No	2	Disability	Catholic	Romani	Nograd county	Subsidy	-
37	42	M	D	32500	No	6	Poverty	Catholic	Romani, Boyash	Nograd county	Retired	-
38	18	F	In part.	12500	No	3	Disability	Catholic	Romani	Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg county	-	-
39	26	M	In part.	120500	2	12		Catholic	English, German	Budapest	Carpenter	-
40	20	F	In part.	86210	2	8		Catholic	Hungarian	Local	-	-
41	18	M	In part.	22000	No	6	Early child caring	Catholic	Romani (Vlach)	Local	Subsidy	-
42	83	F	W	91300	No	0	WWII	Catholic	Romani (Vlach), Boyash	Csongrad county	Retired	-
43	49	F	W	63000	No	8	-	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani	Pest county	Flower shop	-
44	81	F	W	73210	No	0	Wasn't a custom	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani (Vlach)	Pest county	Retired	-
45	60	F		81000	No	4	-	Catholic	Romani	Local	-	-

46	63	M	W	48200	No	3	Poverty	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani	Local	Retired	-
47	83	F	W	91300	No	0	WWII	Catholic	Romani (Vlach), Hungarian	Csongrad county	Retired	-
48	43	F		22600	2	5	Parents didn't allow	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani	Local		
49	67	F		82500	No	5	No memories	Catholic	Hungarian, Romani	Local	Retired	
50	67	M		63300	2	11		Catholic	Hungarian	Local	Retired	Wall painter

## APPENDIX B

### FIELDWORK: INTERVIEW AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

#### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

How many years did you spend in school? Did/do you like going to school? Why?

Were/are you a good student? Did you like going to school?

Did you miss much of school? If so, what were the main reasons?

What kind of relationship did you have with your classmates?

What kind of relationship did you have with your teachers?

Did you want to continue studying? Did you succeed? Why/How?

Did you have many conflicts in the school? Why?

How did your parents relate to your schooling? Did they help or saw no use of it?

Now do you think the years you spent in school were useful? Why?

How can you utilize in your everyday life the knowledge you gained in school and in which parts of your life you feel it is the most useful (or useless)?

Do you remember being distinguished in school? If so, what do you remember?

If there was such distinguishing, how did you feel about it?

What was the ratio of Roma and non-Roma in your class? What was the ratio in school, were there classes for Roma students only?

Did you claim to belong to any ethnicity in the school (such as Roma or other) and in what circumstances did such topics arise?

Did you learn about Roma, Roma culture, traditions in school and if so, how did that affect you?

After or during the school, did you feel closer to celebrating Hungarian national holidays, Hungarian history and culture? Why?

Do you consider yourself a voting member of the society (do you vote)?

*If there are parents whose children are in schools (only ask parents)*

Do you children complain about being ditinguished in the school or not? Often? How does that affect them and your family?

How often can you meet with the teachers of your children (monthly, every semester, never...)? How is th etime used during such meetings?

What is the mood during such meetings?

How often is there parents' meeting and how often do you go?

Do you consider these meetings useful? Why?

How would you describe the role of school for your family (do you hope that your child will study further, or do you find it useless maybe even harmful)? Please explain your answer.

How do you children study, do they miss school often, why?

If they are good students, what do you think makes them that? If they are behind (academically), what is the main barrier to being a good student?

What is the future goal and as a parent, what do you hope them to be in the future?

### Survey Questions

Number (and type) of family members

Age

Gender

Approximate income

Attended kindergarten?

Number of school years finished

If elementary education unfinished, why?

Religion

Language spoken at home

Where the family came from?

Current job

Desired job

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