



Methods for Marginalization
The Effects of an Anti-Roma Sentiment in Eastern and Central Europe

Stefán Örn Gíslason

Lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í mannfræði
Leiðbeinandi: Jónína Einarsdóttir
Aðstoðarleiðbeinandi: Marco Solimene
Félags- og mannvísindadeild
Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands
Febrúar 2017



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í mannfræði og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

© Stefán Örn Gíslason 2017

Reykjavík, Ísland 2017

Extract

The Roma are one of the largest minorities in Europe and have been unquestionably marginalized for the past few decades. In this thesis the current situation of the Roma will be examined when it comes to access to basic aspects of a modern society such as access to healthcare and education. The discourse surrounding this group has for the past decades been defined by bigotry and essentialist attitudes that are criminalizing and dehumanizing and supported by a narrative that perpetuates and maintains stereotypes of the Roma. This discourse will be examined and the effects of the narrative looked at in the context of exclusion from social and political life. Recently this discourse and narrative surrounding the Roma has come under fire by scholars in an attempt to explain why this group still remains in this dire situation despite a decade of unsuccessful efforts by local governments and the EU to bring them out of poverty. The answer to that question lies in the narrative surrounding the Roma that negates any efforts by governing bodies to amend the situation and is heavily dictated by public opinion.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
1. The Roma in Hungary and Eastern Europe	4
2. The Othering of Roma	6
3. The Four Pillars	11
<i>3.1 Healthcare</i>	11
<i>3.2 Housing</i>	13
<i>3.3 Education</i>	15
<i>3.4 Employment</i>	16
4. Feeding the Narrative	19
5. Conclusion	23
Bibliography	26

Introduction

In a post-recession Europe there has been a trend of new political parties emerging on a platform of hardline nationalism. Famous examples of such are the Greek Golden Dawn party and Hungary's Jobbik, whose ideology seemed validated by voters in the elections following the 2008 bank crisis and the subsequent recession. This ideological consolidation of ethnic-majority righteousness within our current nation-state system is yet another problem that piles on an ever larger heap of challenges that face minority ethnic groups in Europe. As the largest of Europe's minority ethnic groups, the Roma have not exactly had an easy time settling in Europe despite their long history in many areas. With them being targeted along with Jews and other minorities for extermination and deportation in the Nazi holocaust of World War II and facing marginalization and discrimination in post WWII across Europe. Their history in the continent over the past century has been rather bleak and as things stand right now they are facing a challenging future.

Today's Roma face a lot of issues, in this paper I will be outlining a few of those issues pertaining to the fulfillment of basic needs and how the Roma are being kept at the margins of society. The Roma face a similar problem across Europe but to keep the discussion anchored somewhere we will focus on Hungary and neighboring countries, however the conditions and issues facing them in that region seem to be in one way or the other reflected transnationally across the European Union. Important categories of today's societies such as healthcare, housing, employment and access to quality education have a direct impact on the fulfillment of some of our most basic needs and therefore have a major impact on quality of life. We will be investigating the uphill battle of the Roma for equal access to basic necessities of modern life which have for decades been categorized as inalienable human rights. The path towards the fulfillment of the four previously mentioned categories has always been a battle for the Roma seeing as the past decades have been harder on them than most other groups in Europe. Roma discrimination is not a hidden part of society in many parts of the world and if you have spent an extended period of time in Eastern Europe you will most likely have had the topic of Roma come up at one point or another in conversations with locals. The direction that conversation might have gone is not

important, but the point is that everyone has an opinion on the topic and most do not have a problem with sharing that opinion.

The subject of this thesis came from the author visiting segregated Roma communities outside of Budapest as part of a social work course during an exchange program in Hungary. Witnessing the situation of the Roma in the different communities sparked an interest in why such poverty and desolation existed just a short train ride from the bustling modern metropolis of Budapest. The range of the communities witnessed were very different though, some were in absolute poverty with no water or electricity while others had pulled themselves up through startup businesses in organic gardening for high-end restaurants in the neighboring metropolis. During my stay in Budapest I did notice that everyone had an opinion on the Roma and this was a hot topic both in university coursework and daily discourse. By looking at the discourse surrounding the Roma on multiple levels of governance and society maybe some light can be shed on how that discourse affects and shapes the quality of life for these millions of people. Some terms in this paper will be used interchangeably depending on context and you will read the word Gypsy on several occasions. These terms are not used out of malice by not recognizing the preferred term of Roma but rather for effect in their respective context.

The aim of this thesis is to look into this discourse surrounding the Roma and the narrative that is being produced of them by majority populations and governing bodies. The effects on quality of life and opportunities for societal participation will be examined and historical parallels between the image of the Roma and literary and public discourse surrounding other exoticized ethnic groups in the past explored. There will be parallels drawn between the Roma and the discourse surrounding the Orient in the 19th and 20th century as the exotification and unilateral construction of images is highly relevant in how the discussion surrounding the Roma is playing out today. The main aim of this thesis will however be to participate in the discourse on the Roma in a meaningful way by outlining the current state of affairs in talking about Roma. There is what I would like to call a crisis of image going on regarding this group today and they are unfortunately often not the ones with the power of defining that identity. The discussion and narrative surrounding them are deeply rooted and in some sense very toxic. So we should talk about how we talk about the Roma.

1 The Roma in Hungary and Eastern Europe

The Roma are one of the largest collective minorities in Europe, in Hungary alone there are around 500.000-600.000 individuals belonging to the Roma ethnic minority according to census polls (Hungarian Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, 2011). It should be noted that those are official census numbers and performing a census on a marginalized group can be understandably difficult. The Hungarian Ministry of Public Administration and Justice (2011) estimates that despite the official census the real number is probably closer to 750.000 individuals. If we take that number, which is of course just an estimate but gives us some indication of the Roma population, the Roma could make up for around 7,6% of Hungary's 2015 population of 9.844.686 (The World Bank, 2015).

Roma in Hungary live in a very difficult social and political climate. The anti-Roma sentiment in Hungary now is palpable as was evident in the 2014 parliamentary elections when a political party called Jobbik ran on a platform of anti-Roma sentiment and antisemitism. They received over 1.000.000 votes, which comes out to around 20% of eligible voters. (Hungarian National Election Office, 2014). That kind of support can be argued as a call for a solution to the so called Roma issue through anti-Roma legislation in government and can certainly be understood as being disenfranchising for the large Roma population. The legitimization of anti-Roma ideologies and violence are claimed by many Hungarians to be fueled by Jobbik's rhetoric (Westervelt, 2009). The party is very open about their views when it comes to the Roma as the official website of the party shows. There they state in their interior policy segment regarding Roma:

Generations have grown up without seeing any positive example within the family, so they have carried on with the same lifestyle which often entails a criminal way of life. People's daily lives are soured by hundreds of theft, mugging, burglary and death threat cases which are most often committed by Gypsy individuals, not only against Hungarians but other Gypsy people as well. Thus the issue of Gypsy-Hungarian co-habitation remains in the forefront of the public discourse as a problem that still needs a solution. (Jobbik Party, 2016).

Regardless of crime statistics within Hungary, which we will not delve into here this is a very brazen way for a major political party to portray a sizeable demographic in their nation. This being a major political party in Hungary emphasizes the national climate regarding the Roma in recent years. That there is a nationalistic, exclusionary element regarding this specific minority that seems to resonate with a number of Hungarian voters (Fox & Vermeesch, 2010, p. 343). For many this is a worrying trend as violence towards Roma, often carefully planned, premeditated and sometimes lethal, has been seen in recent years at the hands of nationalists and now banned paramilitary groups like the former militant arm of the Jobbik party (Popham, 2011).

Historically the Roma in Hungary are no strangers to violence at the hands of militant groups as they saw some 5-30.000 Hungarian Roma being sent to concentration camps during World War II. The numbers on that vary quite significantly but accounting for individuals in a marginalized and often undocumented group can be understandably difficult. Despite which end of the spectrum that number actually falls on it was at the time a sizeable percentage of the Roma population in Hungary, estimated to have been around 200.000 at the time of the 1944 German occupation. Aside from those killed in concentration camps many more were sent to forced labour camps as part of a “management” of the “gypsy question” (Kállai, 2002). Those terms have a disturbing parallel in today’s nationalist discourse regarding the Roma, it’s just that now the terms “gypsy problem” and a need for “solutions” are used instead of the more ominous “question”. The chances of a modern day holocaust are of course very low in today’s social and political climate but there are disturbing parallels in modern day sentiment towards the Roma and the infamously disastrous mid-20th century nationalist discourse. However the current discourse, tone of media coverage and seemingly willful neglect of the already disenfranchised group is a worrying matter to many and larger organizations like the European Union have started to take notice.

The Roma do face a similar situation across Central and Eastern Europe where they are a very sizeable minority and the situation in neighboring countries will be touched upon in later chapters. However Hungary will be a main focal point for looking at the situation of the Roma as it is a prime example of overt Romaphobia in governance and public policy in the region.

2 The Othering of Roma

In the late 70's Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1978/2003) published a book on the subject of *Orientalism* by the same name and in his analysis of the nature of scholarly and public relations of the East and the West contributed a lot to the discussion on Othering and identity politics. In short, his now iconic book outlines the relationship between the Orient and the Occident, more commonly referred to as the East and the West. Following the major expansion of European countries during the colonial era orientalist studies became wildly popular with scholars and writers alike. The division of the world into East and West created an imaginary border inhabited by people of binary cultural traits and constructed a certain image in the West of what it was to be oriental (Edward Said, 1978/2003). What that entailed was entirely dictated by western scholars and writers based on their own ideas and observations which of course were interpreted through their own culturally biased view. The historical parallels of Orientalism and the discourse surrounding the Roma today is the exoticized nature of the Orient created by the powerful West which unilaterally controlled and framed the image and identity of the Orient. There was a clear creation of an "us" and "them" and this was used as a tool for building identities, everything that "they" were "we" were not, so if the Orientals were lazy and barbaric meant that in contrast the West was hard-working and civilized (Edward Said, 1978/2003).

There are some that criticize Said for oversimplifying this system of Othering. Ken Lee (2000) for example mentions this and draws upon Clifford's criticism of Said's focus regarding the selection of material to portray in his works. However Lee does recognize the parallels between Said's Orientalism and what he calls "Gypsylorism" or the study of Gypsies within western academia. He states that the two concepts are even more intertwined after the Roma were believed to come from northern India and that "*Orientalism is the discursive construction of the exotic Other outside Europe, Gypsylorism is the construction of the exotic Other within Europe – Romanies are Orientals within*" (Lee, 2000, 132). This is worth noting seeing as the parallels between the two have been made before but was explored in a more historical context by Lee (2000).

This theme of Othering still resonates today in the discourse surrounding the Roma on multiple levels. The notion of “us” and “them” and the manipulation of images to build borders that transcend state lines across Europe is notably being used in political and public discourse to denounce the Roma as exotic invaders of societies (Loveland & Popescu, 2016).

On a smaller scale within the nation-state the building of identities, ethnic or national also happens in a contextual relation to others, for there to be an “us” there must be a “them” no matter the scale on which it is being produced (Eriksen, 2002). How this is reflected in a society, nation or ethnicity varies but negative connotations involving entire minority ethnic groups can obviously be very troublesome. It is a safe assertion that this is what the Roma do experience in many countries. Being defined as the “Other” but a worse type of “Other” than other minorities within the state.

This notion is evident in the discourse surrounding the Roma on multiple levels of society and governance, ranging from the very top to the general public. As an example of a type of racializing and degrading sentiment towards the Roma on a more localized governance level we have a quote from a mayor in a northern Hungarian village saying:

I just don't understand this question about who is a Gypsy. It is quite clear, isn't it? Everyone who is a Gypsy is a Gypsy. You can smell them from a kilometer. There is no definition for this – I can't find one. You have to accept that a person who was born a Gypsy has a different temperament; they live differently and behave differently. I grew up among Gypsy children. Everyone who is a Gypsy has remained a Gypsy. It makes no difference if they have a bath every night, the smell remains, just like with horses. There is a specific Gypsy smell. And they can smell the smell of Peasants on us. (Stewart, 2011, p. 1)

It should be noted that in the context of that quote the word Peasant is a term used for Hungarians in the region, both by themselves and by the Roma population (Durst, 2011). This quote from the public official brings to light a notion in rural Hungarian areas of the exoticism of the Roma population. There is an allusion to a certain

temperament that the Roma supposedly have which is unshakeable and if not only strongly culturally engrained, almost biologically determined. There is also a certain degree of dehumanization in the way that the Roma are also given characteristics of farm animals.

This type of speech by public officials in Hungary is not contained to low-ranking local government positions. Publicly elected officials do not seem to fear political backlash even at the highest political level seeing as there is a public admittance of this sentiment at that level as well. The sentiment that Roma are inherently aliens within the country and not compatible with the rest of Hungarian society on a fundamental level. A similar statement came from Dr Máté Szabó, the Hungarian Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights in 2009. He described the Roma population as more tribal as opposed to Hungarian individualistic society making them inherently incompatible. This was proclaimed alongside an assertion of an ingrained criminal element inherent in the Roma population which of course is meant to be worrying to the average citizen (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2009).

In regards to the general attitude towards Roma in the broader population in neighboring Romania, Valerie Nicolae (2007), in an essay on anti-gypsyism quotes the results of a 2003 Gallup poll regarding the terms describing minorities in Romania. In that poll there are also apparent prejudices towards ethnic Hungarians as Romania has a large ethnically Hungarian population of more than 1.2 million, or 6.5% of the population in 2011 ("Final results", 2013). However the language used to describe those of Hungarian descent is in a completely different tone than the ones pertaining to Roma. The Hungarians were described in terms of negative human traits like being hypocritical while the Roma were given more animalistic traits such as "wild" (Nicolae, 2007, 23). This is claimed to be an effort of dehumanization which can't be explained by simple misconceptions due to the amount of contact between the two populations and could rather be seen as a way of possibly legitimizing and justifying abusive behavior and policies (Nicolae, 2007).

In a further analysis of a similar study by Michael Shafir in 2012 there was widespread prejudice towards the ethnic Hungarians living in Romania with 41%

describing negative feelings towards the group. However there were a staggering 67% of participants describing an unfavorable sentiment towards the Roma. That coupled with the dehumanizing nature of traits associated with the group gives an example of this negative sentiment in the broader population surrounding Hungary, with the Roma being the lowest on the totem pole of likeability compared to other ethnic minorities.

Having earlier drawn upon the parallels between Said's "Othering" discourse on the East in Orientalism and the situation of the Roma in Europe today, we should define this Othering narrative surrounding the Roma further. What this must entail is a greater theme that Loveland and Popescu (2016) have recently defined as the "The Gypsy Threat Narrative". This narrative was put together through an analysis of public awareness surrounding the Roma and following the general discourse surrounding them. They claim that the narrative they put forward is a transnational European narrative that is a great contributing factor to the anti-Roma sentiment and ideology across Europe in the past few decades and is deeply ingrained in both the political and public sphere. They analyzed The Gypsy Threat Narrative as such:

The Gypsies entered Europe as nomads. Carriers of an alien, resilient, and superstitious religious and cultural heritage, they subversively insulated themselves from the rest of society. Historically averse to productive labor, they refuse to participate in the legitimate economy and instead survive by robbing and deceiving the good, civilized people. Devoid of respect for the nation, the Gypsy culture of criminality and self-isolation undermines the foundation of the modern state. As such, Gypsies are not to be trusted, and Gypsy communities must be monitored, controlled, and even dismantled (Loveland & Popescu, 2016, p. 338-339).

Again in this narrative we can see the markers of Edward Said's (1978/2003) Orientalism in the exoticized nature of the "gypsies" and the nature of the narrative as a whole is on the basis of "our" perception of "them". In their study of this narrative Loveland and Popescu (2016) claim that the power of such a narrative and its resilience

in public dialogue and opinion is due to a narrative being compatible even with differing ideologies. In that sense they claim that you can subscribe to an opposing ideology while still accepting a certain historical or cultural narrative because narratives can be selective in the historical events and “facts” they wish to emphasize and convey for the purpose of the greater moral narrative.

The general sentiment of the described narrative is evident in the previously stated election platform of the Hungarian Jobbik party and comments from top officials in Hungary. However the results of Loveland and Popescu’s analysis were quite interesting because they claim that in the model they based their analysis on less than 10% of Roma prejudice can be written up to a unique national climate of Romaphobia (Loveland & Popescu, 2016, 344). Rather they claim that this is a pan-European narrative that has such a profound effect on the disposition towards the Roma that it is the greater root cause that then manifests itself in both individual attitudes and state policies regarding this particular minority. The narrative, if accepted as true, serves a purpose of making sense of a complex reality in a simplified moral guide and sets the frame on a national level for both public opinion and state policies. They further conclude that while this narrative is not confronted it is unlikely for progress to be made in the situation of the Roma by any actions of governments or the European Union (Loveland & Popescu, 2016).

3 The Four Pillars

As previously claimed the general sentiment of anti-gypsyism at local and higher political levels along with the more widespread Gypsy Threat Narrative will be argued to be some of the main factors contributing to the continued segregation, marginalization and subsequent alienation from certain aspects of society for the Roma. Highlighting all of the aspects in which the Roma face exclusion in day to day life is a daunting task, but there are a few categories of great importance need to be outlined. The fact of the matter is that the Roma don't have equal access to fundamental institutions for basic welfare such as healthcare, education, employment or housing on par with majority populations in the region. There is no coincidence that these four pillars show up throughout history when it comes to improving the situation of the Roma. The four categories were a focal point for the Roma strategy of assimilation in the early 21st century socialist revolution in Eastern Europe (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015). Again they appear decades later in the 2011 European Commission framework for integration of the Roma as main categories of focus in the Roma strategy of the European Union. Access to these four pillars is fundamental to fulfilling basic needs and economic participation in today's society and there is a very apparent and well documented gap between Roma and majority populations when it comes to these categories. Here a few of the issues facing the Roma regarding these four pillars will be outlined and arguments explored as to the effect of the current anti-Roma discourse on these categories.

3.1 Healthcare

The health gap for Roma is well documented and the evidence is conclusive on the fact that Roma suffer from poorer health than majority populations in Europe. There are however difficulties in gathering comprehensive data on such a large, diverse and transnational group. This lack of data is cited by some as a problem when talking about the health status of Roma dating back further than the last decade (Földes & Covaci, 2012). Simply that there isn't enough previous research on the subject is cited by others as problem in the assessment and resolution of this particular issue facing the

Roma (European Commission, 2004). However both of these show a historic lack of focus on these issues and willingness to resolve them until very recently.

Despite the historic lack of research there is evidence that Roma people today face major hindrances in access to adequate healthcare. The European Roma Rights Centre (2006) emphasized a few of the major categories of systemic and overt racial exclusion in their report on the health status of Roma. The systemic categories covered include limited or no access to health insurance which may be due to, but not exclusively because of their lack of citizenship and personal documents. This can be because of their often stateless status or lack of registration. Where they do have permanent residency their communities are often physically removed from healthcare in segregated rural areas where there are no operational clinics. This is especially true for Hungary where around 18% of Roma live in compact rural communities without a general practitioner and in some counties that number goes up to 40% (The European Roma Rights Centre, 2006;36). Further modes of systemic exclusion can be due to simple lack of information about healthcare services that are available to them and the effects of these systemic exclusions can be shown to be even more taxing on women due to their vulnerable status and often worse economic condition within the Roma communities (The European Roma Rights Centre, 2006).

More important to our analysis of the results of Othering and The Gypsy Threat Narrative is the direct discrimination the Roma face in access to healthcare. This is often from individual healthcare employees based solely on their personal views of their prospective patients and their power to act according to those opinions. There are many well documented, specific cases covered in the European Roma Rights Centre report (2006) in which Roma face this direct discrimination by the healthcare industry in Hungary and neighboring countries. These include individuals being flat out denied emergency aid upon request, being refused treatment at healthcare institutions, have money extorted from them when they seek aid, being segregated from others in hospital units and giving birth without any medical professionals present. The report by the European Roma Rights Centre on this issue states that these are also not isolated incidents as there are multiple accounts of similar cases

happening across the region with many more likely going unreported (European Roma Rights Centre, 2006).

This exclusion from healthcare based on prejudice is troubling as it is quite easy to imagine health being a major factor in overall happiness. The specific effects on the Roma regarding this category were reported in an extensive study in 2014 on the self-evaluated subjective well-being of the Roma. The study focused on Central and Eastern Europe and compared the self-evaluated happiness and well-being of Roma to other majority groups in the region. The study found a major factor in the lowered subjective well-being of the Roma population was their self-determined health status which directly relates to exclusion from healthcare (Kamberi, Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2015).

The link between the discourse surrounding the Roma and their systemic exclusion is not as direct as the one involving outright direct discrimination. It is however not far removed from the effects of public opinion. If segregated communities being physically removed from healthcare can be a direct result of a ghettoization of the Roma due to a public subscription to The Gypsy Threat Narrative that would be an indirect result of it. The more blatant discrimination from healthcare workers is easier to connect as a direct result, especially if individuals who hold power in the bureaucracy of a system and can impede an individual from progressing through said system. It is not hard to imagine an individual which thinks the Roma do not belong to their society determining that it is not their responsibility to help them, sworn to the Hippocratic oath or not.

3.2 Housing

Most Roma in the region surrounding Hungary have lived relatively sedentarily over the last couple of centuries despite their image as a nomadic, travelling people. This has been used by governments in Central and Eastern Europe to justify the forced relocation of Roma and in turn provide them with sub-standard housing and accommodation. This “nomadization” of the group has even reached a point in political discourse in the past decades that it appears to be a deliberate effort on the part of some governing bodies to brand them as such (Baar, 2011, 209).

However today there are social housing projects in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe and their proclaimed aim was to improve the quality of life for the Roma among other groups (Molnár & Ádám, et al, 2012). However in a health impact assessment regarding these housing project in 2012 a rather bleak picture was drawn. In Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria there are hundreds of thousands of people living in segregated communities and in all countries evaluated the general state of housing was deemed to be very poor and inadequate by many standars (Molnár, et al., 2012). In Hungary for example they described a situation as such:

...approximately 134,000 Hungarians lived in 758 substandard, segregated habitats (colonies) mostly in the north-eastern part of the country, and 94% of all colonies were populated dominantly by Roma. The most frequent environmental problems in these colonies were found to be lack of sewage and gas mains, garbage deposits, waterlogged soil, and lack of water mains (Molnár, et al., 2012, p. 8)

Powell and Level (2015) refer to these processes of spatial and social exclusion in Eastern Europe as the “ghettoization” of the Roma. Furthermore they question why the Roma have not followed the relative progress that other minority groups in Europe have been subject to in recent years both on a national level and in the context of the expanded European Union. They also recognize the Roma to be subject to a much deeper and long-term process that results in this stigmatization and subsequent spatial segregation, a process which seems to fit the description of the previously defined Gypsy Threat Narrative (Powell and Level, 2015;14). Segregation into housing projects which are predominantly Roma will inevitably be an issue when it comes to access to utilities if they are to be provided by the majority-population controlled state or local county. In fact the perception by the public that these housing projects are recognized as being predominantly for Roma people, whether that was intended by authorities or not can even bring about deeper issues (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015), however those will be expanded upon further in the next chapter. In what shows the intersectional nature of these categories it can be derived that segregated housing has a direct impact on the previously examined category of health as well as the next category of education through simple lack of access to each for predominantly Roma neighborhoods.

3.3 Education

In a 2011 UNICEF report on the Roma children's right to education they cover the regional issues of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. The statistics gathered by UNICEF show that in Slovakia, Roma children abandon school at a rate 30 times higher than other children. In Bulgaria most of the annual drop outs are Roma, less than half of Roma children complete primary education in Macedonia and in Serbia that number is only 13%. They also show much poorer educational achievement which has a correlation with socioeconomic status. In Hungary the status of Roma education is described as *"80 per cent take longer than eight years to complete primary education, of those with less than eight grade levels, nearly all are entirely or functionally illiterate"* (UNICEF, 2011). Those statistics coupled with a 2010 study which showed that only 60% of Roma adults had completed 8 years or more of primary education gives us a picture of the state of literacy in Hungarian Roma communities (Molnár & Ádany. et al, 2010).

In Hungary there is a phenomenon described as the *"romafication"* of schools in areas where there is more than one educational institution available to parents nearby. This is a process of when a certain amount of Roma children are enrolled in a school then parents of non-Roma children pull their children from those schools and try to enroll their children in neighboring ones with a lesser Roma population. Then with the further increasing Roma demographic of the school the Hungarian children were pulled out of the process accelerates and effectively segregates educational institutions as Roma and non-Roma (Havas, 2002). In a survey conducted by Gábor Havas (2002) he found that 38 out of 192 schools visited had experienced non-Roma students changing schools due to a high number of Roma children, in some cases they had to go to a school in another town to do so but was apparently deemed worth the extra time and effort by the parents. This could have a devastating for the schools deemed as *"Roma"* since this had an effect on the availability of teachers willing to work there. Many of them thinking educating Roma to be hopeless and for them personally it would be *"a loss of prestige"* (Havas, 2002, p. 98).

The migration of students between schools and the difficulties facing schools that had parents transfer their non-Roma children away from them led to measures being taken to counter this development. Among these measures was the segregation of Roma students within the school which led to 32.600 out of 93.000 Roma children attending majority Roma classrooms. These classes are often subpar compared to the non-Roma classes which was claimed to be due to the troublesome Roma social environment. Statistics of Roma students were consistent with the overall percentage of the Roma population in Hungary at around 10% of the student population (Havas, 2002).

When it comes to education standards and segregation in the school system the narrative surrounding the Roma appears to be a major factor in the quality of education that Roma children receive. The fact that segregation in this system in Hungary is driven in large part by the actions of non-Roma parents shows the power of the image surrounding the Roma. The willingness of Hungarian parents to put effort into removing their children from schools which have reached a certain point of Roma population is descriptive of a general subscription to a certain image of the Roma. Also with the noted difficulty in hiring teachers in these predominantly Roma schools and the demographics shown in our previous category of housing gives an image of what access to quality education near these segregated Roma communities is like.

3.4 Employment

The final category of exclusion is closely tied to our previous one of education. With lower standards of education in Roma majority schools the chances of academic advancement is arguably systematically limited based on ethnicity. During socialist times in the Eastern Bloc the Roma were relatively active in the labor force due to policies of assimilation which granted often full time employment and job security, but with the opening of borders and migration from other former communist countries the Roma were in many cases replaced by workers coming in from those states (Cames, 2013). The Roma simply lost their jobs in the region with new policies in the reformed states and had to go elsewhere. The image of the Roma as explained by the previously

defined narrative surrounding them has always been of the migrant who would just seek their fortune elsewhere. Indeed many did seek employment in the West but arguably not by choice or some cultural inclination to suddenly leave the countries they had settled in. No they were forced to leave to seek their fortune elsewhere and in turn after traveling to the West were faced by exclusionary policies there as well with those states cracking down on migratory workers through laws and sometimes forceful exportation (Cames, 2013).

Today however the Roma have the European Union behind them when it comes to accessing labour markets so the situation should be improving right? In fact, some argue that the situation today has worsened with certain programs claimed to assist the Roma in the job market. In some areas the unemployment rate for Roma individuals is up to 90% (McGarry, 2012). In some Central and Eastern European states there is not only exclusion today but also exploitation (Baar, 2011). Roma workers in Slovakia for instance have been funneled into so called activation programs which like the name indicates is a government measure designed to “activate” them in the labour market. This talk of activation does not seem very convincing when it comes to light that around 60% of those in the program were doing the same type of work they had been doing before as employees in the general labour market (Baar, 2011). It is hard to imagine this being a deliberate decision by the Roma of lowering their status from being regular employed workers in the general labour market to being in a program for work activation at a lower salary. This seemingly has worked out well for companies looking for cheap labour who have in some cases replaced their current employees with Roma labour from such programs (Baar, 2011). However examples like these emphasize the predicament of the Roma in dealing with their image. These types of programs further perpetuate the negative image of the Roma as being lazy and needing support programs to participate in society, when their difficulties in finding work in the first place has been shown to stem from discriminatory practices after the fall of the Eastern Bloc. The major difference is now they getting paid less to do the same type of work with a lower status in society. This is one of the root causes of the image problem of the Roma. Employees who were replaced by workers from such

programs are probably less than happy with the government supported exploitation of the marginalized Roma but as we will explore next it is unlikely that the blame for this will go upwards to employers or governments, but rather towards the Roma.

4 Feeding the Narrative

In recent years there has been an increased effort by governing bodies to enact a meaningful resolution to this situation of Roma exclusion and marginalization. This can for instance be seen through a recent EU emphasis on the issues of the Roma. The EU has recently enacted strategies for dealing with some of the problems currently facing the Roma in their “EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020” published in 2011 following a European Commission report in 2004 on the status of Roma. The aim of this is to support member states in their integration of Roma into their communities but even such a wide international effort has been deemed to be largely ineffective despite some positive outcomes in certain areas (Vermeersch, 2012).

The pressure on national governments from the European Union to solve the issues of the Roma came as part of the eastern expansion of the union when there were fears of the settled Roma in Eastern Europe migrating to the West due to poor prospects and conditions in their native countries. These efforts were early on in part through direct monetary support for national governments in Eastern Europe to improve Roma housing, education and health. Today these efforts have been shown to have been largely ineffective due to the simple fact that the Roma still face the same issues they did to this day, more than a decade later (Vermeersch, 2012; McGarry, 2012).

Now with a more comprehensive framework in place from the EU there are other concerns. One of these concerns are that by developing a wider EU policy regarding Roma integration the allocation of governmental responsibility towards the Roma becomes more unclear, even though the EU framework states that all responsibility regarding the integration and empowerment of Roma lies with individual member states there are real concerns with these efforts having the exact opposite effect. The results being that with the European Union showing increased interest in the Roma, national governments could shirk their own responsibilities and effectively point their fingers at the EU as being responsible for their newly acquired European citizens (Vermeersch, 2012; McGarry, 2012).

The question of responsibility at the higher levels of governance is an interesting one as it appears that everyone has something to gain from the resolution of these issues. As previously stated the European Union is afraid of the prospect of migrants coming to Western Europe so the union has a clear gain in creating good conditions for Roma in their home countries (McGarry, 2012). Despite the negative sentiment towards the Roma implicit in those fears this leads to a pragmatic willingness on their part to improve the situation for Roma. However when it comes to local governments in the region the denial of responsibility is not as obviously explained by pragmatism. There have been studies showing that local governments have quite a lot to gain from the increased participation of the Roma in the economy. Aside from doing right by their constituents, which the Roma in most Eastern European countries definitely are despite the disposition of some politicians towards them, there have been studies showing that the economic participation of Roma could lead to billions of euros in increased revenue for Eastern European nations (Fésüs, Östlin, et al., 2012). Now thinking pragmatically some believe the unwillingness to address the issues of the Roma in the past to be intentional and malevolent on the part of governing elites. Ágnes Kende (2000) quotes Hungarian Roma politician Jenő Zsigó as saying:

It is the political interest of the ruling elite to maintain a scapegoat, it is their economic interest to have a group that can be exploited without or practically without limits, and finally it is society's need to always have somebody who is worse off than the most wretched white person, to have a group of people whose misery is comforting to the onlooker, who thinks that for the time being, he or she is still better off (Kende, 2000, p. 199).

In the past the Roma as other minority groups have often been scapegoats in times of dire economic conditions as a socio-economic problem facing nation-states as was seen during the transition following the collapse of the socialist Eastern Bloc (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015, 26). Today however the discourse surrounding them aided by recent efforts of integration strategies risks to antagonize the group further.

The “special attention” payed to them both by the European Union and national governments due to these integration strategies can be viewed by some as privilege afforded to the Roma that other groups do not get (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015). This is what McGarry (2012) claims to be due to more of a concentration on the socio-economic status of the Roma without addressing the ethnic aspect of their situation, which appears to be affected by a majority narrative seemingly consistent with the reoccurring Gypsy Threat Narrative (Loveland & Popescu, 2016). But without addressing this deeper rooted problem of social exclusion due to the majority consensus on the “nature” of the Roma, an effort to improve their marginalized status through economic and social participation programs will most likely be unsuccessful. This “Catch 22” situation as it is described by Marushiakova & Popov (2015) is a rather extraordinary predicament as apparently any efforts by governing bodies, Union or local only further validates the narrative and in turn alienates the Roma from the majority population.

Now this may seem counterintuitive at first but in the process of trying to amend some of the issues covered in our previous chapter, local governments and EU policies have only seemed to deepen the divide between the Roma and majority populations. Marushiakova & Popov’s (2015) writings on this issue bring to light how deeper and more difficult to resolve the narrative surrounding the Roma becomes when the extra layer of preferential treatment is added on top of an already racialized and essentialist view of the group. They argue however that implementations of policies that help the Roma should of course not be halted but rather be carefully deliberated. When policies that could possibly help a lot of people become focused explicitly on the Roma is when people start taking notice. Then on top of our previously defined Gypsy Threat Narrative of a criminally inclined isolationist group gets added a label of preferential treatment. Treatment that seems possibly undeserved if you subscribe to the narrative and further creates resentment towards the group. Edward Said’s book begins with a quote from Karl Marx which reads *“They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented”* (Karl Marx as cited by Said, 1978/2003). This is a quote that rang true in the historical context of Orientalism and how the West produced the image of the East, but is equally true in another sense pertaining to one of the main problems facing the Roma today. That is the problem

with being explicitly focused on and therefore being perceived by the majority as overly represented in minority policies, undeservedly at that (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015; Vermeersch, 2012).

There seems to be a general consensus among scholars writing on the issues of the Roma in recent years that this paradox of EU and government programs trying to improve the situation of the Roma is actually making matters worse through framing the Roma in a way that aligns with the already negative public image of the group (McGarry, 2012; Vermeersch, 2012; Marushiakova & Popov, 2015; Baar, 2011). This image is of the lazy, criminal and isolationist Gypsy that does not want to work and is undeserving of such attention. The solution to this is not a simple one since it is unlikely that the EU will halt their programs aimed at helping there Roma nor should they. However it is imperative that all efforts that are aimed specifically at the Roma be evaluated and carefully deliberated if they are to indeed help solve the situation or otherwise run the risk of fueling the fire of Romaphobia (Vermeersch, 2012). This could be done by reducing the amount of public emphasis of certain programs being aimed specifically at the Roma as it appears to be especially harmful to the public's image of the Roma when the Roma are explicitly targeted in social policies (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015).

This brings us back to Edward Said's Orientalism (1978/2003) and the parallels between the historical construction of the Oriental image by the West and Europe's very own "outsiders" today. The fact of the matter is that there is a conversation going on about the Roma. Their image and identity is being produced and reproduced through a mix of public opinion, political initiatives and public reactions to those initiatives. Just like the West maintained the identity and image of the Orientals as being lazy and barbaric at first, later to be romanticized in literature as free and nomadic (Said, 1978/2003), we can see the Roma image being produced through public and political discourse today by outsiders. This coupled with the informality of Roma political participation and underrepresentation in local politics (Szalai, 2016), creates a perfect climate for identity politics and exoticification of a group that has been present in Central and Eastern Europe for centuries.

5 Conclusion

The Roma have undoubtedly had it rough over the past century in Central and Eastern Europe. Depending on the time period examined you can see a change in their situation for the better or worse, but arguably little change in the general disposition towards them. Drawing upon their history in the area, we know the Roma have lived in the region for centuries and have in many places in Eastern and Central Europe been sedentary for decades, if not centuries as well. At some point during the last centuries it might have been convenient for ruling elites to have a marginalized group for which to effectively point at as an example and scapegoat if times got hard. This might explain the beliefs of the Roma politician quoted earlier that the marginalization of Roma was deliberate and malicious in nature. Whatever the historic intent of such marginalization was, either political in nature or just plain racist the effects of it remain today. The Roma are criminalized, dehumanized and marginalized through political and public discourse. We have drawn upon quotes from public officials who do not fear any reprisal for their comments of that nature and in fact may even be relying on them for reelection. Like stated earlier, crime rates in Hungary were not reviewed as they are not what is being looked at here. If it holds true that Roma do commit more crimes than other minority groups it can fairly easily be explained when you look at their prospects. With high levels of unemployment, little educational prospects to advance socioeconomically and perhaps in need of medicine due to a lack of access to healthcare is a hypothetical situation that could make anyone question their stance when it comes to committing a crime. Therefore whether or not the Roma are actually fulfilling the “prophecy of the people” that they commit more crimes than other groups is irrelevant if that narrative of criminalization is what led to that situation arising in the first place through majority discourse and a vicious cycle of marginalization. That in fact is the definition of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The problem is not the Roma, it is the discourse surrounding them. The Roma are being held from important areas of economic and social life in their native countries. Their nativity may be questioned by nationalists as the rhetoric of the nomadic Roma might convince people they do not belong and unfortunately that

seems to be a rather popular disposition. Whatever their motivation it seems that nationalists are embracing the Gypsy Threat Narrative or at least a similar one as can be seen in Jobbik party statements and even their public policy. If the aim of Othering people is to create a clear divide of “us” and “them” it seems in many aspects to have been successful. Such thoughts can be seemingly appealing even, if “they” are bad and lazy then “we” must be good and hardworking. It is not hard to see why even kind and loving people would fall into the trap of thinking that was true, if not just for the boost to one’s self-image implicit in accepting such a narrative.

We have shown such a narrative to be far from harmless or ineffective when it comes to affecting quality of life. With Roma being discriminated against when it comes to quality of, and access to healthcare it can be directly life-threatening. The name of the European Roma Rights Centre report referenced in the chapter on healthcare is called *Ambulance Not on the Way*. That is a rather terrifying image but through the cases mentioned from that report it is shown to be the grim reality many Roma face. It is hard to imagine that reality facing other outsiders in the region, as you would most likely not see reports like this published on expats who had the experience of being denied care based on their implied ethnicity of being blond haired and blue eyed. This is indeed a vicious cycle of alienation and marginalization that is hard to address seeing as how ingrained it is. Even though there is willingness on part of governing bodies to correct it public opinion is unfortunately what dominates political decisions in democracies. Non-Roma parents in Hungary who had a choice of pulling their children from schools when they were deemed by them to have been contaminated by too many Roma children is in effect voting in that closed system of education. This effectively twisted the arm of administration into segregating their schools to keep funding for their local district. There is possibly no other explanation for going through the trouble of doing that unless those parents honestly believed that even Roma children are affected by the “dirty qualities” of the Roma.

The Roma are a part of Europe and as such they will be talked about. It is challenging this narrative surrounding them that is the real issue as it does seem to be the root cause of a lot of the Roma’s problems. The top-down approach of trying to

affect change has been proven to be fruitless this past decade and maybe even damaging. In the example of our “romafication” of schools in Hungary it was even the other way around. The majority community effectively enacted change by pulling their children from school to promote segregation. In other examples presented in the last chapter there seems to be a general consensus among scholars covering this problem that the government focusing on the Roma is even furthering the gap between them and majority populations. So we are left with a situation in which we have an extremely negative narrative being portrayed of the Roma and efforts by governing bodies to enact change that should have in theory improved quality of life have the exact opposite effect. This is the curious predicament of the Roma in Europe today. I would like to argue that this is a narrative that demands being talked about due to its nature of possibly being self-perpetuating. It is so deep rooted that any aspects of criminality by a few individuals further perpetuates the notion that Roma are criminals. With the large population of Roma in Europe there is bound to be a criminal element like in all other societies, it’s just that for most other groups that criminal element has not been deemed essential to, and bound to their nature.

What needs to happen is that the narrative surrounding the Roma needs to be addressed on all levels. If top-down initiatives are interpreted as preferential treatment then they need to be carefully considered before enacted. It might be difficult to evaluate beforehand if the risk of enacting policies or initiatives aimed at improving quality of life which will be effective and if they are worth it at the risk of fueling the fires of a toxic discourse. However there has been a lot of practice runs so far with varying results and learning from them is imperative. More importantly vigilance must be maintained when talking about the Roma. Some may interpret this as victimizing the Roma and therefore removing their agency in improving their own situation, I would however argue that it is imperative that we as outsiders discussing the issues of the Roma be aware of our own agency in possibly perpetuating the narrative even further. Even this very thesis is a contributing factor to the discourse surrounding the Roma, let us just hope that in addressing this toxic narrative surrounding them it will be a positive one.

Bibliography

- Baar, H. V. (2011). Europe's Romaphobia: problematization, securitization, nomadization. *Environment and Planning D-Society & Space*, 29(2), 203-212.
- Cames, R. (2013). Government by Expulsion: The Roma Camp, Citizenship, and the State. *Sociology*, 29, 1-31.
- Durst, J. (2011). "What Makes us Gypsies, Who Knows...?!": Ethnicity and Reproduction. In Stewart, M., Rovid, M., (Eds.), *Multi-disciplinary approaches to Romany studies* (p. 13-35). Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Eriksen, T. H. (2002). *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- European Commission. (2011). *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*. Retrieved from <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2010658%202011%20INIT>
- European Commission. (2004). *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*. Retrieved from <http://www.ergonetnetwork.org/media/userfiles/media/egro/situation%20of%20roma.pdf>
- European Roma Rights Centre. (2006). *Ambulance Not on the Way*. Retrieved from <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/01/E6/m000001E6.pdf>
- Fésüs, G., Östlin, P., McKee, M., & Ádány, R. (2012). Policies to improve the health and well-being of Roma people: The European experience. *Health Policy*, 105(1), 25-32.
- Final results of the Population and Housing Census :Romania had over 20,121 million inhabitants, in October 2011. (2013, July 5). *ACT Media Romanian Business News*. Retrieved from <http://actmedia.eu/>
- Fox, J. E., & Vermeersch, P. (2010). Backdoor nationalism. *European Journal of Sociology*, 51(02), 325-357.
- Földes, M. E., & Covaci, A. (2012). Research on Roma health and access to healthcare: state of the art and future challenges. *International journal of public health*, 57(1), 37-39.
- Havas, G. (2002). On sociological studies about the Roma. In Ernő Kállai (Ed.), *The Gypsies/The Roma in Hungarian society*, 18-24. Budapest: Teleki László Foundation.
- Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (2009). Hungarian Rights Groups Denounce Anti-Romani Statements by Hungary's Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights. Retrieved November 9, 2016 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/rights-groups-denounce-anti-romani-statements-by-the-ombudsman/>
- Hungarian Ministry of Public Administration and Justice (2011) *National Social Inclusion Strategy: Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, The Roma*. Retrieved from

<http://romagov.kormany.hu/download/5/58/20000/Strategy%20-%20HU%20-%20EN.PDF>

Hungarian National Election Office. (2014) *The results of the parties, national minority groups and independent candidates aggregated at country level*. Retrieved from http://valasztas.hu/en/ogyv2014/416/416_0_index.html

Jobbik Party (2016) Interior Policy – Stability and Predictability. *Official Jobbik Website*. Retrieved from <http://www.jobbik.com/policies>

Kamberi, E., Martinovic, B., & Verkuyten, M. (2015). Life satisfaction and happiness among the Roma in central and southeastern Europe. *Social Indicators Research*, 124(1), 199-220. Powell, R., & Lever, J. (2015). Europe's perennial 'outsiders': A processual approach to Roma stigmatization and ghettoization. *Current Sociology*, 0011392115594213.

Kállai, E. (2002). The Hungarian Roma population during the last half-century. In Ernő Kállai (Ed.), *The Gypsies/the Roma in Hungarian Society*, 35-51. Budapest: Teleki László Foundation.

Kende, Á. (2000). The Hungary of Otherness: The Roma (Gypsies) of Hungary. *Journal of European Area Studies*, 8(2), 187-201.

Lee, K. (2000). Orientalism and gypsyism. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 44(2), 129-156.

Loveland, M. T., & Popescu, D. (2015). The Gypsy Threat Narrative Explaining Anti-Roma Attitudes in the European Union. *Humanity & Society*, 40(3), 329-352.

Marushiakova, E., & Popov, V. (2015). European Policies for Social Inclusion of Roma: Catch 22?. *Social Inclusion*, 3(5), 19-31.

McGarry, A. (2012). The dilemma of the European Union's Roma policy. *Critical Social Policy*, 32(1), 126-136.

Molnár, Á., Ádány, R., Ádám, B., Gulis, G., & Kósa, K. (2010). Health impact assessment and evaluation of a Roma housing project in Hungary. *Health & place*, 16(6), 1240-1247.

Molnár, Á., Ádám, B., Antova, T., Bosak, L., Dimitrov, P., Mileva, H., ... & Kósa, K. (2012). Health impact assessment of Roma housing policies in Central and Eastern Europe: A comparative analysis. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 33(1), 7-14.

Nicolae, V. (2007). Towards a Definition of Anti-Gypsyism. *V Roma Diplomacy, ur. Valeriu Nicolae in Hannah Slavik*, 21-30.

Popham, P. (2011, July 9). Hungary in crisis: Tensions with its gypsy population threaten to rip the Eastern European country apart. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk>

Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism: Western Representations of the Orient*. London: Penguin Books Ltd. (Original work published 1978).

- Shafir, M. (2012). Political Antisemitism in Romania?. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 12(4).
- Stewart, M. (2011) Introduction. In Stewart, M., Rovid, M., (Eds.), *Multi-disciplinary approaches to Romany studies* (p. 1-13). Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Szalai, J. (2016). Informality and the Invisibility of Roma Political Participation. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 2(1).
- Vermeersch, P. (2012). Reframing the Roma: EU initiatives and the politics of reinterpretation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(8), 1195-1212.
- Westervelt, E. (2009, September 9). Wave of Violence Strikes Eastern Europe's Gypsies. *NPR*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org>
- The World Bank. (2015) *Population Total, Hungary*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=HU>