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Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South-Eastern Europe

Gabriela Mirescu, Editor

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Supported by the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences www.sagw.ch

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Gabriela Mirescu, Editor

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Gerhard Meili is an economist, involved for more than 20 years in international cooperation. Since 2003 he has run a Caritas program responsible for Kosovo. He succeeded in transforming the former reconstruction program of Caritas Switzerland into a long-term development program focused on integration of minorities, education, and economic development. One of his most interesting experiences has been support of an innovative pre-school education programme aimed at supporting integration of Roma / RAE in Kosovo.

Azbija Memedova, country representative for the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation in Macedonia, is a sociologist and has coordinated the Roma Centre in Skopje since 1998. This local NGO aims to integrate the Romani community into Macedonian society by empowering the individual and organizational capacities of Romani civil society. A special focus emphasizes Romani women and youth. She is a former consultant for the Roma Women's Initiative, one of the Women's Network programmes at the Open Society Institute in New York.

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List of Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia Herzegovina
BLL	Blood Lead Level
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEDIME	Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
CSCE	Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe
ECE	Eastern and Central Europe
ECRML	European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages
EERC	European Roma Rights Centre
ERTF	European Roma and Travellers Forum
EU	European Union
FOM	Swiss Federal Office for Migration
IDP's	Internally Displaced Persons
KMEG	Kosovo Medical Emergency Group
KOFF	Kompetenzzentrum Friedensförderung
MHRR	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (Bosnia Herzegovina)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute
REF	Roma Education Fund
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
STP	The Society for Threatened Peoples
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women (since 2011 UN Women)
WB	The World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

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Abstract/Zusammenfassung/Résumé

In the wake of the dramatic upheaval in South-Eastern Europe during the 1990s, social and economic conditions of many Roma communiies in the region have worsened to the extent that many see migration to Western countries as the only hope for a better life. Although the roots of the problems are old, a new analysis based on new political and social conditions is warranted. Emerging from a series of KOFF roundtables on "Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South-Eastern Europe", the publication attempts to shed new light on some essential elements related to the cultural identity of Roma and draw attention to the variety of challenges that confront Roma communities when engaging in the process of social inclusion. Without aspiring to provide a uniform perspective on such a complex issue, the articles selected here analyze and reflect on some recent occurrences relating to social inclusion (or exclusion) of Roma in different countries in the region and explain specific aspects of the cultural identity of Roma as a transnational minority.

Als Folge des dramatischen Umbruchs in Südosteuropa in den 1990er Jahren haben sich die sozio-ökonomischen Existenzbedingungen zahlreicher Roma-Gemeinschaften der Region in einem Mass verschlechtert, dass vielen die Migration in westliche Länder als einzige Hoffnung auf ein besseres Leben erscheint. Wenn die Wurzeln des Problems auch alt sind, so ist eine neue Analyse, die bei den veränderten politischen und sozialen Bedingungen ansetzt, gleichwohl berechtigt. Ausgehend von einer Reihe von KOFF Rundtischen zum Thema „Soziale Inklusion und kulturelle Identität von Roma-Gemeinschaften in Südosteuropa" sucht die Publikation einige wesentliche Aspekte der kulturellen Identität der Roma in einem neuen Licht zu zeigen. Berücksichtigt wird dabei auch die Vielzahl an Herausforderungen, vor die sich Roma-Gemeinschaften gestellt sehen, wenn sie sich im Prozess sozialer Inklusion engagieren. Ohne danach zu streben, diese komplexe Thematik in einer einheitlichen Sicht zu erfassen, bieten die hier versammelten Beiträge, Analysen und Reflexionen zu einigen aktuellen Initiativen sozialer Inklusion (oder Exklusion) von Roma in verschiedenen Ländern der Region. Zugleich können dadurch spezifische Aspekte der kulturellen Identität der Roma als transnationaler Minderheit in den Blick rücken.

Suite aux bouleversements dramatiques qui se sont produits dans les années quatre-vingt-dix en Europe du Sud-Est, les conditions socioéconomiques de nombreuses communautés roms de la région se sont dégradées au point que nombre d'entre elles voient dans la migration vers des pays occidentaux le seul espoir d'une vie meilleure. Même si les racines du problème ne datent pas d'hier, une nouvelle analyse fondée sur des conditions politiques et sociales modifiées se justifie. Issue d'une série de tables rondes de KOFF sur «l'inclusion sociale et l'identité culturelle des communautés roms en Europe du Sud-Est», la publication a pour ambition de jeter un nouvel éclairage sur quelques aspects prépondérants de l'identité culturelle des Roms et d'attirer l'attention sur la diversité des défis auxquels les communautés roms sont confrontées lorsqu'elles s'engagent dans le processus d'inclusion sociale. Sans chercher à fournir une perspective uniforme de cette thématique complexe, les articles rassemblés ici présentent une analyse et des réflexions sur quelques initiatives actuelles d'inclusion (ou d'exclusion) sociale de Roms dans divers pays de la région. Ils explorent du même coup des aspects spécifiques de l'identité culturelle des Roms en tant que minorité transnationale.

Introduction

Gabriela Mirescu

Gypsies, *Tsigani*, *Bohemians*, *Gens de voyage*, *Zigeuner* - these are only a few names describing the largest ethnic minority of Europe: the Roma. Believed to have migrated from north-western India over a millennium ago, the Roma are today building communities in most European countries, but form no majority in any region. Nor have they articulated any attempt to build a nation or a state of their own.

The lack of a kin state, a deliberate affiliation with various nations, and indifference to any call for Roma nationalism may have contributed to the large palette of harmful anti-Roma prejudices as well as romanticized stereotypes. So, while some claim that the Roma lack civilized norms, others sympathize with their approach to life and so-called *unlimited freedom.* And while many treat the Roma culture with disapproval and disrespect, others dance passionately to ardent Gypsy rhythms and dream of a boundless and *amusing Tsigan life*.[1] Repulsion and exaltation, fascination and fear, curiosity and apathy coexist - it is hard to find another group both demonized and exoticized at the same time for so many centuries.

Yet, after the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe (where the largest Roma communities live), democratization processes in the region have opened a new debate on multicultural policies and minority rights. This is the context in which newly emerging Roma activists and representatives are claiming within an official framework the recognition of Roma as an ethnic group, built around a common language and sharing a common cultural heritage. Centuries of stereotypes, myths, and fantasy, but also exclusion and discrimination have begun to be curtailed. And, in doing so, the Roma intelligentsia have started to picture an official view of Roma identity.

In the following, I'll briefly summarize some significant moments when the Roma gained attention and recognition as an ethnic minority in the European context. At the same time, I will also describe contrary developments that dramatically deepened the gap between many members of Roma communities and their fellow citizens in Eastern Europe.

Between "True Europeans" and "True Losers of Transition"

At the beginning of the 1990s, supported by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Roma representatives gained special recognition of their communities as an ethnic minority, emphasizing the particular needs of Roma living in various European states. These issues came to the fore during the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Rights Dimension of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Noting the Roma's lack of concentration in a specific territory, the CSCE conference recognized them as a "transnational minority without a motherland facing different problems than *normal* national minorities"[2] - a milestone in gaining recognition to the special situation of Roma scattered all over Europe.

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[1] "Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben" ("Amusing is the Gypsy life") is the popular name of a children's song widespread within German-speaking regions of Europe.

[2] Gaarde, Signe (2006): "Recreating the Roma. Policies and Activism". Department for Minority Studies, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, pp. 23.

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A further step in the qualification of Roma as a "transnational minority" occurred in 1992[3] when the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) recognized the Romani language - Romanes - as a *non-territorial minority language.*

Later, with adoption of the Council of Europe's Recommendation 1203 in 1993, the special status of Roma in Europe gained further acknowledgement. Official recognition of Roma as "a minority living scattered all over Europe, not having a country to call their own",[4] led to the status of *True European Minority.*

In 2004, Roma organizations established the *European Roma and Travellers Forum* (ERTF),[5] which advises the Council of Europe, while the OSCE, another major international actor, offers a specific Roma Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - the *ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues* - which mainly assists states in efforts to support integration of their Roma population.[6]

Most activities of all these bodies are directed at the international level, and their efforts concentrate mainly on combating discrimination and fostering social inclusion for a large number of European Roma as citizens of different states.

So far, a conceptual and legal framework aiming to protect the Roma minority has been constructed and institutions seeking to defend its rights have been established. But this does not tell the whole story about Roma status in Eastern Europe.

Paradoxically, all positive developments concerning recognition and rights achieved at the national and international level were accompanied by a general worsening of many Roma communities' status in most countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The last two decades have witnessed dramatic developments marked by socio-economical deterioration of many Roma communities and, even worse, by their increased social segregation.

Even if the socialist regimes generally ignored Roma's distinct culture, many Roma have good reasons today to look back nostalgically to the days of communism,[7] when they were assimilated along with the rest of the population into industry and collective farming. Full employment and job security correlated at the time with housing, childcare, and health assistance. And above all, a minimum income was guaranteed.

Following the 1989 transformations, the transition to a free-market system led to closure of many unprofitable factories and *kolkhozes*[8], and mass-unemployment affected large numbers of East Europeans. Nevertheless, it is generally known that members of the Roma minority were often *last hired and first fired* [9] in the young capitalist markets. Alongside the low qualification or low adaptation to new demands of the labour market, discrimination persists as important obstacle to the participation of many Roma in the transition to the free market system.

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[3] Kymlicka, Will (2001): "Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe". In Kymlicka, Will and Oplaski, Magda (eds.): "Can Liberalism be Exported?". Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 76.

[4] Recommendation 1203 on Gypsies in Europe, adopted by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly in February 1993. Available at: http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta93/EREC1203.htm.

[5] For details see European Roma and Travellers Forum at: http://www.ertf.org/.

[6] For details see the Roma Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: http://www.osce.org/odihr/44247.

[7] Cooper, Belinda (2001): "We have no Martin Luther King". In World Policy Journal, 18/4, pp. 69-70.

[8] Collective farms.

[9] Ringold, Dena; Orenstein, A. Mitchell, and Wilkens, Erika (2002): "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle". The World Bank (Conference Edition), Washington, pp. 96.

Looking at the situation from this perspective, one of the most tragic results of the post-communist transition for Roma has been their insecure status in the labour market - a circumstance that generally affects participation in further spheres of public life, especially education.

The collective perception of Roma as *the others* - or as *second-class citizens* has been re-enforced by the increasing socio-economical gap between many Roma and the rest of society. In a widespread atmosphere of mistrust and disrespect, it is hardly an accident that Roma are blamed for many of the social and economic problems facing the new European democracies. To mention only a few cases: in Kosovo Roma are collectively accused of collaborating with Serbs, while in Hungary they are held responsible (along with Jews) for the decline in the national economy. In Romania they are held accountable for damage to the country's image abroad. Negative depictions in the media and in the political discourse fuel further xenophobic attitudes against Roma communities and decisively enhance their marginalization.

Yet the importance of EU enlargement for the Roma minority cannot be overstated. The integration of Romania and Bulgaria within European structures in 2007 made European citizens of roughly three million Roma and increased the total number of Roma living in the European Union to about 12 million people. Roma gained a new recognition, and, of course, a new title: *Europe's largest transnational minority*.

A Challenge for Europe?

From the perspective of Europeanization, not only people are free to move within a borderless area, but even nation-state affairs can be "exported", as we will see, enabling them to acquire an international dimension. So, recent years have seen a remarkable upsurge in interest concerning Roma-related issues. This especially arises in the context of migration to Western Europe of many asylum seekers from the territory of the former Yugoslavia, as well as other Eastern Europeans. While the former had to flee for security reasons in most cases, the latter took advantage of the open borders after their countries joined the European structures and were mainly driven by the quest for a better life in a socio-economic sense. Meanwhile, the most disadvantaged migrants from these waves (often but not exclusively Roma) have built large communities where thousands of people live in squalid conditions on the outskirts of European cities, especially in France and Italy. And now, after years in which they and their growing slums have been ignored by local authorities, these migrants seem to raise a challenge for Europe.

Most recently, in 2010, the political blunders of the French government in addressing a dilemma generated by illegal Roma camps, shed light on the Roma in Europe once again. While the more or less voluntarily repatriation of thousands of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma were not new measures for either camp inhabitants or for some European regimes, we can observe three new aspects emerging from this episode: first of all, broad media coverage of the phenomenon; secondly - its impact on public opinion in Western countries; and thirdly, a prompt European Commission reaction condemning French policy toward Roma migrants. As a result, many Europeans finally grasped that a characteristic of Roma life is not the *unlimited freedom* mentioned earlier, but rather one of *unlimited rejection*. In this respect, a *tsigan life* might have many meanings - but it is far from being *amusing*.

Political frictions emerged between the French government, the European structures, and the Bucharest regime, and these resulted in grotesque remarks from all sides. But the important aspect here is that this episode allowed public opinion a chance to view the naked reality behind the political rhetoric. First: both the national governments and supranational structures in charge appeared helpless and overstrained in addressing the so-called *Roma question* properly. And secondly: despite the existence of countless Roma organizations and of Roma leaders and institutions fighting for Roma rights, there is no organized Roma political opposition of substance in Europe.

Ironically, the recognition and acknowledgements related to cultural identity assure no political voice and are not sufficient to support the social inclusion of many marginalized Roma, who face extraordinary vulnerabilities and abuses.

"Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities of South-Eastern Europe" was the topic of the KOFF roundtables series that Jonathan Sisson and Christian Gebhart conducted over a 1.5 year time period in 2009 -2010 at swisspeace. This publication is in part based on presentations delivered at the roundtable sessions and in part further develops issues and reflections discussed during those sessions. As a whole, it aims to cast a realistic light on essential aspects and challenges related to the cultural identity of Roma, but also on the processes of social inclusion of Roma marginalized in South-Eastern Europe. Without the pretention of offering a uniform outlook or a comprehensive perspective on the many issues related to the Roma minority, the papers included in this publication were chosen with two criteria in mind: On the one hand, to give an impression of the subject matter of debate in the series of roundtables mentioned above and, on the other hand, to reflect the variety of perspectives on the nature of the complex *Roma issue*.

Accordingly, the authors were invited to discuss aspects relating to Roma cultural identity and to the social inclusion (or exclusion) of Roma in various national contexts. The focus of their contributions, their reflections, and their analyses are summarily presented bellow.

Outline of the Publication

Honestly, what picture comes to mind when thinking about Roma?
It might be better not to rush in answering this question. People often make judgments about Roma based on stereotypes. However, admittedly, the question is a trap! But not for Stéphane Laederich, who opens this publication with a first-hand insight into **Roma Cultural Identity.**

A fine connoisseur of Romanes and of many aspects related to the Roma cultural heritage, Laederich deconstructs many widespread stereotypes attributed to Roma culture and pictures a multi-dimensional image of the Roma minority from some less explored perspectives. An issue to which few thinkers refer - the so-called "invisible Roma" - addresses those well-integrated Roma, a sizeable number of which continue to speak Romanes or practice Roma traditions, but are not perceived as belonging to the Roma group anymore, since they fail to conform to the standard clichés. Laederich explains their painful confrontation with the dominant negative stereotypes, which force them to hide their ethnic affiliation in public. *Who, in most European countries,* he asks rhetorically, *would actually admit that he or she is a Rom when applying for a job?*

Whereas Laederich pleads for avoiding confusion of Roma with a social (under)class and for acceptance of the Romanes language and Roma culture as parts of Roma identity, Christian Giordano and Andrea Boscoboinik paint a more ambiguous picture (or rather an opposing one). In their paper **The Roma "Problem": Ethnicisation or Social Marginalisation?** the authors suggest that Roma culture is a rather recent "construction", while attempts to promote it are in fact political strategies driven by the Roma elitists that aim to gain recognition for an "imagined" group. Yet, while acknowledging the complex heterogeneity of Roma groups and the overlap of ethnic, social, and religious patterns, the authors consider it a mistake to focus on ethno-cultural aspects. Thus Giordano and Boscoboinik proclaim that "the elite-driven ethnicization project" has failed, since it emphasized only the ethnicity dimension while overlooking other aspects like social class or religion. In the authors' opinion, the missing elements would further underscore a Roma identity.

The next article shifts the focus to one of the most comprehensive policies drafted in recent years: The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015). **A Look behind the Curtain** sheds light on the impact

of the Decade on Romani activism and participation five years after its implementation. In collaboration with Gabriela Mirescu, Angela Kocze - an activist, scholar, and policy-maker who has followed the Decade's discursive and policy formation from its beginning - emphasizes the poor mechanisms of the Decade in realising the many promises. The look behind the curtain discloses limitations and paradoxes of Romani emancipation and the authors call attention to the urgent need to empower Roma civil society through sustained capacity building and more inclusive approaches.

This perspective is not far from the position of Azbija Memedova, whose paper **Cultural Identity and Gender Dimension in Macedonia's Romany Community** points out the need to increase the political representation of Macedonian Roma. As a pioneer in the so-called "Roma women's activism", Memedova further addresses the multiple levels of discrimination that Romani women face and calls for a sensitive and intersectional approach to Roma women's issues, by taking the multiple barriers and their roots into account.

Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs), stateless people, rejected war refugees, or asylum seekers. Rainer Mattern shifts the focus on the dramatic fate of thousands Roma from Kosovo, who were caught in the crossfire between Albanians and Serbs during the war and later became "peace-time" targets of ethnically motivated violence by Albanian extremists. In **Roma of Kosovo - Escape, Return, or Stay?**, Mattern underlines the position of Switzerland, along with other states, which urged the return of refugees after Kosovo's independence, ignoring the dangerous circumstances Roma minority faced in the new-born and unstable state. Furthermore, the author notes pressures exercised by Western states on Kosovo's government to accept thousands of forced repatriations despite evidence that Kosovo lacked institutional and logistical capacities to receive the returnees in dignity and security.

Monique Frey and Gerhard Meili keep attention on the region and share aspects related to the activities of **Caritas Switzerland in Kosovo and Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH).** The authors share significant experiences in working on Roma programmes with local organizations in general and with Roma organizations specifically. Their findings emphasize the acute need to address the widespread stigmatization of Roma in these countries and to invest in the capacity building of local Roma organizations. Beside general institutional weakness and weak state support, Frey and Meili notice a further important aspect that contributes to the low representation and power of Roma minority in Kosovo and BiH: the lack of cooperation between local Roma organizations. While acknowledging that current conditions require working *for* Roma rather than *with* them, the authors see the empowerment of local Roma communities and organizations as an imperative need to shift to new forms of collaboration.

Working *for* or *with* Roma? This issue is refined further by Nadia Imgrüt, who recounts her experience as coordinator of Roma programs at the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP). Imgrüt shares her experience related to **the case of lead-contaminated Roma camps in northern Kosovo,** and reveals the shift in STP activities from working *for* to working *with* Roma. After an intensive workshop with a young Rom, STP not only gained a reliable partner in Kosovo, but also a realistic picture of the local situation and a better understanding of the needs and wishes of the previously unheard camp inhabitants. Looking optimistically at this experience, Imgrüt emphasizes how a minimum investment in building the capacity of a single person can contribute to the general improvement of a whole community.

Exclusion, Inclusion, Illusion: Shifting the Perspective on Social Integration of Romanian Roma is the title of the publication's closing article. Gabriela Mirescu focuses attention on the Romanian context, the challenging process of "Roma integration", and proposes a reflection on inclusion by looking at the roots of exclusion. Her approach highlights the historical role of the state in drawing strategies to marginalize the local Roma minority. It also notes the current lack of political accountability and interest in addressing the structural disadvantages facing many

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Romanian Roma. Mirescu illustrates how basic mistrust and lack of mutual respect may undercut imported policies of integration. She emphasizes the need to re-think policies of inclusion taking into account the circumstances of exclusion and broadening the perspective to include a larger socio-political context.

1 The Roma "Problem": Ethnicisation or Social Marginalisation?

Christian Giordano and Andrea Boscoboinik, University of Fribourg

1.1 Introduction

Roma individuals and communities were and still are the focus of attention - either from a political viewpoint or a socio-cultural one. Their "strange" way of life, the conditions in which they live, their scattered geographical distribution, and their unwritten and thus unconfirmed history have nurtured representations crystallized in pictorial works, books, music, and films. At least since their arrival in Europe, they have been the object of mixed feelings of fascination and fear. Beside their romanticized existence, the discrimination which most of them usually face and their regularly conflicting contacts with majority populations concern numerous associations and international organisations. Moreover, the recent development of an elite claiming particular rights, along with recent political transformations in Eastern Europe, would also explain academic and political interest. Yet, despite several research studies and discussions on issues and problems concerning the Roma, the topic continues to be elusive and ideologically embedded. The integration of East European countries into the European Union has altered the picture. Roma and Roma-related group minorities are no longer an Eastern European peculiarity but have become a collective and general European concern. Given the integration of several East European countries into the EU, the Roma now represents the largest minority in Europe. Thus they can no longer be taken into account only marginally, as has been the case until recently.

Much discussion has arisen over recent concern about immigrants in general and a specific fear of a "Gypsy invasion from the East". The subject has moved to the top of the international political agenda, due mainly to the sudden increased visibility of Roma migrating from specific East European countries - namely Romania, Bulgaria, and states of the former Yugoslavia.

Mobility is now becoming a European value, suggesting flexibility, multiculturalism, democracy, and tolerance. However, such positively connoted social and cultural mobility is limited to an elite group of European citizens engaged in highly prestigious professional roles. This group occupies positions that determine high social status and distinctly remunerative economic resources. It would mainly be *winners* in the current phase of globalization, i.e., industrial entrepreneurs, financial managers, new technologies specialists, consultants, and experts in the field of communication. In line with specific sociological and anthropological reflections on post-modernity, the gilded legend of the current transnational cosmopolitism would have developed around these roles, status, and positions.

On the other hand, the mobility of nomads or less resourceful migrants is still branded with the negative connotations of profiteers, crooks, and vagabonds. Such impressions of the impoverished and marginalized Roma populations lead to even greater exclusion. Thus Roma mobility ranks as a "problem" that could cause various complications with an international dimension.

But whom does Western Europe fear? Who are the Roma? We can begin by stating that there is more than one definition of a "Rom". And, because of the diversity of Roma people, it is unclear what might comprise Roma identity. Some are nomads and sedentary. Some speak the Romanes language, and some don't. Some follow Roma traditions, and some don't. There is no shared religion or country of residence. Elements accepted as intrinsically Roma by one group may be considered non-Roma *(Gadje)* by another. It is possible to notice a kind of hierarchy; yet every Rom has a different one. For some, those closer to the majority nationals are the better off. For others, those who maintain traditions are the purest.

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This article shows that, despite the evident heterogeneity of Roma groups and communities, there are efforts underway driven by Roma elites to build a sense of group belonging and cohesion based on a single Roma identity.

1.2 Research: Perceptions, Self-Perceptions, and Identity Strategies

A wide variety of organisations and institutions are engaged in dealing with Roma-related issues. These include supra-national organisations such as the United Nations and its agencies (e.g., UNESCO, UNCHR), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, as well as specialised committees on migration, minorities, and human rights. Other institutions include a variety of NGOs, the most significant in terms of resources being the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER).

Most of these organisations have commissioned studies on the Roma issue. It should be noted that publications produced by international institutions are usually based on quantitative results and tend to focus on poverty, discrimination, and other negative aspects afflicting Roma. Most publications and research adopt a political, economic, and macro-social view of the Roma situation, as seen from the outside. Identity strategies and the influence of religious affiliation, for example, have hardly been studied. Most studies ignore the differing voices and opinions of various Roma categories.

Our aim was different. Our research focused especially on perceptions, self-perceptions, and identity strategies of Roma people. Thus we carried out qualitative, ethnological research on Roma identity strategies in different Central and South-East European countries. Local researchers conducted several interviews with Roma people in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova between 2002 and 2008.[1] Information gathered through these interviews was later compared with more macro-level political processes.

The qualitative methodology of our research provides a new and particular approach to Roma issues. Our goal was less related to statistics than ideas and opinions gathered through dialogues with Roma individuals. Local sociologists and anthropologists in the countries studied conducted interviews based on life histories and self-perceptions of people who define themselves as belonging to any Roma group as well as those who do not acknowledge being Roma but are considered as such by their surrounding neighbours. These interviews cover a wide range of geographical areas and informants' characteristics (age, gender, occupation, level of education, as well as social and economic levels). Thus interviews occurred with common Roma as well as Roma belonging to elite (political, intellectual, or economic) groups. A wide representation of Roma people were asked to talk about their lives and experiences, their opinions, their self-perceptions, and the way others view them. The research was not conceived to be *for* but *with* Roma individuals and communities.

Focusing on an inside view of Roma permitted us to gain firsthand opinions from Roma sources. Combined with the necessary scientific distance, it enabled us to analyze and better understand their social and ethnic situation in Eastern Europe.

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[1] Research results of each country can be consulted in www.ethnobarometer.org. Research in Romania and the Republic of Moldova was conducted in collaboration with a Swiss National Science Foundation project. "Nomads and parliamentarians: The influence of mobility and religious affiliation on identity building and on the development of integration social policies. Roma people in Northern, and Eastern Romania, and the Republic of Moldova". Scopes, 2005-2008.

1.3 From Heterogeneity to Homogeneity: the Ethnicisation Process

Our first conclusions show that Roma is not a homogeneous category, even if the outside world usually takes Roma's group identity for granted. The so-called "Roma community" in fact comprises a multiplicity of heterogeneous groups that may have very little in common and whose ties are very thin. We realized that Roma usually stress differences between themselves - even between "the educated Roma" and "the poor Gypsy" - and express their loyalty to a particular group. As a result, no single Roma group exists, but rather several Roma-related groups. At the risk of incurring harsh criticism from some Roma (and not only) *identity managers,* the data gathered in our research substantiates that Roma identity is extremely diversified; therefore, the use of the plural form and reference to multiple, flexible, and situational identities would probably be more accurate. Moreover, Roma community is not only an ethnic minority group but also a social group consisting of a variety of sub-groups and meta-groups. In addition, the international distribution of Roma populations intensifies differences between all the groups gathered under the same identifying name. Actually, no social, economic, or cultural cohesion exists between Roma living in different countries.

Yet these statements bring into question the relevance of discourses (still very popular amongst influential members of the Roma political and cultural elite), which aim at the emergence of a Roma ethnic nation born of an *ethnogenesis process* more or less driven from the top, if not indeed managed by trans-national and/or supranational institutions and organisations.

In previous reports and publications[2] we have concluded that there is now a process of *ethnicisation*, i.e., an intention to create a collective ethnic identity among the disparate Roma groups, mainly led by an educated Roma elite. Thus, despite the groups' heterogeneity, some Roma activists and politically engaged Roma seek to develop a sort of ethnic solidarity. This identity should express a feeling that all Roma belong to the same distinct group, which shares common cultural traits and common problems resulting from widespread injustice and prejudice, ethnic hostility, and violence.

We suggest that elite members are trying to develop a shared ethnic consciousness across national borders in order to politically unify and mobilize the Roma in their struggle for human rights, socio-economic justice, and recognition as a nation without territory. As such, the term *ethnicisation* has an instrumental connotation and implies creation of an ethnic category with specific purposes.

At this point, we need to distinguish between what we call an *ethnicisation process* and an *ethnogenesis process*. Roma elite members prefer to point to an *ethnogenesis process*. This term holds a positive connotation suggestive of something already existent that should develop. Thus the idea of manipulation implicit in the *ethnicisation process* is overshadowed in the *ethnogenesis process*. Accordingly, the elites break no new ground but rather recapture and raise consciousness of

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2   For details see: Boscoboinik, Andrea (2006): "Becoming Rom: Ethnic Development among Roma Communities in Bulgaria and Macedonia." In Romanucci-Ross,Lola; de Vos, George; and Tsuda, Takeyuki (eds.): "Ethnic Identity. Problems and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century". Altamira Press, Lanham, MD, pp. 295-310; Boscoboinik, Andrea and Giordano, Christian (2008): "Roles, Statuses, Positions. Social categories, and Multiple Identities of Roma in Romania. Roma's Identities in Southeast Europe: Romania." In Ethnobarometer, Working Paper N° 12, pp. 7-23 (www.ethnobarometer.org); Giordano, Christian (2009): "La chimère de l'ethnogenèse ou le mirage d'une solution ethnique aux problèmes socio-économiques des populations Rom". In Boscoboinik, Andrea and Ruegg, François (eds.): "Nouvelles identités rom en Europe centrale et orientale". Transitions, vol. XLVIII, N° 2, pp.157-166; Giordano, Christian and Boscoboinik, Andrea (2003): "Roma's Identities in Southeast Europe: Bulgaria". Ethnobarometer, Working Paper N° 8, pp. 14-29 (www.ethnobarometer.org); Giordano, Christian and Boscoboinik, Andrea (2005): "Roma's Identities in Southeast Europe: Macedonia". In Ethnobarometer, Working Paper N° 9, pp. 7-17 (www.ethnobarometer.org).

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a pre-existing ethnic category. Hence, as a social process of mobilization, *ethnogenesis* would be a feasible instrument by which the Roma can express a stronger feeling of cohesion and consequently a stronger political commitment.[3]

According to these concepts and projects, *ethnogenesis* should induce Roma populations to develop a necessary communitarian spirit. Yet by now this approach has become quite an unfashionable neologism. It is also a legacy of essentialist anthropology and the subsequent emergence of an ethnic-based collective conscience. Thus its basis is the sharing of common origin and culture. In turn, this would have an emancipating function and help abate prejudices and discrimination within the dominant ethno-national groups. Therefore, *ethnogenesis* would put an end to the Roma's serious social deficit compared to other communities. Paradoxically, they would become less *different*, thus more *equal* to *others,* since *they* too would attain a higher level of social organisation comparable to the *others'*.

From a strictly ethical point of view, the goal of the ethnogenesis process, as conceived by its various advocates, is undoubtedly commendable. Yet the point at issue is less the project's moral validity as its practicability in a 21st century characterized by a phase of accelerated globalization. Actually, at least two major aspects provide grounds for some degree of scepticism for those involved in the social sciences.

Clearly, the model based on the idea of *ethnogenesis* is implicitly modelled on 19th-century *nation-building* or, as one of its masterminds - a sociologist of Roma origin (Nicolae Gheorghe) - highlights, is explicitly reminiscent of it. In fact, the planned processes of present-day *ethnogenesis* for the Roma communities somewhat resembles the formation of the *Kulturnationen* in general and nations in eastern-central and southeast Europe in particular between the late 18th and early 20th century.

To elite leaders, the *nation* as a social formation seems a viable solution (1) to fight against the stigmatisation and marginalisation of their people and (2) to handle the social and cultural problems they face. The segregation in which Roma communities are confined and the negative attitudes they must endure bolster the idea among Roma intellectuals that unification is crucial to create a common feeling that could better defend Roma interests in general. They are also convinced that the ghettoized Roma communities would gain in force and confidence if they could feel they share a common identity. If Roma were accepted as a non-territorial nation, some Roma leaders believe this fact would lend greater international legitimacy to advocacy of their individual and collective human rights. Consequently, their general living conditions as a people would improve.

Still, we must distinguish between two schools of thought. More traditional and simplistic, the first school abides by the classic models of ethnic nationalism. Owing to *ethnogenesis*, it holds that the Roma culture and identity within each national and territorial context would be revitalized. Consequently, single Roma ethnic communities, not trans-nationally linked to each other, would emerge. Thus, *ethnogenesis* would simply amount to a resurgence of processes that led to formation of present-day European nations in centuries past.

The second school - one far more ingenious and sophisticated - is based on an avowed trans-national and de-territorialized vision of Roma ethnic identity. *Ethnogenesis* would be the means to attain a Roma feeling of belonging, which would be far more consequential on a European scale. In more institutional parlance, it would involve the emergence of a Roma ethnic nation transcending

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3   Barany, Zoltan (2002): "The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics". Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 70.

the narrow nation-states' borders and comprise a *stateless political community*. Yet this case as well clearly refers to the *Kulturnation* idea, though this concept is skilfully adapted to a spatially extensive reality - one more socially disjointed and less culturally coherent.

At this point, however, we can legitimately wonder whether an obsolete model is being revived and whether it contains an enticing but rather unrealistic vision. With regard to the first project, it suggests that Roma populations ought to follow the same route nearly 150 years later and under dissimilar global socioeconomic conditions that led to the creation of European nations. This seems rather anachronistic and, to some extent, anti-historical as well. Actually, it resembles a simplistic *theory of the socio-cultural gap* that would be redressed by replicating a model successfully employed by other groups in the past.

The second project suggests the emergence of a transnational and de-territorialized Roma community. It likewise harkens back to 19th-century models, but cannot be criticized on grounds of anachronism, since it takes into account the current socio-political trends linked to the globalization process. Moreover, it seems more enticing, precisely because it employs postmodern parlance, which transnational and supranational organisations (such as the UE and some NGOs) hold in high regard. Yet the wide variety of roles, statuses, and social positions, striking cultural differences, and territorial dispersion of Roma populations could become a virtually insurmountable barrier on the road to this specific vision of *ethnogenesis*. It could turn it into a hardly tenable if not an unworkable project, i.e., into an unlikely emancipatory alternative.

As with any form of ethnicisation, the concept of *ethnogenesis* is intrinsically based on the notion of creating boundaries between *us* and *others* that are not perforce territorial. From a theoretical point of view, Fredrik Barth emphasized that ethnic identification results from a process or a social strategy. More or less intentionally, it employs single *markers* or highly varying combinations thereof: social groups mark out each other's territorial and cultural boundaries.[4] This clearly involves a system of self- and hetero-attributions based on one's *self image* and that of the *others*. This being the case, one may legitimately wonder whether *ethnogenesis* in general and that concerning Roma in particular might not intensify the *others*' old stereotypes and prejudices about Roma populations, thus increasing discrimination in social practices as well. Consequently, *ethnogenesis* might even reinforce exclusion processes.

Another unfortunate consequence (contrary to expectations of Roma leaders and intellectuals) is that the process of strengthening ethnic awareness might finally deepen differences between educated and non-educated Roma instead of uniting them. In fact, the poverty of the latter hinders any other commitment than that of securing a daily living; they express no interest in any identity question. Barany points out that the "enormous cultural distance between the tiny Roma intelligentsia and the masses of undereducated and often apathetic ordinary Gypsies, contributes to poor political communication in the Roma community and to the fact that Gypsy politics is, more than anything, elite politics. It is dominated by a handful of Gypsy activists and leaders who desperately (but usually without success) try to prove that they do represent *their people* and that they do have a constituency."[5]

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[4] Barth, Fredrik (1969): "Introduction". In Fredrik Barth (ed.), "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries". George Allen & Unwin, London.

[5] Barany, Zoltan (2002): "The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics". Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 204.

1.4   Roma and Gypsies, "Us and Them"

The relatively recent development of a Roma elite deepens more and more the gap between educated and engaged "Roma" on the one hand and poor ordinary "Gypsy" on the other. We realized in interviews that for poor and uneducated *Gypsies*, the term *Roma* is reserved for educated ones and has a strong political connotation. They absolutely do not want to be called *Rom*, a name with which they do not identify, but rather *Gypsy*. Some really mistrust the name *Roma* and criticize Roma political leaders for being corrupt and taking advantage of projects aimed at improving the Gypsies' situation.

Interviews with rich and educated *Roma* show that - even if they are engaged activists for the Roma unity - when they speak of the poor, they use *Gypsy,* even in a pejorative and despising way. Therefore, sometimes *we* are Roma, but *they* are Gypsies, and *vice versa*.

Those interviewed manifested a persistent distinction between *us* and *the others*. Contrary to what could be expected, *they* are not only the *Gadje* (the non-Roma), but a multitude of *others*. Very often, *they* are *the other Roma* (or *the other Gypsies),* particularly the stereotyped image of a thief, dishonest, lying, and lazy. It is always "*the other Roma*" that deserves all prejudices and negative stereotypes, those who steal, are lazy, and dirty, who stain the name of the whole Roma community. The *"other Roma"* may also include the traditionalist Roma in contrast to the "modern" Roma, the poor Roma in contrast to the wealthy Roma, the Orthodox Roma in contrast to the converted Pentecostal Roma, the ordinary Roma in contrast to those who have positions, resources, or are actively engaged in NGOs or political parties.

We could sense in interviews that talking about *us* and *them* involves value judgments, scorn, stereotypes, a will of distinction, and difference. Thus stereotypes and prejudices concerning other Roma people are also found within Roma individuals and communities: *"**They** are not proper; **they** didn't study; **they** are not intelligent".*

It is clear - for whatever reason - that what *Gypsy* implies is very different from what *Rom* implies, since each group endorses one name or the other. Thus both "identities" related to both names seem to be very different for those concerned. The reasons seem mainly related to the symbolic dimension attached to each designation. "Roma" is considered to be a self-styled name and hence politically correct. It is the term used mostly by promoters of a common ethnicity. On the other hand, "Gypsy" is considered to be a pejorative name given by outsiders; nevertheless it is a designation that some members of the community are used to or somehow adhere to. Besides, it could represent a way to resist what could be considered a new imposition. *"I have always been a Gypsy. Why should I be a Rom now?"*

Most poor *Gypsies* mistrust intensely *Roma* political leaders and NGOs. This could one reason for the "failure" of *ethnicisation*. Indeed, we suggest that the *ethnicisation* process has not been very successful to date.

The failure of the *ethnicisation* process could be explained by the fact that its promoters only consider the undeniable difficult situation of Roma communities in terms of ethnicity rather than taking into account other identity dimensions (such as social, economic, and religious). However, poor Roma conditions do not differ from those of the poorest majority nationals. One goal of those who promote the *ethnicisation* process is to fight against discrimination. However, it is hard to assert that the discrimination Roma/Gypsies suffer is always and unconditionally based on ethnic criteria. On the contrary, we can admit that the discrimination they must endure is often based on socio-economic criteria. Therefore, they are mostly discriminated against because they are poor, not because they are Roma. Wealthy or well-integrated Roma, as our interviews show, do not feel

discriminated against at all. Pentecostal Roma, even if they are better accepted by the majority for being more reliable, could also be discriminated against on a religious basis. Therefore, they face discrimination for being Pentecostal and not (or not only) for being Roma.

Even if differences based on religious, economic, and social aspects are more significant than the ethnic division, very little attention has been paid to viewing Roma as belonging to different social groups. Besides, religious belonging is sometimes more significant than ethnic cohesion. Thus there are converted Roma whose most important identity element is religion. Identity is not always primarily associated with ethnicity. Ethnicity is but part of a total identity, not necessarily the central element.

A key argument for our position is that identity categories are not fixed; they may shift from one dimension such as ethnicity to another such as religion or social status. Then it becomes imperative to examine how identity becomes a political resource used by Roma leaders and elites as well as from outside the Roma tent. When outsiders resort to ethnic identity, it may occur with the goal of stigmatizing and scapegoating.

1.5 Conclusion

A typology of Roma people could be established and that would illustrate the heterogeneity of its members. From nomads to parliamentarians, Roma encompasses almost all social categories. This means that - aside from poor and discriminated Gypsies - we find a Roma elite including those who pursued higher education, the wealthy, the activists, and the socially and politically engaged. There are also socially integrated Roma who achieve social integration by mixed marriage, economic success, or even skin colour.[6] Another category would be the religious converted Roma. No category is exclusive. Each presents members who defend their ethnic heritage, while others seek assimilation or integration into the majority. However, despite this social heterogeneity that goes beyond the multiple clans and groups, there is the tendency "to put all Roma in the same bag", a tendency that makes scapegoating easier. From the process observed, it becomes clear that Roma political conditions and organisation have improved to some extent, whereas their socio-economic situation has deteriorated in the post-communist countries.

Some social scientists, as Michael Stewart has noticed,[7] have taken over the image of an "underclass", a concept dating back to 19th-century sociologists and drawn particularly from North American discourse, to conceptualize the situation of Roma peoples. The notion of a underclass is typically associated with urban black ghettos, which represented a growing segment of the population that remained stuck at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. Analogically, the model is applied to Roma to depict a group separated from the rest of society by widening economic distance and ghettoized social boundaries. Those in the "underclass" are discriminated against to the extent that "have almost no chance of finding roles in the new division of labour or of having "normal" jobs, income, housing, social security, or access to better education for their children".[8] Considering the socio-economic elements, we might conceivably describe the Roma as an *underclass*, since some of them definitely have some of its traits: marginal economic status together

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6   It was often stated in interviews: "You can never see by his/her appearance that he/she is Rom". These people have more chances of finding a job or are less likely to face discrimination.

7   Stewart, Michael (2002): "Deprivation, the Roma, and the underclass". In Hann, Chris M. (ed.): "Post-Socialism. Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia". Routledge, New York, pp.133.

8   Stewart, Michael (2002) quotes Ladányi, János (2000): "The Hungarian Neoliberal State, Ethnic Classification and the Creation of a Roma Underclass". In: Emigh, Rebecca J. and Szelényi Iván (eds.): "Poverty, Ethnicity, and Gender in Eastern Europe During the Market Transition". Greenwood, Westport, CT, pp. 71.

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with social isolation. However, to assess Roma in terms of an underclass model is problematical. An "underclass" could cover a certain class of Roma (but not only them) who are increasingly excluded in socio-economic and spatial terms. "Underclass does not by any means apply to all Roma. But it does apply to certain segments of the wider Roma communities".[9]

Moreover, the very notion of an underclass can be problematical and seen as a response to a particular history in a particular context. To quote Stewart: "It is extremely risky to give any credence at all to a loose and vague term like "underclass", with all its derogatory connotations".[10] Rather than being classified as an "underclass", Roma should be defined as a socially excluded minority. There is as well important to point out that poverty and marginality result from an interactive process involving the "others" and the general context, rather than a state of things ascribable to a distinctive Roma life-style.

It is doubtful that socioeconomic solutions will be found in ethnicising the groups and their problems. Improvement of the Roma's socio-economic situation does not necessarily presuppose the creation of a nation of their own (even without their own state or territory, as some look forward to). Actually, this project appears anachronistic since it refers to 18th-century' development models, which, at the time, were certainly successful. However, we can justifiably question whether these strategies are still timely and worthwhile.

The problems that Roma communities face are essentially those of many other majority or other ethnic groups. Therefore, it is crucial to find solutions for social and economic problems (and not only of Roma communities), particularly without forcing on ethnic status. This does not mean that we support movement towards the assimilation of Roma communities into the majority. The need for equal access to economic development must be achieved by means other than stressing belonging to a minority to prevent ethnic conflicts.

Better conditions for Roma are expected to come from community-based work along with recognition of the value of human diversity. The key to the problem is not only tolerance from economically and socially stronger communities. It is also (and above all) a genuine identity negotiation, beside intercultural (or interethnic) communication and cooperation within specific strategies and actions.

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[9]   Kligman, Gail; Szelényi, Iván, and Ladányi, János (2002): "A Note on the Meaning of Underclass". Roma Rights Quarterly N° 2, pp. 114. Available at: http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=900.

[10]   Stewart, Michael (2002): "Deprivation, the Roma and the underclass". In Hann, Chris M. (ed.): Post-Socialism. Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia. Routledge, New York, pp.140.

2 Roma Cultural Identity

Stéphane Laederich, Rroma Foundation

2.1 Roma Origins

Even though Roma have lived in Europe for more than a millennium, their origins were established with scientific certainty only during the second half of the 18th century. The first person to realise that Roma came originally as a group from India was Isvan Valyi, a young Hungarian aristocrat who, in 1753, went to study in Leyden, Holland. There he met some fellow students from India who taught him about 1,000 words of their language and the corresponding Sanskrit words. Upon his return to Hungary, he contacted local Roma, who understood some of the words he had learned. He disclosed this in articles that appeared in Vienna during 1775 and 1776.[1] In 1782, a German, Jakob Rüdiger, also showed that the Roma language has Indian roots by comparing it with Sanskrit.[2] One year later, another German, Heinrich Grellman of the University in Göttingen, did an extensive study of the Roma language and deduced that the Roma had come from India.[3] Later studies such as the famous ones of Franz Miklosich[4] and Alfred Grafunder,[5] as well as later ones by Alexandre Paspati[6] or the linguist John Sampson[7] all underlined this by now well-known fact as well as the homogeneity of the language. This occurred more than 900 years after the arrival of the Roma in Europe. These scientific studies are not the first to suggest that Roma came originally from India. As far back as the early 15th century, the Chronicles of Forli referred to the visit to that city by a group of Roma led by a "Count Michael" saying "*Aliqui dicebant, quod erant de India",* an interesting statement, since the Roma themselves referred to India here.[8]

Why the ancestors of the Roma left the Indian subcontinent will remain the subject of various suppositions. For lack of historical documentation, I will not advance any definitive answer. The fact is that there cannot have been many of them at the time of their departure, for extrapolating backward, 10,000 people 1,000 years ago would correspond to about 10 million nowadays. This offers a decent estimate of the current Roma population, now estimated at between 8 and 12 million in Europe.

Romanes, the language spoken by a majority of Roma, actually gives the best clues to the time of the Roma departure from India. First and foremost, Romanes does not show any acquisitions related to Semitic languages, except much later ones in the Balkans, due to the Ottoman occupation of the region. The loan words that Roma gathered during their journey from India, mostly the Persian ones, all appear in a pre-Arabic form, while the Armenian loan words show the old Armenian phonetic form of the Armenian Ł, which shifted phonetically during the 9th century.[9] All these arguments, as well as the name of Tsigan (a deformation through a Slavic translation of the Greek *Athinganoi*, a

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[1] "Allegnädigst-privilegierte Anzeigen aus Sämtliche-kaiserlich-königlichen Erbländern" (1775). Vienna, 5, pp. 159-416, 6 (1776) 7-168.

[2] Rüdiger, J. C. C. (1782. Reprint 1990): "Von der Sprache und Herkunft der Zigeuner aus Indien". Buske, Hamburg.

[3] Grellmann, Heinrich (1787): "Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner". Göttigen, 2nd ed.

[4] Miklosich, Franz (1872-1882): "Über die Mundarten und die Wanderungen der Zigeuner Europas". Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaft, Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Vol. 21-23, 25-27, pp. 30-31, Vienna.

[5] Graffunder, Alfred (1835): "Über die Sprache der Zigeuner". Ehrfurt.

[6] Paspati, Alexandre (1973): "Études sur les Tchinghianés". Osnabruck, Biblio Verlag (Original, Constantinople, 1870).

[7] Sampson, John (1926): "The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales". Oxford.

[8] Hieronymus of Forlì. "Chronicles of Forlì" (1731). In Rerum Italicarum Scriptores. Muratori, L. A. ed. Vol. 19. Milan, pp. 890.

[9] Greppin, John A. C. (1986): "The Development of the Armenian l and Π". In Armenian Studies in Memoriam H. Berberian. Impressa de Coimbra, pp. 279-292.

heretic sect to which the early Roma were supposed to belong), support the theory that Roma were deported from Armenia to the Balkans together with many Armenians in the 9th or early 10th century.[10]

While most Roma remained in the Balkans, small groups slowly moved towards the Carpathian region where they are mentioned in the 13th century in Budapest and later in Prague. These Roma were mostly weapon makers and musicians. Others crossed the Danube during the 14th century to Walachia and then to Moldavia (today regions of Romania), where they immediately became subject of enslavement until the 19th century. Finally, a small group, fleeing the Ottoman invasions arrived in the German-speaking regions near Basel in the early 15th century. This latter group then spread all over Western and Northern Europe, up to Russia.

2.2 Language

There are still people to this day who doubt that Romanes is an actual language. The main lines of thoughts hold that the diverse dialects of Romanes spoken by the various Roma groups cannot be mutually understood (a point made by many Roma themselves) and that a collection of dialects cannot be a language in the first place. To better understand the differences and variations of Romanes, one needs to dwell into its very structure.

Romanes exhibits a layered structure with a strong Prakrit basis, on which the entire grammar is based, followed by two shallow layers of acquisitions, Persian and Armenian, a very large layer of Greek acquisitions, and finally a smaller layer of South Slavic terms (see Fig. 1). Interestingly, the Indian basis does not contain any vocabulary covering travels, as all these terms are actually of Persian origins. This basis of Romanes, which we call the "common trunk" is common to all Romanes dialects and constitutes about 60 to 70% of the vocabulary.

The migrations of Roma in Europe led to what can broadly be described as "meta-dialects", of which there are four: Carpathian, with a strong northern Slavic basis; Vlax (or Vlach), with a very strong layer of Romanian acquisitions; the Nordic dialects, spoken from Spain to Russia, with a strong German influence; and finally, the Balkan meta-dialect, with a layer of Turkish words.[11]

Due to this later level of acquisitions, common understanding within a meta-dialect is of course much simpler than across meta-dialects. One has to note that the Vlax meta-dialect is furthest removed from all others due to its isolation during five centuries of slavery in Walachia and Moldavia and due to numerous Romanian lexical acquisitions. It is thus easier for a Russian Rom to communicate in Romanes with a Balkan Arlii than with a Kalderaš from the Vlax metagroup.

Finally, most modern terms are actual loan words from the local language. For example, a television will be called *televisiono* or *fernsevo*, etc., depending on the local language variant.

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[10] For further arguments as well as reference on this theory, see Tcherenkov, Lev and Laederich, Stéphane (2004): "The Rroma". Schwabe Verlag, Basel.

[11] See Tcherenkov, Lev and Laederich, Stéphane (2004): "The Rroma". Schwabe Verlag, Basel.

Fig. 1: Romanes and Roma Groups
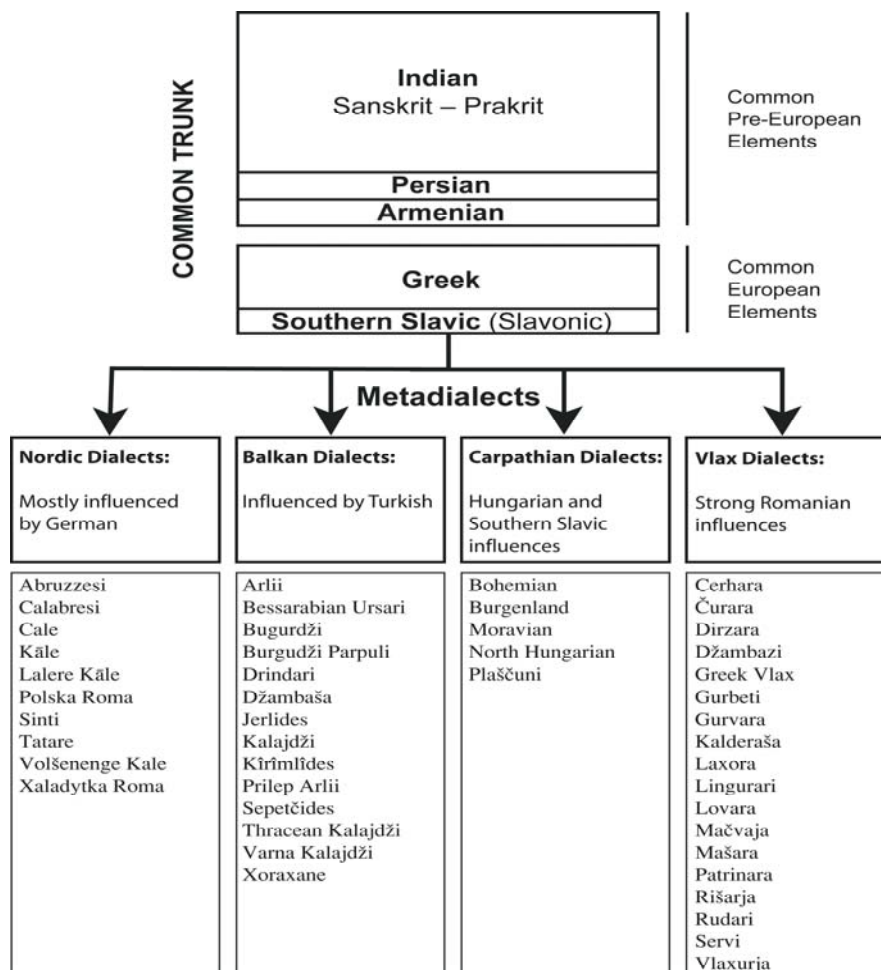
This layered structure and the number of loan words should not give the impression that Romanes is not understandable between groups. For people who speak the language well, even the common trunk allows fluent communication between various groups. Only those loan words, for which there is no common trunk synonym, are not mutually intelligible.[12] In some isolated cases, comprehension in Romanes may be hindered when the group's dialect is so creolised that there is no sufficient common trunk substrate to enable communication.

Today, about two-thirds of Roma still speak Romanes. In some countries (such as Spain or Hungary), the language has almost totally vanished, usually due to repeated state assimilation policies. In Romania, a large part of the assimilated Roma population has also lost its language, especially the descendents of former slaves bound to the land. Generally, the repressive assimilation policies and the communist past contributed to acculturation of many Roma in Eastern Europe.

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[12] Most loan words coexist together with a common trunk variant.

But is Romanes a language? There are some striking analogies that actually warrant naming Romanes as a genuine language. Thinking of Arabic, the various variants of that language are no further apart than Romanes dialects. True, there is a "classical" written Arabic, the version appearing in the Koran, but it is not really spoken today outside a circle of intellectuals. Chinese, on the other hand, from its unified writing, is considered to be a language, even though it is impossible for a Mandarin speaker to understand a Cantonese speaker. Finally, in terms of dialectal diversity, Swiss German is probably the closest analogy to Romanes. While of German origins, these dialects are definitively not properly understood by Germans. Some of the dialects, depending on the canton, can be far apart, but can still be recognized as Swiss German.

2.3 Social Organisation

Commonality or heterogeneity?

Several researchers concluded that Roma do not represent a single homogenous group and that the multiple groups, often compared to tribes, have very little or nothing in common. In their view, *Roma* is just another concept, potentially just a politically correct representation of the old concept of *Gypsy* or *Zigeuner*.

Most ethnological and linguistic studies on Roma have actually concentrated on a single group in a given country, neglecting even the kinship and relation within a group spread over several countries. This research often reinforces the view that there is no such concept as that of "Rom".

The fact is that, if one should dwell upon the individual Roma identity, one will discover well over 40 different groups such as Arlii, Bugurdži, Cale, Kāle, Džambaša, Kalderaša, Lovara, Sinti, Xaladytka, etc. - each seemingly with a different cultural identity, traditions, and, apparently also a different dialect.[13]

Baffling Gadže: the Roma groups

These Roma groups are a concept that is nearly totally alien to most non-Roma, and this concept continues to baffle many researchers and laymen alike. One must acknowledge the fact that Roma themselves have not been very helpful in clarifying this, or even in explaining it. One can hear Sinti saying that they are not Roma (but saying "Gadžkene Sinti rakren richtiges Romanes" [German Sinti speak Romanes well]), Gurbeti in Kosovo saying that Arlii are not real Roma while they are, etc.

Some of these groups can be very large, numbering up to one million people, such as the Arlii in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bulgaria; while some other groups, such as the Finnish Kāle number a few thousands. Some of the better known groups - or at least some of the most studied ones such as the Kalderaša - are by no means the largest ones,[14] and most of these groups are transnational, i.e., straddle many countries.

Roma groups created themselves due to socio-economic circumstances. They either represent the result of migration into a different region or country or simply specialisation within an economical niche in the country of residence. The first process is the greater driver among Roma groups found in Western and Northern Europe. While all share the original name of "Kale", kept by the Finnish, the Welsh, and the Spanish Roma, the mere fact that they all migrated away from the Balkans and into other countries via German territory in the 15th century gave them a different cultural identity.

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[13]   See Figure 1 for the full list of the major Roma groups.

[14]   One estimates that there are between 150,000 and 200,000 Kalderaša worldwide.

Forced to wander, since they were not allowed to settle in Germany, many migrated further East, giving rise to groups like Polska, Litovska, Loftitke, and Xaladytka Roma.[15] All exhibit a large number of German acquisitions in their language, and share very strict and closely similar traditions. Those who remained in Germany took the name of Sinti, a name they were given in Rotwelsh.[16] The last migration within this group occurred when Germany invaded France in 1870, an invasion followed by some Sinti settling in the new French territory, taking the name of Manouches.

In the Balkans and in Romania the situation was more complex, and Roma divided in several groups due to local socio-economic niches. One such example involves the Kalderaša and Lovara. These two groups lived in the same region, the Western part of present day Transylvania, until the abolition of slavery. Kalderaša were traditionally coppersmiths and had more interactions with the local Romanian population. While living in the very same place, Lovara were traditionally horse dealers and had more interactions with the Hungarian population of the region. Over the course of time, one now finds two groups with differing dialects and to some extent differing identities.

This process is far from complete and continues to this day. Subgroups (for there are quite a few) can become groups, while the latest waves of migrations in Europe are forging new ones.

Beyond the groups, a second factor explaining some of the complexity is itself the result of a Vlax peculiarity. Contrary to other Roma Groups, Vlax Roma generally tend to use the term "Rom" to denote their own group (instead of using "Kalderaša", etc.) or by extension other Vlax Roma. This can easily result in a Vlax Rom saying from an Arlii that "naj Rom", literally that he is not a Rom, but meaning he is not a Vlax Rom. This fact may be seen as a result of the arrival of Vlax Roma in Europe following the abolition of slavery in Romania, and especially their arrival in Western Germany after World War II. Local Roma started distancing themselves from the new arrivals, saying: "we are local, they are Roma". A well-known example in this respect is the distinction between Sinti and Roma.

This behaviour is quite common, for example recently in France. There, due to the dismantling of illegal Roma camps in the country by President Sarkozy's decree, the French Manouches recently said officially they were not Roma.[17]

Identity and social organisation

Roma's social organisation can be characterised as a "bottom up" one. First and foremost, at the centre of social life and structure, one finds the extended family. Primary loyalty goes to this entity. The affiliation to a subgroup or lineage then follows: for example the Čōkešti among Lovara, then the group membership. The concept of "Rom" as a supra-identity was originally only present through the language and not as a concept in itself. This became much stronger in recent years, due to intensified interactions between different Roma groups from different countries. Thus increased mobility led many Roma to acquire a reinforced common identity. Switzerland again provides a very fitting parallel. There, the primary community is the village or commune, then the canton, and finally, as a somewhat abstract concept, Switzerland itself. Among Swiss, one will never state the obvious, i.e. that one is Swiss, but rather say first one is from Basel, Zurich, Uri, etc. In Swiss Ger-

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[15] Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Russian.

[16] "Sulzer Zigeunerliste und genaue Beschreibung" (1787), Tübingen, Balz. Available at:
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:aIAdHMTmjkAJ:www.minderheiten.org/roma/textarchiv/texte/sulzer_zigeunerliste.htm+Sulzer+Zigeunerliste+(1787)&cd=1&hl=de&ct=clnk&gl=ch.

Note that Sinti in the Czech Republic called themselves Kale, and that Sinti in Poland call themselves Sasytke - [German] Roma.

[17] See Neue Zürcher Zeitung. "Frankreich Fahrende in Aufruhr". August 12, 2010.

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man, this local origin is anyhow obvious, as the dialect is somewhat different and gives sufficient clues to the origins of the person. The Roma identity follows the same logic: speaking Romanes, the actual origins, i.e., Rom, are obviously established: the only facts that need to be specified are the group and subgroup belonging.

Fig. 2: Roma Social Organisation

Metagroup level	Vlax			
Group level	Kalderaša		Lovara	
First subdivision Geographical and/or lineages *nacija, nemzeto*	Moldovaja	Serbijaja	Ungri	Bundaša
	Vungri		Čōkeštji	
Second subdivision Clans, lineages *vica, nipo*	Jonešti		Doškeštji	Pēkeštji
Third subdivision Subclans, lineages *vica i cigni*	Jonešti	Petrešti	Guraneštji	
Family level		Demeter		Horvath
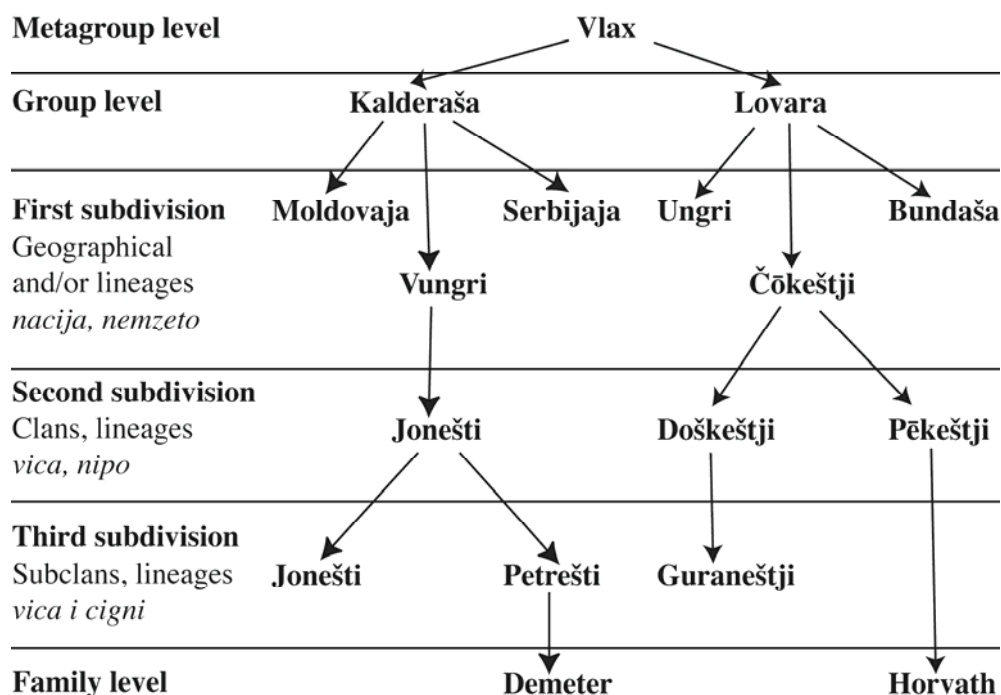
Some authors and many researchers add the concept of *Gadžo* (usually translated from Romanes as *non-Rom)* to the Roma identification process. It is usually said that there is a strong concept of *we* and *them* (i.e., Roma and non-Roma) that is crucial to the overall identification of a person to the Roma community. While this concept is indeed present, it is far subtler than at first sight. First, a *Gadžo* is always a local non-Rom. A Rom from Russia will use *Gadžo* exclusively for Russians using the country of origin (Poland, Lithuania, etc.) for the other non-Roma. In addition, Jews are generally not *Gadže*, being denoted by *Bibolde*[18] or *Džide*. Finally, in the Balkans, there are parallel levels of *Gadže*. Traditionally in the Balkans, a *Gadžo* is a Muslim. For the Orthodox population, one uses the term *Das*, from the old Sanskrit word for slave. In Kosovo and Albania, *Gadžo* was traditionally used only for the Turks, and other terms such as *Gavutne*[19] are used for the local Albanian population. This wealth of terminology gives a more differentiated view of the concept of *we* and *them*. While distinguishing between Roma and non-Roma, it normally denotes the people one lives with these days in a given country or region.

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[18] Literally un-baptised.

[19] Meaning villagers.

This leaves the thorny question of the situation of assimilated Roma: Roma who have lost parts of their culture and language. There are shades and degrees of this acculturation, going from fully assimilated (having lost all traces of the Roma culture and language, such as many Roma in Hungary, but still considered by the non-Roma as "Gypsies"), to groups such as the Cale of Spain who, while having lost their Romanes about a century ago, have maintained all Roma traditions. For the former, recognition as a Rom is more complex and driven more by exclusion from the general population than integration within a community. For the latter, the strong traditions mean that they are totally accepted within the community at large.

Beside the language, the core of shared Roma traditions is a strong identity and an important unifying element. Key factors in the Roma identity that are common to all Roma groups include respect for elders (culminating in the power of *phuri daj/phuri dej*), elder women; ritual cleanness; the dualist approach to God; the approach to death and dead people; oaths; internal mediation (especially for family issues) in the form of *kris* or *sendo;* and generally the consensus-based community. Some traditions are group or meta-group specific and are much less common. One such tradition, the Vlax custom of purchasing the bride can be traced to paying the bride's owner during slavery.

Religion, other than a specific belief in God (*Devel* or *Del)* with a strong dualistic touch is not a key element of the Roma identity and social organisation. Since Roma have traditionally adopted the dominant local religion, when religious doctrine clashes with Roma traditions and laws, the latter take precedence.

Until recently (that is, the last 30 years), common cultural features amongst Roma were not necessarily lived or understood by Roma themselves. This was due in part to the relative isolation of various groups and the lack of contacts between the Roma of different countries. Nowadays, this common culture and language is an important factor that contributes to recognizing the Roma as what they truly are: a trans-national European minority.

2.4 The Roma today

Statistics

Many studies and official statements about Roma are based on statistics. Researchers and governments use them, but regrettably NGOs and international organisations do too. The most common ones cite the fact that most Roma live below the poverty level, that only a small fraction of them go to school, that their life expectancy is shorter than that of the rest of the population, that they have more children, etc. These statistics, often cited with an utmost certainty in the numbers, contribute to perpetuation of the usual clichés about Roma.

One hardly raises the fundamental question: how to compute a percentage number of any of the above when the number of Roma living in a country is not known? And realistic official counts of Roma are practically inexistent. On the one hand, most Western European countries never ask the question of ethnicity (or for that matter even religion, for example, in France) in a census, for obvious historical reasons. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the official numbers of Roma and other minorities was reduced on purpose. The last Romanian census of 2002 lists 535,000 Roma, while the previous one, in 1991, listed 408,000 or less than 2% of the population.

Beside the fact that it is less than plausible that the Roma population increased by 30% in little more than a decade, these numbers are only twice as large as the roughly 250,000 Roma listed in 1860s.[20] During that same period, the population from Romania rose from about 4 million to 22.5 million nowadays. Extrapolating this increase on Roma would mean a lower estimate of about 1.4 million Roma in Romania. The current estimate is closer to the 2.5 to 4 million Roma in that country. Bulgaria provided accurate statistics since the first Ottoman tax register in 1475, in which Roma were explicitly listed. The Roma population in that country always hovered around 9%. These statistics continued until 1918. Under Communism, this decreased to nearly zero but has steadily increased back to 4.6% of the population.

In Hungary, the official numbers from the census list 189,000 Roma or 1.9% of the population.[21] The Hungarian government itself states that this number is too low and gives an alternative estimate of 400,000 to 6,000,000 Roma in the country.[22] Most experts put the actual number at about 800,000.

A social problem - or an ethnic one?

These statistics are often used to underscore the fact that Roma are actually only a social issue, the issue of an underclass or a fringe group and not a minority problem in Europe. Clearly, there is a basis to the argument that at least some Roma fall under an excluded group category, with all corresponding social issues, such as illiteracy and poverty. This situation is more common by far among assimilated Roma and has usually been compounded by forced relocations that took place (mostly after World War II) or by historical circumstances, such as slavery in Romania. To take one example, prior to World War II, there were about 30,000 Roma settlements in present day Slovakia - settlements that themselves resulted from the assimilations policies of Maria Theresa during the 18th century. After the war these settlements were consolidated into less than 3,000 major ones, resulting in the appearance of *de facto* ghettoes with all their corresponding social ills. These relocation problems were compounded during the post-war period. Filling the void created by the *Holocaust* in the Czech Republic, Slovak Roma were imported to provide cheap post-war labour. In Croatia, local Roma murdered during the war were replaced by new arrivals from other republics. Many Roma also lost their jobs with the fall of Communism - in part due to outright discrimination, in part due to poor qualifications - and have been unemployed since.

On the other hand, ethnic cleansing remains a common practice, especially during recent decades in the former Yugoslavia. The creation of new states resulted in a brutal cleansing of whole regions, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and to a lesser extent Croatia. This cleansing was based purely on ethnic factors - especially in the case of Kosovo where the Roma population had been well integrated and actually pro-Albanian before the war.

Governments and NGOs alike have been shown to have a vested interest in representing Roma as a social issue, as a group that never integrated, and which never had a place in European society at large. This picture is actually wrong, as it concentrates on the visible Roma minority, i.e.*,* those generally at the lowest social levels who conform to the prejudices and clichés that most people retain when thinking about Roma.

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[20] Kogolnitchan, Michel (1837): "Une brève esquisse sur l'histoire, les moeurs et la langue des Cigains". Berlin. An estimate of the Transylvanian population is based on the Hungarian one contained in this book.

[21] See Population by nationality and main age groups, at:
http://www.nepszamlalas.hu/eng/volumes/18/tables/load1_30_1.html.

[22] Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004): "Fact Sheets on Hungary". Available at:
http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/05DF7A51-99A5-4BFE-B8A5-210344C02B1A/0/Roma_en.pdf.

Visible and invisible Roma

Few people actually think about it, but if all European Roma actually lived according to the common stereotypes, they would be much more visible than they currently are. After all, if eight to 12 million Roma in Europe were jobless, wanderers, beggars, and thieves, one would hear much more about them in political debate, in the press, and in conversations in general.

These stereotypes - especially those of *travellers* or *nomads* as a part of Roma culture - are strongly anchored in Western European minds. They were never nomads. Roma in Russia, Poland, or Romania (Kalderaša), travelled for their work during the summer. Perhaps the only true travelling Roma were and remain the Sinti, who, being denied the right to settle, were forced into a semi-nomadic way of life. Based on historical data, such as the Ottoman tax registers, as well as on documentation related to groups that traditionally had to travel for their work, one can say that less than one percent of the Roma ever travelled. Roma were no less and no more mobile than other European people who settled in Europe, such as the Germans, the Slavs, the Bulgars, or the Magyars.

Due to these powerful stereotypes, other minorities such as the *Tinkers* in Ireland, the *Travellers* in England, the *Forains* or *Gens du voyage* in France, and the *Jenische* in German-speaking regions were in fact associated by the general population with Gypsies (or lately Roma), even though these groups are by and large of autochthonous origins.

The invisible majority of Roma is well integrated within society and live "normal" lives, working, sending their children to school, going to work in jobs ranging from the lowest ones to engineers, doctors, or bankers. Thus, they are no longer considered *de facto Gypsies.* This integration is not a new phenomenon. It is documented from the 15th century onward within Ottoman tax registers, which lists each family's primary job and show that already then, the variety of employment and levels in society was as great as it is today.

For the general population, not living according to the standard clichés is a sure sign that one is not a Rom. On the other hand, the wealth of negative stereotypes about Roma makes it nearly impossible for an integrated Rom to say he/she is one, without avoiding the usual reactions: "Do you live in a caravan?", "Do you know how to read and write?", and worse. Who, in most European countries, would actually admit that he or she is a Rom when applying for a job? In fact, most Roma would avoid exposing their ethnic identity, while mentioning only their citizenship without explicitly referring to their Roma origin. As commonly illustrated in the literature, this behaviour of a minority (keeping silent about one's origins as soon as one is integrated within society at large) is not unique to Roma.[23]

However, being an *invisible* Rom, does not mean that one's identity and culture is lost or that one is totally assimilated into the local culture. In fact, many integrated Roma continue to speak their language, maintain their traditions and laws, while being well integrated in their local country. It is worthwhile noting that some of the most visible Roma in Hungary or in Romania, for instance, are amongst the most assimilated ones, often not even speaking Romanes. They are all but indistinguishable from the general population in terms of culture and traditions, leaving only the ethno-racial heritage of being Rom as the single aspect of identification.

The Indian origins of Roma are often used as an argument for their non-European nature, to claim that they actually do not belong here, and should go back to India. This view, especially prevalent in

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[23] For a specific review on Roma, see Kligman, Gail (2001): "On the Social Construction of Otherness: Identifying the Roma in Post-Socialist Communities". In Review of Sociology, Vol. 7, N° 2, pp. 61-78 and references therein.

Central Europe (in the Czech and Slovak republics as well as Hungary) is a true historic falsification. First, most of the current Europeans are actual descendents of invaders: the Goths, who wandered through Europe, North Africa, and up to Crimea before settling in the countries they now live in, including France and Italy between the 3rd and 6th centuries;[24] the Slavs, who arrived in Europe in the 6th century;[25] the Bulgars who arrived shortly afterwards; and finally the Magyars (Hungarians) who invaded Central Europe during the last years of the 9th century. All are by now well-established Europeans, and as Roma probably arrived in the European part of the Byzantine Empire at the same time as the Magyar (if not earlier) should establish them as one of the European "*Völker*". The fact that the Roma identity (especially the deep Greek influence in the language and culture) is distinct from the other related people, such as the Middle Eastern *Domari* and the Armenian *Luri,* actually indicates that it is through their settlement in Europe that the Roma acquired their actual identity and culture.

That the Roma identity and origins still cannot seem to be accepted in 21st century Europe reflects the deep-rooted nationalist ideas of the 18th and 19th centuries. These cling to the concept of a country built around one culture, language, natural boundaries where there is no space for *others*. As a transnational minority whose arrival predates the creation of most of the countries, Roma never wanted their own country. This doesn't fit in the framework of these nationalistic ideas and has often been used to stigmatise Roma. Now that Europe moves toward a unified political structure, the trans-national nature of Roma's language and culture and at the same time their true European identity actually make Roma model citizens of the European Union.

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[24] Both the Franks and Lombards are Germanic tribes.

[25] See Cyril Mango (1980): "Byzantium, the Empire of the new Rom". Scribner's, New York.

3 Cultural Identity and Gender Dimension in Macedonia's Romany Community

Azbija Memedova, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation

"Minority women are vulnerable both as women and as members of minorities. They suffer a 'double disadvantage' first by virtue of their gender and second by virtue of their membership in a minority; in some cases they even suffer a 'triple disadvantage', when they live in marginalized areas, when they are forces to become refugees or migrants, or when they are victims of their own communities and families. While there is a clear evidence that women in general face similar problems in all parts of the world, that in no society women enjoy same opportunities as men do, specific concerns of minority women, Romany women as well, have not yet been studied and documented in a systematic way."

(Romany Women's Forum, Budapest, 2003: "Roma in Expanding Europe, Challenges for the Future")

3.1 Foreword

The identity of Roma, their position in societies, marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination against them by other groups, became a subject of numerous analyses and reports during in the last decade from people with both Roma and non-Roma origins. Even though the reasons and motives behind this are numerous, it is clear that the special conditions, needs, concerns, and human rights of Roma are increasingly a matter of international interest.

While some reports advocate the idea that the problems Roma face are primarily development challenges, others argue that the widespread discrimination faced by Roma sullies the democratic credentials of the European Union, some of its member states, and a number of countries aspiring to become member states.[1]

The adoption of a 2003 regional initiative called *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015* by eight governments from South-Eastern Europe (SEE), enlightened the need to consider both dimensions when approaching the so-called Roma issue: *the human development and human rights dimensions.*

Having the opportunity to be a pioneer in the so-called Romany women's movement (I still prefer the word activism instead of movement), I was privileged to organize and attend the very important 2003 gathering which marked the path for the next generations of Romany women activists. The Romany Women's Forum was organized within the framework of the Conference "Roma in Expanding Europe, Challenges for the Future",[2] when the Decade of Roma was announced. It is

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[1] Rorke, Bernard and Wilkens, Andre (2006): "Roma Inclusion: OSI's Lessons Learned in Roma Programming", Open Society Institute (OSI).

[2] The first high-level regional conference on Roma, "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future", was held in Budapest, Hungary, in July 2003. Participating countries were Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia. The conference was co-financed by the World Bank, the Open Society Institute (OSI), the European Commission, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the governments of Hungary, Finland, and Sweden. The conference resolved to: (a) establish a Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005- 2015, during which countries would focus on reducing disparities in key economic and human development outcomes for Roma; and (b) establish an international Roma Education Fund (REF). For further details see: Roma Education Fund (2004): "A Background Document prepared for the Roma Education Fund Donors' Conference", Paris. Available at: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/documents/RomaEducationFundDonorPaper.doc.

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important for two reasons among others. For the first time, Romany women activists from SEE could present documented facts about the worrying situation of Romany women in their countries before more than 100 high-level state representatives and call upon them to take urgent measures to improve the situation. Secondly, it was finally accepted that problems faced by most Romany women result from long-lasting marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion, rather than from their culture or tradition.

The international community's attention towards the important concerns of Romany women has increased since the 2003 Romany Women's Forum. Awareness of gender equality in the Romany community has improved significantly; the number of analyses, national action plans, and documents produced has increased, and so have projects and programs financially supported mainly by donors. How much has all of this affected the Romany community including Romany women? Do we need more time to see measurable changes, since voices from the ghettoes are the same as before this important conference and forum? Or is something else wrong?

3.2 Roma: The Case of Macedonia

With all their cultural distinctiveness, Roma face challenges similar to other minorities in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). What is unique and differentiates Roma from the rest of the population in this region is the "combined impact of the attempted extermination during World War II, oppressive assimilation policies pursued under communism, and a policy of *benign neglect*".[3]

The Republic of Macedonia gained its independence in 1991 after the breakup of Yugoslavia. With its parliamentary democracy system and elected president, Macedonia is a multiethnic society composed mainly of ethnic Macedonians (64%), ethnic Albanians (25%), Turks (3.8%), Roma (2%), Serbs (1.8%), Bosnians (0.8%), and Vlahs (0.5%). The main religions are Orthodoxy (70%) and Islam (30%).

The preamble of the Macedonian Constitution from 1991 explicitly mentioned Roma (among others) as equal citizens with all other "nationalities". But there was no doubt that ethnic Macedonians were the primary owners of the state.[4] The country failed to provide equal rights for and participation of all ethnicities after independence, creating opportunities for structural inequalities to persist between the ethnic groups. Ethnic tensions mounted, especially in the predominantly ethnic Albanian regions of the country, which bordered Albania to the west and Kosovo to the north. Eventually, armed clashes erupted in the spring of 2001 between Macedonian security forces and a formerly unknown group, the Albanian National Liberation Army. The signing of a peace treaty in Ohrid (known as the Ohrid Framework Agreement) ended the armed conflict in 2001. Although the reasons and actors behind the conflict remain debatable, the Ohrid peace agreement significantly changed the nature of the county: the large ethnic-Albanian population (25% according to the 2002 census) was granted more linguistic, political and representative rights than under the previous Constitution. However, although all ethnic groups in Macedonia were to benefit from this policy, it is the common perception of people living within Macedonia that the agreement had only the ethnic

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[3]   Memedova, Azbija; Plauth, Shayna; Boscoboinik, Andrea and Giordano, Christian (2005): "Roma's Identities in Southeast Europe: Macedonia". Ethnobarometer, Working Paper, N° 9 (www.ethnobarometer.org).

[4]   The former Yugoslavia had a highly regulated and hierarchical system of nations (narodi), national minorities (narodnosti) and ethnic groups (ethnicki grupi) - all but the ethnic groups being allowed certain levels of linguistic and cultural enhancements supported by the state. Vlahs, and Roma were situated in the lowest category of "etnicka grupa" with no special legal provision or protection given to its members.

Albanian population in mind. Therefore, although legally Roma (and other minorities) could benefit from many of these reforms, the Romani politicians lacked the skills and power to use the framework to push Romani visibility within state institutions.[5]

Most Roma in Macedonia as in other countries of the region were affected by their low educational and economic status in the previous system. The collapse of the economy, the market, and the social and health systems have extended the gap between Roma and non-Roma. This resulted in increased poverty and further marginalization and exclusion of an already disadvantaged people of Roma origin.

Roma issues in Macedonia touch upon all levels of society: political, social, educational, and economic. The challenges facing Roma are exacerbated by poor economic conditions in general and the lack of coordinated responses to improve the alarming conditions. Discrimination and existing prejudices towards Roma influence employment decisions, and common practice dictates that, when applicants have similar skills, preference is given to non-Roma candidates.

Keeping in mind that education is both a fundamental human right and a means of realizing other rights, the current deteriorating data on the educational status of Roma in Macedonia suggest that an untold number of children with Roma origin that cannot make choices about their lives cannot develop social and political awareness, or lead a dignified life.

3.3 Identity

In the context of the new democratization processes in SEE, the discussions around the Roma issue, as well as the increased interests in improving their socio-economic opportunities, have shifted the debate to further aspects: to the *Roma identity*, and then to *the political representation and the Roma leadership*. What are the ties between the identity of Roma and their political representation?

In a research paper on Romany identity in Macedonia,[6] which I wrote with Ms. Shayna Plaut, we argued that "Romani society is not homogenous, but that this fact is not unique to Romani society; rather, no ethnic group has a singular, monolithic identity. What is unique among Romani society in post-socialist (state-centred) Macedonia, is their lack of a singular political position (…)."

With reference to prominent authors and scholars, we have clearly identified as a problem the idea that *any* group of people should be asked to articulate *one stable* identity. Data from research on the identity of Roma in Macedonia and Bulgaria, have confirmed that *although Roma have a strong sense of belonging to the ethnic group "Roma", this is fed and nurtured on the micro (familial and community) level rather than on the macro (state) level.*

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the number of Romani parties and civic organizations in CEE has multiplied due to newly established conditions resulting from the recognition of the Roma as a legitimate minority.[7] After the fall of socialism in countries like Macedonia, Serbia, and Romania, Roma were given "space" to be politically recognized within the framework of ethno-politics

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[5]   In the latest Macedonian constitution, following the Ohrid Agreement, Roma have the status of constitutive people.

[6]   Plaut, Shayna and Memedova, Azbija (2005): "Blank Face, Private Strength: Romani Identity as Represented in the Public and Private Sphere". In Memedova, Azbija; Plaut, Shayna; Boscoboinik, Andrea and Giordano, Christian (2005): "Roma's Identities in Southeast Europe: Macedonia". In Ethnobarometer Working Paper Series, pp. 20. Available at: http://www.piemonteimmigrazione.it/PDF/ethnobarometer9.pdf.

[7]   Project on Ethnic Relations (2001): "Leadership, Representation and the Status of the Roma". Krakow, pp. 44. Available at: http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/PERKrakow.pdf.

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through official recognition in the constitution (as in Macedonia), recognition as national minorities with guaranteed individual and collective rights (as in Romania, 1989, Serbia, 2002), language rights, and access to media licenses. But having opportunities is not enough to become equals or be seen as influential partners in the decision-making process: Romani politicians started on an unequal footing. Thus they were either incapable or unwilling to use a nationalist strategy. Hence they have been seen as weak and easily manipulated political actors.

Therefore, the following tendencies must be understood:

- Newly formed states like Macedonia have become highly politicized countries where one's success on the "macro-societal" level relates directly to one's participation in and identification (most often through the use of census numbers) with the political sphere;

- Furthermore, the political sphere emerged as an "ethnic party system" and demands a unified (ethnic) public face;

- Roma were/are lacking strong political leaders and representation within the party system; therefore they have little access to public power and representation.

In this line of reasoning, the following arguments regarding the political position of Roma should be recognized:

1. Roma in Macedonia

   - are recognized within the legal framework as a nation with the same guaranteed equal rights of all other citizens;

   - speak the same mother tongue, participate in similar rituals, and fulfil the anthropological definition of having a strong culture;

   - are perceived (from outside) to have a weak identity and questionable culture, because most of the Romani population is alienated from the formal world of party politics and power; therefore they have not crafted a unified domestic political image.

2. The leadership of Roma became incisively diverse, representing a plethora of Romani NGOs and political organizations and parties. A common view holds that Roma NGO activists are well-trained, but there is weak political representation. Most educated Romani people are attracted by organizations in the civil sector, due to the lack of Roma political parties with well-defined structures and established democratic relationships within the parties.

3. On the other hand, numerous NGO leaders (usually seen as self-appointed) are criticised by the political leaders for "being only *service providers*, for losing touch with their Romany communities, putting self interest first, and *selling out* to the non-Roma".[8]

4. Both unsolved internal issues concerning legitimacy and representation as well as lack of coordination and political power very often directly influence the current lack of state intervention or more effective programs supported by the states and international community.

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[8] Ibid., pp. 44.

5. It becomes more and more obvious (from discussion in recent years among Roma activists) that problems faced by excluded and marginalized Roma communities require stronger political participation. This is the only way to advocate better opportunities for Roma in all spheres of societal life. It demands strategies that address both internal and external barriers to Roma political participation and development of Romani political leadership. There are some positive signs in this regard both nationally and internationally, but Roma political participation and representation is still far from being successful or influential.

6. Last, but not least, internal problems within the Roma community (NGOs vs. political parties), which are part of the modernization process in the newly established democratic countries, cannot and should not be any excuse for the current social status of most Roma. National governments are entitled and obliged to provide equal rights to all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, and other beliefs as prescribed in national and international law.

The discussion above demonstrates that issues and problems faced by most Roma are multiple. Any intervention that fails to consider the historical reasons for marginalization or exclusion and human rights as well as barriers that prevent most Roma from practicing them (the relationship between the state and the individual) would be worthless or have only short-term impact.

3.4 "Roma" Terminology

Being a Roma, a Romany woman, is not a skill. It is just one part of someone's personal identity. To be a social worker, a doctor, or a pilot describes a person's profession (a person who presumably has certification showing recognition of his/her education and training). Titles such as "Romani expert" or "Romani women's expert" should describe someone who has the proper education and relevant expertise on Roma (including women). So, is "Roma expert" indeed a profession? If this is the case, where can one be trained and certified? Here, for the sake of clarity, I underscore that I do not question someone's motivation to help those in need. But I do question the use of terms and terminology to describe someone, the work she/he does, the roots of the problems, etc. Our ethnic and/or national identity cannot and should not be affiliated with our own professional orientation. It is possible to be an expert on Romanes (Romani language), culture, or history while being of Roma or non-Roma origin.

The problems most Roma, Romani women, and children face should be approached from the viewpoint of both social (human development) and human rights. To do so, we need to understand the terms we use to define the problems. Take, for example, terms like "Romani education", or "Romani health". Once, when I reacted to such terms, I was told that "it is only a language thing," But is it? Have you ever seen a term like "Hungarian education" (in the case of Romania) or "Albanian education" (in the case of Macedonia)? I believe that when we speak of "Romani education", our focus is directed on "Roma", not on "education".

Looking at projects (strategies and approaches) related to "Romani education", one can see that the issue is dealt with mainly from a social point of view and standards prescribed by the majority. When analysing the main barriers that Romani children face in education, the focus of most educational projects is on 1) poverty (social category), 2) specific cultural or traditional elements like early marriages (very often used by the institutions to excuse the absence of any state action), 3) lack of language and socialisation skills, perceived again from the social point of view and by majority standards: "Roma children have to know the majority language and behave as prescribed" (as normally asserted by the majority), or 4) lack of parental motivation to send their children to school, because: "Roma parents are do not give priority to the education of their children" (as normally claimed by the non-Roma majority).

If we shift the focus from "Roma" to "education", we will have a better chance to see the education of Roma children from another perspective: that is, from the human-rights perspective. This would mean the right to education in their mother tongue, the right to learn about their own history and culture, or, to summarise, the right to education as a basic human right. Instead of dealing with education as such, many local projects deal with social issues that prevent most Romani children from achieving better school results.

The word "Roma" describes a national/ethnic category or belonging; it is not a social category. As a national and minority group, Roma have their rights guaranteed by each state that they live in and by international treaties including education rights in the human-rights field. Education is a field determined by domestic and international human-rights standards (again the human-rights field). If both categories have a common element (human rights), why are human rights-based educational projects for Roma (like those advocating their right to learn in their mother tongue) so hard to find? Equally hard to find are projects/programmes that call on the state to fulfil its constitutional obligations in providing equal opportunity for all children.

I believe that the words we use have unusual power. Therefore, I advocate reviewing the meaning of the Roma-related terms that we use and propose some changes: instead of "Romani education" one option would be "education of Romani children, women, and men"; instead of "Romani housing", "housing of families with Romani ethnic origin"; instead of "Romani women's education", "education of women and girls of Romani ethnic origin".

3.5 Women

Women of Romani origin face many problems common to majority women as well as to women from other minorities. What distinguishes this group is the intersectional/multiple discrimination that it faces: firstly, as women and then as members of a minority group, or as members of other disadvantaged groups (handicapped, single mothers, homosexuals, refugees, etc.). This should be the general point of departure for all our programmes and recommendations to improve the current situation.

Only by acknowledging the multiple barriers and their roots, can we achieve our goals. Yet, if we continue to present certain "women's problems" only as "Romani women's problems", we risk making the situation even worse. Take, for example, the problem of domestic violence: this is a common problem faced by women in general. When analyses present this problem as a "Romani women's issue" without making any effort to find existing links between intersectional discrimination (as result of overlapping oppression) and violence, then we could actually strengthen majority stereotypes such as: "Romani men beat their wives more often than men from other groups". The call for a sensitive and intersectional approach to Romani women's issues means looking for all the connections (both within the community and society) that prevent this group from exercising its basic human rights.

The main objective of the pilot project implemented in 2005 was to document intersectional discrimination faced by most Romani women in Macedonia. It was carried out in partnership with European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), UNIFEM, a local team of young women researchers of Romani ethnicity, and the Roma Centre of Skopje, a local organisation based in Skopje.

The modest efforts to prepare the shadow report and the testimony before the UN Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), present a significant moment for women's activism in Macedonia.

1. Firstly, the report confirms existence of multiple discrimination against women of Romani origin in the fields of education, health care, employment, and access to public services available for female victims of violence in Macedonia.

2. The UN CEDAW Committee urged the Macedonian government to "implement effective measures to eliminate discrimination against Romani women, and to enhance their enjoyment of human rights through all available means, including temporarily special measures… (in the above mentioned fields)".

3. Pressured by the lack of concrete official data and the committee's questions about Romani women during the UN session, the Macedonian Minister of Social Work and Labour who led the country's delegate at the time, stated in his final speech that, "the Macedonian Government needs to pay special attention to the multiple forms of discrimination faced by Romani Women in Macedonia."

A three-year National Action Plan to improve the situation of Romani Women in Macedonia was adopted by the government at the beginning of 2008, specifying objectives and fields of interventions. Unfortunately, almost nothing has been implemented, due mainly to the lack of specific state financial allocations and human resources.

If the government is only interested in giving lip service to develop and include one marginalized group and if political representatives of this group are not sensitive to gender issues, the opportunities for real changes will be limited or non-existent.

4   A Look behind the Curtain: Reflections on the "Decade of Roma Inclusion"

Angela Kocze, Hungarian Academy of Sciences
and
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Five years into the „*Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)*", the situation of Roma has not improved significantly. Instead, the current crisis of Roma as "losers during the economic transition" has been extended. Most Roma leaders assumed that the *Decade* promised prosperity and wealth brought about by the multilateral agencies. Yet it never reached a large majority of the Romani populations in Central and Eastern Europe. Even though the *Decade* has not provided concrete financial support for Roma, civil society leaders at least thought that it would generate the moral and political suasion to create various economic and social opportunities for their communities.

However, despite exhaustive rhetoric which has hardly led to a *Decade-wide methodology*, the *Decade* has offered a policy-making framework for member states and multilateral organizations. Another positive outcome of the *Decade* program may be that it kept the issue on the table of international organizations and member states, encouraging them to make a concerted effort to eliminate the social and economic gap between Roma and non-Roma in Europe. The *Decade* program's message made these member states and international organizations responsible for the plight of Roma. In other words, the Roma issue gained visibility and a Europe-wide coalition to change the Roma status.

At this project's mid-point, this article offers some reflections concerning the impact of the *Decade* on Romani activism. It emphasizes the limitations and paradoxes of Romani emancipation and social mobilizations.

4.1   The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)

Several scholars have described how the shock therapy used during the transition years in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) led in some cases to catastrophic unemployment and marginalization for many Roma.[1] Until very recently, the European policy-making NGO elite in post-socialist countries focused on Roma civil and political rights via legislative and "rule of la" reforms. But no significant policy thought developed on how to improve social and economic conditions in Romani communities. In 2003, when the idea of the Decade emerged at a high-level conference entitled "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future", it aimed to engage European Union institutions in Roma affairs.

The "Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)" began as a 10-year cooperative effort between 12 European governments. It aimed to improve the social and economic condition of Roma in profound recognition of the way economic shifts impacted a neo-liberal market economy in Europe's former socialist countries. The international initiative joined together numerous governmental and nongovernmental actors and was meant to "eliminate discrimination and to close the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society".[2] The Decade program was mainly launched by national governments and designed within the 10-year timeframe of 2005-2015 with a concrete focus on

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[1]   See Sigona, Nando and Trehan, Nidhi (2010): "Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe. Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization, and the Neoliberal Order". Palgrave/ Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 2.

[2]   Decade Declaration, available at http://www.romadecade.org/decade_declaration.

ensuring Roma equal access to education, housing, employment, and health care. This political commitment brings together countries[3] with large Roma populations and several local and international Roma civil society actors.

4.2 Comparing the „Decade for Women" with the „Decade for Roma"

The *"Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)"* is not the first multinational initiative aiming at addressing issues of marginalization and inequality of a certain minority group in a comprehensive manner. Presumably the *"Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)"* was inspired by the *"United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985)"*, with which the project aspires to share important aspects. Both initiatives were launched by multilateral agencies, and, while the targeted groups are different, the logic of both projects is similar: to combat discrimination and reduce inequalities.

Besides eliminating discrepancies between the majority and the target groups, the projects share the common aim of raising awareness about specific issues related to these groups and the various oppressions they face. Therefore, while the main goal in the case of the *Decade for Women* was to increase global awareness concerning inequality between the sexes, the driving force behind the *Roma Decade* is to undertake efforts toward eliminating discrimination against Roma communities and combating inequalities between Roma and non-Roma members of society.

Turning to the distinct aspects of the two projects, beside differences concerning the target groups (first the women, then the Roma minority), another feature that cannot be compared refers to the statistics: while we have gender statistics, we lack reliable ethnic data. To overcome this handicap, ample methods must be found to stimulate Roma participation in policy-making and more sophisticated policy tools must be developed to address ethnic inequality in the way women's agencies addressed gender inequality.

Even if the ambitious goal of the project targeting women as a group facing inequalities closely resembles the main goal of the *Roma Decade of Inclusion*, the two initiatives might lead to different developments in terms of visible outcomes. Therefore, while the instrument of *gender mainstreaming* enabled women to integrate their concern in policy-making mechanisms, inequalities faced by many Roma seem too complex and controversial. To date, projects that aim to include this minority have lagged far behind timelines leading to a so-called *Roma mainstreaming.*

Looking to results, Charlotte Bunch notes that the Decade for Women "proved to be an enormous catalyst for women's organizing, providing resources, space, and legitimization of the issue nationally, as well as bringing women together regionally and globally."[4] In other words, as Leticia R. Shahani, Secretary-General of the World Conference, remarks, "the Decade has caused the invisible majority of humankind - the women - to be more visible on the global scene."[5] The Decade for Women substantially improved participation of women in various international and national organizations, mainstreaming women's issues in various policies. Unfortunately, as we will see, this is not the case with the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

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[3]   The 12 countries currently taking part in the Decade are Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain. For a detailed survey on the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, see http://www.romadecade.org/.

[4]   Bunch, Charlotte (2009): "Women's Rights and Gender at the United Nations: The Case for a new Gender Equality Architecture". United Nations, pp. 14. Available at: http://www.womenalliance.org/pdf/Bunch_GEA-UN_Eng.pdf.

[5]   See United Nations Decade for Women 1976-1985. Available at:
       http://www.unostamps.nl/subject_united_nations_decade_for_women_1976_1985.htm.

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4.3 Identifying Challenges, Looking for Solutions

Recent developments pointed out two alarming aspects concerning policies to be addressed in order to improve the Roma situation.

The first aspect to be discussed refers to *the modest participation of Roma in European programs*, which reveals a worrying reality illustrated by the very incapacity of Roma NGOs to acquire EU funds and to manage EU programs.

The second concern refers to the *need to redesign policies that aim to combat the socio-economic marginalization of Roma by taking into account the increasing racist rhetoric* and attitude against this group. Both aspects rely on reflections about progress (or lack of it) after five years of the *Roma Decade* and will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

The incapacity of Roma NGOs to gain EU funds

Critics of the current *Decade* often refer to the fact that the program fails to provide a means of acquiring EU grants. Moreover it does not provide technical or professional preparation for Roma NGOs to increase their absorption capacity.

Looking at Roma civil society, there are worrying aspects including the lack of human and financial capacity for even accessing European programs or for articulating Roma problems at the national and international level. That has led to the sad situation that most Roma NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe could not apply for EU funds because they could not fulfil the required criteria. It is no coincidence that one criticism of the *Roma Decade* is its failure to empower a number of Roma leaders. Instead it relegated them to serve as information providers for non-Roma experts. A handful of selected Romani activists are visible in the *Roma Decade* framework, but most key players or negotiators at the table are non-Roma. Therefore, while the *Decade* program's entry point sets very specific conditions to be fulfilled for use of EU structural funds, studies show paradoxically enough that Roma NGOs are hindered from taking part in projects designated for their own community.

Recommendation: empowering Roma civil society

Developments in recent years underscore an urgent call to *first invest EU funds that give Roma NGOs* the ability to benefit from EU programs and generally pay substantial attention to capacity building within Roma civil society. Roma NGOs need targeted capacity-building projects, and the *Decade for Roma Inclusion* could design them for these NGOs. Roma capacity building must be developed at various levels.

The first would be local, encouraging and enabling local Romani NGOs to express their own communities' interest and initiating social and political change locally. To do this requires professional and financial support.

The second tier lies at the national level. It should mainly encourage and support Romani professionals to work with various ministries and get involved in decision-making bodies and institutions.

The third level - the international one - aims to support Romani experts and professionals in working with multilateral institutions and becoming involved in international policy making. This requires systemic capacity building and financial investments in these future leaders. The *Decade* program could help open the doors of international agencies at least to involve Roma in their policies and also employ them as experts in their institutions.

The worrying socio-political status of Roma

The justification logic imposed by the *Decade* program seems to be gradually overtaken descriptively by the European Commission. However, this body is still reluctant to translate goals into policy terms. Where does this reluctance come from? Probably it lacks the necessary methodological conditions for statistically based policy making (for example, ethnic data); moreover it lacks the political leadership to make decisions and to design meaningful policy interventions aiming at the full realization of *Decade* program goals on the social status of Roma.

Jasminka Dedić, a researcher from Slovenia, made an interesting observation in this regard: "What is particularly striking in relation to EU policies on Roma," she said, "is that their emergence in policy documents coincides with the increased attention of EU policies to the issue of multiple discriminations/ disadvantages." She pointed out that this "usually denotes the intersection of *multiple discriminations*".[6]

The European Commission (EC) increasingly makes verbal commitments as demonstrated in every Roma-related document. These request governments and civil society to "use all means to improve their (Roma) inclusions".[7] Hence there is explicit willingness, yet the EC does not know how and where to intervene.

Turning to the current situation, the economic crisis and the previous economic shift to a market economy impacted our societies' most vulnerable groups in both social and economic terms. Roma are overrepresented in these socially and economically deprived groups. Moreover, the massive reorganization of political blocs along national lines created extreme nationalist movements. They gained parliamentary seats in some countries (in Hungary, for example), and their political targets single out a new public enemy: namely Roma. So within this strong European economic and political constellation, the odds do not favor Roma. It is hard to combat ethnic bias without the support of European citizens.

Recommendation: A new inclusive approach

Since EU policy already recognized the "multiple discrimination" faced by Roma as a distinct group, new directions can be developed through the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* to improve the Roma situation. One must also consider the new waves of racism and the potential for conflict within ethnically mixed communities. Thus the problem of *multiple discrimination* that Roma communities must confront, involves a variety of social factors: *education, employment, housing, and health issues*.

Mapping out policies that take "multiple discrimination" into account, future initiatives might overcome the handicap posed by the lack of ethnic data through use of research on the socio-economic status of each member state's population. These studies - especially in the post-communist countries - clearly show that Roma are overrepresented in categories of "extreme poverty". Consequently, if we target the lower 5% of the population, we are quite likely to find Roma within this target group.

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[6]   Dedić, Jasminka (2009): "Roma in European gender equality policy debates: intersectionalized and feminized". Available at: www.quing.eu/files/.../Roma_intersectionality_JDedic_290909.doc.

[7]   EU Roma Policy Coalition (2010): "Toward a European Policy on Roma Inclusion". Available at http://erpc.wieni.be/towards-an-EU-Roma-Policy.pdf.

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Another characteristic (particularly in the post-communist countries) is the nexus between social and economic deprivation on one hand and regional/micro-regional and even local under-development on the other. In other words, if we target socially and economically deprived ghetto areas, which are definable by socio-economic characteristics, we will likely find target groups in which Roma are overrepresented.

Turning to such interventions, we could realistically design a complex program in defined territories that involves human and infrastructural capacity building. Furthermore these targeted policies contribute to EU social and regional cohesion policies. And since we already agree that Roma face multiple discrimination and since the intervention steps required are designed to be comprehensive, an *inclusive, territorially (locally) based approach appears necessary.*

This new EU policy departure might make sense, since it reaches out to Roma as a previous target group, but still embraces an approach sensitive to conflict that avoids excluding the non-Roma population facing challenges similar to those confronting Roma living in the same area. Therefore, a crucial issue that *Decade* methodology should develop would be to show policy makers, Romani activists, and politicians how to frame the *conjunction of chronic poverty and racism.* This would have important consequences for policies developed to address Roma issues.

With mainstream support, the *Decade* program might gain efficiency in addressing two related aspects: *eliminating sharp economic differences* on one hand and *tempering extremist political forces* on the other. If an appropriate approach to these aspects is lacking, it will lead to perpetuating the structural discrimination manifested daily by the increase in hate speech, violence, and racist acts against members of the Roma community.

4.4 Conclusion

Until now the *Decade* program has contained declarations from governments and international organizations but no mechanisms to realise the many promises. It became clear after five years that the *Decade* program's existing framework must be adjusted, that the policies must become more strategy-oriented and proactive.

The *Decade of Roma Inclusion* must develop further frameworks with methods aimed at planning and supporting Roma capacity building and broader participation. A first step could be to include Roma in the staff of various organizations and allow them to become familiar with appropriate tools and methods to address the challenges their communities face.

At the same time, the *Decade* program could use the remaining five years for political leverage. It could provide a means to change the EU's structural funds mechanism and to increase awareness among Roma NGO activists and policy makers of undiscovered opportunities. In this respect, the midpoint of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* is an important moment to reevaluate the project's agenda and the current exclusionary (and sometimes discriminatory) policy framework in *Decade* program countries.

5 Roma of Kosovo - Escape, Return, or Stay?

Rainer Mattern, Swiss Refugee Council

The situation of Roma in Kosovo is often compared with their generally desolate situation in other countries of South-Eastern Europe. However, there is a significant difference. Brutal and deliberate attacks and expulsion of the Roma population has taken place twice in Kosovo since 1999. The Roma of Kosovo have not forgotten this.

5.1 Background

During the wars of the 1990s in Yugoslavia, the Swiss Refugee Council dealt mainly with issues related to persecution, escape, and mass displacement of Bosnian and later Albanian refugees. The Kosovo conflict escalated in the spring of 1999 and led to ethnically motivated mass displacement of the Albanian population. Those displaced first sought protection in neighbouring regions of Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro. However, the institutional capacities for receiving a huge number of displaced persons were soon overly strained, and it became clear that international assistance was urgently needed to manage the crisis.

Tens of thousands of displaced persons fled to West European countries including Switzerland. Altogether 58,000 people came to Switzerland during the Kosovo conflict. The flight from Kosovo of most Roma took place later when -with the Albanian shift in power - the ethnic groups of Kosovo moved into focus and minorities became the target of renewed displacement in the summer of 1999. Concern arose for members of the Serb minority, other Slavic-speaking groups, and the Roma communities. Since public attention focused mainly on Serbian and Albanian groups, little was known about the fate of other minorities of Kosovo before and during the war. The Roma were accused collectively of collaborating with the Serbian regime during the war.

Those Roma who had left Kosovo before the conflict were not necessarily visible as Roma. Arriving in Western European countries (especially during and after the conflict), many identified themselves as Albanians. This identification during asylum proceedings was not an attempt to deceive the authorities but corresponded to the prevailing logic. Many of them spoke Albanian and could also be exposed to persecution by Serbs. On the other hand, no need existed before 1999 for the Roma minority to fear violence or expulsion by the Albanian population. Under Serbian rule, it was quite clear during the asylum proceedings that Albanian-speaking Roma could only invoke the risk of becoming targets of persecution by Serbs.

But paradoxically, after the war, the situation took a dramatic turn for Roma and other ethnic minorities of Kosovo. Then the former victims, the Albanians, became the persecutors. Radical Albanians accused the Roma collectively of collaborating with the Serbian militia during the war, and new violence erupted against entire Roma communities.

Those who lived abroad had to explain that the change of power did not work in their favour and that a return to Kosovo had become even more dangerous, since Roma became targets of ethnically motivated persecution by Albanian extremists. More Roma in Kosovo were now forced to flee once more to Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and other European countries. This time they no longer identified themselves as Albanians, but as members of one of the most persecuted minorities in Kosovo: Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptians.

Fragmentation of Roma communities into Roma, Ashkali, or Egyptian is a recent development[1] corresponding to the self-designation of these communities. Despite its denomination, the Egyptian minority in Kosovo has no roots in today's Egypt but in a Greek colony called little Egypt. The term Ashkali was unknown before the break-up of Yugoslavia. The Egyptians and Ashkali are Roma subgroups, and Albanians mostly recognize them as Roma. The fact that many of them no longer speak Romanes hinders them from identifying themselves as Roma, but not from marrying Roma.

5.2 The Roma Situation before the War

Before the war, many Kosovo Roma lived in the cities, mostly in Roma-Mahallas (neighbourhoods) or as farmers in their houses in the countryside. The number of Roma living in Kosovo before the war remains the subject of speculation and contradictory data. A 1991 census arrived at a number of less than 45,000 Roma. Yet this number cannot be true, since far less than most Roma identified themselves as such at the time. On the other hand, both the Albanian and Serbian side had an interest in indicating a population higher than that of the other side. Roma were under pressure to identify themselves either as Serbs or Albanians. More accurate estimates assume that about 150,000 Roma (including Ashkali and Egyptians) had lived in Kosovo before the war.[2] 30,000 of these left Kosovo and fled as refugees to Western Europe before the ethnically motivated attacks and mass expulsions.[3]

The Milosevic power politics not only worsened the situation of Albanians, but also impeded Roma communities. After the 1989 abolition of the Kosovo's autonomous status, the Roma fell more and more into the crossfire between Albanians and Serbs. While Milosevic's ambition pictured Kosovo as a multi-ethnic region at the expense of the Albanian majority, the Roma were pressured to refuse the Serbian option, (for example, the election boycott started by the Albanian population). Conversely, it was in the Albanian interest to register as many Roma as Albanians as possible during the census - a situation very suitable for Albanian speaking Roma, especially in the case of *Ashkali* and *Egyptians*. The Roma communities' Albanian or Serbian language skills depended on proximity to ethnic Albanians (Prizren and Peja) or Kosovo Serbs (North Mitrovica, Gracanica).

However, independently of the Kosovo Roma's self-identification within the Albanian or Serbian populations, they remained *the Gypsies* - the Albanian language used mostly deprecating terms for Roma, like *Gabel* or *Maxhup*.

5.3 Displacement

Following the NATO intervention of 24 March - 10 June 1999, massive displacements of Roma in Kosovo took place. Yet the international community concentrated after the intervention on the return of some 1,5 million displaced Kosovo Albanians. While mass graves were discovered daily, local Albanian extremists started new ethnic cleansing campaigns against the Serbian minority, other Slavic-speaking groups (Gorani, Bosnjaks), and the Roma communities.

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[1] See Laederich, Stéphane (2006): "Kosovo 2006: The current situation of Rroma". Available at: http://www.rroma.org/reports_nav/reports/kosovo_2006.html.

[2] Tcherenkov, Lev and Laederich, Stéphane (2004): "The Rroma". Schwabe Verlag, Basel, Vol. 1, pp. 205.

[3] Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (1999): Until the very last "Gypsy" had fled the country. The mass expulsion of Roma and Ashkali from Kosovo. Available at: http://www.gfbv.it/3dossier/rom-dt.html.

Therefore, 4,000 Roma were displaced in June 1999 alone - and only in the region of Prishtina. From the estimated 1,700 Roma and Ashkali in Vushtrri/Vucitern, only 70 people remained after mid-July 1999. At the same time, the Roma district in Mitrovicë/Kosovska Mitrovica was burned down.

Under the threat of violence, the Roma had to leave their homes and settlements immediately, before properties were impounded and homes or entire neighbourhoods were burned down. These attacks and plundering were often justified by the explanation that stolen Albanian property had to be retrieved.

Besides confiscation of property, the violent methods of expelling Roma communities included rapes and killings. Most Roma fled to Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro - some of them to Western Europe. Overall, 235,000 people left Kosovo. Estimates show that only about 50,000 members of the Roma communities live in Kosovo today.[4]

According to the Kosovo government, 45,000 to 50,000 Roma from Kosovo live in Serbia, of whom 23,000 are registered as displaced persons.[5] About 35,000 members of Kosovo's Roma communities reside in Germany as (usually rejected) asylum seekers. About 10,000 live as refugees in Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Roma were victims of a conflict that was not theirs. Even if the Serbian side manipulated some Roma at the beginning of the war, the arrival of NATO troops and withdrawal of Serbian units conjured up suspicion against the whole Roma community. It was accused of collaboration with the Serbs and involvement in looting during the war.

The 1999 war and its consequences were a crucial turning point for the Roma situation in Kosovo. From this point onward, Roma security and freedom of movement as well as access to social services became very precarious. Attacks on ethnic minorities remained unexplained in most cases, while a general atmosphere of impunity dominated the post-war period. In this context, no ethnic group faced such poor prospects for integration into Kosovo society as the Roma communities.

Many Roma problems owed to the fact that a large part of their population was unregistered or could not register. Consequently, their land had not been registered either. Accordingly, it was difficult to carry proof of ownership after the war. Furthermore, the retreating Serb authorities took away the index of persons, a situation which disadvantaged Kosovo's overall population. However, it was much easier for the Albanian majority to prove its identity before international or newly created Kosovo institutions. In this atmosphere of institutional chaos, the Roma were denied many rights, further condemned to marginalization, and must struggle for subsistence. This situation has not changed much nowadays.

At a time when general improvement in the minority situation was expected in March 2004, the most brutal inter-ethnic violence since the war exploded in Kosovo. The drowning of Albanian children, whose deaths were attributed to unknown Serbians, triggered riots. More than 4,000 Serbs and Roma were expelled yet again - in part from their newly rebuilt houses.[6]

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[4]   Tcherenkov and Laederich, ibid.

[5]   Republic of Kosovo, Office of the Prime Minister (2008): "Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2009-2015". For details, see roma-kosovoinfo at http://www.roma-kosovoinfo.com/index.php.

[6]   Swiss Refugee Council (2004): "Update zur Situation der ethnischen Minderheiten nach den Ereignissen vom März 2004". For details see http://www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch.

5.4 The Situation of Returning Roma today

Despite strong international presence in post-war years, many more Roma from Kosovo have emigrated than have returned. European states urge a return to Kosovo of tens of thousands of Roma refugees, arguing that Kosovo has become an independent state, and the security situation now has improved. While circumstances have improved for the Albanian population, who can now live without Serbian repression, the situation appears complicated for the Roma minority - those who have to return to Kosovo after years abroad being in the most dire straits.

Along with other Western states, Switzerland signed an agreement with Kosovo concerning the return of displaced persons and refugees.[7] While these agreements cover all technical aspects of Kosovar repatriation, they ignore the special situation of minorities.

Even prior to this agreement, five non-governmental organizations in Switzerland (Swiss Refugee Council, Amnesty International, Society for Threatened Peoples, Rroma Foundation, and Human Rights.ch / MERS) have expressed worries that forced returns will occur without considering the particularly vulnerable situation of the Roma minority. Therefore, the NGOs demanded that the authorities waive repatriation of Roma from Kosovo, as long as they cannot return in safety and dignity.[8]

Yet asylum authorities are unprepared for this goal, even if a certain reluctance prevails concerning the number and the extent of Roma ethnics returning to Kosovo. Nevertheless, while international support is linked mainly to the return of refugees, the government of Kosovo is too weak to oppose the demands of European countries. In fact, the young state is under international pressure to accept ethnic minority returnees from Western countries without having either the capacity to guarantee their security or the means to accommodate them. Though a document outlines a strategy for integrating Roma returnees, given the current conditions, fears arise that this will remain only a piece of paper.[9]

Talks with Kosovar politicians and representatives of the international community make clear that there is no real hope in the foreseeable future for sustainable returns and integration conditions for Roma living abroad.[10] Interviews with policy makers also suggest that public authorities (particularly in communities that may be responsible for receiving the returnees) not only lack financial means but also institutional know-how and information. They have no idea what to do with all the returnees.[11]

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[7] See "The Agreement of 3 February 2010 between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo on readmission of persons residing illegally in Switzerland", entered into force on 1 June 2010. Available at: http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c0_142_114_759.html.

[8] See the media release of the Swiss Refugee Council from 28 September 2009: "Wegweisungsstopp für Roma aus Kosovo". Available at: http://www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch/news/medienmitteilungen/wegweisungsstopp-fuer-roma-aus-kosovo/medienmitteilung-vom-28.-september-2009/?searchterm=Medienmitteilung Roma.

[9] Republic of Kosovo, Office of the Prime Minister (2008): "Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2009-2015". For details, see roma-kosovoinfo at http://www.roma-kosovoinfo.com/index.php.

[10] Swiss Refugee Council (2009): "Zur Rückführung von Roma", pp.12.

[11] See the interview with the Ombudsman of Kosovo, Sami Kurteshi, in Der Freitag, 29 July 2010: "Ich sehe nicht, wie dieser Staat helfen könnte". Available at: http://www.freitag.de/wochenthema/1030-ich-sehe-nicht-wie-dieser-staat-noch-menschen-helfen-k-nnte; or the interview with Kosovo's Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Nenad Rasic, at ZDF (17 January 2010): "Die Situation wird sich verschärfen". Available at: http://www.monalisa.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/14/0,1872,8013102,00.html.

Furthermore, coordination between the government and local authorities lacks efficiency. Beside the fact that communities are unprepared for such tasks, there is generally no budget for integrating ethnic minorities. In some cases where financial means are planned for integrating the minorities, these funds are often shifted to serve the majority population's interests.[12]

There is no strategy for accommodating returnees, and housing remains one of the largest challenges for returned Roma. In most cases, they must find their own relatives if any remain in Kosovo to accommodate them. If there are no relatives or other social networks, the trend is mostly towards new emigration to neighbouring states.

A study on Roma forced to return from Germany has shown that they have no chance to start a new existence in their former places of residence. In most cases, their houses no longer exist, nor does a Roma community still exist. Consequently they feel too exposed and fear ethnically motivated violence.[13]

Beside the terror of racist attacks, returnees often fear the futility of securing any source of income for their existence. Inadequate and scarce living space must be shared with several people (mostly relatives) - if they live in Kosovo. Since the means of subsistence can only be secured by using a wide social network, the family and neighbours are often the only source of support. This situation leads to a so-called *secondary migration* away from the place of origin, where social assistance or welfare can usually be sought. In most cases the approach leads to miserable camps in neighbouring states or back again to Western Europe.

In spite of the international rhetoric referring to Kosovo as a "safe country" in order to justify forced repatriations, one thing is obvious: It cannot be claimed seriously that the return of Roma individuals to Kosovo occurs with them retaining their security and dignity.

The Ombudsman of Kosovo, Sami Kurteshi, referred to this alarming situation in an interview: "I honestly do not see how this country, with its unemployment rate, in this situation, could still help people who return to Kosovo". He further explains: "The Roma are in Kosovo in the worst situation, be it economic, be it political, be it cultural. The main reason for this circumstance is that they have no strong lobby. They have no state in Europe, which could protect them. The Serbs have Serbia; the Albanians have Albania; while the Albanians in Macedonia have the Albanians in Kosovo. Roma (…) have no state that stands behind them and asks: *What happens to these people?*"[14]

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[12] Discussion with the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Kosovo, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, on 7 September 2009.

[13] Dünnwald, Stefan (Pro Asyl) (2009): „Bericht zur Lebenssituation abgeschobener Roma, Ashkali und Angehörigen der Ägypter-Minderheit im Kosovo. For details, see: http://www.proasyl.de.

[14] Kurteshi interview, ibid.

6 Working *for* or *with* Roma? The Case of lead-contaminated Roma Camps in Northern Kosovo

Nadia Imgrüt, Society for Threatened Peoples

The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) is an independent international human rights organization representing a strong voice for minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide. Our most important activities concern protection of minorities and threatened peoples, promotion of human rights, and the fight against human rights violations. We achieve this by creating public awareness and informing key national and international stakeholders about the situation of threatened peoples, since it hardly appears in the daily press or on the political agenda. We also carry out campaigns and projects for these people's protection and well-being. Furthermore, we promote contacts between members of threatened peoples and minorities in various countries and among the Swiss public. We provide extensive documentation on various issues regarding our field of work for any people interested in minorities and human rights in general.

This paper, based on a speech at the KOFF Roma Roundtable on 23 June 2010, provides an insight into the field experience we gained in the infamous lead-contaminated Roma camps of northern Kosovo. After running an awareness campaign for several months, we not only changed our strategy and transformed the campaign into a project, but also changed our approach from one of work *for* Roma into one of work *with* Roma.

Since we started our campaign with almost no resources, we had to develop it on a step-by-step basis. At some point the fact that STP Switzerland is a very small and independent organization turned out to be an advantage: all the staff members involved were accustomed to constantly reconsidering the situation and to adapting the current strategy to changing parameters on the ground.

6.1 Background

At the end of 2008, an American activist asked STP Switzerland to support his campaign - which until then had been supported mainly by STP Germany - concerning the fate of about 550 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (in this article referred to as Roma), who were still living in lead-contaminated camps in northern Kosovo.

During summer of 1999 about 8,000 inhabitants of a Roma neighbourhood in southern Mitrovica fled to northern Kosovo after being persecuted and threatened by Albanians. Their houses were completely destroyed. Most of the homeless left for refugee camps in either Montenegro or Serbia. The poorest of them remained in Northern Kosovo and the UNHCR knowingly put them in so-called 'temporary' camps on highly toxic land near the Trepca mines in northern Mitrovica.

They received an official promise that they only would have to stay there for 45 days. But those 45 days have now turned into 11 years. Children rapidly developed health problems, and UN health officers called for evacuation in their November 2000 report. Numerous sets of blood lead level (BLL) tests were carried out. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated in November 2004 that an immediate evacuation and medical treatment was necessary, repeating a call from 2000. Some test results, especially those involving young children, registered the highest levels ever recorded in medical history. In addition to lead, all children had extremely high levels of arsenic and other heavy metals. According to doctors who have visited these camps, every infant now conceived in the camps will be born with irreversible brain damage. Independent health experts have confirmed that lead poisoning contributes to a life of both mental and physical sickness, shortens the life span, and causes permanent organ and brain damage, particularly to young children.

During recent years, new families moved to the camps, mostly returnees from Serbia and Montenegro but also rejected asylum seekers from Western European countries.

In 2008 the UN handed over administration and responsibility for the camps to the Kosovo government, which was highly challenged by this problem. The new administration lacked the finances to close the camps and offer an alternative to the concerned families. Also, due to the still existing Serbian parallel structures in northern Kosovo, it had no authority over the land where the camps were located. Furthermore, one had to deal with at least four different camp leaders, each with different interests and who could seldom agree between themselves. Every person and organization dealing with this situation in one way or the other quickly concluded that the lead-camps issue was unique in its complexity and despair. One should really keep the situation's complexity in mind when trying to learn lessons from our experience while working with these camps.

6.2 Campaign for Roma

STP Switzerland decided to join the campaign to put pressure on the main stakeholders trying to raise more public awareness internationally about these scandalous camps. We called for immediate evacuation as well as adequate medical treatment. STP Switzerland set up a strategic meeting in March 2009 and invited the above-mentioned American activist and some other advocates already engaged in the campaign from the Kosovo Medical Emergency Group (KMEG). Afterwards, we formed a coalition with KMEG, and STP took over the role as the campaign's main coordinator. Within a few months, our coalition gained the attention of some important actors. It was obvious that the issue had finally become a real topic in all international talks taking place in Kosovo. The pressure on the Kosovo government grew continuously, and it officially identified the camps as a scandal in late spring of 2009, declaring itself as the party to solve the problem as soon as possible. In summer of the same year the Kosovo government came up with its first project plans.

In March 2009, STP Switzerland also travelled to Kosovo to get a more accurate picture of the whole situation. It found on this first trip that the issue was obviously much more complex than assumed. Until then our main source of information was the American activist working on the ground; we had no direct access to the Roma. This fact slowly turned into a serious problem - especially because all information we received was filtered and often failed to reflect the Roma's real plight. We had to reconsider the American activist's role and concluded in due time that he was not an independent consultant for the Roma, as we had assumed, but rather one whose aims were not always very transparent. At this point we realized that our campaign had indeed emerged into a project *for* Roma (if at all) rather than a project *with* them.

6.3 From Work *for* Roma to Work *with* Roma

During our second Kosovo journey in September 2009, we met many different stakeholders - this time without including the American activist but with more direct contact to the Roma in the camps. We quickly realized that the situation in the camps was even more complex than previously imagined. Confronted by many complaints from the Roma, we recognized the urgent need to change our strategy.

Regarding the different stakeholders, we concluded that most of them seemed to do some work *for* the concerned Roma, but almost nobody worked *with* them. There was also a major gap in communication between the Roma and the other stakeholders.

Even before our second journey we had studied the situation carefully, trying to identify potential Roma who could join our campaign. We quickly got in touch with a young and well-informed Rom who had been working for years in the camps' administration. He did not live in the camps, but his work brought him in close contact with the inhabitants, and he had gained their full trust. This

person suddenly gave us the opportunity to exchange thoughts and views directly with camp inhabitants. After an intense workshop in Switzerland with Kosovo Roma, we were prepared to define our new strategy and focus much more on work *with* Roma. We quickly reduced our cooperation with KMEG and the American activist to a minimum, focusing instead on supporting the young Rom mentioned, who could directly identify and support the interests of the concerned families within the camps. At the same time we altered our focus, changing from an awareness campaign to a support project.

With the help of this young Rom, we could finally support a highly motivated STP representative in Kosovo who was doing a great job in analyzing the situation on the ground while actively supporting our main goal: to give the unheard Roma in these camps a stronger voice. Presently, cooperation between our office and our new representative in Kosovo is running well - while a trustworthy and direct link to the camp inhabitants is now guaranteed. The information we receive from him has proved to be authentic and free of manipulation. This helps us to gain a realistic picture of the situation on the ground, and we now have a much better understanding of the sometimes confusing and contradictory wishes of camp inhabitants.

Our new representative was not only warmly welcomed within the Roma community. He has also been well received by other stakeholders and has succeeded in facilitating contact between them and the members of the Roma community. With this new approach to the Roma community, we also became aware of the difficulty of identifying their real intentions and - in this regard - of assisting them in developing an appropriate strategy to overcome their huge problems. It became also obvious that the rather weak sense of strategic cooperation within the Roma community, their not very transparent structures, and their permanently changing opinions were responsible in part for their sad fate. Today we must face the fact that - despite our very close connection to these Roma communities - we still lack effective instruments to help minimizing these obstacles efficiently.

6.4 Current Situation

Implementation of the resettlement plans has now started, and the first 48 families have already been moved back to their original neighbourhood. The well-founded hope exists that the remaining 99 families will be resettled by spring 2011 and the camps will be closed. This can be considered a big success. However, it is not yet clear if all families can or will want to profit from this opportunity to return to their old neighbourhood. At least 10 families can or do not want to return to the Roma-Mahalla for several reasons,[1] so another solution must be found for them. Furthermore, there widespread scepticism abounds concerning concrete implementation of medical treatment.

6.5 Conclusion

As we could see, work *for* Roma involves a lot of difficulties. The most problematic one of our campaign to work *for* Roma was filtering information. After we realized that stakeholders on the ground actually worked *for* Roma, we decided to offer an opportunity to work *with* Roma.

It is obvious that a project or campaign must be based on unbiased information from the ground, and those developing the strategy need as direct a link as possible to those affected. In general we can conclude that an earlier focus on work *with* Roma would have been desirable for our campaign as well as for our project work.

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[1] I.e.: they did not live there before the war, political reasons, etc.

The work *with* Roma described above must also be considered in a wider context, apart from the project on lead-contaminated camps in Mitrovica. Supporting a motivated young Rom with the potential to become an important player regarding the Roma question in Kosovo could also contribute to improving the general situation of minorities in Kosovo. We hope for continuing cooperation with our representative and also to implement other projects *with* Roma in Kosovo.

7 Caritas Switzerland in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH)

Monique Frey and Gerhard Meili, Caritas

7.1 The Caritas Projects in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

Kosovo - Reconstruction of Roma Prizren district and integration of children

Around 35.000 Roma, Egyptians and Ashkali (here Roma) live under very poor conditions in Kosovo. The main problems are precarious living and hygiene conditions, little integration in the official school system, and very poor employment opportunities. Caritas is working with two Roma communities in Prizren and Gjakove.

About 5,000 Roma live in the municipality and town of Prizren within urban and semi-urban areas. Their living conditions are somehow better than for the entire Roma community in Kosovo. Several Roma NGOs and the municipality cooperate in principle, but school integration and employment in Prizren remain a challenge. While about 6,000 live in Gjakove, Caritas only cooperates with a very marginalized Roma community *Ali Ibra*. It accounts for more than 700 members just beside the city dumping site.

Caritas has supported the Roma community in Prizren since 2002. Some 56 Roma houses were rebuilt or renovated by 2005. Since then, Caritas has continued with the community building and infrastructure working approach in cooperation with three local Roma NGO partners: *Initiative 6, Durmish Aslano,* and *Foleja*.

Since 2005 a Caritas project called Minority Assistance and Returnees (MAAR) has aimed at social integration of the entire Roma community, community building, improved community infrastructure, and inter-ethnic cooperation at the municipality level. Initiative 6, Kosovo, and the municipality have cooperated since 2007 with a separate Caritas pre-school education project to renovate and operate two pre-school centres (Molekuqet 1 and 2) near the Mati Logareci primary school. Since 2008 eight pre-school classes have been run with four Albanian and Roma teachers apiece and about 180 children (about 135 Albanian, 30 Roma, 10 Turkish, and five Bosnian children). Caritas and its partners recognize the functional importance of this inter-ethnic approach and cooperation with a pilot project in Kosovo.

An important step for the entire Roma community was achieved when the national government in December 2008 approved a nationwide strategy for Roma integration in Kosovo dealing mainly with fields like infrastructure, education, employment, gender, and political participation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) - Housing project for Roma in the Canton of Sarajevo

The Roma are the largest minority in BiH, but they were not addressed in the Treaty of Dayton, which is considered to be the constitution of modern BiH. Thus they lack the relevant rights corresponding to a national minority. For instance, it is impossible for a Roma to become a member of the BiH presidency, although all other rights are granted according to the laws on minorities ratified in 2005. These mention the Roma as one of BiH's 17 minorities.

During the last pre-war census in1991 barely 10.000 people registered as Roma. Even at that stage most Roma preferred to be identified as Bosnians, Serbs, or Croats in order to avoid discrimination. Nowadays it is estimated that around 50,000 to 80,000 Roma live in BiH. There are about 30 Roma settlements, but most Roma are spread around the country, mainly in urban areas: Sarajevo, Zenica,

Mostar, Tuzla, Zvornik, Bijeljina, and Banja Luka. Anonymity in those areas protects against discrimination and offers more opportunities to find paid work. Many Roma settlements even lack legal status, and some authorities (for instance, in Kakanj and Kiseliak) try to resettle the Roma. Not only living standards remain an unsolved issue; many children in these settlements do not attend school, and the hygiene and healthcare situation is precarious. Even worse, many social problems prevail. Most Roma lack stable jobs and subsist on collecting and selling goods from waste dumps. Furthermore, abuse of alcohol, drugs, and violence is frequent in these families.

The BiH government adopted action plans on housing, health, and work in 2008 to improve Roma living conditions. The Education Action Plan was completed in 2004 and is currently being revised. This enabled BiH in September 2008 to join the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015". It aimed to better integrate Roma within the societies where they live. Thus there are now more financial resources to implement these BiH action plans. The State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) announced projects in July 2009 for housing, healthcare, and work. Caritas Switzerland has already rebuilt 33 residential units in eight apartment buildings in 2008-2009 for families of the Roma settlement in Butmir (Sarajevo). Financing came from SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) and the local municipalities. It worked with a local Roma NGO to compile a list of Roma families in the Sarajevo canton that suffer from very poor housing. By assessing families from this list, potential beneficiaries were identified. Overall, rehabilitating or rebuilding 30 residential units (both flats and houses) is planned. Rehabilitation of existing houses and flats is also under study.

7.2 Description of the Partner Organizations and Cooperation with the Roma Community

Cooperation in Kosovo

Caritas cooperates with three Roma NGOs in Prizren, with three Albanian NGOs using an interethnic approach, as well with the municipality - in particular with the Education Department and the Municipality Community Office. The three Roma NGOs are:

- *Initiative 6,* which was registered in 2003 and has been Caritas' main Roma partner NGO since 2005. It focuses on pedagogic and social integration and has a clear strategy for integration through the official education system. Initiative 6 is also involved in human rights and democratic political participation; it participated in elaborating the pedagogic part of the national Roma integration strategy in 2008.

- The Roma NGO *Durmish Aslano* was already founded in 1969, but it only registered officially in 2001. Caritas has cooperated with it since 2005. Durmish Aslano focuses on cultivating Roma tradition and values, literature, music, dances, and media work. Durmish Aslano publishes its own magazines and has its own radio station.

- The Roma women's NGO *Foleja* was founded in 2005. Caritas cooperated with it from 2005 till 2009 in the fields of building health awareness and health-training sessions. As project administration and communications between the two partners proved less than satisfying, Caritas had to end its cooperation at the end of 2009.

Within the Caritas project MAAR, Caritas Switzerland has cooperated since 2007 with the multi-ethnic women's organization *Dora Dores* and the multi-ethnic youth organization *Fisniket* in Prizren. Both organizations have clear target groups, a clear inter-ethnic approach, able staff, and also networking structures at the national level; Dora Dores focuses on social work and gender, while Fisniket deals with youth policy and peace-building.

Starting in 2009, Caritas Switzerland also began cooperating with its national partner, *Caritas Kosovo*. Caritas Kosovo has the national and main centre in Ferizaj as well as regional centres in Mitrovica, Prishtina, Gjilan, and Prizren. Caritas Kosovo focuses on social integration and volunteer work, and engages in several regions for Roma integration (Mitrovica, Dubrava, and Prizren). In Prizren Caritas Kosovo cooperates with Caritas Switzerland and its partners for Roma integration concentrating on children, youth, voluntary, and advocacy work.

Since 2009 *Dora Dores*, *Fisniket,* and the three Roma NGOs have devised a specific concept for girls' work aiming to meet specific needs and interests of girls, but also promoting participation of girls in mixed youth groups and proposing youth policy. They implement the concept in the project area's various communities.

The new MAAR project aiming at integration of minorities (phase IV lasting from 2009 till 2011) allows Caritas to concentrate its support on one of the poorest Roma communities in Prizren, *Jeta e Re.* It is renovating a community centre and assisting it in building up management and supervising structures. The community centre offers space for meetings of youth, girls, and women groups, for various training sessions and networking activities. The community centre *Jeta e Re* has since become a new cooperating partner.

Given the specialized municipality services for infrastructure, education, gender, youth, and culture, Caritas has developed and maintained regular planning, monitoring and advocacy activities since 2005 for both Caritas projects, based on a framework cooperative agreement with the municipalities.

Cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

About 30 Roma settlements exist in BiH, but there are a lot more Roma associations. A *Roma Council* was founded in 2005, and even if not accepted by all the associations, the Roma Council has worked on the action plans together with the BiH Council of Ministers (the executive branch of the government), and the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR). These action plans were approved in 2008. Concerning collaboration with the Roma Council and the other Roma associations, a cultural aspect may be underscored regarding the Roma organization: Roma associations often prefer to represent their own clan primarily rather than the whole community. This is naturally a great disadvantage for project implementation that depends on an experienced and well-structured partner. Local NGOs have little experience and poor track records, because they often really become engaged only when it comes to fulfilling their own needs.

In selecting a beneficiary and recipients of our support in general, we worked mainly with two local organizations: *Roma NGO* and *Budi moj prijatelj.*

Roma NGO, founded in 1994, implements mainly projects in Sarajevo and is a member of the Roma Council. This NGO mediated between the clans and Caritas as the project implementing organization and we had a good cooperation through the Roma housing project in the Butmir settlement. It was included in the project through the Ministry of Housing Affairs (Sarajevo Canton), and proved to be a reliable and trustworthy partner in selecting recipients. It demonstrated active participation in the meetings, and its proposals contributed to successful completion of the project. The Roma community in Butmir lacked its own structure in their settlement, except for four clan chiefs.

Budi moj prijatelj (Be my friend), a non-Roma NGO, has carried out this policy. Budi moj prijatelj has a long-standing experience in the sector regarding Roma research, education, community building, and capacity building.

It also has the important role as facilitator for the Roma NGO in developing the Open Society Institute (OSI). Therefore, it has gained excellent knowledge of the Roma environment. It has already established a trustful relationship with the Roma community and to the public institutions (social and educational) in the Sarajevo canton. It was Caritas' implementing partner for the community-building project within the 2007-2009 Butmir Roma settlement, which also comprises the education component. It assumes the role of advocacy for marginalized Roma families, so that they can register and then benefit from the municipalities' social welfare. An important part is its dialogue with schools and parents, so that children are enrolled.

Concerning the housing project, Roma families themselves are involved in choosing possible locations for their new homes. The apartments are built to a standard defined in Sarajevo. The non-Roma NGO has trained young men from the Roma community as non-skilled workers for reconstruction. Caritas has prepared contracts with construction companies to recruit these young men.

Involvement of beneficiaries in a rebuilding project is difficult. The projects should be implemented quickly and efficiently, so little time is available for project preparation with Roma. However, Roma families were involved in important decisions, especially to inspect the land plots. As result, two land plots were refused. All project partners respected this, so new solutions had to be found.

7.3 Output, Impact, and Outcomes

Kosovo

Three main outcomes must be mentioned:

1. The MAAR community building and local development approach

In cooperation with the three Roma NGO partners, Caritas introduced in 2005 the participative community development approach, starting with a participative situation and needs analysis, defining priorities in three main fields (youth work, women's work, and infrastructure work). It agreed on common annual priorities in all fields, also associating with municipality services. As a result, the partner NGOs were strengthened, Roma participation was developed, and more than 10 small community infrastructure projects could be realized successfully with financial contributions from community and municipality. All these small infrastructure projects (mainly renovation of streets, sewage and water pipelines, and renovation of the community center Jeta e Re and of the two pre-school centres) met important development interests of the community, the Roma partners, and the municipality. They contributed to social integration of the Roma community at the municipality level and also to better cooperation between the different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood.

2. The combined community building and pre-school education approach

Caritas combined two projects in 2007: MAAR (Integration of Minorities) and pre-school education in Prizren. Its main partners have been the municipality education department and Initiative 6. These partners jointly assessed the pilot pre school education project for the Mati Logareci primary school. Together they realized renovation of the two pre-school centres and recruited four Albanian and four Roma teachers. Each year they jointly registered the eight classes with an inter-ethnic composition of children. Caritas assures the continued practical teacher training, and together with Initiative 6 supports the continued parents work and the entire monitoring process till integration of the children in the primary school. Initiative 6 also monitors and supports the entire education career of Roma children from pre-school till secondary school, vocational training and academic studies. Evidently only few Roma youth now have the chance to attend the university level, but the trend is positive!

3. The holistic approach, oriented to implementing the national Roma strategy at the municipality level

The previous chapter mentioned the integrated approach planned by Caritas - community building, education work, infrastructure work, networking and advocacy work handled by Roma NGOs, Albanian NGOs and municipality structures. Major support for this comes from the new national Roma integration strategy in Kosovo and the clear commitment of the two Roma NGO partners, Initiative 6 and Durmish Aslano, which contributed to its implementation at the level of the Prizren municipality.

As a result, the project set-up is working well with the Roma and their partners promoting their participation as well as networking and advocacy work. The social and political integration of Roma in Prizren is well underway.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Not all Roma accepted the proposed method of rebuilding Roma homes in Butmir in a resettlement project. They implied that they would leave their current neighbourhood or community. Although all moved in to their new homes, some later some pulled back and looked for a different solution. Rebuilding was easier to implement if the current place of residence could be legalized and then renovated.

The local population in BiH is aware and supports the government plan to provide better housing conditions for Roma. However, the local non-Roma population prefers that Roma avoid moving near to their living area. The schools see their responsibility for the Roma children and strive to assist them - or at least assist projects that offer this support without obstructing it.

The Roma community itself has not developed much. The Roma Council remains weak, and there are countless small NGOs. There are few Roma leaders in BiH, and Roma are not represented in parliament.

7.4 Challenges in Working with or for Roma Communities in Kosovo and BiH

When working with Roma, several positive outcomes relate to the beneficiaries' direct access to projects and their understanding of the problems they face. But several challenges remain mostly related to local structures, resources, or skills.

Challenges in Kosovo

The limited skills and management resources of the Roma NGO partners

Cooperation with the local NGOs faced several provocations, and Caritas had to end cooperation with the women's NGO Foleja due to the fact that it was not fulfilling its administrative role. On the other hand, the two other Roma partners (the NGO Initiative 6 and Durmish Aslano) still have huge needs to develop their organizational structures, strategies, and management skills. Caritas has noted the following insufficiencies or weaknesses:

- Few skills to elaborate multi-annual project proposals including organizational goals.

- Weak financial management, in particular when they cooperate with different actors and get different donations.

- Insufficient distinction between management and supervisory authorities.

- A predisposition of competition between the various Roma NGOs and a tendency to neglect the necessary cooperation and communication.

- Little effort and interest in planning and promoting a joint approach with Albanian partners, though this is surely necessary for a successful integration process.

Implementation of a systematic gender approach

The Roma partners Initiative 6 and Durmish Aslano are male-dominated. Both are sensitized about gender, but implementation isn't pursued consistently. In this situation a Roma women's NGO as partner would be a big plus. But experience shows that when Roma women's NGOs exist, they often compete, often depending on charismatic women leaders.

Caritas could solve this problem in part by concentrating on the Jeta e Re community in building a community centre. At this centre the participation of women and girls is well promoted and developing at the center and NGO structures as well as in centre activities.

The employment challenge

Unemployment in Kosovo in general is a big challenge, even bigger for youth, Roma, and young Roma women.

To meet this, a full-scale economic approach would need to be developed - at least at the municipal level - with a long-term commitment and a considerable project budget.

At least at the moment Caritas lacks the capacity to develop this in Prizren. Therefore, it focuses on social, political, and educational integration, promoting access for Roma youth to vocational training. In Gjakove, on the other hand, the currently planned project to resettle an entire Roma community gives Caritas an opportunity to develop such a systematic economic approach. It counts on the support of its established partnership with the municipality, the community, two national ministries, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss Federal Office for Migration (FOM).

Challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

The commitment of responsible project managers

The greatest difficulty for Caritas' Sarajevo office in implementation is to find appropriate project managers. There are hardly any non-Roma persons involved to cooperate with the Roma, since Roma projects have not developed a good reputation. Collaboration with the few non-Roma project managers often showed that they assumed no commitment (and therefore no responsibility), because they could not see the projects' relevance.

Roma partners lacking organization and skills

Roma project managers seem difficult to find, as there are very few well-organized and technically well-proven Roma partner organizations. It is hard to find well-educated Roma ready to become involved in projects for Roma communities, but with expert training could incorporate Roma staff. Unfortunately, the project's cost calculations are always so tight that they hardly allow such comprehensive training.

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Structural discrimination of Roma

The aspects mentioned above can be seen to reflect the long-standing stigmatization of Roma who - in the eyes of many - must blame themselves for their situation. Discrimination against Roma is obvious in all structures of public life, even though the government denies this. But discrimination is already so much a part of society that it is hard to change.

Roma have little representation and power

Roma themselves often lack the capacity to fight for rights granted to them by the law but unfortunately poorly implemented.

7.5 Conclusion

In both cases presented, Kosovo and BiH, the effort to integrate Roma communities needs a holistic approach and a long-term commitment by international partners. A more efficient partnership network must be established, with Roma and other local NGO partners, municipality structures, and national supporting services. Obviously the existing formal frameworks and national strategies aiming at Roma integration are a huge support, but important implementation steps must be taken at each municipality level. Yet each Roma community faces different challenges, so strategies must be developed locally for each Roma community.

The local structures do not yet permit this. Money - clear budget priorities for Roma integration at the national and local levels - is still missing. At the same time, there is a huge need to further develop organization, capacity building, and relevant skills for Roma NGO partners. All these steps related to the empowerment of Roma communities in Kosovo and in BiH must be considered, since current projects often require working *for* and not *with* Roma. Caritas support will be needed and also ongoing for the coming years.

8 Exclusion, Inclusion, Illusion: Shifting the Perspective on Social Inclusion of Romanian Roma

Gabriela Mirescu, swisspeace

Democratization processes of Europe's former communist states opened a new debate on multicultural policies and minority rights, giving the Roma minority of Eastern and Central Europe (ECE) new opportunities to take its place on the political stage and, for the first time, to deal with its own destiny.

The collapse of communism in Romania also sparked a phenomenon without precedent in that country: recognition of the Roma community as a national minority, entitling roughly 1 to 2 million individuals[1] with specific collective rights. While the early 1990s marked an important moment for Roma political mobilization, paradoxically, the social situation of many marginalized Roma failed to improve. Quite contrary, several international reports revealed during the last two decades that a large percentage of Roma living in Romania increasingly face living conditions characteristic of the Third World: severe poverty, lack of access to education, the labour market, health care, and housing, as well as discrimination and finally social exclusion.[2]

20 years after the fall of Ceausescu's regime, interethnic tensions and the marginalization of Roma have even intensified, while post-communist politicians and society have paid too little attention to the Roma commensurate with the magnitude of what is generally known as "the Roma problem".[3]

Therefore, the last two decades have not only witnessed an achievement of certain democratic values in post-communist Romania. They have also drawn attention to the difficulty of the Romanian government and society in maintaining and developing harmonious relations with ethnic minorities sharing the same territory.

8.1 The Paradox: New Rules, Old Practices

Before Romania joined the EU in 2007, the European Commission urged it to develop policies for combating discrimination against Roma and including the marginalized minority in mainstream society. The Romanian government responded to these requirements and set up new institutions such as the National Agency for Roma and the National Council for Combating Discrimination. Furthermore, the government and a variety of international actors developed policies addressing social inclusion of Roma, but, even if sustained by forms of affirmative action, they have led to no significant results and seem to be to unable to offer equal opportunities and hope for the Roma

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[1] The exact number of Roma in Romania remains a subject of speculation. National and international institutions estimate the number of Roma in Romania to be somewhere between 1 and 1.2 million, while Roma activists agree on a figure of 2 million people. Independent from the exact number of its Roma ethnics, all assessments consider Romania to be the country with the highest number of Roma members in Europe.

[2] See World Bank (2007): "Romania: Poverty Assessment. Analytical and Advisory Assistance Program: First Phase Report", fiscal year 2007. Available at:
http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=51083066&piPK=51083078&theSitePK=258599&menuPK=641 87510&searchMenuPK=311712&theSitePK=258599&entityID=000020439_20071204114818&searchMenuPK=311712&t heSitePK=258599.

[3] Barany, Zoltan (1994): "Nobody's Children: The Resurgence of Nationalism and the Status of Gypsies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe". In Serafin, Joan (ed.): "East-Central Europe in the 1990's"; Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, pp. 235.

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community. Nor has the fact that Romania today officially fulfils EU standards on human rights, employment, housing, and education led to notable positive outcomes concerning Roma inclusion or improvement of Roma social conditions.[4]

During recent years, socially excluded Roma became the object of numerous discussions attempting to explain their dramatic situation in Romania. Most sociological surveys, official recommendations, and political strategies put great emphasis on the dire living conditions of many members belonging to this minority, on the discriminatory treatment many of them face in all aspects of every day life, and finally on the vicious cycle that seems to imprison many Roma in bitter poverty, social exclusion, archaic traditions, and their own resignation.

Paradoxically enough, even with no institutional rule promoting segregation or any form of social exclusion, a large part of the Roma community must bear the consequences of inequality and disparities in mainstream society as well as daily stigmatization.

8.2 Actors and Actions

Seeking to understand the reason for today's Roma situation, especially *why integration efforts of this ethnic group pose such a challenge,* we face a large palette of actors and explanations. They include international observers who frequently condemn Romanian authorities' passiveness in addressing social exclusion of the Roma community. For its part, the Romanian government insists on explaining the urgent need for a European strategy addressing the "Roma problem", but it misses no opportunity to assert that Roma do not want to integrate. In turn, Roma leaders condemn the widespread social discrimination against Roma and the insufficient support from authorities. Meanwhile, a large part of Romanian society continues to reproduce old stereotypes concerning Roma culture, labels understood as a *culture of poverty.*[5] Finally, the marginalized Roma face unimaginable daily challenges and trust nobody: not Romanian politicians or their own representatives. Above all, the centuries-old statement *"the Țigan remains a Țigan"*[6] still prevails as the most popular explanation, one omnipresent in more or less politically correct formulations in semi-official statements. It underlines the fundamental incompatibility of Roma culture with any rules of civilization. In other words: it underscores Roma's very unwillingness to integrate.

What explains this situation appropriately? Are Romanian authorities to blame for the unsuccessful integration of Roma? Are the Roma themselves to blame? Is the international community? Or is Romanian society as a whole? All these actors certainly play important roles in the process of Roma integration (or their exclusion), and each group can present an explanation. But how does one explain the vicious circle confronting many Roma? And why do efforts to include this ethnic group socially pose such a challenge?

To address these questions fairly, we might logically think that a prerequisite of social inclusion may imply previous exclusion from the social system. Identifying the source of exclusion, its mechanisms, actors, and the processes that lead to social inequalities, is a condition to gain an ample perspective

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[4] Popkostadinova, Nikoleta (2007): "Jobs Boom in Bulgaria Leaves Roma Behind". In Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 15 November. Available at: http://birn.eu.com/en/113/10/5823/?pl=30.

[5] The culture of poverty is a concept that explains the cycles of poverty, arguing that the poor remain poor due to their unique value system and their adaptation to the burdens of poverty. For details see Lewis, Oscar (1961): "The Culture of Poverty". In Moynihan, Daniel (ed.): "On Understanding Poverty: Perspectives from the Social Sciences"; Basic Books, New York.

[6] *Țigan* is the Romanian pejorative term for *Roma*.

on the current socio-political challenges posed within the context of Roma inclusion. Subsequently, this angle may be important in re-thinking policies addressing Roma issues as presented by Bucharest's government and the international community.

Turning to the case of Roma in Romania, there is no difficulty in identifying key moments at the time when the state officially defined this community as subordinate. Moreover, the early presence of Roma, on territory now recognized as Romania resulted from the beginning in relations of domination and exclusion that assumed a predominantly racial form. Evoking historical literature and official documents will highlight the role of the state in inducing violence and marginalization against the Roma community.

8.3 The Chronicle of an Exclusion Foretold - The Case of Romanian Roma

Racializing the Roma minority - slavery

The earliest written evidence of Roma on Romanian territory was recorded in 1385, when Prince Dan I confirmed in a document the gift of 40 Roma families to two monasteries. Apparently, from the beginning of their arrival across the Danube to the province of Walachia (the southern part of Romania today), groups of Roma were captured and immediately enslaved.[7] Most of the current Romania's territory was defined in 1918 by unification of three main provinces: Moldavia, Walachia, and Transylvania. Alone in Europe, Roma were enslaved within a large part of Romania's current territory - in the regions of Walachia and Moldavia.

The manner in which Roma slaves were treated in these two provinces was no different from other societies based on the division of people into masters and slaves: they were bought and sold like ordinary commodities and considered to be the private property of their possessors.[8] This implied that their humanity was denied and accordingly, the Roma were not only placed at the bottom of the social system, but actually excluded from it.

In this early form of class society, Roma slaves became the property of the ruling class, the Orthodox Church, and the state, their status being clearly set through strict rules. So, while intense debates took place in enlightened Europe on liberty, equality, and human rights, the 1818 Penal Code of Walachia continued to describe the status of Roma (at that time called Țigani)[9] as follows: "All Țigani are born as slaves", and "The Țigani without a possessor become state property".[10]

In the province of Moldavia, the 1833 Penal Code also stipulated special clauses for Roma slaves: "Legal unions cannot take place between free persons and slaves. Marriage between slaves cannot take place without their owner's consent." Or "The price of a slave must be fixed by the Tribunal, according to his age, condition, and profession."[11]

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[7]   Djuvara, Neagu (1995): "Între Orient și Occident. Țările Române la Începutul Epocii Moderne" ("Between Orient and Occident. The Romanian Lands at the Beginning of the Modern Era"). Humanitas, Bucharest, pp. 289.

[8]   Ibid, pp. 187-203.

[9]   It is interesting to note that the term Țigan was used at that time in Moldavia and Walachia for designating slaves and for describing a certain social status. See Ibid: 289.

[10] Hancock, Ian cites Kogalniceanu (1987): "The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution". Karoma Publishers, Ann Arbor, MI, pp.16-17.

[11] Crowe, David M (1994): "A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia". St. Martin's, New York, pp. 113-114.

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It is significant here to note the evident role of the state that sustained and took advantages of Roma discrimination through legalization of this racist social structure. Notable too is the position of the Orthodox Church, which, as owner of thousands of Roma, participated fully and unapologetically in slave transactions.[12]

From slaves to second-class citizens

After 500 years of racist relations and institutionalized slavery, trends toward abolishing slavery were recorded under international pressure and thanks to the newly established pro-Western Romanian elite. Between 1855 and 1856 Roma slaves gained recognition as human beings and became free in Moldavia and Walachia, where, as Cărtărescu puts it, the common message of the newly enlightened owners to their slaves was: "Brothers, you are free to go where your feet take you!"[13] But as further social developments show, in the absence of any logistical or psychological preparation, this "generosity" merely paved the way for new tragedies: "Hundreds of thousands of Gypsies were free to die of hunger. With no money, clothing, or livelihood, without a belief or a culture - with nothing but with their naked humanity, they soon populated the prisons *en masse*. No one knows how many perished at the time from so much freedom, or how many have died until today as a result",[14] Cărtărescu notes.

Even if state-induced rules no longer existed after abolition of slavery, the Roma were not automatically integrated into Romanian society. They continued to occupy the lowest social stratum, becoming a subcategory of second-class citizens.

Institutionalized measures of acculturation

While in the two provinces of Moldavia and Walachia the Roma were confronted with a brutal form of social exclusion, as we have seen, in Transylvania, which until 1918 was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, converse policies were applied for Roma. In the 18th century, aggressive assimilation programs launched by the Empress Maria Theresa affected Transylvanian Roma (and all Roma residing on territory of the Habsburg Empire).

The *Gypsy Decrees* prohibited use of Roma language, Romanes, together with all other cultural traits that defined the group's ethnical affiliation. Not only was destruction of a Roma cultural identity the goal of the decrees. So was the total elimination of any physically distinctive trait. Therefore, marriages between Roma were prohibited, and Roma were forced to marry only "inter-racially". A cruel aspect of the decrees stipulated that Roma children had to be taken from their parents in order to be educated in farming families.[15] Even the name *Cigany* (which was commonly used to designate Roma in the Eastern part of the Habsburg Empire) was replaced by Magyar terms like *Ujpolgár* (new citizen), *Ujparasztok* (new farmer), or *Ujmagyar* (new Hungarian).

The state's aim here was not social exclusion, but this procedure can hardly be called social inclusion either, since compulsory state measures were used for it.

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[12] Cărtărescu, Mircea (2007): "Die Zigeuner - ein Rumänisches Problem". In Neue Zürcher Zeitung, November 29.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] See Rombase Didactically edited information on Roma: http://ling.kfunigraz.ac.at/~rombase/cgi-bin/art.cgi?src=data/ethn/groupsat/at-bgld.en.xml&xanchor=a1#a1, or Fraser, Angus (1992): "The Gypsies". Blackwell, Cambridge; or Mayerhofer, Claudia (1999): "Dorfzigeuner. Kultur und Geschichte der Burgenland-Roma von der Ersten Republik bis zur Gegenwart". Picus, Vienna.

First tendencies of Roma ethnic self-awareness in Romania

Due to considerably increased territory after 1918 (when Transylvania united with Moldavia and Walachia), the newly born Romanian nation-state consisted of greater ethnical composition, and a sense of Roma ethnic self-awareness first emerged in this context. Romanian Roma gained popularity as musicians, as skilled artisans, and as subjects of romantic literature. A newly established Roma elite set up associations that placed great emphasis on education, health-care, and tried to counter the disintegration of traditional professions and Roma culture.[16] But the modest tendencies toward Roma emancipation and social inclusion were annulled very soon when the Nazis' assumed power in Europe.

The Roma genocide

In 1940, after Romania had entered the German camp, the newly established military regime of General Antonescu made Romania "Hitler's favorite ally."[17]

During the first year of World War II alone, it is estimated that more than 25,000 Romanian Roma became victims of the Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses (Law for Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring), being deported to the Transnistrian extermination camps. It is estimated that Romania exterminated approximately 36,000 Roma during Antonescu's fascist regime (1940-1944).[18] Due to a lack of wartime records, it is difficult to say how many Roma were killed in Europe during the Holocaust. Estimates speak about hundreds of thousands of Roma exterminated on the European continent due to the same racial madness that lead to extermination of European Jewry. However, as is also the case today, a clear estimate of the number of Roma in Europe never emerged in the first place.

8.4 Discussion - The Role of the State in the Social Exclusion of Roma

Understanding the "tradition" of socially excluding Romanian Roma

Starting from the premise that every problem has its unique history (and that only this history allows a proper understanding for developing suitable solutions), we have emphasized relevant junctions, identifying when the state put the local Roma into institutional contexts of social exclusion. This brief history of Roma marginalization reveals that the state, in all its temporal and spatial configurations, seems to have played a crucial role in social exclusion of Roma on Romanian territory. Hence the current choice of criteria in marginalizing the Roma today might not be arbitrary.

This shifted perspective on the debate over social inclusion evokes the roots of social exclusion, thus allowing a better understanding of barriers posed in the current process of integration. Furthermore, it shifts emphasis on the actors, on their actions, and on their interaction in producing and reproducing social exclusion. Concluding, we can identify three main actors involved in the vicious cycle of Roma marginalization: *the state*, *mainstream society,* and *the Roma* themselves. The actions and the interactions of all three can be briefly described as follows:

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[16] Crowe, ibid., pp. 127-131.

[17] Ibid, pp. 132.

[18] Ibid, pp. 135.

- The state denied Roma minority civil and political rights over extended periods of time. In doing so, it opened the vicious cycle of structural inequalities. Legalization of overt discriminatory practices emphasizes the crucial role the state has played in promoting and facilitating exclusionary practices on certain groups.

- Having the patterns of exclusion already drawn up by the state, mainstream society developed discriminatory attitudes against the officially defined inferior group. Hence this mechanism transformed the Roma minority into a natural target for exclusion from mainstream society.

- The inherited inequalities have considerably weakened many members of the Roma community, inhibiting their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and increasing their isolation. Their vulnerability further transforms them into easy targets of social exclusion, drawn on deep roots of racial, cultural, and social boundaries.

This appears to be the closing link of a vicious cycle that imprisons many Roma in an archaic world, one marked by exclusion, bitter poverty, and self-resignation.

The vicious cycle of Roma marginalization

Currently the Roma remain easy, if informal targets of most racially motivated acts of violence. Although political and legal disadvantages have been reduced over time, discrimination and stereotyping informally persist, hindering those marginalized Roma from developing and exercising their rights and capacities. As a result, many have remained at the bottom of an economic and social hierarchy, being confronted with structural processes that produced and reproduced segregation, even in the absence of official rules of discrimination.

It is interesting to observe that despite a legal framework that should empower the disadvantaged minority, the state today adopts a dual rhetoric and continues to be an active actor in everyday social exclusion of Roma. Even if the official discourse emphasizes the state's efforts to foster Roma inclusion, violence against Roma communities (involving mob attacks, often exercised by state agents), is a method to enforce exclusion. Intimidation and oppression of the Roma minority are often ignored or even sustained by the police or the state's judiciary. Hence the position of Romanian authorities - official or not - versus Roma contributes to marginalizing the Roma community and to furthering social fissures capable of generating dangerous conditions and aggravating tensions. In conclusion, even if the state is not always directly involved in such hostilities, institutional weakness and a general atmosphere of impunity towards abuses against Roma contribute to a spiral of violence and of exclusion against vulnerable Roma by mainstream society.

This vicious cycle of marginalization might explain to a certain extent the contrary driving forces: the rhetoric of inclusion and the practices of exclusion. At a time of new rules but old habits, the reality provides a tragic, but well-known dimension: the practice and rhetoric of human and minority rights may follow different routes.

While the Roma minority was entitled to many rights and pompous titles (such as "true European minority"), members belonging to this minority continue to be treated as resident aliens in Romania (and in many other European countries). They remain victims of increased segregation and discrimination in most aspects of social life. Furthermore, old and new episodes have shown that Roma are not only true Europeans, but may be the only Europeans in the 21st-century who can be truly be discriminated against, attacked, expelled, or even killed without anyone being punished and without anyone reacting coherently to defend them.

8.5 Taking Roma Social Inclusion Seriously

Looking over the Romanian debate on Roma integration, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which policies adopted in recent years have improved or undercut the status of Roma in Romanian society. But some aspects cannot be underestimated. The existence of a legal and institutional framework to protect the rights of the Roma minority is an important first step in empowering a vulnerable group and giving the Roma a voice. From now on, the effectiveness of existing institutions and the development of appropriate strategies will determine the impact of policies to promote Roma integration.

On the other hand, as the Romanian case illustrates, it is obvious that drawing upon multicultural policies and trying to implement them means more than designing institutions and adopting politically correct rhetoric. Paradoxically, this could even lead to reverse consequences - backlash that further inflames aversion against the vulnerable Roma minority. It is difficult to gain public support for multiculturalism policies (especially for "affirmative action" measures) as long as the Roma intended to benefit from them are perceived as illegitimate residents or not even worthy in racial terms. This picture emphasizes the risks that imported policies may pose in an inappropriate environment, within an atmosphere marked by lack of understanding, trust, and mutual respect.

The controversial nature of this reality is due in part to the fact that Romania was sharply criticized for how it treated its minorities. The *Roma problem* especially has achieved more visibility in the context of accession to the European structures. Thus the government set up institutions required by European standards to accommodate the Roma minority. But, lacking any public debate on the importance of Roma integration, the mere bureaucratic actions didn't empower the Roma voice or convince most Romanians to question their discriminatory attitudes toward their Roma countrymen and women.

It is unclear if the multicultural discourse can address the deeply rooted causes for lack of trust and acceptance that we have identified in the Romanian case. However, the question here is not whether multicultural approaches are suitable for drafting strategies to integrate the Roma minority. It's rather *what's missing? What additional measures must be taken to create conditions for implementing these policies or completing them?*

8.6 Outlook: Four Open Questions

The Romanian government may take steps in recognizing the Roma as equal partners in drafting strategies of integration. And Roma not only need encouragement to integrate, but frameworks must also be developed to convince mainstream society to allow the Roma to integrate. Hence, integration policies must not only take marginalized Roma into account but also the dominant society's acts and local circumstances that have previously led to excluding Roma. These are major tasks facing a multicultural agenda that aims at Roma inclusion. Let's shed light now on some relevant questions emphasizing aspects, which a coherent process of social inclusion might take into account:

1. Calling into question: *integration into what?*

There is a broad tendency to focus exclusively on Roma when addressing the integration question. It may be redundant to note that, unlike *assimilation*, an *integration* process implies at least a change in attitudes for at least two (equal) partners. Therefore, the actions of both parties must be taken in consideration when drafting integration policies. The shift in focus (which too often is exclusively on Roma these days) to society as a whole allows an equilibrate perspective in the integration debate. Thus, insisting that *Roma are marginalized,* without clarifying who marginalizes them and why, would hardly help us either to understand the whole phenomenon of social exclusion, either to draft efficient policies aiming at Roma social integration.

2. "Roma education" or "education for all"?

A better level of education would surely help empower the Roma voice and improve the group's social position. But this angle fails to tell the whole story. While the term *Roma education* persists in most debates on integration, the aspect of informing and "educating" the entire society is neglected. It's a well-known fact, that post-communist educational systems especially, have no social-science tradition. That might explain why newly imported terms like *discrimination, racism,* or *exclusion* are often abused and misunderstood. An appropriate education for a marginalized group alone cannot lead to better conditions for integration. While it remains a truism that discrimination is still one of the most acute problems facing Roma of Romania, there should be ways and measures for not only upgrading the Roma's educational level but also transforming the generally hateful mainstream attitude to a more open-minded one. Therefore, more enlightened attitudes on both sides are key measures in overcoming ethnic tensions and discrimination.

An intense knowledge transfer and exchange in schools and universities, trainings for members of civil society and politicians, and sustained media information campaigns may change stereotypes concerning Roma, allow a realistic perspective on the social challenges, and promote understanding that racist attitudes are no way to achieve social well being.

3. How to look the past in the eyes?

National strategies may face painful dilemmas in coping with the ongoing social exclusion of the Roma minority. Relations with Roma co-nationals, shaped by a legacy of slavery, physical extermination, and acculturation followed by socio-economic marginalization must be questioned publicly. The government together with civil society, Roma representatives, and media institutions should initiate wide-ranging and coherent public debates concerning earlier and the present relations with Roma co-nationals. There is an acute need to re-call the past, and to extract lessons learned not only from the events that picture the Romanians as "a brave nation". This would be a constructive way for Romanian society as a whole to shape a common future without repeating past mistakes. A collective process of reflection on its own history, with the focus on learning practical lessons could contribute to develop a minimum of trust and acceptance in place of violence and discrimination.

4. What about political accountability?

All these briefly described steps imply a perspective change on the debate over Roma integration, and propose a broad view on some of the driving forces that pose barriers in the inclusion process. The shifting perspective revealed here may also moderate the discourse of Romanian politicians, who claim that the "Roma problem" is now a "European problem" and not a national one anymore. Strident voices from Bucharest are now urging the European Commission to develop a *European strategy for Roma* with the aim of distracting attention from responsibility of the government for its own citizens and its obligation to stop the violence against domestic Roma communities exactly where it started: on Romanian territory.

Lack of political will and accountability[19] remains an important barrier that inhibits Roma integration. Under such conditions, it is no surprise that the political discourse vehemently turns a blind eye to past experiences that may largely explain the causes of the discrimination and inequality faced by the Roma community today.

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[19] At the end of 2010, the Romanian Government welcomed a parliamentary initiative to change the official naming of Rom into Tigan, a term considered to have a pejorative connotation. The proposal, contested by Roma Organizations, who had not been consulted, received the support of the Romanian Academy. It was aimed at avoiding the alleged confusion made abroad between the Romanians and the ethnically distinct Roma (also Romanian citizens). Although the motion was eventually defeated, this was one of the most significant measure taken by the Romanian politicians following the international disputes with the French Government around the mass-repatriation of thousands Romanian Roma from France.

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