

Charles University in Prague  
Faculty of Arts

**Institute of World History**

**TEMA EMMC "EUROPEAN TERRITORIES IDENTITY AND  
DEVELOPMENT CIVILIZATION, NATION, REGION, CITY"**

**ETHNICITY REVISITED. THE CASE OF HIGHER-EDUCATED YOUNGER  
GENERATION ROMA IN CONTEMPORARY CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE**

**Master Thesis  
ANAMARIA REMETE**

Prague 2013

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Date

Signature

## Abstract

### Ethnicity Revisited: the Case of Higher Educated Younger Generation Roma in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe

Anamaria Remete

This research aims to explore the self perception of ethnicity of younger generation Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. The sample population is represented by two groups of higher educated Roma. First, those who were beneficiaries of the university scholarships granted by the Open Society Institute's Roma Initiatives. Second, those who are working in Roma focused NGO advocacy organizations. The organisations are: the Open Society Institute-Budapest, the European Roma Rights Centre also in Budapest, the European Roma Information Office in Brussels and the European Roma and Travellers Forum by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg .

The self perception is going to be analyzed through the application of the concept of "everyday ethnicity" as developed by scholars Rogers Brubaker, Paloma Gay y Blasco and Carol Silverman in order to gain insight into the dynamics of the factors that come into play in the process of creating meaning for young and higher-educated Roma in countries from Central and Eastern Europe. As the concept of "identity" has been seriously scrutinized in social science research as an analytical category, the study's sources shall consist in semi-structured interviews with university graduates from the two above mentioned groups.

By doing so, the study shall explore manifestations of belongingness, ethnic awareness and self-identification in "everyday ethnicity". Moreover the study attempts to discover whether, and if so, in what way, pan-Romani organisations are succesful in ascribing a so-called transnational Roma identity in the case of the two groups of the study. Also, the concept of "Diaspora" will extensively be dealt with as this study represents an excellent opportunity to add value to studies in the field of Cosmopolitanism by taking up a transnational advocacy movement that works on behalf of several groups with different historicities, thus contending traditional approaches to representativeness. More specifically, the study shall put into practice Rogers Brubaker's criteria to establish whether this

transnational group envisions itself as a “diaspora”. Consequently, the study's sample group shall be analyzed through the criteria of manifestations of collectivity, condition and process as opposed to traditional approaches that look at “disporas” as tangible and bounded entities.

Key words: Ethnicity, Identity, Roma, Central Europe, Eastern Europe

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude for the professional guidance to my thesis supervisors, Prof. Yasar Abu Ghosh and Prof. Paolo Militello.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude for their precious advice, guidance and kindness to Lisa Marlene Edelsward and Prof. Philip Carl Salzman. I am most thankful to them for showing me the beauty of a long-term commitment to anthropology.

I offer my special gratefulness to my dear family.

I am most grateful to Erszebet, Karolina, Shejla, Edlira and Albert for sharing their thoughts and feelings with me sincerely.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	page 4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	page 5
LIST OF TABLES.....	p.6-7
CHAPTERS	
INTRODUCTION.....	page 9
1.A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNICITY.....	page 10
1.1 Ethnicity, the origins of the word and its uses in academic writing.....	page 10
1.2 Different approaches to Ethnicity: the Primordial vs. The Instrumentalist Approach.....	page 12
1.3 Theories on Ethnicity.....	page 18
2.A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTITY.....	page 48
2.1 The 'Beyond Identity' Critique.....	page 48
2.2 The Brubaker-Calhoun debate.....	page 49
2.3 Social Identity Theory.....	page 51
3.A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIASPORA.....	page 55
3.1 Introduction.....	page 55
3.2 Criteria for 'Diaspora'.....	page 56
3.3 "'Diaspora' diaspora".....	page 57
3.4 Diasporic modalities. The Gitanos in Jarana.....	page 59
4.THE ROMA IN EUROPE.....	page 62
4.1 Origins and migrations.....	page 62
4.2 Linguistics.....	page 63
4.3 Statistics.....	page 66
5.ROMA IN ACADEMIC WRITINGS.....	page 71
6.ROMA BETWEEN PROJECT AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	page 73
6.1 Roma identity as project and fieldwork findings.....	page 73
6.2 Ethnogenesis or Ethnicization.....	page 76
7.ROMANI TRANSNATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE CHALLENGES OF LEGITIMACY	
7.1 Introduction.....	page 80
7.2 Collective identification as social process.....	page 81
8.METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND FINDINGS.....	page 84
8.1 Introduction.....	page 84

8.2Research questions and hypotheses .....	page 84
8.3Frame analysis.....	page 86
8.4Interview analysis.....	page 86
8.5 Interview Evidence: Romani voices.....	page 88
9.CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL DISCUSSION.....	page 106
Bibliography.....	page 108
Appendix. Interview transcripts.....	page 115

## Introduction

Romani Studies is a very debated field in which initial academic writings still have significant consequences that hinder production of sound knowledge to this very day. Many scholars specialized in Romani Studies, historians and social anthropologists especially, advance extreme socio-constructivist claims saying that initial academic knowledge has significantly limped our perception and, consequently, our ways of studying the Roma. Post-colonial critique generates debates that revolve around serious issues related to the entitlement of the authors; whether it is appropriate for non-Roma academics to study the Roma given the process of power relations that it belongs to. All these debates constitute serious challenges that need considering and addressing. Prominent scholars in Romani Studies, Wim Willems, Leo Lucassen and Annemarie Cottaar strongly argue for extreme caution while their recommendations in the field practically discourage any study aimed at touching the issue of Roma culture, distinctiveness or ethnicity arguing that they carry within them biased content from the very outset. Such discouragements have been addressed in this study by taking Rogers Brubaker's critique of identity, group and diaspora as categories of analysis in social sciences. His analytical *manifesto* has been taken as a guiding model in the view in which the current study has aimed to look at and construct its conceptual framework of ethnicity and its expressions in social life.

Also, the interest in possible changes in terms of self-identification, perceiving one's own ethnicity and, more importantly, its relevance in today's setting has emerged from general views regarding the ambivalent effects of globalization on 'identities'. Writings on Roma cultural distinctiveness, ethnicity and self-identification has been quite problematic, complex and debated by itself. However, we believe that several issues make this current endeavour worthwhile.

First of all, previous fieldwork research on various Roma communities, such as Paloma Gay y Blasco or Carol Silverman point our attention to the specific traditions of particular Roma groups such as the *Gitanos* or the *American Roma* and their relevance for the way in which these groups see themselves today in the wider world. These studies inform us on the importance that certain Roma values, norms and customs have for their social organisation and the way in which this plays a role in their relationship with the society in which they live. Such studies raise the legitimate question of what kind of relevance can Roma-nation projects have today when such communities seem to place high emphasis on their own cultural distinctiveness and present no solid identification with the larger Roma transnational level. Other studies, such as Mirescu et al. (2011) or Jean-Luc Poueyto's study "Un patrimoine culturel tres discret: le cas des Manouches" point to similar findings. For instance,



Mirescu et al. even raise the question of the direction of causality: does a previous transnational Roma conscience trigger the Roma Movement or, is it the other way around, does the Movement's dynamics shape this Roma transnational idea and render it with a specific character?

However, for what concerns the possible effects change or acculturation may have on Roma self-identification, Silverman's study reports that changes that occur in societies, and even for the Roma, are continuously adapted around their culture so as to better respond to new challenges and environments; as such, these changes should be not interpreted as a loss of Gypsy culture or distinctiveness. For Silverman, Roma's response to new situations as strategies carefully manipulated in a creative way so that they may keep their culture. Consequently, it is also the aim of the current study to explore what happens to the way in which young Roma see their Roma heritage and how they adapt it in the dynamics of the Roma advocacy Movement.

Gay y Blasco says that there is a strong tendency to downplay difference among Gitanos within the Roma transnational project and to over-communicate 'common culture' rather than groups' diversity; moreover, Gay y Blasco says that this type of is based on the creation of practical and imaginative links with Roma elsewhere through means of cancelling barriers of ethnic affiliation, language and life-style."<sup>1</sup>

Given this variety of different possible trends that this phenomenon may take, the question of what happens with the way in which this educated young Roma generation sees itself appears as legitimate and worth researching.

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Gay y Blasco, *Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective*, p.186.

## A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNICITY

1.1 Ethnicity, the origins of the word and its uses in academic writing

1.2 Different approaches to Ethnicity: the Primordial versus The Instrumentalist Approach

1.3 Theories on Ethnicity

1.1 Ethnicity, the origins of the word and its uses in academic writing

Without a doubt 'ethnicity' is a widely explored phenomenon that receives a great deal of scholarly attention as is reflected by the fact that it is an established field of studies. In social and cultural anthropology, 'ethnicity' has been of great interest since the late 1960s and it remains a central focus for research today. A mere observation of its frequency in scholarly journals from the 1960s till the 1990s bears testimony to its popularity as a topic. Scholars however have different ways of looking at this phenomenon and, consequently, different conceptualizations of it. It is because of this that it would be helpful to go back to the origins of the phenomenon and see what it meant initially before it entered the world of academia.

The origins of the word are traced back to the ancient Greek *ethnos* which seems to have referred to a variety of situations in which a collectivity of humans lived and acted together<sup>2</sup> and which is typically translated today as 'people' or 'nation'. According to Raymond Williams<sup>3</sup> however, the term is only a derivative of *ethnikos* which presumably meant heathen or pagan.

Unlike the term 'ethnic', 'ethnicity' is first mentioned in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1972. Another way of envisioning Ethnicity is looking at it as a matter of 'people hood' (Ruane and Todd, 2004: 216) therefore attributing it a sense of togetherness that people presumably have in a given situation<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Østergård, U. 1992a. 'What is national and ethnic identity?' cf. P. Bilde, T. Engberg- Pedersen, L. Hannestad and J. Zahle (eds), *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, p.32.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, Raymond cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, p.119.

<sup>4</sup> Ruane, J., Todd, J. 2004. 'The roots of intense ethnic conflict may not in fact be ethnic: categories, communities and path dependence', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 45:209–32.

As with most concepts in social sciences, definitions of terms such as 'ethnicity' abound<sup>5</sup>, but they are almost always contested. For instance, Kroeber and Kluckhohn identified 162 different definitions. One of the reasons for this is due to the fact that the phenomenon the term refers to is very much tied to its particular empirical context upon which the definition is based on; as a consequence, the variation is quite high, its power of explanation is dependent on a specific setting and it cannot be counted on to make generalizations and extrapolate its interpretations from one case study to another. Another issue that makes the task of providing a definition of 'ethnicity' particularly challenging is the fact that, as a social phenomenon, 'ethnicity' is a word and an experience that is part of the social realm. Its use in academic writing is undoubtedly influenced by its day-to-day understandings in "real" life. Moreover, its academic use also influences the way it is perceived in social life. Having that in mind throughout the chapter I shall make short reviews of the major conceptualizations of 'ethnicity' in social sciences, most notably social anthropology, that hopefully will work as helping guidelines rather than tight confines.

Richard Jenkins draws attention to the fact that we are dealing with a difficult concept that needs clarity above everything else. As such he draws on Max Weber's influential arguments from *Economy and Society* as he puts forward his own conceptualization of 'ethnicity' and the way he recommends it be analyzed in social sciences. The idea that is central to Jenkins's conceptualization of 'ethnicity' that he draws from Weber is that "ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere. On the other hand, it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity"<sup>6</sup>. (1978: 389) In this respect, Jenkins interprets Weber's idea as somewhat suggesting that "the belief in common ancestry is likely to be a *consequence* of collective political action rather than its *cause*; people come to see themselves as *belonging* together – coming from a common background – as a consequence of *acting* together. Collective interests thus do not simply reflect or follow from perceived similarities and differences between people; the active pursuit of collective interests does, however, encourage ethnic identification." In my view, this perspective reconciles in a way the social-constructivist approach – the beliefs and perceptions that influence present actions – with the instrumentalist approach to ethnicity which places great emphasis on the

---

<sup>5</sup> Kroeber, Alfred and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952.

<sup>6</sup> Weber, Max, *Economy and Society*, 1978 cf. Jenkins, Richard, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008.

individuals' pursuit of maximizing their social gains alongside ethnic lines, through ethnicity-influenced ways of perceiving their environment and, therefore, opportunities.

According to Jenkins, a significant sociological contribution to our understanding of ethnicity is represented by the Chicago sociologist Everett Hughes, in a short article he first published in 1948 (1994: 91–6). Apparently, Hughes developed on Weber's thoughts on feelings of collectivity triggered by awareness of ethnic belonging and he rejected a "common sense" understanding based solely on distinctive 'cultural traits'. He states: "An ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups: it is an ethnic group, on the contrary, because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the *ins* and the *outs* talk, feel, and act as if it were a separate group. This is possible only if there are ways of telling who belongs to the group and who does not, and if a person learns early, deeply, and usually irrevocably to what group he belongs. If it is easy to resign from the group, it is not truly an ethnic group." (1994: 91). In this perspective, ethnic cultural differences become a function of 'group-ness'. Here, Jenkins says, identity becomes a matter of both the *outs* as well as the *ins*.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3 Different Approaches to Ethnicity. The Primordialist vs. the Instrumentalist

Broadly speaking, in the field of ethnicity studies, scholars are placed within two, presumably, opposing approaches. The first one is called the Primordialist or the Essentialist; the second, is called either Circumstantialist, Instrumentalist or Constructivist depending on the aspects each author focuses on most. According to Henry Y. Hale in a 2002 paper<sup>8</sup> it is rather stranger, ironic even, that scholars so sensitive to nuance should endorse these labels on themselves, which only leads to the oversimplification of the works discussed. Despite this remark, many scholars continue to make reference to works on ethnicity placing them in such "camps". Eriksen proposes we view this dual distinction in ethnicity studies as useful in highlighting a crucial duality in ethnicity: the choice scholars make, intentionally or unintentionally, to place emphasis either on the cultural/symbolic aspects and situations that explain why ethnicity endures or on the situational/contextual aspects where ethnicity is made relevant to pursue particular interests or is something contingent.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Hughes, Everett cf. Jenkins, R., *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Hale, Henry Y., *Conceptualizing Ethnicity for Political Science. Towards a More Rational National?*, Draft paper prepared for the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, April 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, Page 64.

The primordialist approach reunites theories on ethnicity that focus more on aspects regarding the so-called 'primordial attachments'. The primordial approach's main assumption is that it gives great importance to the influence of the so-called primordial bonds or attachments on social relations and the ways in which individuals perceive their environment. Despite the fact that Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz are regarded as the main figures of the primordialist approach, not all their writings on ethnicity can be placed within this large category. By primordial attachments, scholars generally refer to the prevalence that is given to bonds that presumably stem from the givens of culture that are inevitably involved in givens of social existence. These can take the form of ties of blood, speech, customs, etc.. Shils and Geertz explore the role of culture on individuals' lives, but that focus does not seem to suggest that the "givens" of life that primordialism puts forward are something objective, but rather that they hold a great power on individuals precisely because they see them as "real", because they perceive them as "given". From this perspective, Geertz and Shils are observers of individuals that take "givens" as real and they do not put forward the claim that such elements of culture "are" real, but that they are viewed as such and through this very belief they are re-inforced in social life. For instance, Geertz says that the strength of these primordial bonds differs from one person to person, from society to society and from time to time, thus placing emphasis on the contextuality as well<sup>10</sup>. He defines ethnicity as the 'world of personal identity collectively ratified and publicly expressed' and 'socially ratified personal identity. In this view, Geertz actually seems to have a socio-constructivist stance as he suggests ethnicity has to mean something to people, that it has to have some relevance in their perception of the world. Also, Shils writes about the perception, not the reality, of primordality of the ties and tries to make clear that people vary "normally" in the intensity of their attachments to the group and that there are usually only a few hard-core believers<sup>11</sup>.

Critics of the primordialist approach usually refer to the fact that it tends to necessarily grant culture an important role in the ways in which individuals view their and others' ethnicity and merely assume it a priori rather than question it. Seen from this viewpoint, an individual's cultural identity seems somewhat essential and imposed as a mere external classification is enough to inscribe meaning for the individual in question. This extreme primordialist standpoint is said to account very little for situations in which ethnic membership doesn't seem to mean much to individuals and it

---

<sup>10</sup> Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in Geertz (ed.) *Old Societies and New States*, 3rd Edition (NY: The Free Press, 1967) pp.105-28, pp.109, 128.

<sup>11</sup>

doesn't have enough theoretical and methodological flexibility to accommodate changes over time.

The basic assumption of the circumstantialist or the instrumentalist approach is the contextuality of ethnicity in the sense that it holds ethnicity, in its various understandings, as the end-result of a specific context, be it the perception of a common threat, the possibility of grasping an opportunity in social standing and so on.

The circumstantialist or instrumentalist approach to ethnicity is largely associated with Fredrik Barth's work "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" that is seen as a breaking point with the traditional primordialist model. Barth's critique is based on several points. In the first place, the analysis of ethnicity starts from the definition of the situation held by social actors; that is, the way in which individuals view their social setting and act accordingly. Second, the focus of attention then becomes the maintenance of ethnic boundaries in the interaction between 'us' and 'them' that takes place across the boundary. This is an important point as Barth makes an important shift in the study of ethnicity, a shift from focusing on the so-called "cultural-stuff" (the elements that are presumed as primordial in the first approach, such as language, rituals, customs, etc.) to a focus on the boundaries; here, boundaries are seen as the spaces where values, claimed as belonging to each group, are accepted, endorsed, re-enforced, changed or refused. Another element of Barth's argument is that ethnic identity is ascribed as it is formed both by group members as by non-group individuals. Here, Barth takes into account situations of social interaction and refers to the relational aspect of identity, an idea widely accepted today in social sciences, but rather new at the time. Lastly, Barth stresses the situationality or contextuality of ethnicity; the fact that individuals will place greater or lower importance on their ethnicity depending on their perception of the situation they find themselves in. It must be mentioned here however that the situations that Barth explores are mostly defined in terms of economic relationships, more specifically competition over economic niches.

Barth's contribution to the field is undoubtedly significant as he successfully addresses the main shortcomings of the primordialist approach. For instance, rather than taking for granted the importance and influence of culture in people's lives, Barth's focus of investigation is on the boundaries as spaces of contestation of one's own cultural values. Barth doesn't simply assume the persistence of ethnic boundaries as a natural phenomenon; he questions it and centers his study questions around this. One example of such a contribution is taking into account interaction between individuals and groups; rather than looking at the cultural uniqueness of ethnic groups as a primordial feature and wrongly assuming their distinctiveness as the result of isolation Barth states it may profitably to see them as a result of a long-term social process. Here, the ethnic group is defined through its relationship to others, highlighted through the boundary. Also, the boundary itself is a

social product, a space of contestation which may have variable importance and which may change in time and in circumstance. The element of contextuality in Barth's work is reflected in his description of ethnic categories as 'organizational vessels that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different sociocultural systems' (1969a: 14). It is elements such as these that indicate that Barth advocates a *relational* and *processual* approach to ethnicity.<sup>12</sup> Oddly enough, Barth is sometimes placed within the primordialist approach on account of his ideas regarding ethnic ascriptions; in this respect, Barth defines ethnic ascriptions as categorical ascriptions which classify 'a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background' (1969a: 13).

Richard Jenkins says that one of the great merits of Barth's contribution to the study of ethnicity is that it allowed scholars to switch from a focus on culture to the area of social; to put it differently, the notion of ethnicity was finally being differentiated from that of culture and seen as an aspect of the social organization

Although Barth's contribution is widely acknowledged, there are scholars that challenge his interpretations and empirical studies that challenge his findings and conclude that each study has explanatory power only for its respective case study. For instance, Jan-Petter Blom has shown in a 1969 study<sup>13</sup> conducted in the Norwegian mountains that, due to peculiar ecological circumstances, the farmers in that geographical setting lead a very different life from lowland farmers and that despite this, they are not considered a distinct ethnic group as would be the assumption according to Barth's findings. Cultural differences relate to ethnicity if and only if such differences are made relevant in social interaction.

One scholar that challenges Barth's claims and views him as taking a primordialist stance is Abner Cohen. He states that Barth's definition of ethnic identity gives out the idea of an imperative status, as a somewhat static view of ethnicity, unchangeable throughout time (A. Cohen, 1974a: xii–xv). This view is somewhat ironic as it is Barth himself who argued against cultural determinism in ethnic studies and paved the way for constructivist viewpoints. As for Cohen, he views ethnic identities as developing in response to functional, "environment" requirements. For him, ethnicity is a question of strategic rationality, mere form of informal political organization where Barth's cultural boundaries are invoked solely as a strategic move for gains. At this point, Eriksen views Cohen rather

---

<sup>12</sup> Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, Page 45.

<sup>13</sup> Blom, Jan-Petter cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, Page 45.

than Barth as the one who strengthens the tie between ethnicity and culture<sup>14</sup>.

Another 'strong' instrumentalist, Peter Worsley (1984: 249) argues that cultural traits are not absolutes or simply intellectual categories, but are invoked to provide identities which legitimize claims to rights. They are strategies or weapons in competitions over scarce social goods. This can be seen as probably the synthesis of the instrumentalist view.<sup>15</sup>

Eriksen states that although it is common to distinguish between 'primordialist' and 'instrumentalist' perspectives on ethnicity there is however a second controversy in ethnicity studies that can be described as the relationship between 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' views. Using these principles one could better understand the constraints anthropologists have in reaching common grounds. As we have seen before, scholars disagree whether Barth takes a primordialist or an instrumentalist position; however, using Eriksen's distinctions of 'objective' and 'subjective', "Barth's perspective, where ethnicity is defined as categorical ascriptions undertaken by the agents themselves, is usually regarded as a subjectivist position".<sup>16</sup> Conversely, the objectivist view, would state that ethnic distinctions exist without the awareness of the agents themselves. Eriksen places Cohen in this perspective as he categorically rejects subjective ascriptions to ethnic identity. Moreover, perspectives such as the Marxist one that places emphasis on power differences inherent in the social structure and view them as determinants of ethnicity would be placed within this large perspective. Here, strategic choice is downplayed and external, structural constraints are viewed as determinant.<sup>17</sup>

The question that naturally arises is: are these two views mutually exclusive? Putting it in different words: can ethnicity simultaneously be an imperative status *and* subject to situational selection and choice? Is culture determinant or do individuals choose their identities? This is the central question over the issue of 'situational selection' that places scholars in different categories of approaches. It seems that it is a matter of what aspects get highlighted over others. Jonathan Okamura says that anthropologists who have written about situational ethnicity tend to emphasize either the cognitive aspect – therefore attributing a great role to strategic choices – or the structural

---

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, A. cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, Page 63.

<sup>15</sup> Worsley, Peter cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, Page 43.

<sup>16</sup> Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010, Page 65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



aspect – the constraints imposed upon actors like the political, social or economic setting in which they act.<sup>18</sup> Okamura's insight is particularly helpful in understanding the reasons why scholars that mostly agree on some issues in ethnicity studies, and are placed in the same grand 'camp', would disagree on others; this is the case of the Rogers Brubaker and Craig Calhoun debate that I shall develop on later on in the study. For the time being I shall only mention that, having Okamura's idea in mind, it seems that Brubaker gives precedence to the cognitivist aspect when he advances the idea that cognitivist perspectives from social psychology can provide insight into studies of ethnicity. Conversely, Calhoun seems to take the structural aspect when he advances the important role 'webs of belonging' play in social life; he states that individuals are not as free to choose their identity as liberal cosmopolitans, such as Brubaker, would have it, but that they are part of a system of constraints and opportunities in which they try their best to maximize their standing. More so, they do it through social solidarities which, sometimes, are built around ethnicity. I will get back to this idea later on in the study.

Holy and Stuchlik say that this duality in social sciences in the way scholars view and analyze social phenomena is probably a matter of what they are most interested in, rather than something 'structural' in the object of study itself. To put in different words, it may just be that some scholar find it more relevant to study "how societies, social systems, or structures function" while others find relevant to "study why people do the things they do".<sup>19</sup> Referring to this nodal point in ethnicity studies, Eriksen argues that this is actually a fake controversy as empirical data shows us that "ethnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both. They are wedged between situational selection and imperatives imposed from without". To reinforce that standpoint in his writings on ethnicity – *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives* – Eriksen actually makes a case for both approaches to show how various contexts in social life indicate that individuals have both opportunities and constraints that inform their actions. The guiding principle in matter is Marx's idea that people make history, but not under circumstances of their own choosing.<sup>20</sup>

A branch within the Circumstantialist approach is the socio-constructivist stream. The socio-constructivists recognize Barth's work as a breaking point with Essentialism and build on his legacy, but they distance themselves from Barth in their pursuit of the importance of socially constructed phenomena and the way in which it gets institutionalized and, consequently, uncontested and turned

---

<sup>18</sup> Okamura, Y. Jonathan, *Situational Ethnicity*, Ethnic and Racial Studies Volume 4, Issue 4, 1981, Pages 452-465

<sup>19</sup> Holy, Ladislav, Stuchlik, Milan, *Actions, Norms and Representations: Foundations of Anthropological Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, Page 1.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, Karl cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Page 66.

into "common sense". Stuart Hall is a major figure in Cultural Studies and a main exponent of constructivism in social sciences in literature on ethnicity and identity. In this respect, Hall puts forward the thesis of individuals having not one, essential, birth-granted identity, but multiple ones. He says "Identities are never unified and in modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions"<sup>21</sup> (Hall, 1996:4).

The debate between the primordial versus the instrumental approach illustrate a lasting engagement with and difficulty in reaching common ground on what constitutes ethnic identity. Quite understandably, social scientists are puzzled about the dilemma of "ethnicity in the heart" and "ethnicity in the head" as Richard Jenkins puts it. He explains: "Is ethnicity a fundamental, primordial aspect of human existence and self consciousness, essentially unchanging and unchangeable in the imperative demands it makes on individuals and the bonds that it creates between the individual and the group? In other words, is ethnicity an irresistible aspect of human nature? Or is it, to whatever extent, defined situationally, strategically or tactically manipulable, and capable of change, both individually and collectively?"<sup>22</sup> Can scholars hope to establish to what extent individuals are capable of intervening and altering their identities in a social world where numerous constraints are placed upon them?

#### 1.4 Theories on Ethnicity

Thomas Hylland Eriksen

Eriksen is a social sciences scholar who builds a working definition of ethnicity that strives to accommodate both the symbolic and cultural aspects of ethnicity as the contextuality and its changing nature. His field approach and academic background is that of social anthropology as he views it the approach that enables researchers in ethnicity to explore the ways in which ethnic relations are being defined and perceived by people; how particular worldviews are being maintained, contested and transformed. The definition aims to be solid enough to account for survival of groups over time and in situations when it's not convenient, therefore emphasizing the cultural importance of ethnicity; also, it tries to take into account situations of fluctuation, contextuality in position to others and relevance. These two aspects are integrated into his definition as Eriksen says that ethnicity refers to both aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the

---

<sup>21</sup> Hall, Stuart cf, Jenkins, Richard, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Jenkins, Richard, *Rethinking Ethnicity. Arguments and Explorations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Sage Publications, 2008, Page 48.

creation of identity<sup>23</sup>. In this way it has a political, organizational aspect as well as a symbolic, meaningful one. Having both aspects in mind is no easy task as it requires us to understand and accept that individuals, in various contexts, can both strategically manipulate their social identity to pursue their interest, and stick tight to their collective identity even in situations when it's not in their best interest. The literature on empirical findings indicate to both directions. One naturally thinks of a chicken and egg dilemma in a situation such as this. Here, the dilemma is: what generates what? Does mere knowledge and awareness of membership to a collectivity engender feeling of attachment and belonging? Or, do practices of commonality in various contexts where over-communicating belonging to a group can provide an added value to an individual generate feelings of attachment and belonging? What precedes what? Eriksen elegantly avoids this trap by turning to Marx's view and saying that "although ethnicity is not wholly created by individual agents, it can simultaneously provide agents with meaning *and* with organizational channels for pursuing their culturally defined interests."<sup>24</sup> Moreover Eriksen includes both the 'Us'/'Others' mental frame in his version of the concept. He says that "ethnicity is an aspect of social relationships between persons who consider themselves as essentially distinctive from members of other groups of whom they are aware and with whom they enter into relationships. It can thus also be defined as a social identity (based on a contrast vis-à-vis others)"<sup>25</sup>. The relational aspect intrinsic to our understanding of ethnicity is revealed through the above-mentioned mental frames that we construct and take as behavior guides. He says that in the absence of such a principle - a distinction between insiders and outsiders, between 'Us' and 'Them' - "there can be no ethnicity, since ethnicity presupposes an institutionalized relationship between delineated categories whose members consider each other to be culturally distinctive"<sup>26</sup>.

The way in which social actors reconcile this tension between choice and constraint is through under or over-communication of cultural difference. Eriksen introduces these terms in contexts of poly-ethnic societies, therefore situations that by their very structure, suggest a high interaction rate. The idea behind this is that individuals will sense social cues and have a pretty good idea when it's wise to either over or to under-communicate their belonging to a distinctive ethnic group so as to maximize their benefits in a number of ways, either through social prestige, simply making a good impression, avoiding potential conflict or creating economic relationships. He does say however that over or under-communication should not be mistaken for a total choice in terms of social identity as this is merely a contextual, temporary strategic action actors can, not necessarily will, adopt. In some

---

<sup>23</sup> Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, Page 17.

<sup>24</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 23.

cases he does admit that individuals simply cannot play their group belonging so easily as some membership categories have clear, visible distinctions to non-group members. He says that in some situations ethnicity is deliberately 'shown off'. In other poly-ethnic situations ethnicity may rather be *under communicated*, which means that the actors tried to play it down and not to make it an important aspect of the definition of a situation. Moreover, individuals developed standardized ways of behaving vis-à-vis each other, and oriented themselves socially according to ethnic 'maps'.<sup>27</sup>

A particular context in which ethnicity is more likely to be under-communicated is, according to Eriksen, the case of stigmatized identity<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, he sees assimilation as another possible outcome of application of social stigma as individuals are likely to gradually lose markers of distinctiveness and merge into the majority population.<sup>29</sup> Common examples are the Dalit, widely known as the "untouchables" in the cast system in Indian society, Roma/Gypsies or the example Eriksen provides with the Sami in Sweden and Norway. From the point of view of NGO advocacy it seems that for the Roma and Sami, the story seems not to respect the predicted scenario as we are witnessing a revitalization movement in the last decades that aim at proclaiming the virtues of Sami and Roma identity.

In the complex social realm, individuals don't have neatly ordered dimensions of identity. This makes the task of analyzing when and how these different identities become relevant particularly difficult. For instance, social statuses may overlap ethnic membership, therefore it is one where to establish which belongings inform what action would be difficult. However, it is precisely this kind of information that social science researchers need to gain insight into and the empirical questions that are investigated are in what context and how these identities become relevant, have any meaning for individuals.

Another issue that makes the study of ethnicity difficult that one needs to be aware of and that needs to be addressed is the fact that individuals are not mere empty non-reflexive containers of a particular identity – ethnic identity in this case; they are agents that seek to make sense of their surroundings and expressing one's ethnic belonging can be variate depending on the social circumstances. Referring to this issue, Cohen says that "there is ethnicity and ethnicity ... I think that it is common sense that the ethnicity of a collectivity that manifests itself in the form of an annual

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> Stigmatized identity here would be the attribution of a negative value to an individual based on his membership to a given group with no standing in society and the labelling of such a group.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 36.

gathering of a few of its numbers to perform a dance or a ceremonial is different from the ethnicity manifested by, say, the Catholics in Northern Ireland."<sup>30</sup> The idea is that even the subjects of the analysis of ethnicity have very different ideas on the issue and their versions of it must be taken into account carefully and with scrutiny. This issue raises the question of the fluid and ambiguous character of ethnicity, but one should be also aware that the process of negotiation of ethnic belonging, either over or under-communication or any sort of manipulation of ethnic belonging cannot be done indefinitely. One cannot hope to pass off for an Irish while being a Jamaican as Eriksen says<sup>31</sup>. Individuals are agents, but in a structure that influences them and presents various opportunities as constraints or obstacles for that matter.

Primordialists say ethnicity is always relevant, but instrumentalists say it's not necessarily so, quite the contrary sometimes. If ethnicity occurs in social contexts where cultural differences 'make a difference', then one needs to address the question when do cultural differences make a difference? As Eriksen puts it, when does ethnicity become relevant for the individual, if indeed it does?

Eriksen provides an instrumentalist-based account for situations when ethnicity matters and how in his case study in Mauritius. For instance, he says that ethnic membership can be important to individuals in a number of ways. One would be the allocation of jobs via personal acquaintances or kinship, which are to be found in the ethnic realm of the individual. Additionally religious associations and cults are also tightly linked with ethnic membership. As voting behavior studies indicate it seems that politics is also pretty much 'ethnified' as the electorate have expectations from candidates within the same ethnic group to better understand and represent their interests. Eriksen says that for ethnic membership to have a personal importance, it must provide the individual with something he or she considers valuable<sup>32</sup>. In the case of the Mauritius case study, ethnicity seems to provide individuals with their livelihood practically: jobs, friends network and representation of interests in politics. Asking ourselves only whether ethnic identity stays or remains if not enough, according to Eriksen; he says that in order to find out what actually happens to ethnicity in the context of social change, we must therefore pose the question in more accurate terms; for instance, how does its variability fluctuate in terms of its social importance? Trying to answer this question, Steve Fenton (1999) has proposed a distinction between *hot* and *cold* ethnicity, which refers to its

---

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, A. cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39.

varying degrees of social importance and emotional intensity.<sup>33</sup>

Exploring the cultural or symbolic power that these two presumably hold over an individual when it comes to his/her ethnicity, Eriksen explains how ethnicity can only take place in a relational setting as it is a product of contact, not of isolation; moreover, for Eriksen, the idea of an isolated ethnic group doesn't make much sense in the social world. By conclusion, ethnicity implies both a complementary as a dichotomizing character. In this respect he says that "ethnicity is an aspect of relationship, not a cultural property of a group. If a setting is wholly mono-ethnic, there is effectively no ethnicity, since there is nobody there to communicate cultural difference to. It is also clear that the criteria which constitute ethnicity vary. It will simply not do to state that an ethnic group is marked by shared culture, or even to point at specific 'shared traits' such as shared religion, language and/or customs."<sup>34</sup> This claim is backed by fieldwork such as that made by Moerman in Thailand where he concluded that the sharing of cultural traits frequently crosses group boundaries and that people not always share all their relevant 'cultural traits' with the people who belong to their ethnic group.<sup>35</sup>

In the debate on what constitutes the basis for ethnic identification, Eriksen argues that it would be misleading to state simply that ethnic groups are identical with cultural groups and that shared culture is the basis of ethnic identity; he advises the focus on social interaction and social organization rather than 'cultural content'.<sup>36</sup>

In order to better understand the phenomenon of ethnicity and the way in which individuals position themselves toward it, Eriksen takes on the concept of ethnic incorporation; here, the term wishes to denote various degrees of cohesion between individuals originating from the same ethnic group. The expression of this cohesion is found in terms of organizational importance of ethnicity as it is the assumption that there will be a "transposition" of personal relevance – ethnicity – into social life, seen as organization here. Eriksen takes on Don Handelmann's typology of various degrees of ethnic incorporation constructed around 4 categories that are placed on a continuum: 1) the ethnic category, 2) the ethnic network, 3) the ethnic association and 4) the ethnic community.<sup>37</sup>

In Handelmann's typology the least incorporated kind of ethnic collectivity is the *ethnic*

---

<sup>33</sup> Fenton, Steve cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Moerman, Michael cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p.43.

<sup>37</sup> Handelmann, Don, cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 49.

*category*, which provides its members little in terms of tangible valuables. The reason for this is, in this case, the nominator is an external actors, not the subjects of the category itself so, it is to be expected that the relevance of the act of naming is higher for the nominator itself. This is not to say that individuals within the ethnic category are not aware of which category they belong to; of course, they are made aware of this is the social realm. However it is not to be expected that this awareness necessarily brings about personal relevance. This type only has a practical function: identifying, by contrast, members and outsiders. Eriksen says that "ethnic category membership teaches the individual appropriate behavior vis-à-vis others, passes on knowledge about his or her (imputed) origins and legitimizes the existence of the ethnic category."<sup>38</sup>

The concept of ethnic network implies a higher degree of interaction among members as it is assumed that, in this case, they will have some sort of incentive to do so provided by ethnic membership. Again, this type also has a practical aspect as it is assumed members of the network seek contact so as to pursue some personal interest and, for various reasons, they find it is more convenient to do so with individuals of the the same ethnicity. Eriksen does say however that it is very likely that although initially the reasons for contact as quite rational, the ties that are brought about by frequent interaction can increase the cohesiveness of network members. He says that "the main difference between categories and networks consists in the latter's ability to distribute resources among group members." Other features of the ethnic network are its decentralized character, but also a strong sense of solidarity and cultural uniqueness.<sup>39</sup> While the key-word for understanding the ethnic category is the application of labels, the one for the ethnic network is interaction.

Going on a step higher on the ethnic incorporation continuum, Handelmann identifies the ethnic association; this type is constituted when members of an ethnic category feel that they have shared interests, and develop an organizational apparatus to express them.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the highest degree of ethnic incorporation is that of the ethnic community. In addition to ethnic networks and shared political organization, this collectivity presumes a territory with more or less permanent physical boundaries.<sup>41</sup>

Eriksen suggests looking at this typology as a model of aspects of inter ethnic processes. He

---

<sup>38</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 51.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

says that this way, one can better understand how, from a situation where one's categorical ascription is relevant, one can simply be in another situation where one's ethnic network is activated, and later to situations where one's ethnic category appears as an association or an ethnic community.<sup>42</sup> Also, the typology is helpful in understand the roles that ethnicity's variability shifts according to the role played in various contexts by the constraints and opportunities, or rights and duties that are presented to an individual. Additionally, the typology also manages to successfully show how, even though an ethnic boundary exists it does not necessarily imply that individuals will form strong corporate groups; this idea is also the argument that Brubaker makes in 'Ethnicity without Groups' (2002) and Jenkins makes in 'Rethinking Ethnicity'(2008). As a conclusion, Eriksen says that the strength of group cohesion varies and must be studied empirically in each case.<sup>43</sup>

#### The role of culture in ethnicity studies

Eriksen strives to avoid the trap of having either essentialist or the instrumentalist bias in the study of ethnicity. Consequently, he tries to develop a working idea of ethnicity that accounts for, and is empirically supported by, reasons why ethnicity endures despite un-favourable circumstances and reasons why and ways in which individuals "use" ethnicity to shape their social identities for various outcomes.

As such, Eriksen discusses the view of culture as a nodal point that usually divides scholars in this field. Discussing the role that constructivists attribute to culture, Eriksen takes on the example of Gerd Baumann. He says that by reducing culture to discourse and self-identification, a typical practice for the socio-constructivist approach, Baumann reduces the view we have on culture and, by doing so, doesn't take into account the objective aspects of culture. Eriksen says that the threat, in this case, can be that while focusing merely on people's perceptions, researchers will miss studying the actual culture<sup>44</sup>. While not falling into the essentialist trap has some value within itself, this doesn't stop scholars from going to the other extreme. Eriksen says that "a one-sided emphasis on the manipulation of symbols, the situational selection of identity, and the fleeting and indefinite character of culture seems to suggest that nothing really endures, that the social world is continuously re-created, and that constructivist analytical approaches may tell the whole story about human identification"<sup>45</sup>.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 63.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 68.



The problem with focusing merely on the approach, and the findings of such studies, is, according to Eriksen, that they miss the role socialization has for individuals, the role of transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next, the power of norms, the unconscious importance of religion and language for identity and a sense of community. Societies are socially constructed, but they are integrated through a shared system of communication, through objective practices that can, and should, be studied. This idea is nailed down clearly by Tim Allen and John Eade's words which say that "there is a fine line between trying to describe the value system of minorities (or any ethnicity) and suggesting that those values determine identity" (1998: 33).<sup>46</sup>

Despite the general agreement most social anthropologists have on Barth's contribution in the field, the disagreement on where to place the emphasis still marks the ways in which anthropologists look at and study ethnicity. And although the relationships between culture and ethnicity, between identification and politics, between environmental constraints and individual choice, remains to be contested, ultimately it probably comes to empirically studies that can answer these questions.<sup>47</sup>

The fact that ethnicity is seen as the relationship between two or several groups, not the property of a group and that it exists *between* and not *within* groups<sup>48</sup> seems to somewhat imply that ethnicity cannot be negotiated within the group. Eriksen successfully manages to argue against this by saying that the analysis of the border between groups should not imply that individuals do not negotiate their versions of ethnicity. Eriksen advocates for the study of ethnicity at ,what he calls, the level of social life as ethnicity is made relevant through social interaction. Here, social interaction can be regarded as the key through which analysis is carried out to explore manifestations of ethnicity as, it is the assumption that, relevant cultural differences will be made through social interaction, and not through the mere inventory of the cultural aspects of ethnicity.

#### Ethnic identification

Moving a step beyond macro-level conceptualizations of ethnicity, Eriksen says that a good way to gain insight into its inner workings it to see when and how ethnic identification may assume fundamental important for the individual. Moreover, he provides accounts for ways in which Saskatchewan and loyalty to ethnic categories is created and maintained.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Allen, Tim, Eade, John cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 68.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, pp. 68-69.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, p. 70.

Although approaches focusing on the identity aspect of ethnicity were a blooming trend in American cultural anthropology in the late 1960s, in the field of social anthropology they weren't quite so popular and were treated with skepticism according to Romanucci - Ross and De Vos.<sup>50</sup>

Studies of ethnicity indicate that there is a close, but variable relationship between social processes and personal identities. The difficulty lies in correctly interpreting from empirical data what sort of relationship and what makes it variate. Eriksen says that if we wish to understand ethnic identity, we cannot a priori assume that ethnic categories exist by virtue of certain 'functions'. This means that we must go beyond merely (re)stating the connection of ethnic classification or categorical belonging to ethnic identification and try to see what is it exactly that makes sense to the people involved.<sup>51</sup> He says that it is worth exploring the reasons why in some situations ethnicity can be relatively unimportant, and in others it provides a decisive mechanism for exclusion and inclusion, as well as clear guidelines for behavior.<sup>52</sup> Possible answers in this direction have been provided, according to both Eriksen and Brubaker, by the application of cognitive social psychology into social anthropology. The concept they see as a key-figure is that of cognitive schemes or cognitive mapping. For Eriksen, "ethnic classifications ... serve to order the social world and to create standardized cognitive maps over categories of relevant others."<sup>53</sup>

Neatly organized systems of contrast in ethnic classifications don't have the theoretical and methodological flexibility to address empirical accounts of individuals that develop more "complex" identities, such as second-generation immigrants. Mary Douglas suggests we call them *ethnic anomalies*; she explains that, narrowly speaking, they can be understood as "neither-nor" or "both-and" category. They are seen as such because they go beyond the lines set out methodologically by researchers and are difficult to place within a category other than "anomaly". Usually, these "in-betweens" are often bilingual in their mother-tongue and the national language of the host country, and many experience conflicting loyalties.<sup>54</sup> This is the point when social scientists have proposed we look at these cases with the conceptual tools of 'hybridity' and ambiguous identities.

We have concluded that ethnicity is somewhere between individuals' pursuit of self-interest and

---

<sup>50</sup> Romanucci-Ross & De Vos cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p.70.

<sup>51</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, 74.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p. 72.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, p. 74.

the constraints their surroundings present them. In that respect, Eriksen raises the question of what aspect is anthropology better "equipped" to illustrate and study better: should it "stress the voluntary, chosen and strategic aspects of agency and social identity, or should it rather concentrate on showing the ways in which humans are products of culture and society?"<sup>55</sup> He says that the different roads scholars take depending on their answer to those questions will ultimately be reflected in the resulting findings.

Eriksen raises the question of under what circumstance are, if indeed so, ethnic identifications made relevant? A first factor that can contribute to the variability of this personal relevance could be found in a multicultural environment. Eriksen says that multicultural ideology can put individuals in situations in which they have to take on an ethnic identity, when it is possible that they would have preferred not to have this aspect of their personal identity highlighted.<sup>56</sup>

A way of looking into the issue of relevance of one's ethnicity can find expression in the difference Jean-Paul Sartre makes between two modes of group solidarity: *us*-hood and *we*-hood; also, this differentiation can be helpful in seeing various aspects of communities whose existence are postulated by ethnic ideologies, such as multiculturalism. Sartre explains that on the one hand, the first type – *us* – describes a collectivity of people that are loyal and socially integrated chiefly in relation to *the other*. On the other hand, the second type – *we* - brings about integration because of shared activities within the collectivity.<sup>57</sup> Building on that idea, Eriksen argues that although ethnicity is relational, "it is by definition a phenomenon of *us*-hood, the ethnic category or group must additionally have an element of *we*-hood in order to be viable";<sup>58</sup> the element that could play that purpose could be something that creates ties of interdependence where ritual or interaction can sustain the idea of *we*-hood.

Another factor that can render ethnic identification relevant could be, according to Eriksen, perception of threat. This idea is well-developed in the literature around the concept of group-threat or symbolic threat; the first is the perception, not the fact, that one's group is under threat in terms of access or distribution to resources. This is especially relevant in studies that are placed in an environment that has a high immigration rate. The second one, symbolic or cultural threat, is used to denote the perception that the values that are thought to be sustained by one's group are under threat

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, p. 77.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 77.

<sup>57</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul cf. Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 80.

of disappearing in situations of contact with a different culture that proposes contrasting values. The factors that may contribute to the perception of such a threat could be, according to Eriksen, significant changes in society such as migration, change in the demographic situation, industrialization or other economic change, or integration into or encapsulation by a larger political system.<sup>59</sup>

Eriksen argues that there are cases in which the instrumentalist approach, via its competitive strategy explanation, are poor ways of understanding the endurance of ethnicity. He gives the example of the Roma in Europe saying that it ought to be seen as a cultural and symbolic phenomenon and not as interest-pursuit frame of mind. Claiming that Roma society (!) displays different values from mainstream society, and the goals pursued by Roma are different from those of the sedentary population (Okely, 1983; Stewart, 1991) this should lead to an understanding of Roma identity as a cultural fact and not through the lenses of a group competition approach.<sup>60</sup>

The same factor – perceived threat – is given a different reading when focusing on the pressure exerted on the boundaries of an ethnic group; as such, Eriksen says that the importance of boundaries may be emphasized in situations when the values for which they stand for may be perceived as under threat.

Other efforts to uncover the variation in the salience of ethnicity has been investigated by Wallman (1986;243). To this end, she uses the basic questions in political science: *who does what with whom and for which purposes*. Here, Handelmann's typology of ethnic incorporation is improved as the last could only account for some domains; for instance, ethnic networks can only be relevant in particular settings such as the job market, whereas other domains remain un-accounted for. However Eriksen provides a counter-argument for Wallman's methodological choice of tools as he says that they may serve well studies that show how the very presence of migrants, and the very competition for housing and jobs, is caused by the capitalist system. He says that analysis such as those may be valuable in their own right, but they are incapable of investigating the importance of ethnicity "in people's lives."<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, p. 81.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p.89.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, p. 163.

The issue of what happens to ethnicity in cases of second-generation immigrants has been extensively researched in the last few years in studies<sup>62</sup> that focus on the concepts of 'identity processes' and 'perceptions of self'. The findings indicate that "(i) a clear 'acculturation' in terms of values and general orientation does take place; ... (iii) there is often tension between these individuals and their parents; and (iv) the boundaries preventing full assimilation may be both internally and externally constructed (in the latter case, discrimination may prevent full assimilation)"<sup>63</sup>. As further possible outcomes of the partial assimilation process, Eriksen identifies potential desires to take part in revitalization movements, while at the same time they might also take a different direction and could lead to a diminution in the social importance of ethnicity.<sup>64</sup>

Studying ethnicity, and more specifically ethnic processes, is not the writing down of an inventory of cultural elements pertaining to a group. We study ethnicity not because it is a lab-isolated element, but because it is a social phenomenon, with a life of its own and highly inter-related with other social phenomena. Consequently, it helps us gain insight into the relationship between culture, identity and social organization; the relationship between meaning and politics; the various vocations symbols have; processes of social classification; exclusion and marginalization at the group level; the relationships between action and structure; structure and process; and continuity and change.<sup>65</sup> Granting ethnicity its merits, Eriksen is however cautious enough to warn us of the threats we must address; drawing on Giovanni Sartori's critique of 'conceptual stretching', Eriksen compares a flaw-designed methodology as a straitjacket that, instead of generating new knowledge, it may obscure it.<sup>66</sup> Sartori uses this idea to denote the situation in which scholars extend their models and hypothesis to explain new situations and new settings that cannot be correctly accounted for with the original concept. This common shortcoming in social sciences is also dealt with in an extensive manner by Rogers Brubaker in his critique of the analytical strength of the concept 'group' and that of 'identity'.

### Rogers Brubaker and Ethnicity as Cognition

---

<sup>62</sup> Baumann, Zygmunt, "From Pilgrim to Tourist or A Short Story of Identity" in Hall, Stuart, du Gay, Paul (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage Publications, 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 167.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, 219.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

As mentioned above, some scholars have turned to the concept of cognitive schemas or cognitive mapping in the study of ethnicity. Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov's 2004 article – "Ethnicity as Cognition" - practically represents a 'statement'-paper in which the three put forward their suggestions in favor of the usage of cognition as a research tool in the study of ethnicity and collective identities. They see an emergent concern with categorization in social sciences as an incipient, and still implicit, cognitive turn in the study of ethnicity. The authors propose an engagement with cognitive anthropology and cognitive psychology as that "would help specify - rather than simply presuppose - the cognitive mechanisms and processes involved in the workings of ethnicity."<sup>67</sup>

Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov look at the process of categorization, made by ordinary individuals and not by official actors, as a way in which people try to make sense of themselves and the world they live in. What this means for ethnicity is that approaches, such as the cognitivist one, treat ethnicity as "skilled practical accomplishment, as something that "happens" when ethnic categories are made relevant to participants in the course of a particular interactional trajectory."<sup>68</sup> Research studies of this kind see an interactional shift and exchange of labels for what ethnic memberships are concerned; in this respect, identity labels can be ascribed, but also rejected, avowed, but also disavowed, displayed, but also ignored in various settings, as a natural process that individuals practice in their daily lives.<sup>69</sup> The authors say that in numerous situations we tend to characterize an event, a practice or even voting behavior in ethnic terms, but we fail to see that every time we do that, we are making cognitive assumptions. These assumptions concern the way in which "people parse, frame, and interpret their experience."<sup>70</sup> Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov draw attention to the fact that it is important to make the difference between categorization as political project and categorization as an everyday social practice.

### Schemas

Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov advance the usage of schemas in social anthropology as a research tool to explore mental constructs; he says that the ways in which events are labeled are merely a scratch level of what is actually going on in mental processes and, however interesting they

---

<sup>67</sup> Brubaker, R., Loveman, M., Stamatov, P., *Ethnicity as Cognition*, p. 37.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 35.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, p. 36.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

may be, they make poor instruments to understand the reasons why people label events in a certain way, even to themselves, and that they belong to discourse analysis.

Schemas, and related concepts such as scripts and cultural models, became a central focus of research in cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology in the 1970s. In sociology the concept has been introduced by Goffman, seen by sociologists as the founding-father has of its related concept: the frame. Goffman and others have adapted the concept in literature on social movements.<sup>71</sup> Generally speaking, schemas are mental structures in which knowledge is represented, and, what is of relevance in this study, they are shared mental structures. Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov say that "as mental structures, schemas are of course not directly observable. Rather, they are posited to account for evidence - experimental, observational, and historical - about how people perceive and interpret the world and about how knowledge is acquired, stored, recalled, activated, and extended to new domains."<sup>72</sup>

What is interesting here is that schemas are not mere containers of information; they are "processors" of information. Among the processes that they host we can count guidance of perception, interpretation of experience and generation of inferences and expectations. In this way they function as "a kind of mental recognition 'device' which creates a complex interpretation from minimal inputs; [they are] not just a 'picture' in the mind."<sup>73</sup> The authors draw attention to the fact that as processors, schemas function automatically, outside of conscious awareness; the way in which knowledge is processed is "implicit, verbalized, rapid, and automatic". Consequently, an encounter doesn't start from scratch; each event or fact is compared with a prior information related to that event or fact that the individuals re-evaluate in light of the new event<sup>74</sup>.

The authors say that both categories and schemas "concern the organization and representation of knowledge and the ways in which knowledge structures permit us to go beyond immediately given information, make inferences, interpret the world, and so on. Yet the schema

---

<sup>71</sup> Goffman, Erving, *The Goffman Reader*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1997; Gamson, William A., *Talking Politics*; Cambridge University Press, 1992; Johnston, Hank, *Verification and Proof in Frame and Discourse Analysis in Methods of social movement research*, ed. Bert Klandermans, Suzanne Staggenborg, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, p. 41.

<sup>73</sup> D'Andrade, Roy, *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*, p.136 cf. Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, *Ethnicity as Cognition*, p. 41.

<sup>74</sup> Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, *Ethnicity as Cognition*, pp. 41-42.

concept allows consideration of more complex knowledge structures"<sup>75</sup>, in this case, the study of the relevance and meaning to individuals that ethnicity presumably holds. This new focus of analysis raises new research questions: the focus has shifted from the power actors – the categorizers – that place individuals in given categories (traditionally the State authorities) to the categorizations that ordinary individuals make in everyday life. Now the questions are "how gestures, utterances, situations, events, states of affairs, actions, and sequences of actions get classified (and thereby interpreted and experienced)"<sup>76</sup>. The usefulness of the schemas for ethnicity studies is that it can help elucidate and concretize the notion of ethnic "ways of seeing." Also, cognitive perspectives can help specify how "group-ness" can "crystallize" in some situations while remaining latent and merely potential in others.<sup>77</sup>

The merits that cognitive perspectives have are, according to Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, their avoidance of what Brubaker calls in "Ethnicity without Groups"<sup>78</sup> 'groupism', the tendency to treat ethnicity and any other form of collectivity as bounded, homogeneous and un-changing stable entities. According to the authors, cognitive perspectives successfully avoid 'groupism' and treat ethnic, racial or national expressions "as collective cultural representations, as widely shared ways of seeing, thinking, parsing social experience, and interpreting the social world."<sup>79</sup> They say that the objects that we take as the main "actors" of our study, race, ethnicity, nationality, exist "only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, classifications, categorizations, and identifications. They are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world."<sup>80</sup> This is not to say that, as perspectives *on* the world, race, ethnicity or nationality, are not *in* the world, are not "real". What the authors are suggesting is that they are not substantial entities, but culturally and cognitively constructed and their acknowledgment is what finds expression in the social world. Moreover, the tendency to treat racial, ethnic and national issues in terms of groups can lead to an understanding of these phenomena in a homogeneous way, whereas treating them from a cognitive perspective, group-ness becomes a variable. For analysis that wishes to explore the relevance and meaning that ethnicity hold on individuals, cognitive perspectives can offer numerous possibilities; they give a "measure" of the relevance and the way in which it's processed because, through framing, cognitive perspectives work as "ways of construing sameness and difference, and of "coding" and making sense of their actions. They are templates for representing and organizing social knowledge, frames

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, pp. 42-43.

<sup>76</sup> Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, *Ethnicity as Cognition*, Theory and Society, p. 43.

<sup>77</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups*,. *Common Sense Groupism*, p. 176.

<sup>78</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

<sup>79</sup> Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, *Ethnicity as Cognition*, p. 45.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



for articulating social comparisons and explanations, and filters that shape what is noticed or unnoticed, relevant or irrelevant, remembered or forgotten."<sup>81</sup> The authors see cognitive frames as vessels worth investigating as it is through them that we experience ethnicity, race, and nationhood; these exist through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations, and identifications.

Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov say that cognitive perspectives can also work as a re-visitation of the Circumstantialist Approach in ethnicity and address its shortcomings in a straight-forward manner. Advancing the idea of ethnicity as situationally malleable and context-dependent, cognitive perspectives can take a step forward by specifying the ways in which they happen. For instance, Jonathan Okamura suggests that ethnicity is activated depending on "the actor's subjective perception of the situation in which he finds himself" and "the salience he attributes to ethnicity as a relevant factor in that situation."<sup>82</sup> The authors say that such a Circumstantialist approach can be of value, but it fails to address the issue of "what governs the perception of the situation and the perceived salience of ethnicity."<sup>83</sup> Seen just as this, it would seem that individuals are capable of always strategically manipulating ethnicity to suit their interests, but cognitive perspectives indicate that this is only part of the story.

#### Rogers Brubaker and Ethnicity without Groups

What Brubaker proposes by cognitivist approach is actually a re-visiting of the analytical shortcomings of the constructivist paradigm when it comes to the study of ethnicity and identity as he proposes social science researchers cognitivist approaches as analytical tools. In this sense, he draws on the new shift in cognitivism as in the critique of social science of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu in "Language and Symbolic Power" (1991) to propose alternative ways of looking at and researching the various sides of ethnicity. In "Ethnicity without Groups" Brubaker uses his field research as a case study to illustrate his points. In his dissatisfaction with the way in which scholarly research has been carried out on ethnicity and identity taking groups as main units of analysis that are "to do the job of" representing ethnicity on a conceptual level, in his critique Brubaker views ethnicity as something that "happens in a variety of everyday settings. Ethnicity is embodied and

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem, p. 47.

<sup>82</sup> Okamura, Jonathan Y., *Situational Ethnicity*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4 (1981):454 cf. Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, *Ethnicity as Cognition*, p. 51.

<sup>83</sup> Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov, *Ethnicity as Cognition*, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb., 2004), pp. 31-64, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Page 51.

expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms. This is thinking of ethnicity in terms of ethnicization processes. Such everyday ethnicity – like what Michael Bilig (1995) has called "banal nationalism" - may be invisible to the student of collective action or ethnic violence, but it merits study on its own right."<sup>84</sup>

The Introduction of the book and the chapter “Beyond Identity” practically represent a theoretical *manifesto* in the sense that Brubaker makes no secret of his criticism to “cliche constructivism” and calls for a revised analytical use of the concept of “identity” in social sciences.

Brubaker argues that “the prevailing constructivist stance on identity - the attempt to “soften” the term, to acquit it of the charge of “essentialism” by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid, and multiple - leaves us without a rationale for talking about “identities” at all and ill-equipped to examine the “hard” dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics. “Soft” constructivism allows putative “identities” to proliferate. But as they proliferate, the term loses its analytical purchase. If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere”.<sup>85</sup> Brubaker makes a clear distinction between groups and identity for that matter as a practice category and as categories of analysis saying that it's high time social science scholars admit that gathering all experiences of commonality, attachment and belonging under the “generous”, but flat vocabulary of identity only leads us further away from researching the social world and our object of study. Moreover, he draws attention to the potentially damaging effects of the reification process of the term “identity” and “group” in research as it not merely a “bad intellectual habit” as he says, but also a social agent capable of altering the social world. In that sense, he proposes more nuanced categories of analysis based on Pierre Bourdieu's critique in social sciences that would allow a more detailed, fluid account of the dynamics and the processual nature of social phenomena. By doing so, experiences are to be more contextualized, seen in their dynamics, their changing nature and in relation to other phenomena relevant to their study. Brubaker makes it very clear in his study that the critique he makes of "cliche constructivism" is not an attempt to "banish" it from ways of studying ethnicity, but he wishes to make the point that this field has other ways of being studied that worth exploring and that ethnic groups are merely one way and one unit of analysis among many many others that can provide information about the social world in which we live in as well. As he states "group-ness is a variable, not a constant; it cannot be presupposed"; I might add, group-ness is merely the dependent variable

---

<sup>84</sup> R.Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, p.2.

<sup>85</sup> R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*.

– and not the independent one - that informs something about the complex concept of ethnicity. As Burbaker notes "Ethnicity does not require such group-ness. It works not only, or even especially, in and through categories, schemas, encounters, identifications, languages, stories, institutions, organizations, networks and events. The study of ethnicity ... should not, in short, be reduced to, or even centered on, the study of ethnic groups."<sup>86</sup> As alternative way of conducting research in the field, Brubaker advances 3 clusters of possible concepts that provide insight into the dynamics of ethnicity.

Brubaker's call to abandon "groupism" is sometimes interpreted in its extreme form. For this reason, I believe it is important to clarify some aspects regarding what Brubaker actually criticizes. First of all, Brubaker does not suggest groups do not exist. He says that it is only natural to view the social world in those terms as the "input" we receive is presented to us in that form: "it seems to be mere common sense to treat ethnic struggles as the struggles of ethnic groups, and ethnic conflict as conflict between such groups. I agree that this is the -- or at least *a* -- common-sense view of the matter. But we cannot rely on common sense here. Ethnic common sense - the tendency to partition the social world into putatively deeply constituted, quasi-natural intrinsic kinds - is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things *with*; it belongs to our empirical data, not to our analytical toolkit"<sup>87</sup>.

In other words, individuals do make sense and represent social events in groupist terms; however, Brubaker argue, that is no reason for analysts to do the same. He says we should not adopt vernacular categories uncritically; researchers should make the difference between "*categories of ethnopolitical practice*" and "*categories of social analysis*".<sup>88</sup>

One of the advantages of making the analytical difference between groups and categories is to distinguish groups in the making or, groupness, as Brubaker would have it. He says that "If by 'group' we mean a mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action, or even if we adopt a less exigent understanding of 'group', it should be clear that a category is not a group (Jenkins 1997: 53ff). It is at best a potential basis for group-formation or 'groupness'."<sup>89</sup> And the way through which understanding group-making as project is to be analysed is by framing, seen as the mechanism through which groupism is constructed. In this respect, we

---

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, p.4.

<sup>87</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups*, Page 165.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, 166.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*, Page 169.

must be aware that groupness is not necessarily a measure of the experience felt by participant, but the product of interpretative frames that shapes subsequent experience and increases levels of groupness.<sup>90</sup>

What does the cognitivist approach actually mean as for the study of ethnicity? In that respect, Brubaker proposes we move beyond studying of ethnicity as merely the study of ethnic groups and suggests eight basic points that could provide insightful in the study. (1)The first point he suggests is *Rethinking Ethnicity* in terms of conceptualization and see it in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms, therefore seeing and conceptualizing them in terms of practical categories (Brubaker refers here to the way in which Lakoff (1987) proposes we see categories as they don't have the "fixed", bounded, unchangeable, time-enduring weight that the concept of "groups" has; instead he suggests we view categories as events, actions, emotions, spatial relationships, social relationships, and abstract entities of an enormous range<sup>91</sup>.) (2) The second point he suggests is that looking at and studying ethnicity without groups doesn't mean one overlooks the reality of the phenomenon; quite the contrary as "racial idioms, ideologies, narratives, categories, and systems of classification, and racialized ways of seeing, thinking, talking, and framing claims, are real and consequential, especially when they are embedded in powerful organizations."<sup>92</sup>(3) A third point refers to looking at Group-ness *as Event*, in the sense that it would be fruitful to think of ethnicity rather as a dependent variable that may or, may not, take place or crystallize under specific circumstances. In this view, ethnicity is seen as an event, as something that "happens". He exemplifies the usefulness of this viewpoint for research on the issue of failed efforts at ethno-political mobilization for instance. (4)The fourth point Brubaker makes regards the issue of Groups and Categories as he suggests that such a differentiation between the two could allow researchers to problematize, rather than presume pre-existing relationships, thus ultimately talking of degree of groupness rather than groups per se 5) The fifth point Brubaker makes is regarding the issue of Group-Making as Project in the sense that Bourdieu suggests we look at the dynamics of group-making as a social, cultural, and political project, aimed at transforming categories into groups or increasing levels of groupness (Bourdieu, 1991c, 1991d).<sup>93</sup>(6) The sixth point suggests briefly of looking at the organizations, rather than the groups, as actors in ethnic conflict; this way, power relations would be put on the "map" and as the important problem of representation that may organizations have serious difficulties with would be raised.(7) The seventh point refers to *Framing and Coding* as the focus of the study on these processes would inform the researcher how framing

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem, Page 174.

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, p.77.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, p.11.

<sup>93</sup> R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*,p.13.

events and other in ethnic terms creates an "artificial" narrative of high degree of groupness.(8) The eighth point referring to *Ethnicity as Cognition* retakes the need to revisit the study of ethnicity through a cognitivist perspective which implies an understanding of the fact that "Ethnicity, race and nationhood are fundamentally ways of perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world."<sup>94</sup>

Brubaker backs his analytical suggestions on a case study in a Transylvanian town, Cluj-Napoca, fieldwork that he conducted personally. Using empirical qualitative data from this case-study, he provides accounts for the ways in which a good deal of common-sense cultural knowledge about the social world and one's place in it, here as in other settings, is organized around ethno-national categories.<sup>95</sup> "This includes knowledge of one's own and others' ethno-cultural nationality, and the ability to assign unknown others to ethno-national categories on the basis of cues such as language, accent, name, sometimes dress, hair style, even phenotype."<sup>96</sup> Drawing on the findings from this case-study, Brubaker concludes that "categories need ecological niches in which to survive and flourish"<sup>97</sup> and such ecological niches can be found in the (partial) reproduction of this social world with its expression in social relationships: school, friendship circles, and family. He argues that "ethnic networks can be reproduced without high degrees of groupness, largely through the logic of contact probabilities and opportunity structures".<sup>98</sup>

### Richard Jenkins

Richard Jenkins advances a summary of what seems to be the socio-anthropological model for the study of ethnicity so far. This model consists in the following ideas: ethnicity as a matter of cultural differentiation, ethnicity as a matter of shared meanings, in terms of fixness or unfixness, ethnicity is merely a reflection and part of social life, and it's collective and individual at the same time. The first idea refers to the fact that identification always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference; the second refers to the necessity for culture to be reproduced through interaction; the third refers to the embeddedness of ethnicity in the social realm; the last idea refers to the back-and-forth interaction character of ethnicity as it is a process of externalization in social

---

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, p.17.

<sup>95</sup> On categories as "repositor[ies] for common sense knowledge" generally (Schegloff 2000:29), see Sacks 1995, I, 40-48, 333-40. For cognitive perspectives on social categories as structures of knowledge, with special regard to ethnic, racial, and other "natural kind"-like categories, see Rothbart and Taylor 1992; Hamilton and Sherman 1994; Hirschfeld 1996.

<sup>96</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups. Common Sense Groupism*, Page 183.

<sup>97</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups. Common Sense Groupism*, Page 185.

<sup>98</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups. Common Sense Groupism*, Page 186.

interaction, categorization of others, and internalization in personal self-identification.<sup>99</sup>

On the one hand, Jenkins shares central features that Brubaker advances in his work on ethnicity, namely, the danger of reification of concept in social life and the tendency to appeal to interpretative frames, for Jenkins, "complex repertoires", to explain the working of ethnicity. He says that "a further problem ... is the perpetual need to struggle against our tendency to reify ethnicity (and, indeed, 'culture'). Although they are talked about endlessly in these terms, neither ethnicity nor culture is 'something' that people 'have', or, indeed, to which they 'belong'. They are, rather, complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows. Ethnicity, in particular, is best thought of as an ongoing *process* of ethnic identification."<sup>100</sup> Trying to address the question of what constitutes ethnic identification, Jenkins takes Brubaker's concept of 'ethnicity as cognition' and interprets it; he says that "*our* culture – language, non-verbals, dress, food, the structure of space, etc. – as we encounter it and live it during socialization and subsequently, is *for us* simply something that *is*. When identity is problematized during interaction across the boundary, we have to make explicit – to ourselves as much as to Others – that which we have hitherto known without *knowing about*."<sup>101</sup>

Also, Jenkins has another point in which he converges with Brubaker's emphasis on cognitive perspectives and the focus on categorizations; in Jenkins's terminology these are part of social identity processes, both nominal and virtual (practical meaning experience). Having said this, Jenkins argues that ethnicity may be a key component in primary socialization, depending on local circumstances and the salience of ethnicity. He says that at the level of cognition, "the child will develop a point of view on a world that is axiomatically organized in terms of ethnic classifications. He/She will learn not only that he/she is an 'X', but also what this means: in terms of her esteem and worth in her own eyes and in the eyes of others; in terms of appropriate and inappropriate behavior."<sup>102</sup> He proposes various social contexts that researchers can focus their investigation on such as the field of primary socialization in communal relationships and membership in informal groups, kinship relations, and secondary socialization in more formal settings such as the areas of the individuals work activities and institutional organizations

On the other hand, his reading of Brubaker's criticism of the concept of 'groups' and

---

<sup>99</sup> Jenkins, R., *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008, Page 42.

<sup>100</sup> Jenkins, R., *Rethinking Ethnicity*, p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem, p. 79.

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem, p. 61.

'identity' is that identities are a matter of individual choice, a point of view of individuals, thus placing him with others scholars that treat ethnicity as a matter of voluntary action. Although Brubaker specifies that the reading of his critique should not be treated as if he is casting away groups and identity as actors in the social world, he is merely scrutinizing their analytical power to account for phenomena that deserves better names and further details. For instance, Jenkins says that in Brubaker treats groups as not real things; what, in fact, Brubaker says is that they are not contingent and that they are actually real in the sense that social actors perceive them as real. He merely draws attention that scholars and researchers should not do the same. That while ethnicity, identity and groups are social constructions they are the subject of study and should not be mistaken as the method. However, the point of divergence actually lies on the issue of voluntary identity and constraints placed upon actors. Jenkins views Brubaker's work on ethnicity and identity as placing too much emphasis on individual choice and almost none on the relationships of dependency that exist in society and on the constraints and situations where ethnicity is not left to the individual himself/herself.

One point in Jenkins' s analysis of the phenomenon is related to how ethnicity is to be differentiated from, or related to, other bases of communal attachment or identification with which it appears to have much in common. He says that the literature on ethnicity doesn't make enough theoretical difference between them. For instance, community, implies somewhat the idea of both similarity and difference for Jenkins. He sees a *relational* character in the idea of community: "the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities."<sup>103</sup>Jenkins says that substituting the word 'community' here with the word 'ethnicity' wouldn't alarm many scholars and that, in itself, is the problem. Analytically speaking, studies on ethnicity lack a differentiated vocabulary as many forms of communal belonging are described and studies with the same terms.

Another focus of Jenkins' s analysis of ethnicity is on the role globalization plays in the ways in which ethnicity is perceived, changed and studied. One of the phenomena that is commonly and widely attributed to globalization as an effect on other social phenomena is the fact that it shrinks distances through new means of communication, technologies and relationships of inter-dependency. While this is one of the catch-phrases of globalization we so often hear, it tends to be taken for granted. What can be reasonably assumed is that increased contact, proximity of various cultures, and their corresponding values, and increased inter dependencies between individuals is bound to have some effect on the ways in which people perceive their settings.

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem, p. 44.

Jenkins actually says that, however beneficial the effects of globalization may have seemed initially, it is becoming clear that "globalization doesn't necessarily broaden the mind. Globalization and heightened localization, far from being contradictory, are interlinked: the world is becoming smaller and larger at the same time; cultural space is shrinking and expanding. Localism and ethnicity are conceptualized as inseparable sides of the same coin, and each may (re)assert itself either as a defensive reaction to, or a result of, the increasingly global context of social life."<sup>104</sup> Eriksen also shares Jenkins' thought of the possible roles that this large-scale and complex process might have on 'identities. The problem with any analysis that might attempt to explore this is, according to Eriksen, that globalization 'works' in two contradictory ways; in some cases, it seems that it “*shrinks* the world by facilitating fast contact across former boundaries” while in others it seems that it “*expands* the world by creating an awareness of difference”. Another duality in terms of its possible effects on individuals' lives is that it can “homogenize human lives by imposing a set of common denominators (state organization, labor markets, consumption, etc.), but it also leads to heterogenization through the new forms of diversity emerging from the intensified contact. Globalization is *centripetal* in that it connects people worldwide; and it is *centrifugal* in that it inspires a heightened awareness of, and indeed (re-)constructions of local uniqueness”.<sup>105</sup>

Jenkins advances an 'improved' version of the role of contextuality in the formation of self-identification with one's ethnic category. The issue of the enduring ethnicity at the individual level can be better understood through the analysis of the processes of the social identification of the self. He says that "identification is an aspect of the emotional, psychological and cognitive constitution of individuality; it is, correspondingly, bound up with the maintenance of personal integrity and security, and may be extremely resistant to change"<sup>106</sup>. Consequently, the relevance of ethnicity at an individual level can be understood here as the human need for security and having a sense of place in the world, and ethnicity as a pre-established category that the individual can draw upon to address this need. He says that, this way, we can interpret ethnicity as "a *primary*, although not a primordial, dimension of individual identity. Internal or self-identification – whether by individuals or groups – is, however, not the only 'mechanism' of ethnic identity formation. People are not always in a position to 'choose' who they are or what their identity means in terms of its social consequences. Power differentials are important here ... external categorization is an important contributor to ethnicity, not least during primary socialization, but also in a range of other, lifelong settings.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibidem, p. 45.

<sup>105</sup> Eriksen, T.H., , *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 200.

<sup>106</sup> Jenkins, R., *Rethinking Ethnicity*, pp. 48-49



Categorization is, furthermore, related to my earlier distinction between the nominal and the virtual: the consequences of ethnic identification across a range of settings – not least whether these are mutually reinforcing or not – are likely to have an important influence on how much ethnicity *matters*.<sup>107</sup> Referring to the role of contextuality for the relevance of ethnicity in the lives of individuals, Jenkins says we should look at the workings of ethnic attachments to see just to what extent does ethnicity play a significant role. Moreover, we should always bear in mind the fact that "ethnic attachments do not have the same salience and force everywhere, or for everyone". Empirical findings indicate that this is the case. "For many people(s), ethnicity is a background factor, part of the cultural furniture of everyday life, and consequently little attended to. But for many others ethnicity is an integral and dynamic aspect of self-conscious self hood and everyday discourse, rooted in early socialization and produced and reproduced in the ongoing concerns of the here-and-now"<sup>108</sup>.

Jenkins draws on Barth's legacy to take as one of the main foci of investigation of the phenomenon of ethnicity the situational defining and (re)producing that happens during interactions across the boundaries; here is where Barth, and Jenkins among others, see the workings of ethnicity in 'real' life as this is where people 'test' in a way the relevance of ethnicity for them: the values, principles and issues it addresses in their lives and the space in which these are accepted, revisited, challenged, changed or rejected. In this respect, Jenkins says that "ethnicity is thus fundamentally political, at least with a small 'p', and ethnic boundaries are to some extent permeable and osmotic, existing despite the flow of personnel across them (and because of the interaction across them). Criteria of ethnic ascription and subscription are variable in their nature and salience. 'the constraints and incentives that canalize choices' and individuals act."<sup>109</sup>

Since it has been said that ethnicity is interactional, Jenkins identifies two processes that take place simultaneously during interaction: processes of internal definition and those of external definition. The first imply members of a group that signal to fellow group members or others a self-definition of who they are. Jenkins says that we shouldn't be tricked by the usage of the term 'internal' here as if they do take place internally in the first instance; these processes happen, *par excellence*, externally as are necessarily interactional and social – even in the individual case – because they presuppose an audience, without whom they make no sense, and a shared framework of

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem, p.79.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem, p.54.

meaning.<sup>110</sup> The second type of processes, the external definition ones, are, what Jenkins calls, "other-directed processes". During these processes, one person or set of persons defines the other(s) in a particular fashion. He says that "this may, at its most consensual, be a validation of the others' internal definition(s) of themselves."<sup>111</sup> But not necessarily as the possible outcomes range on a spectrum of various possibilities.

Jenkins provides a theoretical basis that the present study draws significantly on: the issue of internalization. Here, internalization is understood as the situation in which the "categorized group is exposed to the terms in which another group defines it and assimilates that categorization, in whole or in part, into its own identity".<sup>112</sup> Placed into the context of the study: do young educated Roma internalize the "umbrella" Roma definition that they are exposed to heavily? Referring to the process of internalization, Jenkins touches a sensitive point in ethnicity: why should the external definition be internalized, for example, and how does it happen? He provides 5 possible scenarios to these questions:

In the first scenario, the external categorization might be more or less the same as an aspect of existing group identity, in which case they will simply reinforce each other. Jenkins also sees possible the situation in which some degree of external reinforcement or validation is crucial to the successful maintenance of internal collective definitions. He says it's not likely that categorization will remain strong if it is confronted with existing boundaries and identifications.<sup>113</sup>

The second scenario refers to the possibility that "We" will come to define ourselves differently depending on how "They" appear to define "Us".

In the third, because of some legitimate authority that the "Others" might have, they are in the social position to categorize "Us". If the situation presents itself in such terms of power dis-balance, then this is quite likely to happen.

The fourth scenario refers to a situation in which external categorization is imposed by the use of physical force such as the exercise of power. In such an extreme situation, the categorized, "may, in time, come to see themselves in the language and categories of the oppressor. They are certainly

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

likely to behave in an appropriate manner."<sup>114</sup>

The final scenario describes situations in which the category that is labeled by external actors resists and rejects imposed boundaries and the content that is attributed to that category. However, Jenkins warns us, the very position of defiance will always be directed at the act of categorizing, and consequently, be influenced by it in its manifestations: "The rejected external definition *is* internalized but, paradoxically, as the focus of denial".<sup>115</sup>

Jenkins concludes that the act of categorization of a 'group' "creates a framework of constraint and possibility for future generations. Since 'culture' is a matter of everyday life and its exigencies, the power of others to constitute the experience of daily living is a further important contribution of categorization to group identity."<sup>116</sup> What this means is that it is expected that the second generation will draw on the experiences and the frames in which particular 'ethnified' situations are defined and presented by their elderly; consequently, their further framing process will, naturally, be a by-product of that 'input'. It is also to be expected that that original framing will be seen by the second generation as 'common sense' drawn from experience, albeit, not their own.

Wsevolod Isajiw

Isajiw attempts to provide a working definition of ethnicity based on social psychology concepts such as socialization and internalization. He says that ethnicity is both the personal relevance it hold for an individual, providing him/her with feelings of security and meaning, and a series of social phenomena that produce a sense of identity. Additionally, he says that ethnic identity can be defined as "a manner in which persons, on account of their ethnic origin, locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems, and in which they perceive others as locating them in relation to those systems".<sup>117</sup> Moreover, he suggests it would be helpful in the study of ethnicity to make the distinction between external and internal aspects.

He says that, as for external aspects are concerned, they refer to observable behaviour, both cultural and social, such as "(1) speaking an ethnic language, practising ethnic traditions, (2)

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibidem, p. 75.

<sup>117</sup> Isajiw, Wsevolod W. *Definition and Dimensions of Ethnicity. A Theoretical Framework*, p. 8.

participation in ethnic personal networks, such as family and friendships, (3) participation in ethnic institutional organizations, such as churches, schools, enterprises, media, (4) participation in ethnic voluntary associations, such as clubs, 'societies,' youth organizations and (5) participation in functions sponsored by ethnic organizations such as picnics, concerts, public lectures, rallies, dances"<sup>118</sup>. As for internal aspects, we should have in mind images, ideas, attitudes, and feelings; within this category of aspects, we can further distinguish three types of internal aspects of ethnicity: (1) cognitive, (2) moral, and (3) affective.<sup>119</sup>

The first dimension, the cognitive, is a possible means of carrying out a cognitivist analysis of ethnicity that Brubaker advances. Isajiw says that this aspect consists in (perceived) stereotypes that the individual holds of him/herself and images of one's group. Also, it may consist of "knowledge of one's group's heritage and its historical past. This knowledge may not necessarily be extensive or objective. It may rather focus on selected aspects or events, or historical personalities that are highly symbolic of the group's experiences and which thus have become a legacy. Finally, the cognitive dimension includes knowledge of one's group's values, since these are part of the group's heritage".<sup>120</sup>

Under the moral dimension Isajiw describes feelings of group obligations; he says that these feelings "have to do with the importance a person attaches to his or her group and the implications the group has for the person's behaviour." Example of such feelings of obligations might be sensing the importance of "teaching the ethnic language to one's children, or marrying within the group, or of helping members of the group with finding a job. Feelings of obligation account for the commitment a person has to his group and for the group solidarity that ensues"<sup>121</sup>. They are seen as a very subjective sense of the individual's position and role vis-a-vis his/her ethnicity. Isajiw says that so far, no theory of ethnic identity has conceptualized group obligations as constituting its core dimension.

The current study's hypothesis is that self-identification and feelings of belonging will be an expression of the personal relevance ethnicity has for an individual. As such, it is reasonable to assume that these feelings will be "translated" into the individual's social life through interactions and

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

<sup>121</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

the establishment of social networks along ethnic lines, such as friendships with others belonging to the same ethnic category. In that sense, the borders are taken as focus of investigation to see what values that are seen as belonging to one's ethnic category are seen as relevant and are not subject to negotiation, or social transactions as Jenkins calls them.

Also, the third dimension that Isajiw describes is integrated into the conceptual framework of this study as it addresses one of the key concepts of investigation: feelings of attachment to the 'group'. According to Isajiw, the third dimension, the affective or cathetic, includes two types of such feelings: "(1) feelings of security with, sympathy and associative preference for members of one's group as against members of other groups and (2) feelings of security and comfort with the cultural patterns of one's group as against the cultural patterns of other groups or societies."<sup>122</sup>

Isajiw also addresses the issue of retention of 'ethnic identity' from one generation to another; in this respect, he says that both aspects, the external and the internal, are not to be expected to be retained to the same extent. He says that some components may be retained more than others; some may not be retained at all. "A member of the third generation may subjectively identify with his ethnic group without having knowledge of the ethnic language or without practising ethnic traditions or participating in ethnic organizations. Or, inversely, he or she may practise some ethnic traditions without having strong feelings of attachment to the group. Furthermore, the same components of external identity may acquire different subjective meaning for different generations, ethnic groups, or other subgroups within the same ethnic group."<sup>123</sup> Consequently, Isajiw says that it should not be assumed that the ethnic identity retained by the third generation is of the same type or form of identity as that retained by the first or the second generation. It is only natural to assume that societal factors change over time and the ways in which they determine variations in the manifestations and feelings towards one's own ethnicity. Isajiw says that it is precisely this differential variation of the components of ethnic identity that allows us to distinguish various forms of 'ethnic identity'. He gives the example of various cases. One such a case is where "a high level of retention of the practice of ethnic traditions accompanied by a low level of such subjective components as feelings of group obligation may be one form of ethnic identity: say, a *ritualistic ethnic identity*."<sup>124</sup> On the other side of the continuum, he says that "a high intensity of feelings of group obligation accompanied by a low level of practice of traditions would be a completely different form of ethnic identity: say, an

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem, p.14.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem, pp.14-15.

*ideological identity* with different implications for the collective aspects of ethnic group behaviour"<sup>125</sup>. Another interesting type Isajiw identifies is 'the rebelling identity'; this type assumes that "negative images of one's own ethnic group, accompanied by a high degree of awareness of one's ethnic ancestry."<sup>126</sup> But what is most relevant for the current study's focus is perhaps the phenomenon he calls '*ethnic rediscovery*'; in this case, he says that "positive images of one's ancestral group accompanied by a frequent practice of highly selected traditions, particularly by the third or a consecutive generation."<sup>127</sup> Perhaps the 'lowest degree' of relevance for an individual, in terms of feeling of obligation towards the group, is what Isajiw calls fringe identity. In this case, the individual is supposed to selected images of one's ancestral group and practice occasionally, some traditions.

Isajiw advances the concepts of 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction' in an attempt to integrate the factors of time and change in the dynamics of ethnicity. He says deconstruction can come in various degrees; for once, a) it can consist in some objective aspects of ethnic identity losing their meaning and use, b) others might lose their meaning without being completely dropped, or for others still, c) the meaning may become latent. Moreover, he says that, in some cases of deconstruction, "at a certain point, one's ethnic background or group experience may acquire new meaning and be objectified into new visible ethnic patterns. It is more likely that over the generations selected old patterns would be revived but given new meaning. New collective experiences, in particular, often work to create new meanings for communitytype groups".<sup>128</sup> At this point, he calls what happens next 'reconstruction'. Isajiw, s concept of deconstruction is a very useful way of understanding the emergence of a variety of new forms of ethnic identity which are more adaptable to the surrounding social and cultural structures.

The concept of deconstruction and the types of ethnicity that Isajiw proposes are based on one of the quantitative studies carried out by Breton et al. In 1990<sup>129</sup>. The respondents were selected from Metropolitan Toronto, it used 25 indicators of types of ethnicity and applied them to three generations of four ethnic groups. The study hypothesized that with each generation there will be a tendency "to negotiate away the objective, external, aspects of ethnicity as well as those subjective, internal, aspects which may not be consonant with popular societal values and attitudes"<sup>130</sup>. The hypothesis was consistent with the symbolic ethnicity theory proposed in the seventies (Isajiw, 1975,

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibidem, p.16.

<sup>129</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

1977). Isajiw says that the indicators for retention would be 'read' in light of the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction; as such, frequent use of one's mother tongue in the third generation, for example, is an indicator of deconstruction of identity and not one of its retention because overall the third generation retains it only in a very low degree.<sup>131</sup> The results showed that ethnic language, over the generations, drops its practical purpose, but achieves a simplified form and acquires a symbolic function.<sup>132</sup> Also, feelings of obligation to marry within the group stands out as an indicator of deconstruction.<sup>133</sup> In the Toronto case, the concepts of deconstruction and reconstruction were useful in terms of understanding and correctly attributing a just scale to the respondents' answers; meaning that, what might initially seem a low incidence rate, with an understanding of the process of ethnic deconstruction, one can understand that we might, in fact, be talking about a rather high incidence rate.

Joseph Ruane & Jennifer Todd

Scholars Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd make a significant contribution to ethnicity studies as they manage to both build on and challenge Rogers Brubaker's claims on the concept of 'groupism' and ethnic self-identification. They put forward their understanding of ethnicity as a form of *status group*; they stress the idea that the sense of ethnic commonality, through its elements: membership, eligibility and access, provide a basis and a shared sense of what is 'proper' and what is valued. Seen this way, the dynamics that come into play in the 'working' of ethnicity as meaningful to individuals, makes more sense that looking at it as an inventory of the 'cultural stuff' alone. Ruane and Todd say that ethnicity by itself is a thin category, that "it requires to be filled by other content, and how actors fill their sense of peoplehood is a contingent matter. They may fill it with a set of beliefs in common biological descent and blood belonging, but they may equally fill it with religious or linguistic content, or with a set of cultural values or political ideas. In short, the cultural "stuff" of ethnicity is not essential to ethnicity in general, but is "contingently necessary" to each particular ethnic group."<sup>134</sup> In other words, because there is an overlap between ethnicity and another categories, such as religion or common language, what individuals perceive in terms of content may be 'understood' in ethnic terms, thus becoming 'ethnicized'. What Ruane and Todd further conclude from this idea is that, as

---

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>134</sup> Ruane, J., Todd, J., *The Roots of Intense Ethnic Conflict may not in fact be Ethnic: Categories, Communities and Path Dependence*, p. 216.

Brubaker himself argues, ethnic categories can exist without communities.<sup>135</sup>

Ruane and Todd further provide an explanation of how this process works as the mere overlapping and multiplicity of categories by itself does not stand a solid explanation. They propose looking at these processes as a set of interrelations of elements which form systemic feedback patterns; in their terms, "path dependent' system".<sup>136</sup> Their theoretical strategy of looking at this process is seeing all these categories as interrelated and mutually dependent which reproduce themselves by virtue of their by-product.<sup>137</sup>

### Herbert Gans's Symbolic Ethnicity

The study places under a question mark the relevance that ethnicity may hold over young generation and educated Roma in Europe today. In this respect, the term "symbolic ethnicity" put forward by Herbert Gans is a possibility that should be taken into account as for the legitimacy of this research question. Gans investigated in a study applied to second-generation young immigrants in the US whether their experienced ethnicity held any form of personal value for them, whether their ethnicity was expressed in any way in their social networks or actions. He says that today's young ethnics are finding new forms of being ethnics and their frame of reference is merely "an exotic tradition to be savored once in a while in a museum or at an ethnic festival."<sup>138</sup> He provides possible reasons for this phenomenon the fact that there are simply little reasons for these individuals to interact with other ethnic of the same category in any meaningful way for them.

## A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTITY

### 2.1 The 'Beyond Identity' Critique

In 'Ethnicity without Groups' and, more specifically, through the chapter with co-author Frederik Cooper, "Beyond Identity" Brubaker calls for a revised analytical use of the concept of "identity" in social sciences and criticizes what he calls the 'cliche constructivism' approach. Brubaker argues that "the prevailing constructivist stance on identity with its attempt to "soften" the term, to acquit it of the charge of "essentialism" by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid, and

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibidem, p. 223.

<sup>136</sup> Ibidem, p. 224.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Gans, Herbert J., *Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America*, p.6.



multiple leaves us without a rationale for talking about "identities" at all and ill-equipped to examine the "hard" dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics. "Soft" constructivism allows putative "identities" to proliferate. But as they proliferate, the term loses its analytical purchase. If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere". Brubaker makes a clear distinction between identity as a category of practice and as category of analysis saying that it's high time social science scholars admit that gathering all experiences of commonality, attachment and belonging under the "generous", but flat vocabulary of identity can only leads further away from researching the social world and the object of study. Moreover, he draws attention to the potentially damaging effects of the reification process of the term "identity" and "group" in research as it is not merely a "bad intellectual habit" as he says, but also a social agent capable of altering the social world. In that sense, he proposes more nuanced categories of analysis based on Pierre Bourdieu's critique in social sciences that would allow a more detailed, fluid account of the dynamics and the processual nature of social phenomena<sup>139</sup>. By doing so, experiences are to be more contextualized, seen in their dynamics, their changing nature and in relation to other phenomena relevant to their study.

Brubaker doesn't stand alone in his endeavor as he bases his critique on what other prominent scholars have also addressed previously in their works. For instance, Brubaker bases his work very much on Bourdieu's writings regarding the need to consider and research social phenomena in their dynamics and not as static or fixed as was the vast amount of research material produced in social sciences. Also, the need to observe the social life in its interaction, over time and contextuality is another major influence of Bourdieu in Brubaker's considerations. Also, scholars such as W. J. M. Mackenzie in the '70s were characterizing "identity" as a word "driven out of its wits by over-use" and Robert Coles would remark that the notions of identity and identity crisis had become "the purest of cliches" part of what Brubaker calls "the identity crisis in social sciences".

## 2.2 The Brubaker-Calhoun debate

In the lines that follow I shall make a brief outline of the debate in which scholars Rogers Brubaker and Craig Calhoun have engaged in 2003 in the journal "Ethnicities" as this would reveal in a constructive way the key-tensions within the vocabulary, analytical concepts and categories in social science research on identity, ethnicity, and cosmopolitanism as they are inter-related concepts. More specifically, the two approaches emphasize the aspects the study looks at as key-areas in understanding the inner-workings of ethnicity and collective identities; as such, the study looks for

---

<sup>139</sup> Rogers Brubaker. "Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu" *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 745-775

emergent expressions of communality, social solidarities and the existence (or non-existence) of social networks alongside ethnic lines.

In “Belonging’ in the cosmopolitan imaginary” Calhoun puts forward his thesis that social solidarity – and its individual manifestation in the sense of belonging in specific cultural and social setting – is marginalized and often stigmatized by what he calls, the liberal cosmopolitans, among which he identifies Rogers Brubaker. His main critique is directed at the supposed elitist position cosmopolitans take by their ignoring that social identities are not a matter of individual choice or taste and that, cosmopolitanism too, is a part of the world and not a perspective all can have the chance to take. He draws attentions to the danger that while Brubaker's critique of constructivism is most needed, it is possible to fall into a slippery sloap and view individuals as “real” and groups as not. Moreover, he states that Brubaker's ideas might be easily misread and lead to the idea that individuals are free to choose what identifications they wish completely disregarding the social web in which they are part of, whether they wish it or not. Calhoun states that cosmopolitans such as Brubaker simplify the two-sided process of auto-identification and identification by others and completely ignore his concept of “webs of belonging” and solidarity that groups find themselves in, challenge, create and take part in in various contexts. He states that views such as Brubaker's are unrealistic as they are “treating ethnicity as essentially a choice of identifications, they neglect the omnipresence of ascription (and discrimination) as determinations of social identities. And they neglect the extent to which people are implicated in social actions that they are not entirely free to choose.” Calhoun says solidarities should not be so easily dismissed as they do stand for something in people's lives, or else, they would cease to be so prevalent. He says that solidarities provide individuals with networks of mutual support and frameworks of meaning.

In “Neither Individualism nor 'Groupism' : A Reply to Craig Calhoun” Brubaker makes several remarks to Calhoun's critique. He addresses Calhoun's central argument by drawing attention that such a critique falsely creates a dichotomous position that neither he, nor Calhoun actually desire. More specifically, he refers to the fact that talking in such terms creates the illusion that scholars in social sciences are faced with taking one of two opposing positing when, in fact, that is not the case. One who critiques the shortcomings of individualism is not necessarily placed within the “groupism” side of the camp. Conversely, to criticize an analytical focus on bounded ‘groupness’ is not take side in an individualist manner that disregards social life. We are not faced with a limited choice between a individualist analytical idiom and an ‘groupist’ idiom. Brubaker says that that is a classic false

opposition and to frame the options in this way would be to miss the variety of forms in which in which ethnicity 'works' or other forms of communality. Ethnicity, Brubaker argues, cannot be reduced to individual choice, but it cannot be reduced to bounded groups either.

Finally, in "The variability of belonging: A reply to Rogers Brubaker", Calhoun, emphasizes his main interest in the importance of social solidarities and expresses his worry that Brubaker underestimates its importance in shaping the social world. Calhoun stresses that "being 'social' involves being inescapably determined by, dependent on, and committed to other people, patterns of social organization, and culture" and that the constituting role of culture is misrepresented in Brubaker's considerations. Both scholars practically are taking, let's say, a larger instrumentalist approach; Brubaker through his proposal to research ethnicity and other collective phenomena in a more nuanced way by using also a more generous analytical vocabulary, and Calhoun, through his idea that ethnicity matters to individuals as both 'it' and them are part of the social realm and part of a web of belonging. With the risk of presenting an abstract point of view, we could say that Brubaker focuses more on the various expressions of identity as basically voluntary while Calhoun focuses more on the constraints social actors have to deal with as they try to maximize their social standing.

As the current study intends to investigate expressions of ethnicity through feelings of belonging in the social realm, the focus shall be on the types of solidarity that Calhoun puts forward as meaningful for individuals in social life. More specifically, the type of solidarities that the study looks at is the culturally defined category and the individual's social network. The first refers to the individual's categorization based solely on his/her perceived membership in categories such as race, gender or ethnicity; the second refers to the organization of the individual's social life in a way in which members are joined to each other in direct or indirect relationships.

### 2.3 Social Identity Theory

Any literature review on the study of ethnicity should be related to the concepts that 'work together' with ethnicity; one such concept is social interaction and, as such, the study shall make brief descriptions of the role it plays, focusing on the one of the most influential works in the field which is Richard Jenkins's 'Social Identity'. We must bear in mind that Jenkins is well aware of Brubaker's criticism of the use of 'identity' as an analytical category and his use of the term is merely to explain theories of socialization at individual and collective level. Also, as an expert in social psychology,

Jenkins naturally tends to look at the relationship between 'identity' and social processes and not to explore various manifestations or expressions of it. Building on Henry Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory<sup>140</sup>, Jenkins contributes significantly to the nodal point of debate in ethnicity and identity studies regarding the (in)voluntary aspects of social identity; the debate discussed on other previously in this study is the one whether studies show that individuals act more as agents/actors and manipulate their presented 'identity' to maximize their gains, or, whether they engage in strengthening ethnic ties in an environment that presents more constraints than opportunities upon them. Jenkins main claim is that individual and collective identification takes place in the process of social interaction which, necessarily has a simultaneous character; in other words, he puts forward the idea that the ideas of difference and simultaneity, the par excellence tools in the process of social identification, are engaged in simultaneously and that practically, neither one comes first. He says that during “primary socialization, in everyday interaction and in institutionalized practices of labeling, individuals are identified, by themselves and by others, in terms which distinguish them from other individuals. Individual identification is, however, necessarily about similarity too. Self-hood, for example, is a way of talking about the similarity or consistency over time of particular embodied humans.”<sup>141</sup> Jenkins suggests that we should avoid understanding this process of internal-external identification in terms of sequences as that would lead to a lesser understanding of what really happens. What Jenkins means to say by this is that, by its very structure, collective internal definition is group identification and collective external definition is categorization; he says that each is an interrelated moment in the process of identification, suggesting that neither exists without the other.

While Jenkins takes note of Brubaker's warnings regarding the use of 'groups' in social science as analytical categories, he says that the understanding and use of this concept in sociology and social psychology is quite different from what Brubaker warns against. Jenkins says that, in sociology, “if people think that something is real, it is, if nothing else, real in terms of the action that it produces and in its consequences. Therefore it is ‘socially’ and inter-subjectively real.”<sup>142</sup> Therefore, for Jenkins, groups as categories of practice is more relevant, sociologically speaking, than looking at the phenomenon as a category of analysis. Because individuals view themselves and others, through

---

<sup>140</sup> Turner, J. C. (1982). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>141</sup> Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity*, , p.79.

<sup>142</sup> Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity*, p.82.

'groupist' lenses, that is the way in which, according to Jenkins, researchers should research. Despite this view, Jenkins does realize the danger of reifying social concepts and he suggests that, rather to see groups and categories as things in the world, we should think about identities instead as “constituted in the dialectic of collective identification, in the interplay of group identification and categorization.”<sup>143</sup> Points of common stance do exist between Brubaker and Jenkins's observations; for instance, Jenkins too stresses the fact that only through empirical studies from one context to another, can a scholar establish more precisely what counts more between these two processes; he says that while group identification always implies categorization, the reverse is not always the case. Categorization, however, at least creates group identification as an immanent possibility<sup>144</sup>. This is Brubaker's similar idea referring to the potential a category has of becoming a group; he discusses it in terms of degree of crystallization or 'group-ness'. However, the current study takes Brubaker's critique in this matter and takes the stance that, while social science scholars should be aware of how social actors view their world, they should not use the object of the study as the tool of the study as well. Thus, the way in which the current study will explore phenomena of communality is by investigating cognitivist frames, social networks and social 'transpositions' of values assumed to belong to a particular ethnic category, in this case, the Roma.

As we were saying earlier, Jenkins builds his claim on the works of John Turner and Henri Tajfel, advocating for the idea that, by the nature of things, group membership is always meaningful to individuals as it gives them, the much-needed, social identity. Moreover, Jenkins says that we can look at identification both as part of basic human processes and recognize at the same time that collective identifications are real for individuals, that they mean something in real experience. For him, the recognition of the first by no means refutes the idea of the second as, for him, 'self-categorization theory' acknowledges the situational variability of identification.

These claims are most important for the theoretical assumptions of the current study as they represent a research branch that suggests that collective identities will instill a sense of belonging-ness to individuals who are part of a category by reasons of basic human processes of socialization, if not by anything else. The point of departure of this study is that we need empirical evidence to assert claims such as these as context and change through time play a significant role in the findings of each case.

Going further with Jenkins's idea regarding the significance of interactions in the process of

---

<sup>143</sup> Ibidem, p. 88.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

self-identification, both at individual and collective level, the author says that a way though which we can establish this relevance (which can happen or not) is by investigation the process of boundary maintenance. He says that this can be managed during interaction *across* the boundary, with the 'Others'. By this, Jenkins views Fredrik Barth's legacy as congruent with the symbolic interactionist tradition, such as Chicago School representative, Erving Goffman and his concept of 'anthropology of performance' and frame analysis<sup>145</sup>. What Jenkins is keen on emphasizing here is Barth's own ideas on the fact that ethnic identities have a processual nature and, as such, their investigation should be carried out in ares where they are performed, put into action, rather than as objects of contemplation. He stresses that claiming an ethnic identity is not enough, one must be able satisfactorily to perform it, to actualize it because, given the circumstance, actors downplay or overstate similarity and difference.<sup>146</sup> That is precisely the focus of investigation of the current study. Barth actually discusses this process in terms of negotiation, in terms of 'give and take'; he says that individuals move around various frames or discourses of ethnicity where cultural differences are vastly over-stated; consequently, in real life situations, individuals test what the discourse level hold by contrasting them to precise situations. These 'situations' are the borders, the space where values and beliefs are tested, and their relevance for the individual is negotiated.<sup>147</sup> Jensen's suggestions is that we look at these borders as temporary checkpoints rather than as concrete walls.

Another significant claim that Jenkins makes that is relevant for the current study is the idea he develops around Anthony P. Cohen's 1985 thesis in "The Symbolic Construction of Community". In this work, Cohen advances the claim that there is a big difference between the cultural aspect of a community and its social structure and individuals' behavior vis-a-vis the community. He says that we should view community as a project, as a rhetoric individuals drawn upon and use strategically rather than necessarily a reality because "culture – the community as experienced by its members – does not consist in social structure or in 'the doing' of social behavior. It inheres, rather, in 'the thinking' about it. It is in this sense that we can speak of the community as a symbolic, rather than a structural, construct."<sup>148</sup> Drawing on Cohen's thesis, Jenkins says that the common values a community upholds as relevant don't necessarily mean the same thing to all members; neither should we necessary assume conformity of behavior for all individuals of that community. He says that it is not relevant whether individuals perceive or experience community-related things in the same way; that is not the point. What is the point however is "that their shared

---

<sup>145</sup> See Goffmann, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York, 1959.

<sup>146</sup> Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>147</sup> Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity*, p. 99.

<sup>148</sup> Cohen, Anthony P., *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p.89.

symbols allow them to *believe* that they do.”<sup>149</sup>

To conclude, Jenkins's suggestion in the study of social collective identities is that the focus be placed on the border as space of negotiation, a space where the project-community's values are put to the test of time and circumstance. Also, Jenkins sustains similar points with Brubaker regarding the potential that a collectivity or category has to become as close to the group as project, or the community as project for that matter; in Brubaker's vocabulary, this is called the degree of groupness, in Jenkins's vocabulary, this idea is called the dependency of group identification on categorization and not the reverse.

## A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIASPORA

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter intends to present an outline of the main points of tension in the literature on diasporas and to use the questions that arise from that as interrogation marks for the case study on younger generation and higher-educated Roma individuals in the Central and Eastern European

---

<sup>149</sup> Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity*, p. 112.

space. The reasons why the investigation of diaspora could provide fruitful in understanding more the dynamics of attachments and belonging to an ethnic category is that diaspora, as a scrutinized concept, can be seen as an alternative to the essentialization of belonging; but it can also represent a non-territorial form of essentialized belonging, according to Rogers Brubaker.<sup>150</sup> The literature on diaspora too, as we shall see in the lines bellow, touches key-issues relevant to the questions of this study as it interrogates the role played by time, members' committment, re-actualization and ritualization of 'group' values as marks of distinctiveness in the social realm, the relationship with an imagined or real homeland, networking among group members, etc. Thomas Hylland Eriksen suggests that studies on diaspora and transnational groups engages with the theory of ethnicity in a number of ways, often rephrasing and refining earlier debates concerning the relationship of ethnicity to culture, history and degrees of group cohesion. He says that it is legitimate to put under a question mark the effect globalization and increased contact have over transnational ethnic categories, communities and groups. Although there are studies that point to the strengthening of group identities as a result of this, he says that empirical evidence that claims a contrasting trend makes all the more necessary the adoption of 'diaspora' analytical vocabulary in transnational groups studies.<sup>151</sup>

Perhaps, the most fruitful element that is dealt with in the literature on diaspora is the element of transnationality, of members' territorial dispersion which addresses most the relevance of feeling of attachment and belonging that the current study investigates. Also, the study explores and adopts concepts and tension-points in diaspora studies on account of the recommendations made by scholar Rogers Brubaker for further research; more specifically, Brubaker argues that an investigation of boundary-maintenance (or erosion) by second and third generation individuals provide relevant questions and indications to the relevance of the existence of a diaspora.<sup>152</sup> As such, the case study of this research is used as an opportunity to interrogate and make an attempt to do so.

### 3.2 Criteria for 'Diaspora'

Generally speaking, the literature on diaspora focuses on three core elements in the study of such phenomena that supposedly are the constitutive elements. These are: dispersion in space, orientation to a 'homeland' and boundary-maintenance.

---

<sup>150</sup> Brubaker, R., *The 'Diaspora' Diaspora* p.12.

<sup>151</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, p. 188.

<sup>152</sup> Brubaker, R., *The 'Diaspora' Diaspora*, p.7.



The first element is the one that is most agreed upon as relevant in determining a 'diaspora'; it is however not universally agreed upon as it fails to explain cases of ethnic groups across national borders that seem to fall in the category of "diaspora".

The second constitutive criterion is the orientation to a real or imagined 'homeland' as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty. However, even this element is under scrutiny as recent discussions tend to de-emphasize homeland orientation. For instance, this is the above-mentioned critique that James Clifford makes saying that this strict definition fails to account even for the 'traditional' diasporic experiences such as the Jewish one.<sup>153</sup>

The third constitutive criterion widely used in the literature is boundary-maintenance; this involves the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society(-ies) by means of a deliberate resistance to assimilation. The most common practical forms that this boundary-maintenance can take are self-enforced endogamy or other forms of self-segregation such as linguistic or taking part in a network of wider family-run businesses. Yet, the stream of literature that emphasizes boundary-maintenance is met by an opposing counter-current in the literature that emphasizes hybridity, fluidity, creolization and syncretism. A strong representative scholar of this counter-stream is Stuart Hall. As expected, given his contribution to the larger field of Cultural Studies, Hall focuses more on the process of boundary erosion and its relationship with the 'diaspora' phenomenon rather than on boundary maintenance. More specifically, he claims that the 'diaspora experience . . . is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity'.<sup>154</sup> Thus, Hall claims that boundary maintenance is a poor indicator of the diasporic feelings of belonging to such a transnational community and that changes in this experience do not cancel it altogether.

### 3.3 "Diaspora' diaspora"

Rogers Brubaker's standpoint emerges as an attempt to address this ambivalence in the literature and to find a way that addresses the shortcomings and the merits of both sides. It will come as no surprise by now that Brubaker's critique in the field will address, in some way or another, the issue of conceptualization of the term and its analytical strength. In a manner very similar to the critique on

---

<sup>153</sup> Brubaker, R., *The 'Diaspora' Diaspora*, pp.5-6.

<sup>154</sup> Hall, Stuart, '*Cultural identity and diaspora*', in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, p.235.

groups and identity as analytical categories (and not as categories of practice), Brubaker builds on Giovanni Sartori's critique on the illness of concepts in comparative political science. Sartori's expression of 'conceptual stretching', used sometimes as 'conceptual straining', is widely used to denote situations where scholars adapt their analytical categories to fit new contexts as a result of their need to extend their models and hypotheses. What happens, according to Sartori, is that they resort to vague, amorphous and value free conceptualizations<sup>155</sup>. Brubaker claims that the concept of 'diaspora' is suffering from what Sartori calls 'conceptual stretching' saying that the proliferation of the term's meaning has been stretched to accommodate various intellectual, cultural and political agendas.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, he says that "The problem with this ... 'let-a-thousand-diasporas bloom' approach is that the category becomes stretched to the point of uselessness. If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. The term loses its discriminating power,,its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora."<sup>157</sup>

Brubaker bases his claim on the application of the term 'diaspora' to a growing set of cases that go beyond the 'traditional' examples of diasporas, such as the Jewish or the Armenian cases. He says that what was initially supposed to be a call for *nuance* and hybridity in studies on diaspora – advocated by anthropologist James Clifford in his 1994 article 'Diasporas'<sup>158</sup> – is now being adapted to 'fit' the semantic domain and experiences like those of immigrants, exile communities and so on.<sup>159</sup> In addition to the large numbers of other numerous cases where the term is used, Brubaker also draws attention to the area of the vocabulary that has developed around the core-term; he says that what initially designated a collectivity – diaspora – is now striving to designate a condition (diasporicity or diasporism), a process (diasporization, de-diasporization and re-diasporization), even a field of inquiry (diasporology or diasporistics). This phenomenon of vocabulary dispersion in the academia is what Brubaker calls "the 'diaspora' diaspora".<sup>160</sup>

What Brubaker suggests in the analysis of 'diaspora' is that we look at the phenomenon as an idiom, a stance, a claim, a project defined as diasporic stance rather than an entity or a fact; Brubaker says that by using these suggestions as viewpoints we can better understand how to adapt this category of practice to make it work as a category of analysis. He says that it is reasonable to

---

<sup>155</sup> Sartori, Giovanni, *Concept Misformation and Comparative Politics*, p.57.

<sup>156</sup> Brubaker, R., *The 'Diaspora' Diaspora*, p.1.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibidem*, p.3.

<sup>158</sup> James Clifford, *Diasporas*, pp. 302-338.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*, p.3.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, p.4.

take as focus of analytic investigation the areas in which diaspora works: for instance, 'diaspora' is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties. As such, we should look at and structure our analysis on its claims; for instance, its focus on normative change suggests that 'diasporas' are not so much descriptions of the world as they seek to remake it.<sup>161</sup> In the same way as Brubaker proposes we analyze and discuss of group cohesiveness and group-ness rather than 'group', he suggests we do with 'diaspora'.; he argues that, like so many other social phenomena, 'diaspora' 'acts', socially speaking, as a project and the most practical way to study it therefore is in terms of degree of success and types of support it has. In ther words, we should make the difference between its purpose and its discourse, and the actual lived experience of the individuals it claims to have as members. As such, we can discuss to what extent members accept, adopt, change or refute its project.

Much like Brubaker's remarks, T.H. Eriksen too says that literature on diaspora makes us believe that we are dealing with two opposing directions. The first one suggests that a diasporic identity "implies an emphasis on conservation and re-creation of the ancestral culture."<sup>162</sup> This stance takes somewhat into account the factors of change, but it sees it merely as adaptability of the culture to new contexts and emphasis is always placed on continuity and cultural purity. The presumably opposing perspective puts forward the idea of hybridity, in the way in which we described it previously as presented by Cultural Studies scholar, Stuart Hall. Eriksen says that this opposition is somewhat a false one; it creates the idea that on ethe one hand, diaspora necessarily implies continuity, stablility and clear-cut boundaries, while, on the other hand, hybridity implies change, deterritorialisation and open borders. He suggests that in practice, the social world is not such a tidy place and that the social realm is made of both openness and closure, 'rootedness' and change, both continuity and adaptation.<sup>163</sup>

### 3.4 Diasporic modalities. The Gitanos in Jarana

Paloma Gay y Blasco provides a case-study backed account in which a specific Roma group is taken as central to the investigation of what types of diaspora Roma groups envision themselves and others as belonging to. Interrogating whether various Roma groups imagine themselves as diasporic

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibidem, p. 12.

<sup>162</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives* p. 187.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

communities is quite a legitimate research question as the empirical literature on the Roma in Europe provide different accounts. For instance, Gay y Blasco says that the question of the unity of the Roma/Gypsies across political borders depends very much on where this information is sought.

On the one hand, there is the discourse that is formed by and around Roma NGO activists that draw on elements of common past, history, commonality and, in more extreme cases, nation-building processes such as the 'Romanistan' project.

On the other hand, scholars in anthropology, sociology and linguistics debate whether Gypsies indeed form one people given the wide differences in historical development, life-style, world-views, etc.<sup>164</sup> Empirically-backed studies such as those by Patrick Williams<sup>165</sup> and J.P. Liégeois<sup>166</sup> indicate that different Gypsy groups very often do not recognise each other as belonging to the same social and moral community.

As for her own study, Gay y Blasco's findings for the case of the *Gitanos* in Jarana (Madrid) show that indeed few Roma display any interest in bringing about imaginative or practical cohesion with each other. Gay y Blasco explain these findings saying that it is the fragmented nature of these 'groups' that makes absent any desire for unification: "For over five hundred years, the Gypsy diaspora has been characterised by its extreme political and structural fragmentation, and by the weakness or even absence of any overarching Gypsy imagined community."<sup>167</sup> Gay y Blasco sets as main focus of investigation the relationship between what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined community' and the social and political relation that it depends upon and that it sustains at the same time. This research focus leads Gay y Blasco to make the difference between two diasporic modalities in which the *Gitanos* in Jarana position themselves, namely, a non-activist and kin-oriented one and an activist and universalizing one.<sup>168</sup> Gay y Blasco's findings for the case of the *Gitanos* in Jarana show that they do not set their image of themselves as part of the 'the Gitano people', as having an idea of unity with other Roma/Gypsy groups around the world. Gay y Blasco says that this is not an unexpected finding as for the most part of this group's history in the Iberian peninsula relations have been characterised by "a lack of social and political cohesion, and by the weakness of any frames of

---

<sup>164</sup> Gay y Blasco, Paloma, *Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective*, p. 173.

<sup>165</sup> Williams, P. 1984. *Marriage Tsigane. Une cérémonie de fiançailles chez les Rom de Paris*. Paris:cl'Hamarttan Selaf.

<sup>166</sup> Liégeois, J. P. 1994. *Roma, gypsies, travellers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

<sup>167</sup> Gay y Blasco, Paloma, *Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective*, p. 173.

<sup>168</sup> Ibidem, p. 174.

communal reference external to Gitano individuals themselves"<sup>169</sup>. Moreover, she says that this dispersion and fragmented character are central to their ideas of *Gypsiness*. The reasons for this type of imagination of the Gypsy ideal is, according to Gay y Blasco, their sense of allegiance and belonging to the social unit called *raza*, which is a closely knit group of kin. In order to explain this character of relative isolation even among *Gitanos* groups Gay y Blasco resorts to her own study's observations to argue that the *Gitanos* in Jarana see a number of social situations as potentially conflictive and, as such, intentionally choose restraint and avoidance in social relations. At the same time, this type of social behavior is understood by them as a way of asserting their attachment to their kin and, therefore, reject cohesion with non-kin. This type of behavior is the socially-validated one in the *Gitano* worldview; anything that transgresses that is *Payo* or non-*Gitano*.

Gay y Blasco claims that the way in which the *Gitanos* of Jarana envision themselves vis-a-vis other Roma groups is quite different from the anthropological understand we have of the word 'community; moreover, she argues that their understanding of the types of ties they have, share and their sense of togetherness with other Roma groups is anchored not in what 'community' expresses, but in 'commonality'. What this means for the *Gitanos* in Jarana is "an emphasis on mimesis and moral correspondence and, in particular, on the assumption that, within the bounds of the nurturing environment of the *raza*, each Gitano man and woman upholds the Gitano morality. It is the person, as performer of Gitano custom – the *leyes Gitanas* (Gitano laws) – who sustains the *Gitanos*' shared sense of community."<sup>170</sup> The *Gitanos* in Jarana are well-aware of the existence of other Roma outside of Spain, but they do not see themselves as forming with them 'one kind of people', nor do they attempt to establish any practical links with them.<sup>171</sup>

The first diasporic modality, or way of constructing their idea of what *Gypsiness* should be, is characterized by a lack of an all-encompassing political structure that would mean a sort of unification of Roma, a lack of a desire to do so, avoidance in social relations of Roma/Gypsies outside the patrilineal kin group, *Gypsiness* is upheld by the individual's behavior and performance of Gypsy morality, and finally, the past is not held as a source of common identity.<sup>172</sup>

As for the second diasporic modality, Gay y Blasco says that it is very much based on a Western

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibidem, p. 177.

<sup>170</sup> Ibidem, p. 178.

<sup>171</sup> Ibidem, p. 178.

<sup>172</sup> Ibidem, p. 179.

model and discourse on ethnicity and identity and that this is a strong contrast with the first modality of being a Gypsy. The 'representatives' of this modality are the Roma-focused international NGOs as the actors that shape this type of discourse and project. This type of discourse strives towards instilling a sense of shared identity among different Roma across borders. She says that because there is a strong tendency to downplay difference among Gitanos, Manouche and others and to over-communicate 'common culture', "what emerges is a conceptualization of the Roma as a diaspora, not unlike the Jewish one."<sup>173</sup> Gay y Blasco openly expresses her concern with the potential consequences of this diasporic modality-project as it is based on the creation of practical and imaginative links with Roma elsewhere through means of cancelling barriers of ethnic affiliation, language and life-style and says that "Roma activism runs the risk of reducing Gypsiness to 'its minimal cultural prop'."<sup>174</sup> It is legitimate to ask what could the possible consequences of such a project be considering that it basically relies on emphasizing particular aspects while downplaying others; for instance, the content of how should Gypsiness or Roma-ness be envisioned by individuals raises serious issues of power relations and identity ascription and framing the Roma in particular ways for specific audiences has the potential of altering the way in which individuals conceive of themselves. "Gitano distinctiveness becomes 'the Gitano culture' and replaces the clear awareness of Gitano moral superiority that drives the lives of the people of Jarana".<sup>175</sup>

Gay y Blasco concludes that these different accounts point to various possible scenarios for the future of the Roma/Gypsy today. The empirical findings indicate that factors such as religious affiliations or various ways of being part of the economy shape the imaginative images Gitanos have of themselves and other Roma. However, the Roma-focused transnational NGOs have a heavy standing and the nature and ways of their discourse can have potential consequences on how these individuals see themselves.

## THE ROMA IN EUROPE

---

<sup>173</sup> Ibidem, p.180.

<sup>174</sup> Ibidem, p.186.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

This chapter is a brief description of the origins and the migrations of the Roma as they are, more or less, agreed upon in the field of Romani Studies. The Indian origins of the Roma are perhaps one of the least contested aspects in Romani Studies, although there are scholars that refute this view such as Judith Okely.<sup>176</sup> What is however one of the most controversial facets of Romany history are the various contending suppositions over their initial status before their migration(s) from India and their reasons for leaving. It is difficult to reach agreement on this issue as there isn't any documentation of that time that could indicate more to one account over the other; their presence started being documented in European 'archives' only in the Middle Ages when they were regarded as an exotic people from the East. This particular situation created a large space of interpretations for various scholars to advance hypotheses based on circumstantial aspects rather than 'traditional' sources such as documents tracking large population movements. One scholar criticizes such academic practices saying that there is even the danger that dubious assumptions receive legitimation merely by over-citation, and, in time, become treated as facts.<sup>177</sup>

### Origins and Migrations

Aidan McGarry says that whatever migration paths the Roma may have taken, their presence is certain once they reached Byzantium and their migration path from there into Europe in the late thirteenth century. McGarry says that, judging from the high incidence of Greek words and grammar structure found in Romani, it is reasonable to assume that they may have rested in Byzantium for a few centuries.<sup>178</sup> It is generally agreed that the Roma arrived in Europe from a number of directions and that around the end of the fourteenth century a large part of the Roma had settled in Eastern Europe. The settling of another significant number into the Balkan peninsula is based on the records of the pilgrims route via Crete in 1322 from Greece and another migration route is established from Northern Africa to the Iberian peninsula. A strong assumption based on these large geographical migrations is the one regarding the craftsmanship of the Roma; it is assumed they resorted to whatever niches presented in various societies so that they may have economic independence in the different places they inhabited. Also, it is believed that craft work and musicianship allowed the Roma to have enough flexibility and durability whenever they needed to settle in a new environment.<sup>179</sup> It is

---

<sup>176</sup> Okely, Judith, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

<sup>177</sup> Matras, Yaron, *Language Contact*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>178</sup> McGarry, Aidan, *Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community*, 2010, p.9.

<sup>179</sup> McGarry, Aidan, *Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community*, p. 10.

believed that Roma settled in South Eastern Europe and the Balkans from the thirteenth century and did not start large migrations in other parts of Europe till the fifteenth century; it is believed that what prompted their migration at this point was the invasion of their provinces by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>180</sup>

### Linguistics in Romani Studies

According to scholar Stéphane Laederich, the first scientific method of establishing the origins of the Roma was conducted in the late eighteenth century by German Jakob Rüdiger who found similarities between the Romani language and Sanskrit, thus showing the Indian roots of the language. Most scholars in Romani Studies take another moment in the history of Romani Studies as more relevant for its far-reachness; in 1783, Heinrich Grellman from the University in Göttingen, carried out an extensive study of the Roma language and deduced that the Roma had come from India. Although the Indian origin is widely accepted, not all scholars agree on the way in which studies on this issue were carried out. For instance, contemporary Romani Studies linguists, especially the Manchester School of Linguistics<sup>181</sup>, but also the Holland School in Romani Studies<sup>182</sup> view Grellman's methods of study as heavily flawed and his conclusions even un-scientific. As we have seen so far, language is a much-used focus of investigation in Romani Studies as traditional sources are very scarce. But that does not mean that Romani linguists do not have its share of debates and points of divergence. The very fact that Romani is in fact, a language, is subject of debate as there are lines of thought that hold that the diverse dialects spoken by various Roma groups are not mutually understood. This claim is quite a difficult one even to the present-day as there are accounts of Roma themselves that hold such views. The Manchester School of Linguistics clears some scientific light on this issue as its comprehensive project, called "Romani project", addresses contemporary changes and social media contact between Roma individuals of various groups that manage to build linguistic bridges and communicate in an ever-adaptable version of Romani.<sup>183</sup> Stéphane Laederich from the Rroma Foundation says that one needs to better understand what factors influence these variations in dialects in order to assess whether they can be, at least, potentially mutually understandable for Roma individuals of various groups. He says that the Romanes language exhibits a layered structure with a strong basis (Prakrit), followed by two shallow

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibidem, p. 11.

<sup>181</sup> See Matras, Yaron, *The Role of Language in Mystifying and De-Mystifying Gypsy Identity* in Saul, Nicholas & Tebbutt, Susan. Eds. *The role of the Romanies*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2004. Pp. 53-78.

<sup>182</sup> See Leo Lucassen, Wim, Willems, Annemarie Cottaar, *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach*, Center for the History of Migrants, University of Amsterdam, 1988.

<sup>183</sup> See "Romani Project" <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>



layers of acquisition (Persian and Armenian), a very large layer of Greek acquisitions and a smaller one of South Slavic terms. What Laedrich means to say by this is that, the 'common trunk', the basis of Romanes is present in all Romanes dialects and accounts for around 60 percent of the vocabulary of that respective dialect. Moreover, the migrations in Europe led to the formation of roughly 4 meta-dialects, the Carpathian, the Nordic, the German-influenced meta-dialect and the Balkan one, which means that common understanding within a meta-dialect is indeed more likely to happen than outside the meta-dialect.

Laedrich goes on to conclude that for those individuals that communicate using the common trunk, mutual understanding is likely to happen, whereas loan words are indeed unlikely to be understood<sup>184</sup>. Due to state policies and other social-political factors, Roma groups in Europe have different degrees to which they still speak Romanes. For instance, Laedrich accounts that, roughly speaking, around two-thirds of Roma in Europe still speak Romanes. In those countries where assimilation policies were rather extensive, such as Spain or Hungary, the language has almost totally disappeared. In the case of Romania, a large part of the assimilated Roma population has lost its language not due to state assimilation policies, but because of the long period in which Roma were slaves bound to the land, in the regions of Wallachia and Moldavia. Also, it is generally assumed that Communist state policies may have contributed to this linguistic acculturation.<sup>185</sup>

The debates in the field of language in Romani Studies raise questions regarding their character in terms of social organization; given this variety of historical experiences and different dialects, it is reasonable to question the cohesiveness of this transnational ethnic category. Should the social organization of the Roma be seen in terms of heterogeneity or in terms of commonality? For instance, scholars representing the Holland School in Romani Studies, Wim Willems, Leo Lucassen and Annemarie Cottaar, are among the voices that stress the fact that Roma do not represent a single homogenous group and that the multiple groups have very little in common. Moreover, they see the image of a homogeneous Roma group as the mere creation of the non-Roma, usually authorities in power, that have been largely the only ones to manufacture the image of the Gypsy in popular

---

<sup>184</sup> Laedrich, Stéphane, *Roma Cultural Identity in Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South Eastern Europe*, Ed. Gabriela Mirescu., p. 20.

<sup>185</sup> Ibidem, p.21.

culture throughout Europe for long periods of time. In their view, the newly-introduced concept of "Roma" somewhat resembles, in terms of identity ascription and un-balanced power relations, the one-sided creation process of the term "Gypsy". For scholars that hold this view, neither Roma, nor Gypsy are terms envisioned originally or created by the subjects themselves. A large number of studies that have conducted ethnographic accounts generally tend not to generalize their findings and stick to their study group; as such, accounts on specific Roma groups' traditions and cultural distinctiveness count to around 40 in Europe, such as the Arlii, Bugurdži, Cale, Kāle, Džambaša, Kalderaša, Lovara, Sinti, Xaladytka and so on.<sup>186</sup> Some fieldwork evidence strongly suggests that some 'Roma' groups do not identify at all with a larger 'Roma' cultural commonality as they tend to stress their cultural distinctiveness; this is the case of the Manouche in France in Jean-Luc Poueyto's study "Un patrimoine culturel tres discret: le cas des Manouches".<sup>187</sup>

Laedrich advances the claim that social-economic circumstances are the factors that explain the ways in which various Roma groups were articulated and organized. He says that there are mainly two driving forces that led to the formation of these groups: the first one is represented by the large migrations and the second one is due to their specialization in particular market niches in the host society. In this respect, he gives the example of the Kale group who, despite of the original common name, have developed distinct cultural features due to their different migratory courses in the Finnish society, the Welsh and the Spanish.<sup>188</sup> Another factors that generated another migration wave represented the non-settlement policies in the German lands; as such, Roma groups migrated further East creating other sub-groups such as the one called Polska, Litovska, Loftitke, and Xaladytka Roma. Laedrich says that it was their similar traditions and their similar language that represented a fruitful investigation focus that lead to this finding. Lastly, the settlement in the French territories of the above-mentioned Roma group is attributed to the invasion of France by Germany in 1870. Shifting attention even more to the region of South-Eastern Europe, the reasons why these groups diversified so much is also attributed to more factors; for instance, in the case of the Balkan territories and what is nowadays Romania, the Roma divided into groups according to the economic opportunities that were presented. This is the example that is used on several occasions for the copper smith-oriented Kalderashi and the horse dealers-oriented Lovara in Western Transylvania.

---

<sup>186</sup> See Fig. 1 in Laedrich, Stéphane, *Roma Cultural Identity*, p.20.

<sup>187</sup> Poueyto, Jean-Luc, *Un patrimoine culturel tres discret: le cas des Manouches*, pp. 130-143.

<sup>188</sup> Laedrich, Stéphane, *Roma Cultural Identity*, p.22.

Because of their trade specialization it is believed that the Kalderashi had more contact with the Romanian population, while the Lovara with the Hungarian one. As a consequence of the borrow words in the vocabulary, these two groups have differences in language and present two dialects. Contemporary Roma NGO political discourse is presented with a great challenge as the accounts of these multiple groups on their own standing vis-a-vis each other points to distinctiveness and various cultural traditions. For instance, situations in which local Roma distance themselves from Roma 'new arrivals' are not uncommon; a widely used example in this sense is the case of the Sinti in Romani Studies, but more recent fieldwork on other Roma groups point to similar discourse and phenomenon. Here, the ethnic transnational solidarity that would play a central role in the Roma NGO political discourse lacks when local Finnish Roma reject any affiliation with newly-arrived South-Eastern Roma as is the evidence from Raluca Bianca Roman's study "Roma "culture clash"? Finnish Roma representatives on Roma migrants, Roma identity and transnational mobilization".<sup>189</sup>

Laedrich draws attention to a much-used element in the identification process of Roma that is much subtler than the way in which it has been presented so far in the literature. The dichotomy Roma-Gadze is very much known in Romani Studies, however Laedrich says that understanding the way in which this frame of meaning works is heavily contextualized and should be placed in historical light. For instance, he says that we must bear in mind that, throughout history and context, Gadze is always non-Roma, but its meaning is not filled solely with 'ethnic content'. Depending on the context, Gadze for a Russian Roma will always be a Russian, not just any non-Roma. In addition, Jews are generally viewed as non-Gadze and are denoted as *Bibolde*, which literally means "un-baptized". Even more interestingly, in the context of the Balkans, a Gadzo is a Muslim; in Kosovo and Albania, Gadze was traditionally used only for the Turks, and other terms such as *Gavutne* (villagers) are used for the local Albanian population. What this rich understanding of their surroundings means to tell us is that the 'Roma' world-view is not so much dichotomized as the Roma-Gadze discourse would have us believe. It is nevertheless true that Roma distinctiveness developed and changed alongside majority populations and in relationship with them, but the social realm is never a neatly organized place.

## Statistics

There is a high number of studies and official documents on Roma that are based on statistics, but this is perhaps one of the most problematic areas of inquiry in Romany Studies as data

---

<sup>189</sup> Master of Arts thesis, University of Helsinki, HELKA online catalogue, <http://www.helsinki.fi/helka/index.htm>

gathering and manipulation has always been a strong feature in this field. State authorities that included ethnicity items in national census kept track of the 'national' Roma, but reluctance to declare oneself a Roma that might bring about social stigma had lowered the real figures considerably. In addition, states have sometimes lowered the numbers on purpose so in attempts to diminish the scale of their unresolved problems with the inclusion of the Roma, or during Communist regimes, to downplay ethnic categories. Laedrich says that there is even a trend in the common expressions that are used in NGO statistics to describe the social and economic situation of the Roma in general; he says that, however true, the use and re-use of cliché phrases such as "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" run the risk of contribute to perpetuation of the usual stereotypes about Roma.<sup>190</sup> Laedrich says that numbers can only be estimated even in national census, taking into account general population growth, migration, and so on. He says that the current estimation for the Roma in Romania is closer to the 2.5 to 4 million. The statistics situation in Bulgaria is probably among the most precise due to the accurate statistics since the first Ottoman tax register in 1475, in which Roma were explicitly listed.; as such, the percentage of Roma population in that country usually tended to be around 9%. In Hungary, the official numbers from the census list 189,000 Roma or 1.9% of the population. What is ironic is that the census agent itself, the Hungarian government, states that this number is too low and gives an alternative estimate of 400,000 to 6,000,000 Roma in the country, while most experts put the actual number at about 800,000.<sup>191</sup> According to Anna M. Fischer, the Roma in Europe are estimated to be between 7 and 12 million.<sup>192</sup> However tempting it may be to provide 'official' statistics for the Roma in Europe in this study, experts in the field indicate that this would not be quite helpful, quite the contrary. These few statistics offer quite the opposite of what the role of statistics is: clarity and precision. What they do tell us however is that there are clear indications of the various ways in which 'the Roma question' has been used by state authorities to communicate either inclusion or to downplay the presence of the Roma in their respective territory. It also gives a measure of the effects of general discrimination of the Roma as many choose to hide their belonging to this ethnic category for fear of social stigma.

## Traditions and change

---

<sup>190</sup> Laedrich, Stéphane, *Roma Cultural Identity*, p.26.

<sup>191</sup> Laedrich, Stéphane, *Roma Cultural Identity*, p.27.

<sup>192</sup> Fischer, Anna M., *Between Nation and State. Examining the International Romani Union*, Senior Projects Spring, Paper 12, Bard Digital Commons, 2011.

A significant debate in the field of Romani Studies is over the issue of tradition and change; scholars debate whether traditions assumed to belong to most Roma groups should indeed be regarded as 'identity' markers and, more importantly, whether changes in those traditions should be regarded as their disappearance. Various social-political factors, more commonly state policies, are assumed to have led to a significant degree of acculturation for Roma in national states, and the loss of language is regarded by some as loss of culture. This remains an open and problematic question as 1) it is very problematic to say what precisely 'Roma culture' is, 2) who has the power to say it, Roma or non-Roma scholars, and 3) views on the effects of change over the continuation of a culture are quite different, as there are strong theories that scrutinize even the invention of tradition, such as Eric Hobsbawn's thesis. Laedrich says that any study of this phenomenon should take into account the various paths that acculturation has taken; for instance, some Roma groups in Hungary that are fully assimilated, having lost most traditions and language, continue to be regarded as Roma by the non-Roma population. As such, this is believed to have some influence on the way they perceive themselves in cultural terms.

Quite a different path of acculturation in terms of consequences is the one of the Cale of Spain who, while having lost their knowledge of Romanes about a century ago, have maintained all Roma traditions and present themselves as Cale, not by the terminology of the modern 'Roma'. Laedrich interprets these different experiences of the Roma vis-a-vis their host societies in terms of their rejection or acceptance as a different culture; he says that the Roma in Hungary may have undergone a high degree of acculturation as a result of their exclusion from the general population, whereas for the Cale in Spain, he thinks their keeping of strong traditions indicate they are accepted within the community at large. Laedrich says that, despite this variety of groups, each with its own cultural distinctiveness, there are common themes that pertain to most, if not all of them<sup>193</sup>. As Paloma Gay y Blasco's above-mentioned field study with the *Gitanos* in Jarana-Madrid and other studies<sup>194</sup> have shown, key factors include respect for elders (culminating in the power of phuri daj/phuri dej), elder women; ritual cleanness; the approach to death and dead people, especially

---

<sup>193</sup> Laedrich, Stéphane, *Roma Cultural Identity*, p.24.

<sup>194</sup> Silverman, Carol, *Negotiating "Gypsiness": Strategy in Context*, *Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 100, No. 101, 1988.

illuminating is the name ritual of the Manouche in France<sup>195</sup>; internal mediation in the form of kris or sendo; and generally the consensus-based community.

As mentioned above, the issue of change, and more precisely, acculturation, in the case of the Roma is seen by some as an indication of the disappearing of the Roma culture or distinctiveness altogether. Carol Silverman's study of the American Roma/Gypsies, point to different conclusions. Her thesis is that "the modern American urban environment has encouraged Gypsy ethnicity in very specific ways. Among the American Rom (Gypsies who speak Romanes)there exists a culture that is vital and innovative, but that exhibits few signs of decline or assimilation, defined as the disavowing of Gypsy culture and the loss of Gypsy ethnic identification and institutions."<sup>196</sup> The phenomena that inform her findings are the relative small number of Gypsy children that reject or 'forget' their heritage, the small number of intermarriages between Gypsy and non-Gypsies, and generally the relatively large number of respondents that articulate distinct Gypsy identity, in terms of institutions and folklore. Silverman argues that changes that occur in societies, and even for the Roma, are continuously adapted around their culture so as to better respond to new challenges and environments; that, these changes should be not interpreted as a loss of Gypsy culture or distinctiveness. She views their response to new situations as strategies carefully manipulated in a creative way so that they may keep their culture. She particularly discusses the interaction between Gypsy and Gadze in practical aspects of social interactions, such as market dependencies, as this feature of Gypsy culture is traditionally seen as dichotomized. Indeed, Silverman, argues, Gypsies do uphold specific visions of Gypsy and Gadze morality as opposites, but that doesn't cancel economic interactions. Borders are permeable in a very practical manner, but the core of their culture – Gypsy morality and ideas of purity – are kept strict despite interaction and adoption of Gadze elements such as fashion or technology. She says that the adoption of these 'Gadze' elements have no meaning in themselves; their use is what determines their significance: "ethnic identity, then, does not depend on cultural diversity *per se*, but rather on the assignment of social meaning."<sup>197</sup> Additionally, there is one particular aspect that Silverman says that scholars failed to interpret in its original meaning; she says that the role of change in Gypsy culture is generally misunderstood as scholars see change as disappearance. She argues that change has indeed occurred in Gypsy culture, but that this is nothing

---

## 195

Poueyto, Jean-luc, *Manouches et mondes de l'écrit*, Maison d'edition Karthala, Paris, 2011.

<sup>196</sup> Silverman, Carol, *Negotiating "Gypsiness". Strategy in Context*, p.267.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

new in Gypsy culture, moreover, this is part of Gypsy history. She says that innovations in areas such as housing, travel patterns and the acquisition of non-Gypsy language is but a mere strategy of re-adaptation that has been happening for a long time as these areas are the most open to change and flexibility. Change is inevitable. Moreover, she says that change in certain cultural areas can actually serve to foster conservatism in other areas of culture such as, worldview or the taboo system of purity of the Gypsy body.<sup>198</sup> The types of occupations and jobs that Gypsies, traditionally, specialize in are a good example of that as they allow them to respect the values of Gypsy independence and the rules of the taboo system.

An interesting point in Silverman's remark is the one she makes referring to the issue of the commonality or sense of unity that Roma across borders have or don't have. She says that the Roma share fundamental cultural values, but that their cultural forms that are the expressions of those values manifest differently according to context. The reason for that is, according to Silverman, the situational dependence that is characteristic of Gypsy culture. She claims that one element that all Roma share is the Gypsy world-view that is manifested in many variations depending on the particular environment.<sup>199</sup> Silverman's fieldwork and findings are of great help in understanding empirically how apparent assimilation can actually 'hide' cultural survival strategies, and more precisely, how despite change, Gypsies can manage to uphold and continue to practice the taboo system and Gypsy-Gadze boundaries around that system.

---

<sup>198</sup> Ibidem p.268.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibidem*, p.273.

## ROMA IN ACADEMIC WRITINGS

In the previous chapters we discussed claims made by scholars such as Rogers Brubaker or Paloma Gay y Blasco that suggest looking and studying the transnational Roma as diasporic stances or diasporic modalities. However, there are Romani Studies scholars that suggest that the the Roma have been endowed with the image of a diaspora through the erroneous academic discourse and call to a cease of research and academic writing in that manner. These scholars and their stance are known in the field of Romani Studies as the Holland School composed of Wim Willems, Leo Lucassen and Annemarie Cottaar. The three engaged in a long research effort aimed at showing how, throughout the history of academic writing in 'Romani studies', the Gypsy was actually constructed by the dominant society (indicating at times groups that are not Roma, but because of their nomadic life-style were placed in the same category). They say that, throughout academic writing, societies have come to 'know' the image of the Gypsy very different from their actual experiences and quite denatured from reality. They strongly criticize writings such as those by Angus Fraser saying that it merely reflects a fascination for the exotic and that accounts such as those actually distance us from knowing the Roma groups as they are. Willems, Lucassen and Cottaar stress the far-reaching effects such ethnographic accounts have had on Romani Studies, saying that they led to the creation of an image of a homogeneous, time-enduring and un-changing one people, quite different from the actual experience of discrimination and the heterogeneous character.<sup>200</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, scholars such as linguist Yaron Matras have identified a phenomenon of erroneous knowledge-production in Romani Studies; the Holland School has shown extensively in their work

---

<sup>200</sup> Lucassen, L., Willems, W., Cottaar, A., *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach*, Center for the History of Migrants, University of Amsterdam, 1988, p.5.



how the ongoing reproduction of the same ideas has led authors to follow each other's steps and create an aura of legitimacy to their writing, with flawed sources.<sup>201</sup>

A more precise argument is made by Wim Willems in "Ethnicity as a Death-Trap: the History of Gypsy Studies" where he advances the idea that most writing in Gypsy studies is flawed because of the inheritance of works such as Fraser's or Grellman's that allude to the image of a one people with a number of fixed characteristics, not unlike the Aristotelian logic of 'the sum of its parts', that merely manages to essentialize the Gypsies in academic writing. They say that, unfortunately, what characterizes Gypsy studies is a "splendid isolation" and that "Gypsy folk-lore, with its upgraded amateurism and, since 1888, its own journal, has always dominated the field".<sup>202</sup> He draws attention to the lack of using historical sources in Gypsy studies and the relative lack of social scientists and historians working on the subject, saying that scholars should be skeptical of generalizations.

Finally, the Holland School in Romani Studies is critical of the claim that Romani identity emerged from a diaspora historically as it only links several disparate groups under the umbrella of Romani identity. They argue that such attempts ignore factors such as self-identification within these ethnic subgroups, and plays into a tradition of tracing Romani roots to a limited and non-European origin. Moreover, these efforts are run by non-Roma for the Roma, and more problematically from a political science perspective related to legitimacy, funded and ran by entities of power, such as state authorities.

---

<sup>201</sup> Lucassen, L., Willems, W., Cottaar, A., *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach*, p.7.

<sup>202</sup> Lucassen, L., *Ethnicity as a Death-Trap: the History of Gypsy Studies in Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach*, p.33

## ROMA BETWEEN PROJECT AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

1. Roma identity as project and fieldwork findings

2. Ethnogenesis or Ethnicization

This chapter will present political and ideological projects to construct a transnational consciousness of Roma-ness. This phenomenon is particularly visible through the focus on the discourse displayed by the International Romani Union in its various actions. On its website, the IRU claims legitimacy as it says to represent "12 million Roma in the world".<sup>203</sup> Paloma Gay y Blasco says that this kind of project represents a way of imagining the Roma that resembles a people, as a particular kind of community or diaspora that is very different from the one she describes in her case-study on the Gitanos in Jarana. The IRU's claims are ideological and political in nature as it calls for the practical unity of Gypsies/Roma everywhere – using the Socialist style catch-phrase: 'Roma from the Whole World Unite'. Also, it claims to play the role of a political forum of the sort, and, finally, it proposes assumes to represent the interests of Roma worldwide. But there are other ways in which the same logic of discourse is configured; this is sometimes represented by scholars which are criticized by the Willems, Lucassen & Cottaar as going on the footsteps of the flawed and non-scientific tradition of the initial "Gypsy-ologists".

Efforts in academia such as these are the one employed by known historian Ian Hancock;

---

<sup>203</sup> <http://www.unionromani.org>

according to Anne M. Fischer his works place him in the scholarly literature on Roma that view the Romani identity as united by objective properties and characteristics. According to Fischer, the reason why claims that Romani distinctiveness can simply be linked to objective factors rooted in history, biology, or cultural practices is made by scholars such as Hancock "because they propose a concrete and factually justifiable starting point upon which to build a united Romani identity."<sup>204</sup> Fischer says that the task of uniting the Roma as a single national identity is an extremely difficult one as empirical evidence indicates some groups, for instance the Sinti, do not identify in any way with the term 'Roma' and actually hold that there are notable cultural differences exist between them and other Roma<sup>205</sup>. She says that the practice of linking Romani 'identity' to 'objective' cultural traits can produce negative effects, be an obstacle for integration into mainstream society and may limit self-identification.<sup>206</sup> Elements that seem to seriously hinder such a project of 'identity unification' under a common set of traits and name can be found in the very concept that this discourse advances, namely 'Romanipen' or 'Romani-ness'. According to international law theorist, Morag Goodwin, "it is not that Roma share a sense of being a single people but that the fundamental nature of Romani identity is the division of the world into Roma and Gadje and that from this flows the related notion of řomanipé ('Romani-ness') – a 'being Romani."<sup>207</sup> Consequently, it is only through the perception of the Roma/Gadze duality that 'Romanipen' makes sense; one can imagine contexts in which, when the element of 'Gadze' is irrelevant, 'Romanipen' fails to crystallize.

Basing her claim on the concepts of the invention of tradition<sup>208</sup> or imagined community<sup>209</sup>, Fischer argues that a homogeneous Roma culture is a constructed concept and not, as some discourse goes, being preserved. Fischer says that discourse such as the one used by the IRU or Ian Hancock is part of the wider logic of the creation of a single Romani identity that somewhat resembles the logic of national identity. She says that this strategy to mobilize the Roma politically is used by Roma Rights movement, which, among other, is largely responsible for disseminating the term Roma. The reason for this is, according to Fischer, to bestow an aura of political correctness and legitimacy upon the movement<sup>210</sup>; although, as we shall discuss further on, this is a serious shortcoming and issue that the movement has had to deal with. Fischer argues that exact measures that indicate this creation process of Roma culture are easily identifiable; for instance, she focuses on

---

<sup>204</sup> Fischer, Anna M., *Between Nation and State. Examining the International Romani Union*, p.8.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibidem*, p 4.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibidem*, p.8.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem*, p.9.

<sup>208</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric, Ranger, Terence, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

<sup>209</sup> Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition, London, 2006.

<sup>210</sup> Fischer, Anna M., *Between Nation and State. Examining the International Romani Union*, p. 10.

the world Romani congresses and their working papers to examine the agenda of this political forum of the IRU. For example, Fischer says that there are visible and deliberate efforts to foster a common culture among the heterogeneous Roma<sup>211</sup> and that at some point, the congresses "took a decidedly nationalist stance, focusing on measures for uniting the Romani community as a nation, with the IRU as its government."<sup>212</sup> Other homogenizing and unifying measures include the creation of a standardized Romani language and the diffusion of a Romani alphabet.

It is this very creation process of a homogeneous Roma identity that prompted one of the research questions of the current study: does this type of discourse appeal to younger-generation and high-educated Roma? A discourse is created for an audience, and, in this case, the possible reception and responses to such a discourse are various. First, younger-generation can be assumed to have inherited a sense of *Roma-ness* from their family and primary socialization environment. Secondly, they may reject it and display no feeling of attachment or belonging to this type of discourse. Thirdly, they may manifest in a rather hybrid way, presenting expressions of adaptation to external factors such as contact and interaction in multicultural environment, immigration and the factors usually attributed to globalization in contemporary societies. What the literature and qualitative research findings tell us is that there are various directions these instances may take. On the one hand, one possible direction suggest that there is a shared sense of belonging to a transnational group called Roma; this is the idea put forward by what we briefly described above by the efforts of organizations such as the International Romani Union or the Gypsy Lore Society; also, there are efforts from the academia that point to the same direction, such as the works and theses advanced by historian Ian Hancock. On the other hand, large-scale fieldwork findings indicate to the contrary: that Roma view themselves quite differently from this one Roma group discourse. A large-scale longitudinal study carried out by the Swiss Peace Foundation in Central and Eastern European countries released in 2011<sup>213</sup> shows that Roma view themselves in sub-group terms, self-identifying with the group in which they belong (such as Kalderashi or Lovara for instance). Studies such as these seriously question the appeal one-Roma discourse has in practical terms and are helpful in understanding problems related to legitimacy of representation and identity ascription. The research was carried out between 2002 and 2008 in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova using interviews based on life stories and having as analytical tools perceptions, self-perceptions and identity strategies. These interviews cover a wide range of geographical areas and informants' profile

---

<sup>211</sup> Ibidem, p. 39.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Mirescu et al., *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South Eastern Europe*, Swiss Peace Foundation, 2011.

such as age, gender, occupation, level of education, as well as social and economic levels. As such, interviews occurred with 'common' Roma as well as Roma belonging to what is generally called in Romani Studies elite, either political, intellectual, or economic. People were asked to talk about their lives and experiences, their opinions, their self-perceptions, and the way they think others view them.<sup>214</sup> Their conclusions were that the so-called “Roma community” is comprised of a multiplicity of heterogeneous groups that may have very little in common and whose ties are very thin. The findings also indicated 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. As such, the study's authors suggest that these findings indicate that is more relevant to talk about multiple, flexible, and situational identities in the case of the Roma in Europe. Moreover, the authors suggest that looking at the Roma merely as an ethnic minority category would not be so accurate as their social organization - a variety of sub-groups and meta-groups – indicates there is also an over-layered social dimension as well. Finally, the authors say that given the very different historical experiences of Roma groups across national boundaries, their gathering under the same common name does not make much sense for what real experience is concerned. Once more, they say that no social, economic, or cultural cohesion exists between Roma living in different countries.

A previous 2004 empirically study<sup>215</sup> also for Central and Eastern European countries indicates similar findings; authors Gyorgy Csepeli and David Simon inform that there is no match between the results of outgroup and ingroup categorization. Their study aimed at empirically testing whether there was a compatibility between two constructions: the Gypsy image of the majority population and the self-image of the Roma and their findings indicated that while the Gypsy image of the majority population is more or less homogeneous, the self-image of the Roma is heterogeneous.<sup>216</sup>

## 2.Ethnogenesis or Ethnicization

Another major finding of the Swish Peace Foundation study is the phenomenon called of 'ethnogenesis' and the one called 'ethnicization'. The authors say that, given the empirical evidence of

---

<sup>214</sup> Ibidem, p. 13.

<sup>215</sup> Csepeli, Gyorgy, Simon, David, *Construction of Roma Identity in Esatern and Central Europe: Perception and Self-identification*, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 30, No.1, january 2004, pp.129-150.

<sup>216</sup> Ibidem, ,p.129.

real-life experience that people say they have, there is the legitimate question of the relevance of the one-group Roma discourse that needs to be addressed. The possible rationale for the creation of this discourse is offered by, what they call, the ethnogenesis process. They claim that there are deliberate top-down efforts, from Roma political and cultural elite, to create a sense of ethnic nation among transnational Roma groups via transnational institutions and organizations. Their previous reports and publications inform similar phenomena.<sup>217</sup> Their use of the term 'ethnicization', over the preferred one 'ethnogenesis' by Roma elite, is due to the instrumental connotation that the first one has as it implies the creation of an ethnic category with specific purposes: to develop a sense of ethnic solidarity and to instill a sense of ethnic consciousness in order to politically unify and mobilize their struggle for human rights<sup>218</sup>.

The authors say that while the first term, 'ethnogenesis', "holds a positive connotation suggestive of something already existent that should develop"<sup>219</sup> the 'ethnicization' term addresses the issue of manipulation in the process. As such, the use of the term 'ethnogenesis' presents itself as a better tool by which the Roma can express a stronger feeling of cohesion as there is the implicit idea of the, supposedly, already existing ethnic consciousness and solidarity. The authors are keen on saying that their interest in analyzing the 'ethnogenesis' process is not from an ethical point of view; their interest has to do with the project's practicability and feasibility in the context of globalization, and, as such they remain rather skeptical to the project's potential for success. The authors say that the practices and rationale of 'ethnogenesis' is deeply rooted in 19th-century nation building, and as such, its far-reachness is not likely to have much appeal nowadays. There are other scholars, such as the Roma origin sociologist Nicolae Gheorghe that share the same view that this obsolete model needs being revised. Both Mirescu et. Al's study and Nicolae Gheorghe are skeptical regarding the potential of success ethnogenesis may have as they say that the wide variety of social positions,

---

<sup>217</sup> 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](http://www.ethnobarometer.org)); Giordano, Christian (2009): "La chimère de l'ethnogenèse ou le mirage d'une solution ethnique aux problèmes socioéconomiques des populations Rom". In Boscoboinik, Andrea and Ruegg, François (eds.): "Nouvelles identités rom en Europe centrale and orientale". Transitions, vol. XLVIII, N° 2, pp.157-166;

<sup>218</sup> Mirescu et al., *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South Eastern Europe*, p. 13

<sup>219</sup> Ibidem, p. 14.

striking cultural differences, and territorial dispersion of Roma populations consists an insurmountable obstacle. Romani Studies scholar Sir Thomas Acton also shares that view the Romani movement's focus on nation-building discourse as this concept is already inadequate and obsolete<sup>220</sup>. Another potential obstacle is the perception that studies indicate that the NGOs that claim to represent Roma everywhere and their interest have to address at some point the serious issue of legitimacy and lack of constituency as there is the perception inside the Roma respondents that there is a widening gap between the Roma elite and the non-elite Roma.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, Mirescu et al's study accounts that there is even the phenomenon in which 'Roma' gets associated with 'elite Gypsy' while 'Gypsy' with 'non-elite', even poor, Gypsy. What is more concerning is that Mirescu et al's study says that during interviews with educated and activists Roma they refer to the poor Roma using the term 'Gypsy'. The authors say that the consequences of the image of the 'Other' exist and produce effects even within what some call 'the Roma community'. For instance, the authors inform situations in which respondents other Roma are stereotyped as having the image of the thief, it is other Roma that are looked down upon. Variations of the logic of 'otherness' 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 or resources.<sup>222</sup> Thus there is always a symbolic dimension attributed to the reasons for one chooses to use the word 'Gypsy' over the word 'Roma'. Finally, Mirescu et al's study suggest that it is worth looking into the reasons why some respondents choose to resist the imposition of the new term 'Roma' upon them; the authors say that while Gypsy is a term imposed by non-Gypsy dominant population, it does share the element of imposition of ascription of identity as the term 'Roma' has.

In the following lines we shall briefly present an opposing stance in the debate of ethnogenesis-ethnicization; this position is taken by scholar Slawomir Kapralski. He suggests that while it is generally agreed that Roma do not fit the classical picture of a nation, that is not solid enough reason to believe that such a project of a transnational and diasporic identity may not be viable in spite of the fragmentation of Romani communities<sup>223</sup>. His claim is that linguistic rituals and self-labeling, associated with the attempt to introduce an umbrella concept of Roma, could end up in instilling a sense of commonality among Roma everywhere. Kapralski says that while in normal circumstances, this may not happen, he says that the use of Romani political rituals could form a bridge between the

---

<sup>220</sup> Acton, Thomas cf. Kapralski, Slawomir, *Symbols and Rituals in the Mobilisation of the Romani National Ideal*, p. 70.

<sup>221</sup> Barany, Zoltan (2002): “The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics”.

<sup>222</sup> Mirescu et al., *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South Eastern Europe*, p. 16.

<sup>223</sup> Kapralski, Slawomir, *Symbols and Rituals in the Mobilisation of the Romani National Ideal*.

empirical Roma identity – thus the heterogeneous character – and the projected national identity – the one-group Roma project, a bridge between the 'actual' and 'the ideal'.<sup>224</sup> Kapralski draws on the concept of 'project identity' coined by Manuel Castells<sup>225</sup> to adopt its logic to what is going on in the Roma transnational movement and one-Roma group discourse. Castells' concept refers to a situation in which social actors, with the help of the available cultural material, construct a new identity that helps them re-define their social position. Kapralski advances the following research question, question that is central to the contemporary debates in Romani Studies and the subject of this chapter: "Do the ties that allegedly connect all Roma exist objectively (in the sense of having been spontaneously developed in the course of Romani history), and the process of Romani mobilization makes its participants reflect upon them, or is it rather the 'awareness' that comes first, as a project, which subsequently creates ties where they did not previously exist?"<sup>226</sup> One Roma scholar provides a possible answer; according to Nicolae Gheorghe, the nature of these ties is not 'primordial'. He suggests that Romani identities are crystallized in the dynamics of the Romani movement and in the interactions with the world of supra-national institutions.<sup>227</sup> Wim Willems is also quite skeptical regarding the appeal the Romani elite may have on various Roma groups, saying that, he expects them to display feelings of attachment to other entities than a transnational created one; these attachments may be towards one's clan or group. Other scholars that remain skeptical as well as for the appeal and success of this project. Scholars Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov<sup>228</sup> argue that the whole project is unrealistic -bearing in mind the social heterogeneity of Roma – and that the nation-building dimension has been instrumentalized to serve particular interests of a given group of activists.<sup>229</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup> Ibidem, p. 64.

<sup>225</sup> Castells, Manuel, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. 2: The Power of Identity, p. 7.

<sup>226</sup> Slawomir Kapralski, *Symbols and Rituals in the Mobilisation of the Romani National Ideal*, p. 67.

<sup>227</sup> Nicolae, Gheorghe, *The Social Construction of Roma Identity in Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, ed. Thomas Acton, Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997.

<sup>228</sup> Marushiakova, Elena, Vesselin Popov, 2004, 'Roma-a Nation without a State? Historical Background and Contemporary Tendencies' in 'Segmentation und Komplementarität, Organisatorische, ökonomische und kulturelle Aspekte der Interaktion von Nomaden und Sesshaften', ed. Bernhard Streck, Halle: Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte.

<sup>229</sup> Kapralski, Slawomir, *Symbols and Rituals in the Mobilisation of the Romani National Ideal*, p.71.



## ROMANI TRANSNATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE CHALLENGES OF LEGITIMACY

### Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Roma NGO movement has to address important issues related to empirical studies and the 'grass-roots' feed-back they receive. These issues raise questions regarding the role that these NGOs play, who do they represent and through what processes they do so. We shall make a description of this here as we try to understand the agency such organizations have and their relationship with the larger 'Roma community', if indeed. Some authors point to the political opportunity structure as ways through which Roma NGO representatives continuously change their discourse to advance their interests. As we shall see, this flexibility and adaptations raises questions of legitimate representation. Peter Vermeersch and Aidan McGarry say that NGOs that advance Roma interests, whether nation-building and ideological ones

or human rights ones, must narrow the gap between the Roma elite and the larger Roma masses<sup>230</sup>.

Scholar Aidan McGarry puts forward the idea that there are more than one way to claim legitimacy as an international advocacy movement and he gives examples of the Roma NGOs that claim to have some sort of legitimacy, although not in the traditional sense of the word. He argues that there are various sources a movement can draw legitimacy from such as notions of justice, reference to international legal norms, extensive membership or giving voice. He says that the most common source of legitimacy Roma focused NGOs use is giving voice; what he means by this practice is that NGOs claim to have a presence ensuring that the interests of Roma are taken into account when designing policy, not that they necessarily influence it, but that the Roma are represented and their interest are presented. McGarry says that this is what the European Roma Travellers Forum does Roma require a broad understanding of representation therefore 'giving voice' helps capture an aspect of this phenomenon. Social movements specialist, Alberto Melucci says that the agents involved in the network of these social and political movements, despite deriving from heterogeneous groups, may come to share at some point a sense of commonality and ethnic solidarity as their common works has this unifying potential<sup>231</sup>.

The current study will focus also on a second sample group, young Roma origin activists in the social and political movements in the Roma-focused advocacy network; the literature on this tells us that they are agents in the creation, re-creation and framing process of Roma 'identity' for wider audiences, and, a such, 'identity' is assumed to be a major element in their discourse. The degree of success of the one-goup Roma approach in their case is assumed to be more complex as 1) they have a major exposure to this discourse, but also to alternative, often opposing discourse in their work and 2) Roma ethnicity has 2 dimensions with 2 different stakes for them: both personal and discourse level. They sense of ethnicity is believed to be placed in a context in which they are more aware and reflexive of it. McGarry claims that the Roma social movement is very much dependent on the element of identity as it is central for ethnic mobilization and interest articulation. Specifically, for the Roma movement identity overlaps with interest as they are directly affected by perceptions of their ethnic identity. The stakes in this case are rather high as ethnic identity is believed to act as glue for this heterogeneous and geographically dispersed ethnic category.

### Collective Identification as Social Process

---

<sup>230</sup> McGarry, Aidan, *Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community*, p. 139.

<sup>231</sup> Melucci, Alberto, *The New Social Movements, A Theoretical Approach*, Social Science Information, May 1980 19:199-226.

Social movements literature such as that represented by main scholars Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani say that identity is a product of social process; as such, it is produced and continuously re-defined by the process of collective action itself.<sup>232</sup> Della Porta and Diani (1999: 87-91) describe three important mechanisms through which this happens: collective action defines and redefines the boundaries between actors in a conflict, it engenders networks of relationships of trust, and it offers a continuing sense of belonging. Building on these ideas, scholar Peter Vermeersch argues that the same logic stands for what is happening in the Roma NGOs network. His work<sup>233</sup> addresses the question of how conceptions of ethnic identity are actually produced and contested within the movement and to what extent they are subject to constraint and facilitation. He says that even when it seems that there are " 'objective' historical and cultural foundations of identity, as is the case with ethnic identity, the boundaries of this identity are continuously reconstituted in the light of the present circumstances. An ethnic minority is thus not simply a group of people differing from the rest of society in terms of language and tradition, but rather the result of a process in which such differences are perceived as socially and politically meaningful."<sup>234</sup> Vermeersch's findings for the Roma advocacy network support ideas advanced by Rogers Brubaker in favor of the use of cognitive frames for understanding the workings of ethnicity and its various forms of crystallization or 'group-ness' and manifestation. Vermeersch says that one of the aspects of the (assumed) relationship between collective mobilization and ethnic identity formation is ethnic mobilization as a form of cognitive praxis, in the sense that it is precisely the cognitive aspect of collective action that defines the identity of a social movement. In other words, ethnic movement actors are what Benford and Snow call 'signifying agents'<sup>235</sup> who attempt to promote new understandings and interpretations of their ethnic identity.<sup>236</sup> Another finding observation is that ethnicity, for NGO activists, seems to work as a semantic category that is realised through articulation in language. Vermeersch says that this means that ethnic identity "serves as a semantic category that is constantly subjected to the manoeuvres of actors who are trying to persuade others to see their identity as they understand it is."<sup>237</sup> Vermeersch's recommendation is that the concept of framing serves as a good analytic tool that takes into account cognitive and contextual aspects; as such, the current study will adopt the

---

<sup>232</sup> Della Porta, Donatella, Diani, Mario, *Social Movements. An Introduction*, p.87.

<sup>233</sup> Vermeersch, Peter, *Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Central European Politics*.

<sup>234</sup> Ibidem, p.5.

<sup>235</sup> Benford, Robert D., David A. Snow (2000). "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.", p. 613.

<sup>236</sup> Vermeersch, Peter, *Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Central European Politics*, pp.5-6.

<sup>237</sup> Ibidem, p.6.

method approach suggested by Rogers Brubaker and Peter Vermeersch and use a classic analysis model in framing processes for social movements proposed by Robert Benford and David Snow, namely frame analysis.<sup>238</sup> Vermeersch's frame analysis is used as model for the current study analysis, however, there are differences that shall be taken into account regarding the sources used and sample population; while Vermeersch has used official documents and interview transcripts with Roma origin elite NGO activists, the current study shall take as sources e-mail interviews with higher-education and younger Roma origin NGO activists. Also, the study's age segment ranges from 25 to 37 years. Vermeersch says that the merits of frame analysis reside in the fact that it manages to capture the salience of ethnicity for movement agents outside of the above-mentioned space available for individual manipulation. Framing has been described by Benford and Snow as the generation and diffusion by movement actors of mobilizing and countermobilising ideas and meanings.<sup>239</sup> He says "the concept of framing, however, also recognizes that this process is not taking place in a vacuum. It is sensitive to the fact that it is to a certain degree shaped by the complex, multi-organisational, multi- institutional arenas in which it takes place. It is acknowledged that the resonance of framing is affected by the cultural and political environment, 'including the (counter)framings of the institutional elites."<sup>240</sup> As the literature on social movements suggests, agents' self-identification with the movement's values is shaped by the process of negotiation itself, not merely by its initial input. As such, the study will have integrated contextuality and dynamics in the interpretation of the findings, a feature that is quite relevant for analyzing self-identification and feelings of belonging as expressions of ethnicity. The types of identity frames that were the types used to describe Roma collective-action were mainly three, according to Vermeersch's findings; the first one is a view of Roma as a non-territorial European nation, the second shapes the discourse of Roma as a minority and stresses its rights as such, and, the third frame views Roma as ethno-class. Vermeersch concludes that each frame basically represents the result of a specific context in which the opportunity structure determined the way in which Roma activists framed their cause for advancing Roma advocacy. Details regarding these frames shall be discussed in the Findings section of the study.

---

<sup>238</sup> Benford, Robert D., Snow, David A., *Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment*.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibidem*, p.626.

<sup>240</sup> Vermeersch, Peter, *Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Central European Politics*, p.6.

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND FINDINGS

### Introduction

This chapter will present the chosen theoretical approach for this study, the methods used and the rationale. In the chapter on the theoretical framework on ethnicity we have presented the main theoretical concepts and the way in which scholars have attempted to improve their research tools. Consequently, this study has taken the latest scholarly criticism in the above-mentioned fields as main 'lenses' through which the phenomenon of this study can be looked at and understood in broader terms. This study takes a socio-constructivist viewpoint to the main object of study – the phenomenon of Roma ethnicity and its various manifestations – while integrating at the same time

the critique that scholars make to cliché constructivism; the main critique here is for what regards the use of 'identity' as an analytical concept.

### Research questions and hypotheses

As such, the study aims to explore expressions and manifestations of ethnicity in the form of self-identification and display of feelings of belonging or attachment in the case of young Roma activists. The way through which this study aims to explore the assumptions previous qualitative studies inform us of is by carrying out a set of interviews via Skype with young higher-educated Roma that are actively involved in what is known as the Roma advocacy network, a series of interconnected international or national non-governmental organizations that aim at either defending human rights for Roma, provide legal services for Roma, defend minority rights, aim for the social advancement of Roma individuals or simply promote Roma culture.

### Research question

The main research question of this study is how successful can Roma-nation projects, such as the discourse displayed by the International Romani Union or the Gypsy Lore Society, be expected to be in the case of higher-education younger-generation Roma that work in the Roma advocacy network? The question is being raised in the context in which several qualitative studies<sup>241</sup> indicate that many Roma groups, such as the Gitanos in Spain, the Roma in the United States, the Kale, the Manouche, the Sinti, etc., seem to place high emphasis on their own cultural distinctiveness, manifest identification only with their own community and present no solid identification with the larger Roma transnational level. As such, the need to have some insight into what young Roma working in the field of Roman advocacy manifest comes as necessary and worth exploring.

Moreover, it is hypothesized that young and higher-education Roma working in the Roma advocacy network, due to multicultural contact, will have acquired what Stuart Hall defines as 'hybrid'<sup>242</sup> cultural self-identifications, visions of ethnicity that transgress 'traditional' views on the subject and that rely heavily on elements of change, (re)adaptation, but also continuity.

---

<sup>241</sup> Silverman, Carol, *Negotiating Gypsiness. Strategy in Context*, Poueyto, Jean-Luc, *Manouches et monde de l'écrit*, Gay y Blasco, Paloma, *Gypsies in Madrid: Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity*.

<sup>242</sup> Hall, Stuart, *Critical dialogues in Cultural Studies*.

## Interviews with Roma advocacy key-figures

The interviews were conducted via Skype with higher-education younger generation Roma that had either received scholarships via the Roma Access Program of the Open Society Institute at Central European University in Budapest; or work for the Roma Education Fund, for the Roma Initiative Office or for the International Roma Youth Network. The respondents were chosen as key figures in the Roma advocacy network as they are leading figures in the work they do. One respondent is Program Coordinator of the institutional development of Roma NGOs, one was Program Coordinator for Education and Culture of Roma Youth in Macedonia, one is working for the Roma Education Fund, one for the Open Society Institute – EU funds for Roma. It is legitimate to assume that a higher degree of exposure, such as beneficiary of Roma-focused programs, will naturally have an effect on the respondents in terms of them identifying various challenges both at a personal level and for what young Roma activists in the whole network are concerned. It is assumed due to their work, the interview respondents have had and have a high degree of contact and interactions with many young Roma working for the network and that their projects involve constantly challenging more 'traditional' Roma norms and customs. At the same time, items referring to primary socialization and private sphere expressions of attachment and belonging will also have an effect on the respondents' answers. As such, the natural questions of what type of discourse will these respondents articulate taking into account the various types of manners in which Roma ethnicity is presented, comes as legitimate.

## Frame analysis

The method used to understand, interpret interview responses and their thematic clusters is based on what the social movements literature suggests as cognitive framing or frame analysis. The methodological model this study has adopted is Robert Benford and David Snow's "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment". What this method generally offers for understanding social movements dynamics lies in its ability to conceptualize collective action frames and delineate their characteristic features; identify framing processes relevant to the generation, elaboration, and diffusion of collective action frames; specify various socio-cultural contextual factors that constrain and facilitate framing processes, and, when needed, elaborate the consequences or implications of framing processes for other movement processes and outcomes. Generally speaking, through frame analysis we are able to get a sense of the salience and the importance of mobilization of meaning as it is frequently conceptualized in mobilization frames.

Benford and Snow suggest that focusing on frames means to practically acknowledge the role played by members as producers of ideas and rhetoric both within and beyond the social movement. In other words, frames represent the 'spaces' where the process of negotiation and counter mobilization of meanings, relevant for the members of the organization, takes place. Consequently, movement actors are viewed as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for the individuals it represents and carries its activities for.

Additionally, collective action framing offers a solution to the static and descriptive viewpoint on identity – seen as a set of beliefs and values that have considerable power that are assumed to have a visible effect on everyday life. Frames can be seen and analyzed as an ideology discourse on the dynamics and the inner processes of negotiating identity. Narrowly put, framing is construction of meaning; as such, framing stresses agency, processuality and negotiation. Frames are the product of these processes. The factor of resonance, characteristic of collective frames, is a focus of investigation of the current study as it represents the degree of success of a specific discourse and its adoption, adaption, or refusal.

## Interview Analysis

On the one hand, the analysis strives to avoid a deductive approach and to focus on inductive methods instead so as to establish clear links between the research expectations and the evidence from the interviews. It is believed that inductive analysis allows us to understand the underlying structure of experiences or processes found in the responses. The merits of the inductive approach are that it allows research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. It is believed that with deductive analysis key themes are often obscured, re framed or left invisible because of the preconceptions<sup>243</sup>. As such, it allows for clusters of meaning to be formed 'naturally' by the respondents' answers and not pre-established according to literature. The use of empirical findings in other studies will be that they will be confronted with the findings in the current study. These clusters of meaning are the re-current themes that keep coming up in the responses individuals provide and they indicate that they are central and relevant for the respondent's understanding. Consequently, the manner in which some interview questions were conceived is intentionally general and strives to be as neutral as possible so as to allow as much space for personal interpretation for

---

<sup>243</sup> Thomas, David R., *A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis*.



the respondents as possible.

On the other hand, some interview questions needed to be specific so as to touch key-areas that the empirical and theoretical literature points to. Examples of this case are item referring to respondent's preference of terminology used to denote the ethnic category known politically correct as 'Roma'. The literature generally agrees that there is a gap between Roma individuals who prefer one and those who prefer the other. While some say that Roma is the preferred, prejudice-free one, others have either never heard of it, feel that it applies to 'elite', activist Roma or simply refuse to identify themselves with it as they take pride in the term 'Gypsy' and refuse to accept that it may have become contaminate with derogatory content and meaning by majority populations. The preference of one term over the other shall not be interpreted per question response, but in the entirety of the interview as the interview allows for opinions to be checked in a later question. The other concept-specific question is the one where the degree of permeability of borders between the so-called Gadze and Roma world are assumed to exist. Ethnographic fieldwork findings such as those by scholars Paloma Gay y Blasco or Carol Silverman indicate the existence of contemporary Roma communities in Spain and the United States that, despite re-adaptation of Gypsy culture, have a solid taboo system that consists in ideas of purity and Gypsy morality, whereas the Gadze world holds no such values. As such, the legitimate assumptions of the study regarding this questions are that respondents who provide significant responses to that questions will have the idea or experience in the social world of borders between Roma and Gadze; also, their permeability or rigidity would be an interesting topic to discuss upon. For instance, if a respondent says he/she views Roma culture and distinctiveness as continuously changing and hybrid and provide strong examples of rigid borders between Gadze and Roma, then that might be a non-correlation between personal, lived experience in the social realm and what they declare at a discursive level.

#### Interview evidence: Romani Voices

In the lines to follow we shall present some personal accounts that young Roma activists have shared from their experience and personal stories.

Albert Memeti

For Albert, the family was an initial environment in which he developed a feeling of responsibility for the whole Roma community. Just like Erszebet, he too sees a central point in the need for research on the Roma history and making it available for everyone. He feels that this can be his personal contribution to the Roma cause. This is of utmost importance for Albert as he feels that there's a great need for young Roma out there to abandon feelings of shame due only to the process of internalization. As Albert puts it:

*"I try to give this knowledge to the people about ourselves and try to, my opinion is that many youngsters today, they internalize the picture of the Others; how they perceive us: like criminals, like stealers, like travellers, like I don't know what. And this is a internalized picture that makes you feel ashamed to say and proud to say that you are Roma. And now, I am trying in some way to change that."*

Because of Albert's family context and the national context in which the Roma didn't experience such discriminatory practice as other cases, he came into contact for the first time with other Roma that felt shame towards their origin. Moreover, meeting other Roma that were not active in the Roma advocacy cause was perceived as something rather odd for Albert as being Roma, for him, is being conscient of one's role and responsibility towards helping others:

*"It was like discovering some world that you've never been even though we are all Roma there. And I can say that maybe that I am coming from Macedonia and such a family, I developed strong identity feelings into me. But when I saw the other people I saw like, how to say, like internalized everything what it is written, like internalized into them. And first internalized with the term, they were saying "I am Tsigan", not "I am Roma". ... We had people who were saying that they are Roma, but not doing something about Roma."*

The experience of commonality and the environment of Roma advocacy actions represent an basis for different experiences to come together and be challenged. Albert provides accounts for young Roma that were originally individualistic and that changed their relationship to the Roma cause throughout the programme. For what Albert is concerned, having had this experience open his horizon for what community means; initially, he says:

*"I think that they experienced the identity part at CEU. Because we had discussions among us a lot and we were trying to discover ourselves; OK, who are we? Let's go back and ask questions and start looking into the national histories and start research, start asking other Roma who were activists in this and we found some things that were really interesting for us. I see a community even in Budapest when we are 50 students, I see a community when we are going at some conference when we are going with other Roma and it's, how to say, a broader picture of what I mean with 'community.' "*

For Albert, trying to understand the situation of the Roma today in the 'nationalism' mindset is outdated and not helpful. What is more important, according to him, is that various Roma groups acknowledge their commonalities without cancelling their diversity; for him, the Roma can gain

political recognition, social justice and equal rights by engagement in politics and representativeness, not by following the 'nation-building' project such as that of the International Romani Union:

*"We need to unite in our interest. The cultural tradition, the practices, the language or etc., I don't see it like, how to say, whenever you try to unite it's always "what makes us different?". And we always say, OK I speak this dialect, they are speaking another dialect, I have this tradition, they don't have this tradition We in Macedonia we have these traditional jobs, but they don't and have etc. For me personally, it's important the struggle and the interest that we have because I see the European Union as a project that will grow up. That's why, with the young generation what we are now, I tried also, not just with Barvalipe, with personal talking and seeing, to see the responsibility, to open our eyes and see what is actually happening and when tomorrow we will come to certain position, some of us will be some ministre or whatever, to know which interests to promote."*

Erszebet Bader

For Erszebet, being Roma is not being part of a 'group' or 'nation'; ethnic membership does not entail being responsible for an entire category. For her, being Roma means taking part in a venture of advancing individual Roma's rights and making sure that structural injustice against Roma is surpassed with the help of Roma advocacy organisations:

*"I think the nation is just too much or too big of a word or a group of people to sort of share any sort of responsibility. I think there are morals, there are responsibilities by law, by morals, by what not. But it's not by ethnicity. And this is what I don't like when people sort of merge the talent, the life, the achievements of one person or the failures! And that's more likely what's more used is the failures, the mistakes of one person, over- used for the whole of a family, for the whole of a country, for the whole of a nation, for the whole of Roma."*

For what regards her universe of experience during childhood, Erszebet says it's quite difficult to say now if being Roma had any imprint on it. For her, the habits, celebrations, taste in music are part of her way of being raised as Roma, but are not necessarily 'typical' Roma and viewing them as such wouldn't make any sense. The 'Roma world' didn't stretch far back during her childhood as the experience of assimilation restricted it to her village. She says she had to study and find out by herself about the existence of a wider and more diverse Roma communities and various elements of Roma history and culture that she could relate to. For Erszebet, being Roma:

*"is the people who surround you, my family, my parents, my grand-parents, my relatives, our habits, the food we eat, the celebration we have, the music we like, the moral approach we consider normal and is different to the majority, but I'm not saying it's a Roma-ness or it's a Roma tradition; I'm just saying it's the tradition of my family who is born Roma. But, I don't speak the language and I didn't have, until the age of nineteen, I was basically never exposed to any Romani culture other than us probably, but I was not able to name any historical person, I was not able to name any scientific or arts achievement, any Romani people has ever done so it took me basically real study; it's not like I*

*inherited it by birth or I inherit my place of, I don't know, foods or clothes or music or what not, but it didn't come with that inheritance so I thought like I am a Roma because... Funny, I don't speak the language and I don't have basically typical customs, but I probably do. I don't know what's typical and what's not, I don't know. I mean, it's just so diverse that it can go on and on; you speak the language and if wear or if you can dance this or if you, if your marriage lasts three days or I don't know.”*

For Erszebet, Roma group diversity isn't a challenge, but an asset. She says that being Roma tops all elements of diversity and accommodates it under a feeling of commonality. Moreover, this commonality is dynamic, is a process; it's what she calls the struggle to be Roma and get involved in the Roma cause:

*“What matters to me and what I really like about the fact that it's always Roma that comes first and then comes the person and the comes whether it's young or elderly, so the fact that I like about it is that I get to meet other people; I get to meet people with different faiths, with different lives, with different history, with different difficulties and hardship and love and health and what not? And what connects us is that, at the end of the day, we call all say that we are Roma. This or that time it's all the same, from here or there it's no matter. It's like this unseen bond that of course is visible to some extent.”*

Being Roma really meant something for Erszebet and her cousin once they had the chance to meet other young Roma coming from different cultural, social and national backgrounds. Being Roma was at most a sort of basic awareness in the context of the assimilated village in which they lived before meeting Roma from other places. But after that experience, they started discovering and building their own version of what it *personally* meant to be Roma. This “here” are different visions and situations/context to live Roma ethnicity. In assimilation and quasi isolation, it's a struggle and sometimes shame. In situations where you can see other Roma communities and various ways to be Roma, you get in touch with your own expression of Roma-ness and you re-discover your roots. Talking about her cousin's story, Erszebet says:

*“That's the kind of fight you go through in an assimilated environment and that's what makes it hard, but at the end of the day when you grow up to the level that confessingly living with your ethnicity was never an issue, it's not that you ever wanted to have it, but furthermore you have always wanted to put it upfront and you have always wanted to live through all your life experiences through the fact that you are a Roma and it's just another factor to the personality that you are, but it's just another colour or it's just another taste to the personality or to the person you are basically. And this is only important until the point when you see more and more and more and more and more and more of these people around you... some of us are born here, some of us have to travel a long way to get here and some of us travel a long way to get away from here.”*

Breaking down self-stereotypes on what a Roma 'is supposed' to look like and challenging ascribed identity:

*"It's just a myth! Like, we're not defined by our look; we're defined by what we inherit and what we carry on with us, what we keep as our tradition, what we consider as our personality and identity basically; that's an identity issue and identity is ten percent or not even ten percent defined by your looks."*

The political movement and the Roma network works as a completely new opportunity for Roma today to discover who they are in terms of history, important figures, language, culture, different groups migration paths and traditions, etc. She describes the situation and the stories of assimilated Romungro that were not in touch with what Roma culture meant. The "identity" she refers to in her story represents a vision of looking at and taking pride in being Roma:

*"I see more and more Romani language courses show up here and there and I see and I see more and more people wearing the Romani design clothes, although they are hell expensive, but at least the Romani design itself is great of an achievement and it's a perfect idea to sort of save some of the identity, the cultural identity and bridge. What I see is more like bridging; I'm not saying that anything is safeguarded, but I would say that open, tolerant people from the mainstream society are trying to go hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder with those that are being discriminated. ... These are great big things and these are all fostering, these are all, helping to build a strong identity. Because they come from the same, you know, assimilated area where the only thing that tells them they are Roma is the word of mouth like, they're Roma, but what does it say? Nothing really."*

Erszebet says that the young generation need to have Roma role-models that they can look up to, that the Movement needs to work as a support basis that sustains Roma pride and that can offer them an informed account of all Roma history. This way, young Roma can better know and identify with key figures in Romani history and understand their struggle for justice better:

*"Given the fact that there is just as much of empowerment or empowering movements going on right now, as much as of negative information and bad examples floating around, I think it's far much easier now because there's way more information available, there's internet, there's, there's foundations and associations like us and I even know of certain elements of Roma history that are part now of some historic classes so it's like, that sort of an acknowledgement to it so that has a lot of power for sure. ... That is something like I imagine as the Black empowerment must have been, with Rosa Parks and Malcom X and Doctor King. Like, information has to be shared, information has to be available that you can affiliate with, there has to be people that you can look up to, there have to be role-models, there has to be historical names that are up there, that is not just something in your imagination, that's not just something you find in the library after reading 500 books, but it's something everyone knows about... I think that's a great empowerment tool for young children to stand up and to be strong about their heritage, to give reasons to it, to make them proud, to make*

*them powerful, to put data behind it, to put like real factors that, you know, if you want to know where I'm from I can tell you."*

Despite not having a personal experience of discrimination, Erszebet is very strong on the significance of the terminology for Roma. She says that political correctness is not sufficiently equipped to solve the discrimination that lies under the word "Gypsy" in ordinary social encounters. However, she says that it is important that it is respected and its significance explained and disseminated in political and cultural environments:

*"I would always correct a Gadžo calling me or anyone else a "Gypsy", but not that it hurt me, just for the fact that it's some sort of a weird 'Stand up for your rights.'... I correct Gadžo. If they call a Roma "Gypsy" then I'd say "No, it's not Gypsy" but, what's the point? I just feel that this is an empty balloon. You blow it up, it shows really nice and colorful, it probably flies for about 3 seconds and then there's one prick and it's all gone. I don't think it's about the term; if it's politicians, if it's teachers, if it's someone who's trying to share information, they should know better because it's part of the European Convention or whatever."*

Karolina Mirga

Coming from a moderate Roma community in Poland and being a mixed-marriage child, Karolina was exposed to discrimination as her name was easily identified as a 'Roma' name. She talks about having went through a personal journey of figuring out what having Roma origins means in her life. She took, as she said, a very conscious decision to get engaged and work for the large Roma community. For her, being Roma is being part of a large family, wherever you go as, for her, all Roma settlements are her family. For her this describes best what it personally means to be Roma:

*"I think definitely this question of what it means to be Roma is really a hard question and I think nobody can answer that properly because the groups are so various; you have different rules, different traditions and so on. For me personally as identity is something I kind of started to explore, maybe only in my twenties; also, in the background I was raised in the Roma community, also my mother is non-Roma, but I always strongly identified with being Roma; it was more difficult when you are younger because although I don't look as a typical Roma, but still my surname and everything, my background has been known and the environment so I get different reactions from people, of course. Then once in the twenties when I actually left my community ... then I really had more reflections on this and so on and this also kind of pushed me to work for the cause, it was a very conscious decision and also I started to study due to the fact that I wanted to do more for my community so, that's why I also went to the university at the age of 25 and so on. For me, being Roma it's living in a family and it's kind of a sense of family even when you travel. ... So, for me, it's the sense of belonging to a group which is very strongly, which have very strong feelings about each other, which has poor knowledge of their background and also this lack of historical narrative from our side because it has been always the non-Roma narratives, it's also this part that makes it hard to say what it means to be Roma."*

Karolina says that the relationship between young educated Roma and traditional Roma communities seems to be a difficult negotiation process. She says that some young Roma want to bring positive change for all, but find themselves challenged by their very 'beneficiaries'. For instance, she says that traditional norms are respected by young people, but aren't strictly followed. As such, in particular situations, such as wanting to print in Romanes for a wider Gadjó audience, was met with reluctance at best by traditional communities. In situations such as those, young Roma working in NGOs try to show respect while trying to keep a 'balance act' at the same time so as to gain the acceptance of community leaders:

*"The rules that are in Romanipen are mostly respected, but not really followed like, you know, eagerly; there are things which you cannot do, there is great respect for the elder people and, of course, the hudge respect for the family, but in this generation or, at least, among the people that I meet also travelling around, I think we have a very open kind of way to look at it, of course we have a hudge respect for it, we also think the culture has to be preserved in some ways, but we don't think that the rules and the tradition which limits ourselves or are bringing down the community should be still so strictly followed."*

Karolina provides more specific examples of such challenges that young Roma have to deal with most in their lives and their work with traditional Roma communities; she gives accounts of successful young individuals that have to take charge of the whole family as this is seen as a basic responsibility. Also, Karolina says there are quite a few situations in which young Roma that work in NGOs find girls that intentionally display bad manners or have a low achievement level at school so as to reduce their chances of finding a husband at an early age. In situations such as these, Karolina says that many NGOs workers try to act as mediators between advancement and tradition; they try to bring positive change to communities, while trying to show respect for traditions. The difficult part for them is trying to sort out which traditions still have their use in today's world and which don't:

*"There are still problems between the groups like for example, in Poland we have these four groups and there is this very traditional group which is the Polska Roma and they for example would not, sometimes it happens that even among young people, they would not sit together at the table with the other group because they see them unclean and things like that. So, there also has to be a lot of internal dialogue to kind of challenge these things."*

Reflecting on the issue of whether there is a sense of belonging between various Roma groups despite the diversity, Karolina says that she thinks that, for now, this feeling is restricted to the community level. Moreover, she says that something that can and will create something that resembles attachment and belonging would be the Roma transnational Movement. Karolina thinks that it is more likely that the Movement will contribute to the character of what Roma means in the end:

*"It's hard to say among the groups because they are really so rarely exposed to this kind of connection between communities from different parts so, I definitely there is the sense of belonging to the community and, of course, there are the*

*common interests of all the groups and so on, but I think that the awareness on the larger community level, it's not so strong, really. I think this is kind of what the networks are doing: connecting the people among each other."*

As for the future character of the Movement, Karolina expresses skepticism when it comes to the creation of a general feeling of togetherness and belonging at community level. She fears, although hopes this will not be the case, that the tendency is the creation of a gap between a small group of educated Roma and the grassroots community level that will not share elements of commonality:

*"I was a bit disappointed talking to a few of the participants because for them it was only something interesting to do, but it didn't carry this whole philosophy of identity or understanding this and so on. Maybe at the end of the project [Barvalipe Roma Pride Summer Camp organised by the Open Society Institute] they did change their mind and realize what identity means in their life, I don't know, but this kind of concept: just coming together and just talking about identity, of course, it's good, it's important to discuss about it, but I think you have two concepts: either the identity creates the movement or the movement creates the identity, so, I mean, you're learning by doing or you have more this academic approach, which I think is fine, but I don't see how much benefits the communities and how much it strengthens the identity of the communities because it's maybe it's more directed towards the future leaders of the communities. But at least year, at that camp, I did not see those leaders there, just more of a few students mostly kind of beneficiaries of the Open Society Foundation, which would also continue their work in their own circles, so, for me, it's kind of, if it doesn't carry this whole message to the community, then I have an issue."*

Edlira Majko

Although not being part of a very traditional Roma community and not having knowledge of Romaness, Edlira does provide accounts of keeping traditional Roma values alive. For instance, she says that respecting and being a member in an extended family is a Roma value for what she is concerned; also, showing respect for the elders and being responsible for the well-being of one's extended family is something of value. She says globalisation has played its toll on more 'traditional' Roma values and way of life, but she says that although the form has changed, the content remains the same.

*"It's very difficult sometimes to divide what is actually typical Roma culture; in this globalized world sometimes it's very difficult to define it! And also like, you see that also the culture, the Roma culture, if you have read, like, I like to read books or fairytales or legends and then you can see how globalism has influenced Roma culture. I don't come from a family with traditional dresses for examples or the language; we don't speak the language in my family, but we have this, as I explained before, like this family, like we are an extended family, we care a lot about family, we have this, when there are celebrations, we have this big parties like where all the family comes, so, more a sense of value or, for example, the elders people, the elder's opinions are valued much, like "grandfather is us" or "grandmother is us". We don't have the language anymore, we don't have the clothing, but we have, we still keep the values."*



Edlira believes that projects, such as the Barvalipe summer camp, are important so as to instill a sense of Roma Pride in younger generations. She talks about the possibility for young people to stop being ashamed of being Roma, of the chance for them to be informed of their cultural origin and heritage. According to Edlira, these kind of projects are useful as they represent an informal way of creating a sense of togetherness and pride for young people coming from different countries. The identity transformation she talks about, from shame to pride, is also something she experienced herself and now wants to extend that help to other Roma:

*"People coming from mixed backgrounds, from mixed marriages, from communities, people who before coming to Barvalipe hid their identity and how in 10 days it was like an identity transformation. And we want to continue organizing this and also with the NGOs that we work we want to insert this idea of the Barvalipe concept so they can develop it with their youngsters. I think now this pride, it's different from the older generation because it is more informed, how to say. In the way we teach people language, or the history of language, history, culture, we cook so I think it's more informed. It's not just old people being in the community, that kind of pride where all the community sees one as the leader, but this is more informed. Like these people can go out and say why they are proud of being Roma, because of the community history, of the common language, common. Even though you have different religions, different dialects, but if you take it in total, we are one people. And this can be used for political reasons so it goes more to a political level and we are one people, so here we go to the political level."*

She says that the issue of knowing or not knowing Romanes constitutes a problem sometimes between various young Roma as the ones coming from more traditional communities feel "more" Roma than others. Edlira says that they try to resolve these points of tension by emphasizing groups diversity, not hiding it and trying to explain the complexity of identity. She says that she herself experienced being rejected Roma membership upon confessing she did not speak Romanes. Edlira tries to explain why the experiences at Barvalipe are so strong for some participants; she says that the very environment there provides them the opportunity to see that it is alright to be Roma, that they can actually take pride in it and that they have a support system in the Roma network.

*"Because there are other people there that are the same as you and they are not afraid to say they are Roma and being Roma is not something bad or that you should hide. So, it's a very strong feeling. I also experienced it myself. When I was in the university, I was the only Roma. Everybody knew that I was Roma because of my skin colour, that I'm darker, but I didn't have anyone else to talk about it. But when I came here in Budapest and I met a group of Roma, young Roma, educated from all over, it was a strong feeling for me, for going out and telling "I'm Roma! I want to do something about it!" So, it helps you when you see other people like you. They are proud and they don't hide being Roma."*

As for the potential tensions between traditional older generation's Roma values and this new Roma generation, Edlira says that they try to balance the two as much as possible. For some things, like the invisible division between Roma and Gadge for instance, the borders make no sense anymore:

*"For us youngsters, young people, students, I don't think there's any division anymore. We promote this, that we are equal, in everything, Like, in my discussions or meetings or conversations with Roma youngsters today we never discuss this issue. Maybe this is like a topic that my grandmother, she would tell you what a young Roma girl or boy should do, what they are allowed to do and what not, and what counts as Gadge behavior. But I think in today's world, among the youngsters we never have such conversations. That we are not allowed to do this because we are Roma or, that as Roma, we should do this. ... I don't go for a division. We are equal, we are our set of values which are not, I would say, very different from the non-Roma, are not very different from other communities. And even if we have different set of values, we should keep as we mentioned before, that we with our values and our culture and our history, we contribute to the overall society, the world. So, it's like we are one together."*

## Discussion on interview findings

Taking a broader look at the interviews there seems to emerge a 'big' narrative, there seems to be a construction that unites all the individual stories of the respondents something that keeps showing up; while their life experiences as Roma have similarities and differences for what political, cultural and social background are concerned, their current way of looking at their ethnicity and what it means for them to be Roma resembles the Afro-American Movement in terms of process or path of re-discovery of one's roots. The personal stories of interview respondents seem to revolve around a common frame build upon concepts such as pride, engagement or involvement, responsibility, struggle, and so on. Moreover, the similarities reside in the mutual emphasis placed on racial, or ethnic pride in this case, and on the creation of political institutions that could advance and promote collective interests. Also, the centrality of the idea of achieving social justice for the Roma and the means to achieve it are very much reminders of the Black Empowerment Movement in the United States in the 1960s.

While previous experiences of discrimination have determined many to hide their Romani origin, the various international projects aimed at improving the conditions for Roma and restoring social justice has provided the possibility and the space for them to "come out" and explore new ways of being Roma. These various ways/models are extracted either from the family environment, the community where they come from, other young Roma they met and last, but not least, the various

types of discourses on *Roma-ness* that they are exposed to in their work. What comes most often as a strongly influential character on shaping their feelings toward their own Roma heritage seems to be feelings of common effort with other young Roma throughout the world to advance Roma rights. It seems that contact, interactions, exposure to different experiences of what it means to be a young Roma today play a key role in the process of self-reflection. Moreover, what we discussed in the theoretical framework as "lived ethnicity" (Silverman, Gay y Blasco) seems to take the shape of Roma as cultural heritage that needs preservation, but also Roma as a personal journey of self-discovery and empowerment of other Roma as well. Various factors, such as experience of discrimination in society and the non-existence of Roma cultural institutions (written history, cultural institutions, etc.) undoubtedly leads to this process of re-discovery of one's roots and what they may mean at an individual basis. As such, the young Roma of today are 're-discovering' what it means to be Roma and are drawing on a repertoire that resembles very much to that of the Afro-American movement in the U.S. The term 're-discovery' is used because they had some knowledge of what it means to be Roma from the life experiences of their family, the elder generations, but the image of Roma culture, in a more broader and integrated way is being presented to them relatively recently, with the vocabulary, concepts and practices we find in human rights and individual empowerment movements such as 'Roma Pride', 'giving back to the community', 'social responsibility'.

For what concerns the process of negotiation on what it means to be Roma several focus points emerge from the interviews.

There seems to be a debate between the relationship between Movement and Roma Identity. As once respondent clearly put it, she feels that there are two approaches emerging in the Roma network: one that sees the movement and its projects as shaping and creating what it means to be Roma, and the other that is seen as the more academic one which sees more the project of Roma identity as shaping the character of the Movement. So, how does the dynamics between the network and young Roma influence their self-identification and on their visions of *Roma-ness*? The nature of this relationship has been of interest for researchers in collective action, notably Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani<sup>244</sup>, as they strived to understand how one makes a difference on the other. What della Porta and Diani argue is that a form of solidarity and the conscience of a common 'We' must precede collective action<sup>245</sup>; however, they do agree that this relationship is a two-way street as identification is ultimately altered within the processes of interest definition, negotiation and framing. Focusing exactly on this relationship, Peter Vermeersch has investigated how formulation

---

<sup>244</sup> Della Porta, Donatella, Diani, Mario, *Social Movements: An Introduction*.

<sup>245</sup> Ibidem, p.87.

sof Roma 'ethnic identity' – as discourse- have been developed under the influence of power structures deeply involved in the process such as European Union institutions.

The potential challenge of reconciling group diversity and the vision of one Roma people is indeed a subject of discussion among young Roma working in the network, but they don't seem to view it as a problem. The various Roma traditions that groups have are seen both as a value and as a challenge by young Roma; they wish to preserve this diversity and embrace it, but they also wish to connect various Roma communities in their common effort to assure Roma advancement.

For what concerns the process of negotiation on what it means to be Roma between generations, respondents seem to find a balance between preserving and respecting tradition and trying to accommodate ideas such as women's rights and other to this cultural heritage. Naturally, this issue is not very relevant for those respondents that come from more assimilated communities, but there seems to be a sense of responsibility towards keeping traditional values for those who do come from more strict communities. The situation is somewhat complicated as there are very different visions between the elders in the Roma communities and the young Roma NGO workers as to how Roma culture should be preserved. The elders see the solution in keeping the rules and lifestyle norms of traditional values, while young Roma view NGOs as a way for advancement and a way of safeguarding Roma heritage.

An orientation towards the future of what it means to be Roma. While the past, and especially national histories are being 'rescued' and researched to trace a more unified history of the Roma , the new opportunity structures, such as the more and more used concept of Roma pride, empowerment, womens' rights and so on, provide the environment and create the conditions under which the experience of being a young Roma is lived. As such, the personal discourse on what being Roma means today for young Roma activists is very much embedded in their own work; their committment is in fact the expression of their ethnicity; it is what best describes their understanding of Roma cultural heritage at a personal level.

In the following lines we shall present how this study's interview findings address the research assumptions based on previous qualitative studies evidence. We shall foremost refer to the concept of 'opportunity structure' as used by Peter Vermeersch, the concept of 'diaspora' as theorized by Rogers Brubaker, the idea of using framing so as to understand the Roma Movement as group-making as a project or Richard Jenkin's suggestion to look at ethnicity as 'repertoires of experience'.

## **Roma network as 'diaspora'**

What Brubaker suggests in the analysis of 'diaspora' is that we look at the phenomenon as an idiom, a stance, a claim, a project defined as diasporic stance rather than an entity or a fact. Indeed, the challenge of reconciling various traditional Roma traditions with their intended unifying project is presented the respondents in terms of a project, as something under way, an intention rather than reality. Respondents report constraints to their project that need addressing, such as adapting various Roma traditions to better fit the values and behavior of mainstream society. As such, Brubaker suggests any analysis should focus more on the claims that such an 'modality-project', as Gay y Blasco calls it, has rather than its character as it is more future-oriented than something to be studied in the present.

Identity labels are subject of negotiation: they can be ascribed, rejected, displayed, but also ignored in various settings, as a natural process. The interviews with the young Roma indicate that the very issue of the naming of this ethnic category is a huge subject of debate and also negotiation inside the Movement; individuals inside the Roma Movement differ when it comes to the subject of the very name, either "Gypsy" or "Roma" as both have within themselves great symbolic power. For instance, the term "Gypsy" is both a negative experience of discrimination for some, an ascribed identity that needs to be rejected if the Roma advocacy is to advance for other, but at the same time it bears no personal experience of discrimination for other, but quite the contrary; a sort of resistance to accepting that the term be "polluted" with negative connotations despite others' negative experiences with the term. As such, respondents have a personal stance on this matter - depending on personal experience of discrimination or different national policies towards the Roma that affect this view - but they also try to reconcile this and keep a common "voice" on the matter taking Roma advocacy as the most important factor to be taken into account.

## **Frames: group-making as a project**

Brubaker says that the way through which we can understand group-making as project is to analyze by frames; here, framing is seen as the mechanism through which groupism is constructed. The frames that seem to emerge from the interviews with the respondents seem to revolve around the issue of the need for struggle to advance Roma rights, the issue of supporting and promoting Roma Pride and the idea of unity in diversity. This potential challenge that young Roma have to address constantly in their work is seen as an analogy to the situation of the European Union as a project by one young Roma activist, Albert Memeti. Albert says that "It's good where we are.

Whenever you try to unite it's always 'What makes us different?'. We just need to united in our interest. For me personally, it's important the struggle and the interest that we have because I see the European Union as a project that will grow up.”

Another finding from the interviews that relates to Brubaker's approach to ethnicity refers to the fact that it seem to be processual, seen in terms of events rather than structure and disaggregated as individuals inside the Movement are engaged in a continuous process of negotiation of meaning and framing.

Moreover, the Roma advocacy network seems to be the ecological niche that Brubaker was reminding us of; the ecological niche is seen by him as a need for ethnicity to have an expression, survive or flourish. He says that such ecological niches can be found in the partial reproduction of this social world with its expression in social relationships, in this case, the relationships with other network and organization colleagues and the beneficiaries of these organizations, the Roma communities. He argues that "ethnic networks can be reproduced without high degrees of groupness, largely through the logic of contact probabilities and opportunity structures".<sup>246</sup> Consequently, the conditions or the context under which ethnicity is made relevant is this: the network as the space where being Roma has meaning, where being Roma is re-discovered together with other Roma, where various experiences are united and where presenting what is Roma outside the network is being negotiated. Social scientists, such as Fredrik Barth's famous argument,<sup>247</sup> say that it is at the border with the Other that self-identification takes place and indeed, this is that case too for young Roma. But the salience, character and personal meaning of one's ethnicity is expressed in the dynamics of the network; negotiation and presentation of Roma culture is at the same time both a personal journey of re-discovering one's roots and part of one's job. What this means is that Roma associations are not only the means through which collective action gets organized and transmitted, but they play a central role as an element of crystallizing Romani cultural distinctiveness. The fact that young Roma play a key-role in this process where various visions of *Roma-ness* are accepted or contested means that they too will ultimately go through these processes at a personal level and self-inquire how they stand on the matter as well. The job of being active in the Roma cause means that, in their work, young Roma have to address and reconcile the challenges of various Roma traditions, norms, customs, etc. If they wish to carry out their organisation's main objective, they find themselves in the situation in which various voices that uphold differents visions of Roma-ness have to be heard. Moreover, continuous contact with other ways of being Roma presents the context under which interview respondents start a process of self-reflexiveness and accept, refute, challenge

---

<sup>246</sup> Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups. Common Sense Groupism*, Page 186.

<sup>247</sup> Barth, Fredrik, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*.

or adapt various elements of the discourse on Roma.

### **Movement and Discourses of Roma 'Identity'**

A relevant insight in further understanding this phenomenon can be Peter Vermeersch's comments on the Roma transnational network, more precisely, the role that the opportunity structure, as he says, plays in all of this. We will recall that in his study, Vermeersch was addressing the question of the extent to which the process of political mobilization has an impact upon a minority's conceptions of ethnic identity; or, put differently, how conceptions or discourses of ethnicity are produced and contested within the Movement(s). His findings were that the different formulations of 'Roma identity' by Roma actors can be linked to the political opportunities that are presented by the political environment. Similarly, the interview respondents of the current study emphasize the role that power institutions, such as the European Union, international forum in general or national governments play in their articulation of 'Roma identity'; what this means more precisely is that they will over or under communicate particular aspects depending on the audience and the Movement's most urgent needs. For what we are concerned in this study, these observations are relevant as they give us a measure of the role that contextuality plays not on ethnicity per se, but on actors' choices regarding the ways in which they express various aspects of it.

### **Rejecting the essentialist approach: ethnicity as repertoire of experience**

Richard Jenkins's conceptualization of ethnicity is another important lens through which we can understand the workings of ethnicity in the case of the respondents. Jenkins hold the view that neither ethnicity nor culture is 'something' that people 'have', or something to which they 'belong'. Rather, they are repertoires which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives. As such, ethnicity seems to be the very journey or re-discovery that interview respondents say are experiencing. Also, his suggestion to look at ethnic self-identification as a framework of possibilities and constraints based on the previous generation's experiences, allows us to better understand the context under which interview respondents describe their experiences; for them, previous frames, such as the family or the immediate community's cultural values and norms play the role of such a framework, but are also subject of negotiation as young Roma are influenced to some extent by changing global circumstances.

The interviews with respondents seem to be an invitation to break away with an understanding

of ethnic self-identification as a neatly organized concept; they seem to point to the very contrary, to hybridity, but as Stuart Hall suggests, that is a characteristic of identity typical for modernity. Sometimes it is even built upon apparently contradicting discourses and overlapping in some aspects. But central to what respondents are saying seems to be their common and conscious effort that Roma elites and Roma communities or grassroots need to be connected, to have common grounds so that they may advance and achieve their goals; having this in mind, reconciling various ways of being Roma given the heterogeneity of various groups and traditions seems to be more on the agenda than ever. As such, this effort to find a comfortable space that represents a compromise of all these groups' cultural distinctiveness seems to be characterized of both openness and closure, 'rootedness' and change, both continuity and adaptation, as T.H. Eriksen was suggesting.<sup>248</sup>

### **The network as the way *par excellence* of being Roma: space, possibility and meaning-creation**

The development of a wide web of Roma NGOs meant new opportunities available out there for Roma to carry out their message and fight for justice. While the idea of being proud of one's heritage was instilled in some young Roma through the family, the chance to actively be part of this process of making Roma history was made possible, in a truly meaningful way, only through this platform of multiple organizations. One can say that they work as truly a support network for young Roma activists. This support network gives them the opportunity at a personal level in two ways: the first, to re-discover what it means to be Roma today by sharing experiences, and the second, to be actively engaged in the process of framing Roma cultural distinctiveness by working as a voice for Roma communities. Both aspects are quite complex as they are basically processes in-the-making. For the first one, multiple models or ways of being Roma are presented and shared, either more conservative or more tradition-defying ones; the second one carries within debated issues such as representativeness or legitimacy. This happens as there is no consensus on the way in which Roma want to advance their rights and the way in which multiple, often different, frames are presented to serve that goal. For instance, Peter Vermeersch was summing up possible frames that define the strategic choices made around the Roma 'identity' discourse that have been used by Roma NGOs<sup>249</sup>. The most used ones have been the Roma as a non-territorial European nation, the discourse of Roma as a minority and Roma as an ethnoclass. All three point to different aspects, address different audiences and pursue different interests as a consequence; for instance, the first frame points out

---

<sup>248</sup> Eriksen, T.H., *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives* p. 187

<sup>249</sup> Vermeersch, Peter, *Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Central European Politics*, 2011.



attention to the Indian origins of the Roma, but also stresses their right to belonging to the national histories of Europe as well. The second one draws attention to the relationship between Roma and the majority population in a national state and the problems that that carries with it. The last one places emphasis on the structural injustice and the vicious circle that explain the detrimental socio-economic situation of the Roma.

Activists within the Movement have to decide, depending on the 'opportunity structure', on a specific frame, identifying the interests and placing them on the organisation's agenda, deciding what they want to head out for, how to achieve it, the audience that is to be addressed, etc. It is in the dynamics of this process that multiple discourses on models or ways of being Roma come up and, consequently, get changed to some extent. It seems that there are two ways in which a frame is built: either as a bottom-up process by the communities or a top-down process which is mainly led by a political leadership or elite. One Roma activist, Karolina Mirga was reporting that the tendency in the Roma transnational Movement resembles more the second type, which raises problems of legitimacy and sometimes conflicts with community elders that don't support the presented frames. The issue is a rather tricky one as the bottom-up approach basically means that it will be run mainly by the traditional community power authority: the men of respect. As such, young Roma activists often don't find their objectives and values reflected under the guidance of the elderly. Under a top-down approach however, young activists manage to mobilize larger areas of the network to gather support, but some communities don't identify with their chosen course of action.

The gap between the generations seems to be one of the most particular challenges that young Roma working in the network face today as it is a nodal point in their personal relationship with the community where they come from, but also for their work in general. Some young Roma report that the elders may feel that mainstream society has altered young Roma's values while, in their turn, young Roma workers may feel that elders' conservatism may hinder the efficiency of their work.

For what elders are concerned, their fears are related to the influence that non-Roma society might have on the young Roma's relation to Romanipe, to keeping 'the Roma way' alive in terms of values and behavior. As pursuing higher-education and working in a wide organisational web for the Roma cause implies living outside the area of control of the community, one can see how the elders are particularly doubtful as to whether this young generation still understands the values of the community that they are working for.

For what the young Roma are concerned, they say that they encounter obstacles in their work when they deal with conservative stances on the topics ranging from diffusion of the Romanes language and widening the audience of its literature to changing some norms that are not congruent with widely-accepted contemporary values such as human rights, such as changing the custom of arranged young marriages. But, the real challenge lies in the fact that these men of respect, as they are most often referred to, practically represent the political authority within their communities and gaining their support proves to be crucial in some particular projects as they work as opinion leaders for the entire community. The task of bringing change into the community for advancement while playing 'by the rules' is even more difficult as the very structure of some Roma communities is built in a very conservative way that practically rejects change of any sort. Romani activist, Anna Mirga from the research group on Roma in Barcelona EMIGRA, conducted a fieldwork study that strived to find possible explanations for low levels of involvement of young Roma in the NGO structure in Catalonia. She found out that the authority structure of men of respect in Roma communities is one of the most relevant factors that affect young Roma participation in the network in Catalonia. As such, Anna Mirga was explaining, the dominant role of the elderly within the community and the associative movement affects the freedom of expression or action carried out by the young Roma as they do not tolerate questioning, contradicting or openly disagreeing in public.<sup>250</sup> Besides this structure of authority that one needs gain acceptance from, young NGO workers also have to follow thoroughly the Roma custom of showing respect for the elders by not challenging their authority at all. As such, bringing change and challenging some customs is no easy task when the ways of doing it are quite rigid. It is reasonable to assume that the variety of Roma groups that the transnational network works with provides some space for dialogue and challenging, whereas the conservative Catalonia *Gitanos* keep strong borders and little flexibility for what traditions and power roles are concerned. In addition to that, Anna Mirga argues that because of globalization, Roma youth today is much more diverse due to the rich repertoire of models, lifestyles and sub-cultures<sup>251</sup>; as such, Roma culture is currently under an intensive process of re-definition as young Roma begin to define their Roma heritage not merely in terms of origin and traditions, but have the possibility to actively play a role in the direction that Roma cultural distinctiveness is taking.

---

<sup>250</sup> Mirga, Anna, *Roma Youth, ethnic mobilization and Roma associative movement in Catalonia*, EMIGRA Working Paper número 135, ISSN 2013-3804.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibidem*, p.13.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL DISCUSSION

The current endeavour aimed at gaining insight into the dynamics of the young Roma activists in terms of self-identification and reflexiveness towards one's own ethnic heritage. It has been argued that this area is worth investigating as there are several streams that point to different findings and, accordingly, to different directions. For instance, on the one side, qualitative studies conducted on

Spanish *Gitano*s<sup>252</sup> and American Roma<sup>253</sup> provide accounts of self-identification solely around one's own community that don't display feelings of unity with a transnational Roma idea. But on the other side, several discourses give away the idea of a unified Movement, both in character, attachment and action; this is at least the discourse displayed by the International Romani Union. As such, the question of the direction of causality came as only natural: does a previous transnational Roma conscience trigger the Roma Movement or, is it the other way around, does the Movement's dynamics shape this Roma transnational idea and render it with a specific character? What current evidence indicates, having conducted interviews with young Roma activists in leading positions, is that the answer lies in both phenomena: activists work having in mind an idea of one's own ethnicity and the general cultural character of *Roma-ness*, but, at the same time, the process of negotiation within the dynamics of the Movement shape this idea constantly. Young Roma activists are educated and understand the Movement's character with the vocabulary of human rights and collective action literature; as mentioned earlier in the study, some elements, such as pride, engagement and responsibility towards the general Roma community resemble very much the logic of the Black Empowerment Movement in the United States of America in the 1960s.

Another aspect that the current endeavour wished to shed some light upon was the issue of change on perceptions or visions of one's own ethnicity. The expectation based on previous findings in the field and the study's hypothesis was that young Roma activists will develop what Cultural Studies prominent scholar Stuart Hall calls 'hybrid' cultural identifications. What interviews have shown is that young Roma activists understand and define their envision of their ethnicity by identifying it strongly with their commitment and work for the Cause. In other words, the main finding of the current study was that young Roma activists have neither conservative envisions of their ethnicity, nor do they develop a 'uniform' new character or model of being Roma today. What does stand as a common denominator among all of them is the fact that they see the role and relevance of the Roma cultural heritage as their personal struggle for justice, both at personal and collective level. Their role and work inside the Roma network represents, in a way, their understanding of what it should mean to be Roma today. Because of the particular history of injustice of the Roma worldwide, they feel that all young Roma best understand their heritage if they dedicate themselves to the Roma cause and work for the advancement of Roma communities. By doing so, they strive to accommodate human rights into the Roma tradition and challenge the conservatorist branches and power structures inside the grassroots communities. Perhaps this phenomenon can be best understood with the help of Carol Silverman's insight into the strategies

---

<sup>252</sup> Gay y Blasco, Paloma, *Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective*.

<sup>253</sup> Silverman, Carol, *Negotiating Gypsiness. Strategy in Context*.

used by American Roma to keep their distinctiveness while adapting to new needs. We might see young Roma activists as doing the same: they strive to keep Roma cultural distinctiveness alive, while, at the same time, creating ingenious ways to adapt some customs to modernity and today's needs. What Silverman is trying to tell us is that we should not see change as disappearance, but as a much needed adaptation exactly so that Roma culture is able to survive. Undoubtedly, these adaptive strategies will shape and transform Roma traditional culture and the way in which Roma individuals see themselves, but change is a natural process that cultures go through as time goes by. This is something new for men of respect in traditional Roma communities as they were more used to adapting a defensive strategy so that their culture survives in the majority societies in which they lived. But the world of young Roma today has become increasingly more complex than what the nation-state horizon could offer. The Roma transnational network and larger political entities, such as the European Union and its far-reaching policies, have influenced these processes tremendously. Young Roma today can explore, and indeed they are, multiple ways of being Roma.

## Bibliography

1. Anderson, Benedict, "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism", Revised edition, London, 2006.

2. Barany, Zoltan (2002): "The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics", Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
3. Benford, Robert D., David A. Snow (2000). "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611-39.
4. Bloom, Jan-Petter cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, "Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives", Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Brubaker Rogers, "Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu" *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 745-775.
8. Brubaker, Rogers, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 28 No. 1 January 2005.
9. Brubaker, Rogers, "Ethnicity without Groups. Common Sense Groupism", Harvard University Press, 2004.
10. Brubaker, R., Loveman, M., Stamatov, P., "Ethnicity as Cognition", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb., 2004), pp. 31-64, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Page 37.
11. Castells, Manuel, 1997, "The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture", Vol. 2: The Power of Identity, Malden, MA, Blackwell.
12. Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in Geertz (ed.) *Old Societies and New States*, 3rd Edition NY: (The Free Press, 1967) pp.105-28, pp.109, 128.

13. Clifford James, Diasporas, "Cultural Anthropology", Vol. 9, No. 3, Further Inflections: Toward Ethnographies of the Future. (Aug., 1994).
14. Cohen, Anthony P., "The Symbolic Construction of Community", Routledge, Lonon, 2001,
15. Cohen, A. cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, "Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives", Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010.
16. Csepeli, Gyorgy, Simon, David, "Construction of Roma Identity in Eastern and Central Europe: Perception and Self-identification", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 30, No.1, January 2004.
17. Della Porta, Donatella, Diani, Mario, "Social Movements. An Introduction", Second edition, Blackwell Publishing, Victoria, 2006.
18. Denscombe, Martyn, "The Good Research Guide for Small Scale Social Research Projects", McGraw Hill International, 2003.
19. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, "Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives", Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010.
20. Fischer, Anna M., "Between Nation and State. Examining the International Romani Union", Senior Projects Spring, Paper 12, Bard Digital Commons, 2011.
21. Gamson, William A., "Talking Politics"; Cambridge University Press, 1992.
22. Gans, Herbert J., "Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America", Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2:1, 1-20, 1979.
23. Giordano, Christian (2009): "La chimère de l'ethnogenèse ou le mirage d'une solution ethnique aux problèmes socioéconomiques des populations Rom". In Boscoboinik, Andrea and Ruegg, François (eds.): "Nouvelles identités rom en Europe centrale and orientale". Transitions, vol. XLVIII, N° 2, pp.157-166.

24. Goffman, Erving, "The Goffman Reader", Wiley-Blackwell, 1997;
25. Goffmann, Erving, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", New York, 1959.
26. Hale, Henry Y., "Conceptualizing Ethnicity for Political Science. Towards a More Rational National?"", Draft paper prepared for the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, April 2002.
27. Hall, Stuart, du Gay, Paul (eds.), "Questions of Cultural Identity", London, Sage Publications, 1996.
28. Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 222-37.
29. Hobsbawm, Eric, Ranger, Terence, "The Invention of Tradition", Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.
30. Holy, Ladislav, Stuchlik, Milan, Actions, "Norms and Representations: Foundations of Anthropological Inquiry", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
31. Isajiw, Wsevolod W. "Definition and Dimensions of Ethnicity. A Theoretical Framework", 1992.
32. Jenkins, R., "Rethinking Ethnicity", 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008.
33. Johnston, Hank, "Verification and Proof in Frame and Discourse Analysis in Methods of social movement research", ed. Bert Klandermans, Suzanne Staggenborg, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
34. Kapralski, Slawomir, "Symbols and Rituals in the Mobilisation of the Romani National Ideal, Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism", vol. 12, No. 1, 2012.
35. Kroeber, Alfred and Clyde Kluckhohn, "Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions". Cambridge, MA: Harvard Worsley, Peter cf. Eriksen, Thomas Hylland,



- “Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives”, Third edition, Pluto Press, London, 2010.
36. Kvale, Steinar, “Interviews. An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing”, London, Sage Publications, 1996.
37. Laederich, Stéphane, “Roma Cultural Identity in Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South Eastern Europe”, Ed. Gabriela Mirescu, Swiss Peace Foundation, 2011.
38. Liégeois, J. P., “Roma, gypsies, travellers”. Strasbourg: Council of Europe 1994.
39. Lucassen Leo, Wim, Willems, Annemarie Cottaar, “Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach”, Center for the History of Migrants, University of Amsterdam, 1988.
40. Lucassen, L., Willems, W., Cottaar, A., “Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach”, Center for the History of Migrants, University of Amsterdam, 1988.
41. Marushiakova, Elena, Vesselin, Popov, “Roma-a Nation without a State? Historical Background and Contemporary Tendencies” in “Segmentation und Komplementarität, Organisatorische, ökonomische und kulturelle Aspekte der Interaktion von Nomaden und Sesshaften”, ed. Bernhard Streck, Halle: Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 2004.
42. Matras, Yaron, “Language Contact”, Cambridge University Press, 2009.
43. Matras, Yaron, “The Role of Language in Mystifying and De-Mystifying Gypsy Identity” in Saul, Nicholas & Tebbutt, Susan. Eds. The role of the Romanies. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004.
44. McGarry, Aidan, “Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community”, The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., New York, 2010.

45. Meho, Lokman, I., Tibbo, Helen R., “Modeling the Information-Seeking Behavior of Social Scientists: Ellis’s Study Revisited”, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 54(6):570 –587, 2003.
  
46. Meho, Lokman I., “E-Mail Interviewing in Qualitative Research: A Methodological Discussion”, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(10):1284–1295, 2006.
  
47. Melucci, Alberto, *The New Social Movements, A Theoretical Approach*, *Social Science Information*, May 1980 19:199-226.
  
48. Mirescu et al., *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South Eastern Europe*, Swiss Peace Foundation, 2011
49. Mirga, Anna, *Roma Youth, ethnic mobilization and Roma associative movement in Catalonia*, EMIGRA Working Paper número 135, ISSN 2013-3804
  
50. Nicolae, Gheorghe, *The Social Construction of Roma Identity in Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, ed. Thomas Acton, Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997.
  
51. Okamura, Y. Jonathan, *Situational Ethnicity*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* [Volume 4, Issue 4](#), 1981, Pages 452-465.
  
52. Okamura, Jonathan Y., *Situational Ethnicity*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4 (1981):454.
  
53. Okely, Judith, “The Traveller-Gypsies”, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
  
54. Østergård, U. 1992a. ‘What is national and ethnic identity?’ cf. P. Bilde, T. Engberg- Pedersen, L. Hannestad and J. Zahle (eds), *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
  
55. Paloma Gay y Blasco, “Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective”, *Social Anthropology* (2002), 10, 2, 173–188.
  
56. Poueyto, Jean-luc, “Manouches et mondes de l’écrit”, Maison d’edition Karthala, Paris, 2011.

57. Poueyto, Jean-Luc, “Un patrimoine culturel tres discret: le cas des Manouches”, Numero 58, Revue de l'ethnologie de l'Europe "Terrain", Mars 2012, pp. 130-143.
58. Ruane, J., Todd, J., “The Roots of Intense Ethnic Conflict may not in fact be Ethnic: Categories, Communities and Path Dependence”, European Journal of Sociology, Volume 45, Issue 02, August 2004, pp 209 232 DOI: 10.1017/S0003975604001432.
59. Ruane, J., Todd, J. 2004. ‘The roots of intense ethnic conflict may not in fact be ethnic: categories, communities and path dependence’, Archives Européenes de Sociologie, 45:209–32.
60. Sartori, Giovanni, Concept Misformation and Comparative Politics, “American Political Science Review”, LXIV(4) (1970): 1033–1053.
61. Shils Edward, “Primordial, Person, Sacred, and Civil Ties,” The British Journal of Sociology, v.8, 1957, pp.130-45, pp.140-143.
62. Silverman, Carol, “Negotiating ‘Gypsiness’. Strategy in Context”, Journal of American Folklore, Volume 100, No. 101, 1988.
63. Thomas, David R., “A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis”, School of Population Health, University of Auckland, August 2003.
64. Turner, J. C., “Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group”. In H. Tajfel (ed.), “Social Identity and Intergroup Relations”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982.
65. Vermeesch, Peter, “Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Central European Politics”, Paper prepared for the workshop on identity politics ECPR joint sessions, Grenoble, 6-11 April 2001.
66. Weber, Max, “Economy and Society”, 1978 cf. Jenkins, Richard, “Rethinking Ethnicity”, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, 2008.

67. Williams, P, "Marriage Tsigane. Une cérémonie de fiançailles chez les Rom de Paris",  
Paris:cL'Hamarttan Sela, 1984.

#### WEBSITES:

<http://www.helsinki.fi/helka/index.htm>

<http://www.unionromani.org>

<http://www.romadecade.org/about>

<http://www.feryp.org/>

<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/roma-initiatives-office/background>

<http://www.errc.org/about-us-overview>

<http://www.erionet.eu/>

<http://www.ccu.hu/academics/nondegree/rap>

## **Appendix. Interview transcripts**

### **Appendix 1**

Interviewer (Anamaria Remete): Hey!

Interviewee (Erszebet Bader): How's it going, Ana?

A.R.: Hi! I'm well. And you?

E.B.: I'm alright, thank you!

A.R.: It's good to finally see you!

E.B.: Finally.

A.R.: It's good to see you although you have sunshine n your back.

E.B.: Hold on a second! If only we had sunshine, but it's just some weird cloudy weather, no sunshine. Summer left us.

A.R.: Ah, it's a bit the same here as well.

E.B.: Any better?

A.R.: Yes, that's much better! Thank you!

E.B.: OK, not at all.

A.R.: Ah, I'll try not to take so much of your time because if you're at work I think you probably have to do, to work on, right?

E.B.: Well, I have set aside time for it so. You've been waiting long enough; take your time!

A.R.:OK. So, I have your written interview in front of me right now and I just want to ask you some questions on the answers actually.

E.B.:O.K.

A.R.: But in order to do have also some, I will also specify the questions as well.

E.B.: You have, you have to repeat my answers because I can't recall them by heart, I don't remember them anymore.

A.R.: I will, sure! Don't worry.

E.B.:OK.

A.R.: So, you said that, for the item on knowledge of Romanes, you said that you don't speak it and I was also interested to know: is it because your parents don't speak it or they do and they never taught you Romanes?

E.B.: No. In fact, I come from an assimilated village basically where Roma arrived like about 200 years ago or so and they were basically musicians. And no one in my village speaks Romanes. Not even my parents, my great grandparents didn't speak Romanes, but just some words remained part of the Hungarian, but not much of Romanes conversations at all.

I don't know how much do you know about the Hungarian different cultural Roma groups, but ours is called "Romungro".

A.R.: Yes.

E.R.: That means that we're Hungarian Roma, not speaking the language, but assimilated to the majority basically, hundreds of years ago. This weird light is just taking control. Sorry! You will not be able to see any better.

A.R.: Is it my weird light or yours?

E.B.: No, no! Mine, mine! From the back.

A.R.: OK. I also noticed there are some groups, I think they're called the Vlax Roma, in Hungary and they do, do speak as far as I know a dialect of Romanes.

E.B.: Yes, it's called Baieshi and there's another one Lovari! They all speak some dialect of Romanes, but Romungro, they don't speak.

A.R.: Yes, I had some knowledge of that. My first question for you was: what were your first thoughts on the subject of this study?

E.B.: Repeat!

A.R.: What were your first thoughts on the subject of this study? And you said: "it's great soil for stereotypical connotations" And I was wondering, the subject of this study, so that we have it clear is: "Ethnicity Revisited. The case of Younger Generation Higher-educated Roma in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe" so there were some elements in the title you thought were probably fertile for stereotypical connotations.

E.B.: Right.

A.R.: I was wondering what were they.

E.B.: This is the "Ethnicity Revisited" part. How to put it? What I thought when I first read the title, I thought: "It's another one of those studies or researches that are claiming reputation through the individual, but it's claiming the reputation for the whole of the Roma nation..." And this is what I personally cannot agree with; like, I can earn my own reputation and I can destroy my own reputation, but I'm not doing it for a population or for a nation or for humanity per se. So, it's like, I don't like this kind of group responsibility or common responsibility approach because I think that's a perfect soil for those who want to misinterpret it, you see? So, it's like, if there are people who want to mis-use it, they will mis-use it. Like, "Oh, here's another one on behalf of the whole of the nation

and then doing this and that". I mean, one person is responsible for their own mistakes and for their own success and that's it. No one else is responsible for what I do. And I am not responsible for whatever anyone else does. I think the nation is just too much or too big of a word or a group of people to sort of share any sort of responsibility. I think there are morals, there are responsibilities by law, by morals, by what not. But it's not by ethnicity. And this is what I don't like when people sort of merge the talent, the life, the achievements of one person and then, or the failures of! And that's more likely what's more used is the failures, the mistakes of one person, over- used for a whole of a family, for the whole of a country, for the whole of a nation, for the whole of Roma. Do you see what I mean?

A.R.: Yes. I think maybe - correct me if I'm mistaken - but if I were to put it in a nutshell, you feel that even the very use of the word "ethnicity" and especially in the case of what we usually call "Roma", although, even that is a social agreement, let's say convention, it carries great weight to it – ethnicity. And you can see, you probably see the situations in which it can be instrumentalized for a lot of different purposes.

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: And you're fearing that there is a big threat of generalizing whatever results such a study might have for the whole.

E.B.: I mean, I don't have anything against your research or your thesis or your questions, but the title itself is just another way of generalizing, sort of like a melting pot in a way that, this is now going to bring out a big thing like the big solution.

A.R.: Your comments were really important for me because it's always helpful to ask someone because you have something in mind and in the end, when somebody read it, they might just as well read something different and that's not what you want.

E.B.: Yes!

A.R.: OK, that was an important question for me to ask to understand what do young people and especially what young Roma understand by that. Ah, my second question for you was: what makes someone Roma? What would you say would be the defining elements for a Roma? And your response was: "You're born into an ethnicity whatever you consider your own, is what becomes your habit and tradition." So, my further question to your answer would be - you mentioned habits and traditions - so it's about origins and heritage and then, it slowly becomes that?

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: I'm thinking of experience, ritual in a way, you keep it alive by doing something

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: So, I was thinking, in your case, do you keep any traditions that, let's say, would be viewed as Roma traditions and not, non-Roma?

E.B.: I think my case is very untypical in a way that not being born to any other Romani or whatever we call it, group, but to an assimilated one and still having our own traditions and still having our own common roots and it makes it a bit more different, I guess. Or not, don't know. I mean, I speak Hungarian as my mother tongue, I did all my studies in Hungarian majority schools, I attended kindergarten, I attended primary schools, I attended highschool, I attended university and I have never actually been put in any segregated class or what not, so, education might not be necessarily the approach to come from, but it's just what you inherit by birth, by people who surround you, my family, my parents, my grandparents, my relatives, our habits, the food we eat, the celebration we have, the music we like, the moral approach we consider normal and is different to the majority, but I'm not saying it's a Romaness or it's a Roma tradition; I'm just saying it's the tradition of my family who is born Roma. But, I don't speak the language and I don't have, until the age of nineteen was

basically never exposed to any Romani culture other than us probably, but I was not able to name any historical person, I was not able to name any scientific or arts achievement, any Romani people has ever done so, it took me basically real study; it's not like I inherited it by birth or I inherit my place of, don't know, foods or clothes or music or what not, but it didn't come with that inheritance so I thought like I am a Roma because, funny, I don't speak the language and I don't have basically typical customs, but I probably do. I don't know what's typical and what's not, I don't know. I mean, it's just so diverse that it can go on and on; you speak the language and if wear or if you can dance this or if you, if your marriage lasts three days or I don't know, but from my personal point of view is like, the first thing I recall is like, at the age of three my parents telling me when I first enrolled kindergarten that you might face difficulties in life for this very same reason, but this is something you have to be proud of all the time and nothing to be afraid of or nothing to hide and this is the fact that you are born a Roma and I never knew. I mean, at the age of three what do you know about being Roma means? When you live in the center of a village, when your parents are all, like mixed with everyone else's parents and no matter you're called Roma in school, it doesn't mean anything, nothing good or bad because it's like, I was always and even my brothers were always amongst the top five students; we have always been, you know, it's like nothing else came with it, but the knowledge that I was born a Roma so I had to put it together later on when I was about eighteen, nineteen years old so, it's like, Oh, so where did we come from? What's the origin of the language? Can I name four authors of Romani? Any poet? Do I know any poet? Do I know the Roma anthem? Do I celebrate 8th of April? I haven't even known about the 8th of April till until I started to work for the Roma Education Fund so, it's like. Or the Roma Center before. So, it's like I don't come from a traditionally good cultural environment and my parents didn't know about things like this, but it was never questionable or it was never mistaken the fact that we are Roma, it has always been a fact and, like, the first thing when you introduce about yourself is like, ok "My name is Erszebet Bader, I'm 33 and I'm a Roma." So, that's basically I don't know, it's probably not the strongest identity you would ever meet, but it is one of them.

A.R.: It's apparently relevant for the people you meet.

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: Somebody gives you their citizenship and you feel that, well, even though it's not important or you find it relevant, well, it's only polite that I respond the same.

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: It appears that they want me to so, why not? I can understand that.

E.B.: Does it answer any of your questions?

A.R.: It does! It does very much because it's exactly what you mentioned; the fact that there is a big big diversity and even within this cultural diversity, what we call Roma, there is a big diversity of experiences because of different state policies, then because of individual persons' paths, because of many factors. And that's exactly what I'm interested in because I see this - even as you mentioned it now - this re-discovery; because at the beginning this didn't mean anything to you, of course! What

could it mean? And only then, I think, as you go on in life and you have different encounters, interactions with different people who are not Roma or other Roma who are different you have an idea of what this means. Even from my, let's say, I'm not Roma, but many people, in my encounters, people coming from different countries, apparently it's important for them to know what country I come from and what it means for me. Obviously, for example, I'm Romanian, I have a Romanian citizenship, but obviously my experiences as a human being, while living in Romania has been influenced by a Romanian context; it's just that I don't know to what extent. And, if I were to say what it means to me, I wouldn't know what to say. I speak Romanian obviously, but what does that mean to me? I'm interested to know the experience of people who, for example, they don't have this cultural heritage transmitted in the family and they re-discover it; now, they work in Roma NGOs so, I want to know: how they view this, this stuff, you know? Is it ethnicity for them? Is it even important? And, if so, how is it important, you know? Maybe besides your work? Do you, do you have the chance to spend some more time with, let's say, other young Roma coming from different places that do the same work as you do?

E.B.: Let me put it this way: like, what matters to me and what I really like about the fact that it's always Roma that comes first and then comes the person and the comes whether it's young or elderly, so the fact that I like about it is that I get to meet other people; I get to meet people with different faiths, with different lives, with different history, with different difficulties and hardship and love and health and what not? And what connects us is that, at the end of the day, we call all say that we are Roma. This or that time it's all the same, from here or there it's no matter. It's like this unseen bond that of course is visible to some extent, but, for instance, let me put it this way, like I have a cousin who until the age of seventeen she was fighting hard in all physical terms you could expect to make her look Roma because "Oh, what makes you...?" I mean, we don't speak the language, we don't know how to dance, we never knew, who was the first, don't know, Roma painter until we actually learned about it and read about it, I don't know, but she's blonde, she has light green eyes, beautiful skin color, sort of like, I don't know, the touch of sun is on it, but it's not dark as mine and she used to hate her look, like, she cannot be Roma because she doesn't look like a Roma like, that's the kind of fight you go through in an assimilated environment and that's what makes it hard, but at the end of the day when you grow up to the level that confessingly living with your ethnicity was never an issue, it's not that you ever wanted to have it, but furthermore you have always wanted to put it upfront and you have always wanted to live through all your life experiences through the fact that you are a Roma and it's just another factor to the personality that you are, but it's just another colour or it's just another taste to the personality or to the person you are basically. And this is only important until the point when you see more and more and more and more and more and more of these people around you; that come with a cultural background standing on both feet, speaking the language, wearing the clothes, don't know, having always been able to learn her subjects, all their subjects in Romaness, attending highly professional Roma-only high-schools, like in Hungary and then, there's another who hasn't even been aware of the fact that they're a Roma, you know; it's just an extremely great big diverse community that is only connected through one word that we all confess, we all call ourselves Roma. And to Hungarian definition or, I think it's a European definition, it's a universal definition, that whoever defines themselves Roma are Roma. But... that's the only thing that basically connects us; I mean...

A.R.: Which is very problematic, you know? Some people actually were discussing about it and they say .Well, this definition is really good because it sort of addresses the problem that is part of Romani history, the fact that it's an ascribed identity.

E.B.: Yes!

A.R.: This new term was supposed to be the actual opposite; so that they define themselves, feel themselves and gives a meaning to the definition of Roma. We recognize ourselves as such because we feel Roma. Even that is very problematic because I may start developing this tomorrow morning, maybe the community won't acknowledge this!

E.B.: Well, you see, it's another question of where do you find yourself home. If this is where you find yourself home, fine! Some, some of us are born here, some of us have to travel a long way to



get here and some of us travel a long way to get away from here.

A.R.: This, example you have me with, with the blonde girl is incredible! And from what you described, it was a bit, at least a bit difficult for her, from what I understand.

E.B.: It was a real struggle. Like, look at me: black hair, black eyes, black eye-lashes, black skin. I have all the looks that they define here to be Roma and then, she's my first cousin, so, it's like, she's the daughter of my father's sister so we basically inherited 50% of the same genes; still, she came out totally, totally, totally non-Roma look and then when we entered high-school and then we applied for these available Romani scholarships, there were

summer camps where we actually managed to sort of be exposed to what it is to be Roma like art, culture don't know, movies, cooking, traditions, woodwork, what not, you name it; it was all there. And there she actually had to stop and recognize that she's one of them, she's one of us because she's not the only one, she's just the only one from the village where we come who comes with blonde hair and light rain blue eyes and what not. I don't even know, like light green eyes she has. And there was a great variety of Romani women and men who were all Romani, but all they looked different; like, some of them had reddish hair, some of them had blonde, some of them bold, some of them were tall, others were short and fat and slim and what not, so, it's like, until the very surrounding society has a depiction of what's normal, it's hard to fit in, but as soon as you see out, a bit further out then your surroundings, then, I think it's the same with whatever nationality you are, you consider yourself the shit, you consider yourself the bomb, you consider yourself the best of everything until you don't step out. But then you have to see more than your wall-city, I'm just saying this as an idiom, I don't know, you have to see further out than your garden and then your neighbours garden. I mean, if you don't expose yourself to the world, then you don't see nothing basically; not yourself, not your relatives, not your neighbour, not the stranger on the street so even if you don't belong to an ethnicity you have to see more than what's surrounding you in order to see a global picture of what you are and who you are.

A.R.: One question comes to my mind now as you were speaking. What was your cousin who is, how was she viewed in the community? I mean, I'm sure everybody knew that she was Roma, but she had struggles of her own until a certain point because of her ...

E.B.: It was only in her, it was only in her; no one actually questioned whether she was a Roma, I mean, she's my cousin; everyone knew her mother, knew her father and knew us so everyone knew she was one of us, but it was her own it was until she... because there was no one else in the village with that look, there was no other blonde Roma in the village, so as soon as she saw another blonde Roma and as soon as she saw another blue-eyed, red-hair, what not, Roma, she finally figured out that, ok, it's just a myth! Like, we're not defined by our look; we're defined by what we inherit and what we carry on with, what we keep as our tradition, what we consider as our personality and identity basically, that's an identity issue and identity is ten percent or not even ten percent defined by your looks. But it's just a weird example that I wanted to share with you. I mean, of course there is very many people who go through the same struggle, but it's just the way how people find their way to their identity or to their, or to themselves being Roma when they come from an assimilated atmosphere or region.

A.R.: It was a really interesting example.

E.B.: You know, she did everything: dye her hair to the darkest colour of black ever possible. She started wearing roses like all over her body like in her hair; she started wearing clothes that were stereotypically Roma; not even like people who are dancers wouldn't wear something like that because it makes you vomit it's so ugly, having all the flowers of the world on it and all the colours of the world, but this is how she actually fought herself through it; she wanted to change her eyebrows colour because they were light brown, but she did everything, she went through a whole lot trying to become a Roma.

A.R.: Or whatever she thought that Roma meant.

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: You said at some point, you started going to some summer camps and I was wondering: are those the summer camps in, I don't know if I'm pronouncing it right, it's Barvalipe, in Hungary?

E.B.: No. No.

A.R.: It's not that one?

E.B.: No, no, it's a long time finished now. Do you remember the Soros Foundations that were all over Eastern European cities?

A.R.: Yes.

E.B.: They used to have scholarships for Romani high-school students who were doing good; like, you had to have a GPA average above 4 or something so, it was a competition-based and it was a national competition and we had to come to Budapest to take some written exams and then, based upon our GPA we were selected or not, and if we were selected we were given tuition or scholarships basically for the semester or for the year, for the school year and in the end, in the summer, they had summer camps around Lake Balaton. And we only participated in one and that was the last of the Soros Foundation because after 1999 it moved, it closed its office in Hungary. So we only went to the summer camp once; we were beneficiaries to the scholarship programme. I remember I was a beneficiary to it for about three years, for the last three years of high-school, but I never actually went to the summer camp until the last one. And that's when she came with me as well and then struck.. That's what I was talking about. When she went to the summer camp.

A.R.: I just knew about the Barvlipé ones; I think it started in 2011, the first one, and it's also Open Society who organizes it.

E.B.: Yes.

A.R.: Do you happen to know somebody who went there?

E.B.: From Hungary?

A.R.: Yes or another country. Just, if you know somebody in general.

E.B.: I know a couple of people, but I don't know them personally.

A.R.: OK.

E.B.: I know them through Facebook or through work experience, I know quite a few from Macedonia, from Romania, even from Hungary. I know some people and they call it a very powerful campaign or summer camp or movement or whatever it is. And I was supposed to go there last summer, but just to visit because they had some media courses and since I work in Communications I thought it could be useful, but in the end it was scheduled in a way that it didn't fit my son's summer school schedule. I had to postpone.

A.R.: OK, let me go fast to the other questions. Would you say that Roma culture is safeguarded in society? And you said "No". Why was your answer "No"?

E.B.: Because I come from an assimilated family; if it was safeguarded I would speak the language, I would have been born to a family that has their own traditions, their own religion, that has their own language, that has their own music, what not. But I wasn't, so I had to say "No". It's been assimilated and forced into mainstream hundreds of years ago and you have to fight hard or you have to live separated because if you're a part of the society, the society is just gonna suck it in and kill it and make it its own.

A.R.: Do you think that nothing has changed, let's say, lately in the last years? Do you see any changes, movements?

E.B.: I see several things going on with the rise of the right-wing movements, of course, automatically Roma empowerment, both from internal and external powers is just getting stronger and stronger and stronger and it seems that, you know, there's reason to fight so I see more and more of traditional NGOs rising and striving to maintain, without funding it's not possible. I see more and more Romani language courses show up here and there and I see and I see more and more people wearing the Romani design clothes, although they are hell expensive, but at least the Romani design itself is great of an achievement and it's a perfect idea to sort of save some of the identity, the cultural identity and bridge. What I see is more like bridging; I'm not saying that anything is safeguarded, but I would say that open, tolerant people from the mainstream society are trying to go hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder with those that are being discriminated, let it be, I don't know, homosexuals, let it be minority, ethnic minorities, let it be disabled people for this or that reason or anything! It's just that, it's the normal turbulency of the good morals that people are born with, that

they want to go hand in hand with those that are, that are oppressed. And, in this sense, there are certain, I mean, there's Roma Education Fund, there's Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat, there is Open Society Foundation, there is European Roma Rights Center, there is Chance for Children Foundation, there is Roma Press Center and the list goes on and on and on, there's several great giant big international NGOs pro-Roma, pro Roma rights, pro Roma culture, pro Roma social security. I mean, you name it! So, of course, there's a lot of things going on, but, on the other hand, at the same time, it is for a reason. Because the far right movement is just upon our neck. I mean, you might be aware that today is the trial day of the ritual serial killings of those five, four people that killed five people over the course of the last four years. The Court hasn't yet decided, but they've been in prison for four years now; you know that the trial period or the probation period or what not, until the Court trials are on and today is supposed to bring a decision whether these people will get sentenced for life or they will get some minor sentence or what not; whether they will be set free today so, there's all reason to it. But in the village where I come from had no access to any facilities of stuff that, for instance, an NGO like the Roma Education Fund supplies or offers. Now, I can easily lead any of my cousins finishing high-school in wanting to continue their studies to university, I can easily link them up with the system and make them apply for the Open Scholarship Programme; I mean, these are great big things and these are all fostering, these are all, helping to build a strong identity. Because they come from the same, you know, assimilated area where the only thing that tells them they are Roma is the word of mouth like, they're Roma, but what does it say? Nothing really.

A.R.: The question sounded like this: do you perceive any difference in how young Roma perceive their ethnicity? And you were asking me: "As opposed to what?". And I was thinking here, do you think there's any difference in how young Roma perceive their ethnicity as from how their parents and their grandparents' generation viewed their own ethnicity. Of course, there are different experiences because of countries or state policies

E.B.: I can only talk of my experience of Roma, my cousin's experience that I've told you about. Like how she perceives her ethnicity until the point she actually figured out that it's ok to be blonde and you can still be Roma, but there's the other side as well. Like, there's people with total traditional family speaking the language still hiding their ethnicity, so I don't really know. I mean, it has to be rooted in the way you grow up. I mean, as I told you, the first thing I remember at the age of three is my parents keep telling me "You're a Roma, you have to be proud of it. You're a Roma, you have to be proud of it." It might, you have to work three times more for the same job, you have to work harder for the same place in university, it might be the case that you have to fight three times harder and what not, what not. It might just bring a lot of difficulties, but this is something you have to be proud of. Yes, and a three-year old kid understands what of it? Even at the age of sixteen when I first heard my classmates in high-school being called by the name "Gypsy...Gypsy...Gypsy" I didn't even know what to think.. "Are they trying to hurt me now or, are they talking about someone else?" I mean, this is not something that you get prepared for unless you come from an area where you have to unfortunately be prepared for it from day one because, you know, there are certain settlements where the far-right just is constantly present and you have to defend your human rights every day, just even to go to the shops, but I was not coming from, you know, from a village like that so I had no idea what that means. I think I still I don't think I have a proper idea of my skin, of what it means to be discriminated or segregated, but I just don't know; I never had to question myself, I cannot recall not one. The first thing that I would say about myself was not that I am either a mother or I am Roma. Like, there's two things I consider it's important for people to know when I introduce myself and there's like "I'm a mother" and "I'm a Roma" or the other way around, I mean, so, I don't know, I can only go by my experience, I don't consider myself as young anymore so I probably don't understand or give a proper answer to your question. Given the fact that there is just as much of empowerment or empowering movements going on right now, as much as of negative information and bad examples floating around, I think it's far much easier now because there's way more information available, there's internet, there's, there's foundations and associations like us and I even know of certain elements of Roma history that are part now of some historic classes so t's like, that sort of an acknowledgement to it so that has a lot of power for sure. I mean, if you're a Roma and

you learn about the Romani soldiers who used to fight with Mathias Rex then, Good God! Then you learn about Mathias Rex at the age of eleven! So if I had learned anything about Mathias Rex and his Black Army that was called "Black Army" for this and that reason, but in fact there was many Roma people in there too, then, you know, that's just, that is something like I imagine as the Black empowerment must have been; with Rosa Parks and Malcom X and Doctor King. Like, information has to be shared, information has to be available that you can affiliate with, there has to be people that you can look up to, there have to be role-models, there has to be historical names that are up there, that is not just something in your imagination, that's not just something you find in the library after reading 500 books, but it's something everyone knows about, like bang! That's examination questions number 2 when you're finishing sixth grade or I don't know. It's something. I think that's a great empowerment tool for young children to stand up and to be strong about their heritage, to give reasons to it, to make them proud, to make them powerful, to put data behind it, to put like real factors that, you know, if you want to know where I'm from I can tell you. But, when I was fifteen you could of asked me:" What do you know about the Gypsies?"I'd be like: "Oh, my grandpa used to be a musician and or, my great-great used to be a musician with the municipalities Austro-Hungarian" what not. I don't even know these titles in English, but, you remember there were these localities and there were power, like some powerful men who was responsible for taking orders and this or that reason or one field belonged to one person and he had his own peasants and what not...

A.R.: Like the Manor lords?

E.B.: Yes, something like that; in the eighteenth-nineteenth century, my great-great grandad used to be a violonist in his yard or what not, but what's that supposed to mean? There's nothing you can be proud of, there's no historic elements and even if there were, I mean, what I just think that's important is that bridging societies is what makes it more powerful. Like, it's not important how much I know of my roots if you're not interested. And it's not important how much I know of your roots if you don't care whether I know anything or not, it's back and forth, doors have to open and then everyone can be totally comfortable with their own ethnicity.

A.R.: It just came to me that at some point I was asking you what term do you think should be used, either Roma or Gypsy? Because people have different experiences with these different words; you said that both. How come?

E.B.: I think of myself as Gypsy all the time in Hungarian, but I talk about others as Roma.

And I think it's just a.... I have...if you want to be politically correct you can use this term, but when I think of Rom....what do I do with Roma, like they'd be looking at me like "Ha?"..."Rom?"..."What are you talking about? That's the capital of Italy, right?"

A.R.: But what about the thing that it means "people" in Romani?

E.B.:Since I don't speak the language...I don't speak the language. It never meant anything to me until someone told me like, "Oh, come on; Rom means "people"..."Oh,..."...but I was about twenty-one-twenty-two; I was working for the Roma Center back then so, it's like, if I had known it means Rom I would have always called myself Roma and I would have spread the word that Roma means Roma people. I'm the wrong person to ask .

A.R.: Do you think it should be used - now you know that you know about it - do you think "Roma" should be used instead of "Gypsy"? Is Gypsy pejorative? There is this experience.

E.B.: I truly don't mind...I mean, if they want to hurt me they can hurt me with anything, but they can't hurt me with calling me "Gypsy", that's what I am, so it's like. I mean, there is no connotation for me in being called "Gypsy"; I would always correct a Gadzo calling me or anyone else a "Gypsy" , but not that it hurt me, just for the fact that it's some sort of a weird "Stand up for your rights" , some sort of not getting hurt or even without risking the fact that they'd get hurt, but it's like educating people or own, it's for your own rights to, if it's only about, like step two is to call people "Roma" instead of "Gypsy" then you have to do it only I don't know. I'm a bad example because I

really don't mind, but I correct everyone so it's like, not everyone, I correct Gadzo. .If they call a Roma "Gypsy" then I'd say "No, it's not Gypsy" but, what's the point? I just feel that this is an empty balloon. You blow it up, it shows really nice and colorful, it probably flies for about 3 seconds and then there's one prick and it's all gone. I don't think it's about the term; if it's politicians, if it's teachers, if it's someone who's trying to share information, they should know better because it's part of the European Convention or whatever

A.R.: I was interested because people have really different opinions on this.

E.B.: Yes, some people go, they go crazy being called Gypsy.

A.R.: Some people actually take pride in it; it's probably the people who haven't been discriminated. And they also, they don't have the word "Roma" in their lives, it means nothing to them. Then, you have certain researchers that says "No, you have to say Roma because to say Gypsy is pejorative". Even when one reads articles on Roma/Gypsy, they're used inter-changeably; sometimes you have "Gypsy", sometimes you have "Roma", sometimes you have the people who want to be safe and use Roma/Gypsy so you can choose whatever you want.

E.B.: What about the Travellers and the Baieshi and Egyptians and the Askaly, they were all considered Roma, but they refused to be Roma, so it's like, it's a great big word.

A.R.: And that's why I'm asking because it always indicates something. Some people, they actually take pride in the word "Gypsy", some people take pride in the word "Roma" and they do it for different reasons...

E.B.: I have no interest in none of them, but it's probably because I've grown assimilated so it's like, I haven't heard the word "Roma" till I was nineteen-twenty.

## **Appendix 2**

Interviewer: Anamaria Remete

Interviewee: Karolina Mirga

**Interviewer:** I was watching a video on youtube right now about the presentation you were giving on the activities of TERNYPE to see a bit the things that you are doing because, at the begining, when I start the interviews I try to ask people to get them to tell me something about their work, in what way they're involved in the Roma advocacy network so that I know exactly what kind of questions I should and what kind of questions are not going to help me at all. And I didn't quite get for how

long you've been working with them, but I got the idea that you very much into the activities there; I know that I contacted you via the International Roma Youth Network so, TERNYPE, but I don't know much in detail about your work, about the organisation you're with in Poland. **So, could you tell me for how many years you're working and in which areas you're more specialized than others?**

Interviewee: OK, so, I started to work with our local organisation from Harangos from Poland in 2008; Harangos is mostly specialising in kind of educational projects and working mostly with young people and children and , for example, we do also fabrications so we have published together with the cooperation of the Ministry of Interior of Poland many fairytales translated into Polish and into Romaness, we produced also a Polish-Roma dictionary, we have an art group which is called "Romani Art"; it's three young artists from our region who, two of them have degree from the Fine Arts Academy and one of them is amateur artists, so, we also organise since 2011 international Romani arts projects in a village where there is a Roma community in the South of Poland also. Once I started for TERNYPE, I was more a contact person for Harangos for TERNYPE, I kind of got sunk into the work of TERNYPE actually so I'm coordinating all the international projects from the Polish side, but also from the TERNYPE side and I go to represent the network, I kind of the applications, well, I do almost everything. Harangos at least it very much focused on this artistic and non-formal of getting the children to get engaged and so on. There are regular workshops with Roma and non-Roma kids, also we work afterschool, so we work in this artistic way also.

**Interviewer:** I just realized I don't know how much Jonathan Mack told you about this study I am conducting. Do you know the title of the study? Because I want to ask you some things about it. Did Jonathan Mack manage to tell you, I don't know, my name, the university I come from, the study I'm conducting?

Interviewee: No.

**Interviewer:** So, I'm a student at Charles University in Prague and I'm working on this European Union Erasmus Mundus postgraduate research program and this is the study for the thesis of my program and the first question in my study is actually related to the title of the study so that's why I would like to ask you, after I tell you the title, I would like to sk you what are the first things that pop into your mind when you hear this kind of title. You know, like a really spontaneous answer. So, the title is "Ethnicity Revisited: The Case of Higher-Educated Younger Generation Roma in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe". And I was does a study like this make you think of? What would you say it's about?

Interviewee: OK, so, the first I would say is that we have a bigger number of university students already, I also say that it's still not enough and that many of the youth is getting lost in the transition

process from the lower level to the higher level of education. What else, more engagement and also of this kind of knowing your background and also recognising the issues at the European Union level, especially among the educated Roma youth, identity issues and also, how to say, the movement, strengthening the movement also.

**Interviewer:** I want to have a first-hand idea of what people think when they hear the title. So, for the other things. What I'm trying to find out this study; I'm interested to know what happens for the way in which young Roma in Europe look at their ethnicity today, what it means for them to be Roma. I think that they have some models for what it means to be Roma within their family, within their communities, but then, let's say, the respondents of my study, they travel a lot and they work in the network, so they meet other models for what it means to be Roma, from other countries so, people with different experiences and then they meet people that, let's say, challenge traditional Roma culture, beliefs, norms, traditions, etc. The central question of my study for the respondents would be: **how do you see your ethnicity? Do you live it in a particular way? Do you think? Because you have so much contact with other young Roma in your work, do you see it differently? Do you have the sense that you have common challenges with other Roma you meet and so on?**

Interviewee: I think definitely this question of what it means to be Roma is really, it's a hard question and I think nobody can answer that properly because the groups are so various; you have different rules, different traditions and so on. For me personally as identity it's something I kind of started to explore, maybe only in my twenties; also, in the background I was raised in the Roma community, also my mother is non-Roma, but I always strongly identified with being Roma; it was more difficult when you are younger because although I don't look as a typical Roma, but still my surname and everything, my background has been known and the environment so I get different reactions from people, of course. Then once in the twenties when I actually left my community and I moved to UK then I really had more reflections on this and so on and this also kind of pushed me to work for the cause, it was a very conscious decision and also I started to study due to the fact that I wanted to do more for my community so, that's why I also went to the university at the age of 25 and so on. For me, being Roma it's living in a family and it's kind of a sense of family even when you travel; for example, my trip to the Balkans while hitch-hiking through Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania always staying in the Roma community settlements and always felt like a part of the family; as soon as they know I am Roma, they're open arms and so on. So, for me, it's the sense of belonging to a group which is very strongly, which have very strong feelings about each other, which has poor knowledge of their background and also this lack of historical narrative from our side because it has been always the non-Roma narratives, it's also this part that makes it hard to say what it means to be Roma. My community is not a very traditional one, it's a sedentary community and the

rules that are in Romanipen are mostly respected, but not really followed like, you know, eagerly; there are things which you cannot do, there is great respect for the elder people and, of course, the hudge respect for the family, but in this generation or, at least, among the people that I meet also travelling around, I think we have a very open kind of way to look at it, of course we have a hudge respect for it, we also think the culture has to be preserved in some ways, but we don't think that the rules and the tradition which limits ourselves or are bringing down the community should be still so strictly followed. So, I guess it's - they question for instance the language and in the very traditional communities, you would not be allowed to make publications in Romaness and so on because it's a language which should not be taught to the non-Roma people also as an effect of the persecutions in the past and so on.

**Interviewer:** This is exactly what I was trying to get out of persons I was speaking to; this idea that you have a generation of people that are challenging some of the values and what comes out of the negotiation process, you know? Within the generations, but also between Roma groups because they have different traditions, right? I am really curious what happens in that case; **what are the points of tension, let's say, that are most often discussed and what do the young Roma you meet most frequently say about this? What are the problems or the challenges they have to deal with most?**

Interviewee: Well, it's a few things. Also this kind of, you are successful you need to carry the whole family on your sholders because this connexion with the family is like sacred and, of course, if you are doing better, you have to put a lot of energy also to support your family, so, I think this is one of the issue because I don't see that the Roma youngsters think about it as a problem, but they feel this responsibility I guess. The other thing is, in the more traditional, there are the problems of young, early marriages also. It's still happening and we're trying to address that, but it's a very sensitive topic; for example, I work with children, with young girls who say they purposely do bad at school or they act in a bad way so their parents have difficulties to find a husband for them. So, there are also these issues. Even for me, for example, to take some youngsters from my community to international, not even international, but a few hundred kilometers away, it comes sometimes difficult because of this fear the parents that once young girls and boys go somewhere, they will do, you know, inappropriate things and so on. So, this also can be like a barrier for the participation of the Roma in the early age. With the education now I don't think it's a problem, it's used to be be seen as following the way of the Gadje, but now I think more and more Roma do realize the need for the education; I don't think there are big results for this because although young Roma are educated they are still dealing with the discrimination and it often doesn't give them the level they thought it's going to give them and



making your own life and your career and so on. What is very interesting is that most of the higher educated students are doing studies either connected to social work or to education, so they studying to be teachers, to be social workers and so on because they feel they need to give back to the community. But, for example, there are still problems between the groups like for example, in Poland we have these four groups and there is this very traditional group which is the Polska Roma and they for example would not, sometimes it happens that even among young people, they would not sit together at the table with the other group because they see them unclean and things like that. So, there also has to be a lot of internal dialogue to kind of challenge these things. I know when it came to the publication, when Harango was doing the publication, we also have been kind of told off by the older community that we should not spread the knowledge of the Romanes and so on, we argued that the people in the Stone Age were trying to put the words in the stone and we still don't want to move on so, you have to use different kind of ways and arguments for people. But I guess it's still among a lot of transformations, it's hard to say specifically because it's such a diversity among our communities that it's hard. I think it's interesting also that religion doesn't really play any role in the connexions or in the contact of the young people, among ourselves and so on. Just because they feel they are all Roma they wouldn't mind the religion of one or another, it never becomes an issue. I don't know if what I'm saying makes any sense.

**Interviewer:** Of, course, you're the person to ask this: you're a young Roma, you're part of the network, you meet many young Roma and this is actually exactly what I wanted to get a sense of. You mentioned before, you know, this great diversity between the groups and the challenges it poses when you conduct projects; I was wondering, in the case of **the International Romani Union project**, you know, this idea that we are the Roma nation and the fact that it has this discourse: it stresses more the aspects that all Roma groups have in common rather than their differences. **Do you think such a project is successful? Do you think that Roma groups, despite differences, they do have this sense of belonging, togetherness, something like a transnational feeling?**

Interviewee: I mean, you know, it's hard to say among the groups because they are really so rarely exposed to this kind of connection between communities from different parts so, I definitely there is the sense of belonging to the community and, of course, there are the common interests of all the groups and so on, but I think that the awareness on the larger community level, it's not so strong, really, you know. I think this is kind of what the networks are doing: connecting the people among each other and, at least from the work of TERNYPE, it has a great positive impact and also a great kind of response in a way that, yes, people would connect with each other and they would support each other. So, I think this approach of connecting people, it is working definitely. I think it has to be

much more at the grassroots level, but still it is working.

**Interviewer:** I also wanted to ask you: **have you had any contact, collaboration of some sort, of any sort with the Barvalipe summer camp in Hungary?** The Roma Pride summer camp...

Interviewee: Yes, I was last year there, I was a speaker. I had my issues with that.

**Interviewer:** OK. I want to know about those issues.

Interviewee: You want to know about the issues?

**Interviewer:** Yes. They have a very fine concept, right? Romani Pride and since it's a project-idea and I'm a social scientist, I'm curious because it represents something, right? Like a project, a discourse, a story, a narrative. And I'm very curious about the way in which this is presented, you know?

Interviewee: I mean, the project is designed as strengthening the identity of the Roma youngsters. I mean, here you have to have clearly defined the target group also as to know the profile of the participants when they come to your Barvalipe camp. Last year, I was a bit disappointed talking to a few of the participants because for them it was only something interesting to do, but it didn't carry this whole philosophy of identity or understanding this and so on. Maybe at the end of the project they did change their mind and realize what identity means in their life, I don't know, but this kind of concept: just coming together and just talking about identity, of course, it's good, it's important to discuss about it, but I think you have two concepts: either the identity creates the movement or the movement creates the identity, so, I mean, you're learning by doing or you have more this academic approach, which I think is fine, but I don't see how much benefits the communities and how much it strengthens the identity of the communities because it's maybe it's more directed towards the future leaders of the communities. But at least year, at that camp, I did not see those leaders there, just more of a few students mostly kind of beneficiaries of the Open Society Foundation, which would also continue their work in their own circles, so, for me, it's kind of, if it doesn't carry this whole message to the community, then I have an issue.

**Interviewer:** I think the idea is a small group of leaders.

Interviewee: Yes, it's creating those elites which I really don't like.

**Interviewer:** I'm sorry: did you say it creates "allies" or "elites"? I didn't hear you so well.

Interviewee: Elites. Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** I think they have this component: it's called "civic involvement", you know, this whole idea of giving back to the community, getting actively involved in projects and so on. I was really interested: what was your opinion on the way in which - I imagine that they have coaches there, right? I mean, people who organize, guide the activities and so, so, I'm curious to know **in which way do they present Roma identity in general? I mean, do they stress the diversity, the common features that all individuals coming from different Roma groups have? Do they present**

**Roma as a nation? As something 'under construction'? Subject of negotiation or...?**

**Interviewee:** I cannot say much about my participation there, I was more trying to get the connection, stressing the fact that yes, there is this amount of educated youth among us and that they really need to bring it to the communities, stressing the gap between this educated people who often have problems with their identity and their work for the community. Of course, your personal choice and so on. Regarding the experts there, there have been a few very good people which, of course, have rich knowledge and I don't negate that in any way, but it's, the concept I think it's more, I don't want to say 'wrong' because I was not involved as a participant and I was not there for the whole program, just for two days and they are working on the history of the Roma, focusing very much on the history and the participants work a lot themselves on the diversity, but I won't be able to explain it to you very well because I was not involved in this well.

**Appendix 3**

Interviewer (Anamaria Remete): Hello!

Interviewee (Shejla Fidani): (Laughing) How are you?

**A.R.: Hey! I'm fine. And you? This is much better.**

S.F: Yes because I'm using the laptop from home and yesterday it was my mobile phone...phone

**A.R.: Yes...**

S.F: Can you hear me well?

**A.R.: Yes, I can hear you well. And you?**

S.F: Yes.

A.R.:OK...

S.F:It's fine.

**A.R.: Good. I promise to be as short as possible, ok?**

S.F:OK.

**A.R.: So I won't take much of your time.**

S.F:OK

**A.R.:OK. So, this is a follow-up study after an interview sent via e-mail with Shejla. I don't know if I'm pronouncing it right, but I hope I am.**

S.F: It's alright.

**A.R.: Shejla is a 28 year old Macedonian and we're trying to develop some more on the answers she have for the first interview. So, the first the questions of the interview was what were your first thoughts on the subject of this study? On this occasion these would be the second thoughts on the study.**

S.F: Yes.

**A.R.: I mean, generally speaking, what do you think these kind of studies that have this title deal with? What's the first word that come into your mind?**

S.F: Actually, the topic was a bit confusing for me because I don't know the background, of course, of what you were researching before, but my first thought was that you want to research something about how the new Roma generation is integrated nowadays. But I'm still not sure ...ah...what was before and what will be after the research or what is the main point

you want to get out from the research.

**A.R.:** It was important for me to have a spontaneous answer for the...for the title of the research, so that was very important for me to ask that question. OK. The second one: what would you say makes someone a Roma? And not a non-Roma? You think there are some defining elements that make someone Roma and, again, not non-Roma?

S.F.: Well, as I mentioned also in the written paper, you're just born like a human and after that you learn what you are and where you belong so I was raised in a family that was believing that they are Roma, they have elements like the language, the music that they want, the way of dressing sometimes... I don't know, celebrating the hollidays was also part of my life like "Oh, this is Roma hollidaya nd we are going to celebrate it!" so I think those are the elements who can define Roma because, you know, it's very difficult because we don't have a country and then you cannot even identify yourself with a country, a president and nation like that so...

**A.R.:** You place, from what I hear, you place a lot of emphasis on cultural heritage, especially on elements such as music, dressing, hollidays and so on.

S.F.:Yes.

**A.R.:** And you were talking about in general or personally, you experienced all of that in your family, right? From what I understand...

S.F.: Yes. Personal.

**A.R.:** And what about -this is your personal experience- what about other young Roma you know? It doesn't matter from what country they are, what kind of other stories do you hear for this kind of question?

S.F.: It's the same. It's basically the same.

**A.R.:**So, Roma culture was preserved and experienced in the family?

S.F.: Yes. Because we don't have written history, we don't have anthropologists, we don't have, you know, historians who wrote something about that. It's very...there are some, you know, papers that you can learn about how you are Roma and why you are Roma, but it's very limited so it's basically coming from the family...

**A.R.:** I'm asking because there are different stories, people have different experiences with this so... That's exactly what I'm trying to do know: to gather up all of these stories so as to have a broader image as possible of what's happening now with young Roma in Europe and how they view their ethnicity. The use of the term

**"Roma" over the term "Gypsy" is very complex and very debated even to this day; some people like to stress that there would be a difference between either "Roma" or a "Gypsy" world and a "Gadje", non-Roma world. How do you view these words? Are they important, do they matter, and if they do, how come?**

S.F.: You know, for me it's very important because I'm from Macedonia and Macedonia is a country who is very tolerant according to minorities and different cultures, nations and we never use the word "Gypsy". So, for me it's very strange when I heard some Bulgarians or still in Hungary people want to use the word "Tsigany" or "Gypsy". For me that is not understandable knowing of the word, what does it mean, coming from the Greek "asiganes" [Tsiganoi] which probably means something that is "outsider" or something dirty which I don't like it. Rom is "human". Different from "Roma". And I was raised with the word of "Roma" and knowing the background and the meaning so I'm very much for the use of the word "Roma". And my country is also very aware of this.

**A.R.: That's very interesting. And what about -some studies talk about the fact that Roma have a worldview in which there is this separation between Roma and non-Roma sometimes with variations from the word "Gadje", "Gadzo" and so on. Do you think that this worldview exists today or is it something we just find in studies? Is it present?**

S.F.: You mean for the word?

**A.R.: Yes, but it's also...**

S.F.: Like "gadze" or...?

**A.R.: There are some qualitative studies and many of them say that - they actually do fieldwork- let's say in Roma communities in various countries and you could always hear the same story: the fact that Roma there, in that community, tend to view the world as separated between two parts: the Roma and the non-Roma. Do you think that's true, that it holds even today?**

S.F.: Yes, it's true. Yes, unfortunately, it's true because the Roma used to live before in this small communities, gathering together and everybody who was trying to approach them was non-Roma or Gadze for them, but it is a reason just of protecting themselves. To read the whole history from, you know Roma have emigrated three times: from Byzantine and then the Ottoman Empire and now this also, so it's just protecting themselves and nowadays we are facing a lot of violence so that is why there is in these words or phrases or generalizing to distinguish things. I think that's what you mean.

**A.R.: OK. If you're not comfortable with one of the words or if you need me to rephrase them, just let me know. The next question was: would you say that Roma culture is safeguarded in society? In the sense that you just mentioned earlier, it doesn't have a written history, it doesn't have, let's say the traditional power institutions that help preserve culture so, having that in mind, would you say that the family environment is enough as a support for the preservation of cultural heritage today?**

S.F.: Well, it depends, you know? It depends from the country where you live. For example,

I'm afraid that we are losing not the culture, but we are losing the language, you know, that some habits that used to be like very visible for Roma, but on the other side, I now refer to my country, Macedonia is giving opportunities for Roma and non-Roma to learn the language at the primary school. So we have the language in the... in the schools. Then, we have a special cathedra for Roma language and culture at the University of Anthropology and...and... Ethnology. So... the field of languages is offered very much. Ah.. all the museums in my country... ah...we are referring to (un-intelligible) and dresses...bla bla bla... are including the Roma culture too. So, I don't know the real answer; it's "yes" and "no". For me and my country is ...I'm trying and my government is trying to...to keep the ... the culture, the ...to safeguard the Roma culture in the society, but it's not the case in other countries.

**A.R.: Thinking about, let's say your personal experience, when you think about, let's say, the three generations in your family, let's say your grandfathers, your grandmothers, your parents and your generation...would you say that they view, all three generations, view and express their ethnicity in the same way, or, are there differences?**

S.F: Well, for my personal story is the same way. mean, we're generations that live in a peace and quiet society in a set where we can loudly say that we are Roma and that's it, you know? So, maybe I'm a little bit a different story, but we never had a problem to say what we are.

**A.R.: Also, if you were to think, let's say of particular challenges that young generation Roma are facing today - and I'm talking all over Europe, but if you, if you wanna give some examples from your personal experience, that would also be good as well. Do you think that there are some particular challenges that they're facing today, something that needs special attention, that's going under some sort of change?**

S.F: Oh, my God, of course, but I will mention the bad side of this: it's first the segregation, the schools at primary and secondary education. You live in Prague, yeah?

**A.R.: Yes.**

S.F: You know what's going on there, the same in Slovakia, it's also same in Hungary and all the Central and Eastern Europe countries, maybe in the Western countries of Europe it's not visible like here but, I would say the segregation in the schools, discrimination at workplaces and property so they are many and worse issues that we are challenging today as a young generation who already passed that migration before.

**A.R.: Nowadays we have so many, some technologies that keep us, lets' say, more or less connected even though we come from different countries, so we have more possibilities for contact and sharing experiences; having that in mind, would you say that there are some particular challenges that young Roma within the Roma community face today? So, actually between community, do they have a common message, do they have common views, do they view their ethnicity the same?**

S.F: Well, yes, it's a very difficult question and difficult to answer, you know? Many of the people who, you know, succeed to take part in the society are getting out of the community and forgot what they are or they are ashamed to say what they are, you know? Because they cannot succeed further if they say what they are and where they're coming from. But from the other side, I know some people who are really experts in what they do, are very well educated and they want to bring something to the community so, they are going back to the community, like, for example, me and everybody who works in Open Society Institute that are Roma are doing the same. They got something and they are bringing it back to the society. But I would say rather here that, they want to get out of the community and don't say what they are in the future, you know?

**A.R.: Here, you mean in Macedonia or generally, in Europe?**

S.F: In general, yes.

**A.R.: So, we have two different, opposing worlds. My last question was very precise and probably a bit confusing one; you actually mentioned you weren't sure you understood it well.**

S.F: Yes.

**A.R.: So, I will repeat the question now so that we have it for the interview and I also rephrased so that you get a better idea of what I actually wanted to ask you. So, the initial question was: what kind of act would be seen as intolerable behavior for a Roma and tolerable for a Gadze? But, it can actually go the other way around; meaning, do you feel that Roma culture stresses particular values, that it emphasizes a particular set of behavior, principles and so on that non-Roma culture doesn't; or the othe way around: that non-Roma culture upholds some values instead of values, a set of value and Roma, a different set of values. So, we're talking about borders. Are there any cultural borders between the two?**

S.F: Of course, there are some cultural borders, but here I will not refer so much on the cultural differences; I will refer on the measures that are giving to Roma and the integration of Roma. So, you know, everybody has different culture and that is not so visible, we are not



monsters, we are a human being and we just speak different language maybe, but we also speak the national language of the other nation so it's not so cultural, but it's, I would say, a given way or chance or measurements for integration equal with the others.

**A.R.: I wanted to know if there are some cultural differences, cultural borders, if there are rather rigid, closed, or if they are permeable; if we have bridges across - because you mentioned what does being Roma mean, so it's cultural heritage, it's something you see and it's something that you live, you experience also, especially in the family environment. So, if that is so, theoretically, culture always has some imitations, some borders, right? So that you make the difference between something and something else. And I was trying to understand - in terms of values, principles, behavior- is: is this border between Roma and non-Roma fixed or permeable? Can bridges be crossed?**

S.F.: Of course that's not fixed, of course. I will explain it in just one simple way. You know, all the Roma who are living in my country are much more accepted to behave like Macedonians than to try to keep their way of living, you know? So this bridge can be approached, but the problem is that non-Roma are not so open to accept the change of the Roma and also not open to give them place to integrate within them; they like them to be different and different in a bad way in this case.

**A.R.: Would you, could you expand on this last idea? Because it's very interesting, this idea of the majority population, in this case, the Macedonians. They don't like to give a different status to the Roma...**

S.F.: No, people are having borders actually so... For them it's very important they have a big nation and you have to be the minorities, the minority and then, seeing you treated better or, I don't know how, I don't want you to use the stereotypes again as a word, but for them, that is acceptable while the other, from the Roma side, everybody is trying to change their behavior and the livings and how culture and even religion to be similar to them, the non Roma. But it's a very long process of doing it and, as I mentioned, again, my country is doing that nowadays; in the last two-three years they are trying to keep our language, they are trying to, the Macedonians, to know our Roma language or whatever so, it's like common study. But it's not the case in the other countries for sure.

**A.R.: The last question was: are you involved in a, let's say, any Roma focused program ?**

S.F.: I work for making the most of EU funds for Roma Programme.

**A.R.: And for how long, by the way?**

S.F: Well, I work here in OSI just one year, but they started to work like ten, twelve, thirteen years ago on this, on the Roma issues and Roma fieldwork so I was working previously as a volunteer, then some simple fieldwork, you know, it's almost thirteen years working on the same issues.

**A.R.: Well, you have quite an experience so far! If you had to, I don't know, the first thing that comes into your mind, right now, really, really fast, what were the biggest challenges you had to face just with other Roma working on the same issues around Europe? What would you say were the biggest difficulties, challenges, obstacles?**

S.F: You know, what I always say: I had so much capacities and skills like all the others, but, in many cases, I was accepted to work just as a Roma, for Roma. Which I really don't like. I really don't like.

**A.R.: I have an idea of what that means, but could you expand on it? Could you develop that idea so that you were working in some places, that they saw you just as a Roma?**

S.R.: So, you're applying for some job place, right? And you like it and you have the skills like all the others and if this program or job whatever is related to Roma, then you will be accepted just as a Roma. Yes, Roma, you can work for us because, I don't know, something for Roma and from, for the other jobs I used to work for, which is not related to Roma, I was working in a national TV in Macedonia as a journalist. I was accepted as a journalist, you know? And after a few months they pushed me to write about Roma, Roma, Roma...which I really don't like. Because they see you just like that... And for me it's really difficult sometimes to escape from these borders, but I got used to say "OK, I'm Roma and I will work for Roma".

**A.R.: That's very interesting. I receive so many different, different stories, different experiences, you know? And, of course that they, they may be related to different national policies and so on, but that's very interesting.**

S.F: It's the first thing that came in my mind right now.

**A.R.: It's obviously the thing that was most important if it was the most spontaneous one! I really want you to know that I appreciate this very very much. I know that you probably must be very busy so, thank you! Because this means a lot to me. I got really interesting ideas that would be helpful for my study. And when I finish it, if you want I can send it to you.**

S.F: Sure, sure. I would be happy to read it and actually, I am always happy to do something like this because I, as I said, there aren't many written papers for Roma and

history so I really appreciate what you are doing and would be happy to read it.

**A.R.: Thank you! Thank you very much!**

S.F: Keep in touch!

**A.R.: Thank you! Have a good day's work!**

S.F: You too!

**A.R.: Bye!**

S.F: Ciao!

Appendix 4

1<sup>st</sup> PART

Interviewer (Anamaria Remete): Hello!

Interviewee (Edlira Majko): Hello!

A.R.: Are you free to talk?

E.M.: Hi!

A.R.: Hey! Can you hear me?

E.M.: Can you hear me?

A.R.: Yes, I can hear you. And you? Can you hear me well?

E.M.: I can hear you.

A.R.: I just realized I don't hear you so well as I would have wished to, but, it's good, it's good. It's good to finally meet you, it's nice to meet you.

E.M.: Yes.

A.R.: It's always good to put, to put a face on someone.

E..M: Yes, yes! It's good to talk face to face, yes. How are you doing? How is your thesis going?

A.R.: It's going well; I've started conducting the interviews on Skype as my tutor wished and it's nice, it's really nice hearing these life-stories from different people. It's actually really exciting. I'm going to try not to take so much of your time because I think you're at work and you probably have other things to do today.

E.M.: Yes.

A.R.: So, I don't know, maybe it's going to take like twenty minutes, half an hour more or less; is that ok for you?

E.M.: Yes, yes!

A.R.: Great! OK, great then. So I'm going to ask you exactly the same questions I sent on your e-mail, they're not different, maybe not all of them, but maybe ask you more details on some.

E..M:OK!

A.R.: Maybe ask you questions on the replies you've given.OK. So, for the first question I'm not going to ask anything, maybe just for the second, which si kind of central for my study and the question goes something like this: **What makes someone Roma? What would you say are the defining elements for a Roma?**

E.M.: Can you repeat once more the question? Because I couldn't hear it very well.

A.R.: Of course.

E.B.: What are believed to be...?

A.R.: **What does it personally mean to be Roma for you?**

E.M.: Yeah, this is also in the questionnaire I think I answered very shortly.

A.R.: Yes.

E.M.: That I think it means who I am; like, I was born in a Roma family, I was raised up as a Roma.

I grow up with Roma values, how to say, and it means who I am, I am a Roma so I don't know how to explain it more in detail.

A.R.: **You mentioned before "Roma values"; What values would that be? Could you give me some, some examples? Could you develop that idea?**

E.M.: Yes, honest, hospitable, caring about past, like caring about family members, like having extended family, I think these are all Roma values.

A.R.: Regarding a different question, I was asking....Can you hear me well?

E.M.:Not that well...

A.R.: I was asking you, **which term do you prefer? Either Roma or Gypsy?** And you said definitely Roma because Gypsy is an exonym and it carries discriminatory and derogatory connotations so, I was actually wanted to ask you about this. Ah....ever since you were born so, as you were growing up, ah....when you referred to your ethnicity, did you always use the word "Roma" or "Gypsy"?

E.M.: We always use the word "Roma and in Albania, because I'm from Albania, in Albania the other thing, "Tsigani", is not very used in Albania, but there are other derogatory namings which means like "bear...carring"which are derogatory names, like they are exonyms the Gadje put on us, so in my family and obviously in the community, we always use "Roma". And also I was doing research research in Albania in different settlements and in no settlement did I hear of someone, speaking of himself of their community as "Gypsy" so I think in Albania people, Roma people are very strong for the "Roma" than for the "Gypsy"; it's very derogatory.

A.R.: There are many opinions on the usage of either one or the other term so it was important for me to know what your experience with these words is.

E.M.: I always use "Roma" and for me it's very disturbing when I hear the "Gypsy", "Gypsy" word and I also try always to, when people use "Gypsy" and "Roma" like "Gypsy", I always explain them why we should use "Roma" and not "Gypsy". For example, two weeks ago there was a presentation in Central European University by an anthropologist and he was using both terms, but not in a very consistent way; he started a sentence with "Roma" and finished with "Gypsy" so in the end of the lecture I just raised my hands and told him: OK, it's your choice, but you should also be consistent and you should also take into account where you present the lecture because it's a university and it is like going in an international university or whatever university and talking about Afro-Americans and using the terms "Black" or "Nigger" or all these so I'm, I'm very strong on the term "Roma".

A.R.: Yes, of course. **At some point you mentioned that your family is very proud of being Roma. And tried to transmit to you this pride; so, I was wondering, in that sense, in what way can you say that you keep some Roma customs that your family and you share the experience of being Roma in some way?**

E.M.: My parents are both teachers and they never hid the fact that we are Roma or hide that we are Roma. And everybody in our town knows that we are Roma and it's also very difficult sometimes to divide what is actually typical Roma culture; in this globalized world sometimes it's very difficult to define it! And also like, you see that also the culture, the Roma culture, if you have read, like, I like to read books or fairytales or legends and then you can see how globalism has influenced Roma culture. It's like from the long dresses and so. I don't come from a family with traditional dresses for examples or the language; we don't speak the language in my family, but we have this, as I explained before, like this family, like we are an extended family, we care a lot about family, we have this, when there are celebrations, we have this big parties like where all the family comes, so, more a sense of value or, for example, the elders people, the elder's opinions are valued much, like "grandfather is us" or "grandmother is us". We don't have the language anymore, we don't have the clothing, but we have, we still keep the values.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> PART

A.R.: I also wanted to ask you something; you are a programme coordinator at Open Society Institute. So, for how long have you been working with the Open Society Institute approximately?

E.M.: For 2 years now. I joined in 2011 and I'm working mostly with, now I'm focusing more on institutional development of Roma NGOs.

A.R.: I wanted to ask you: you must, because of your work, you must come into contact with many young Roma throughout Europe and probably even wider and I was imagining as you have this high rate of contact, you must know a lot of different stories. I mean personal stories of young Roma who work in the network. And I wanted to ask you: **how do you think they view their ethnicity? Are things changing? Are they developing a new type of ethnicity rather than the way in which their parents see themselves ? Are there any differences that happen, any changes?**

E.M.: I think that Roma now are being more proud of being Roma. We have a special project actually, I don't know if you know about it, Barvalipe which means "pride" so we organize it for 2 years and you could see people like, every year we have from 25 to 30 youngsters from all over Europe, all educated Roma. People coming from mixed backgrounds, from mixed marriages, from communities, people who before coming to Barvalipe hid their identity and how in 10 days it was like an identity transformation. And we want to continue organizing this and also with the NGOs that we work we want to insert this idea of the Barvalipe concept so they can develop it with their youngsters. I think now this pride, it's different from the older generation because it is more informed, how to say. In the way we teach people language, or the history of language, history, culture, we cook so I think it's more informed. It's not just old people being in the community, that kind of pride where all the community sees one as the leader, but this is more informed. Like these people can go out and say why they are proud of being Roma, because of the community history, of the common language, common. Even though you have different religions, different dialects, but if you take it in total, we are one people. And this can be used for political reasons so it goes more to a political level and we are one people, so here we go to the political level.

A.R.: You mentioned it a bit, the Barvalipe summer camp in Hungary, but I'm curious to know more. I've seen some of the materials, the videos and one question came to my mind because I've never participated in the summer camp; **does it, generally speaking, tend to present Roma culture as a united transnational one, so something that all Roma around the world have in common, or, does it stress more the diversity of different dialects, different traditions?**

E.M.: Yes, it stresses the diversity because in the first camp, you know we had this conflict, not conflict, but people who came from a community and said "We are more Roma" so, some people tend to say that we are more Roma than you, that you don't speak the language or don't have long hair.

A.R.: So that point came up?

E.M.: Yes, this came up and we said like "OK, we are people, but we have different backgrounds, we are diverse." Even if you are from the same community you are diverse because identity is complex; for example, I am Elvira, I am Roma, I am a woman, I'm a mountain hiker. Identity is complex and we belong to different groups so we try to show this diversity within the group. Because it can be very demotivating for some people.

A.R.: Do you think some people feel rejected because they don't know the language and might be rejected by other Roma?

E.M.: Yes, it can happen sometimes. I am Roma and you are not. For example, I don't speak the language and I was doing research in Albania on the housing conditions of Roma so, in different communities, people were asking "Do you speak Romanes?" because I was in the community and I was saying "No", they would be a bit upset or sometimes people would also say like "How do you represent us if you don't speak the language?" But it's not my fault.

**A.R.: From the young Roma you've met across the years, coming from different countries, how would you say that the issue of being a child from a mixed marriage means in their community? Does it raise questions? Are people who are a child of a mixed marriage get accepted in the community or, is it an issue?**

E.M.: Sometimes it is an issue. Like, for the community and I think also for the child himself, like, we have a girl from the first summer camp, I think you can also read her blog, she came from a mixed family and she rejected the actually the fact of being Roma. So, even if the community wanted to accept, she herself hid that part of her identity and after parting from Barvalipe she also experienced a transformation in herself. But I think the identity is a dynamic process; how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you. So, even if the community doesn't want to accepted, how much you do there's the community that accepts you; I think it's a dynamic, how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you.

A.R.: You mentioned the word "transformation" for her case and can understand transformation from rejecting being seen as a Roma to accepting it; how do you think that



this happened, taking her as an example? **How exactly do you think the summer camp led to this transformation?**

E.M.: Because there are other people there that are the same as you and they are not afraid to say they are Roma and being Roma is not something bad or that you should hide. So, it's a very strong feeling. I also experienced it myself. When I was in the university, I was the only Roma. Everybody knew that I was Roma because of my skin colour, that I'm darker, but I didn't have anyone else to talk about it. But when I came here in Budapest and I met a group of Roma, young Roma, educated from all over, it was a strong feeling for me, for going out and telling "I'm Roma! I want to do something about it!" So, it helps you when you see other people like you. They are proud and they don't hide being Roma.

A.R.: I want to go to the last question because it is, let's say a very sensitive question, but I asked it for a very specific reason and I would like to re-phrase it so that you have an idea of what I actually meant by it. My last question sounded like this: what kind of act would be seen as intolerable behavior for a Roma and tolerable for a Gadge? But it goes both ways actually: what could be seen as intolerable for a Gadge and tolerable for a Roma? What I actually wanted to say, it's a very specific question, it refers to behavior and what's considered accepted and un-accepted behavior for both sides. I basing this question of mine on empirical studies, qualitative ones, done on various Roma populations, in Europe, but also in the U.S., and these were anthropologists that were stressing this idea that, in the Roma worldview, there's a division between Roma and Gadge and this is how the community sees it, how Roma see it and that each of these, let's say, worlds has a very specific set of what's acceptable behavior and what is not. And that's why I was asking this question. I'm curious. For some communities, in some contexts, this appears to be true, at least that's what these studies tell us, but I wanted to know in today's world, for this new young educated Roma generation in the Roma network, in Europe, so people you've met and are the representatives of what I'm talking about. So I want to know: in this changing world, does this division still hold? **The division between Roma and Gadge as having different behavior, one is tolerated in one world and one is not in the other, and so on. Does it still uphold this thing?**

E.M.: I think in some communities it still upholds. Like, for example, if you come from a Roma community, a girl cannot have a boyfriend for example. Or, go out late.

A.R.: So, some things still uphold.

E.M.: Yes, some things. Like, for us youngsters, young people, students, I don't think there's any division anymore. We promote this, that we are equal, in everything, Like, in my discussions or meetings or conversations with Roma youngsters today we never discuss this issue. Maybe this is like a topic that my grandmother, she would tell you what a young Roma girl or boy should do, what they are allowed to do and what not, and what counts as Gadge behavior. But I think in today's world, among the youngsters we never have such conversations. That we are not allowed to do this because we are Roma or, that as Roma, we should do this.

A.R.: Do you have any particular conflicts with you grandmother regarding this? I mean, do you present your vision on these things and she upholds hers? Do you negotiate it? Or, it never came up?

E.M.: Yes, it never came up. It's like when you develop a certain relation and trust with your family then I have been, me personally I moved out from my family when I was 14 for studying so I have been travelling so it's not the question.

A.R.: I was wondering because you first answer was "I think that this question is inappropriate" and I wanted to know what you first understood by my question.

E.M.: Yes, coming from my work, this is an inappropriate question because we are equal and it's a steretotypical thinking like, "Only Roma do this". Coming from my position, where I stand, that question would be very inappropriate.

A.R.: So, it was the idea that there might even be such an idea as Roma and non-Roma behavior?

E.M.: Yes.

A.R.: And what do you think about this much more generally speaking, the idea that there might be a worldview in which there is a division between **Roma and Gadge**. Do you that this is inappropriate, that this is false, that this is true, that it's changing maybe?

E.M.: I don't go for a division. We are equal, we are our set of values which are not, I would say, very different from the non-Roma, are not very different from other communities. And even if we have different set of values, we should keep as we mentioned before, that we with our values and our culture and our history, we contribute to the overall society, the world. So, it's like we are one together.

A.R.: I wanted to test this idea because I didn't invent it.

E.M.: Yes, yes.

A.R.: I was just reading it through some qualitative studies and some Roma communities and it was always very much stressed. And I was curious. OK, this exists for that community, but is it still a thing that people actually use as a lens to view the world? Does it still exist? Because sometimes things change.

E.M.: I don't know.

A.R.: You mentioned the view that your grandparents' generation have on being Roma and, you know, values, principles, behavior and so on, there's very much different from your own, especially because of the travelling you've done and the contact you've had with other Roma throughout the world, other countries. What about your parents' generation?

E.M.: My parents' generation, yes, you should look at it in a historical context; my parents were both born during Communism in Albania where religion, ethnicity, all these things didn't matter. Religion was abolished so my father, and they are teachers, so educated, going through the whole system of Communism, so they are like, not. I would say maybe assimilated in a way. Because the context was like this at that time.

A.R.: I also come from a former Communist country, from Romania so; it's very interesting because the Communist project was to, let's say, to delete any other identity than the workers', the proletarian one so, ethnicity was supposed to not matter any more, minority language was supposed to be almost deleted, religion as well, you're practically denied of being an aristocrat and so on. But, this project had various degrees of success; it wasn't always successful and it generated different outcomes. So, I was curious for your parents' generation how this was.

3<sup>rd</sup> and last PART

E.M.: Hey!

A.R.: Sorry because of the bad connection. I think we both have it actually.

E.M.: Yes, yes...

A.R.: I know that you answered my last question at the end when we were talking about the, the communist experience and so on and that was actually one of my last questions.

E.M.: Yes.

A.R.: I wanted to thank you very much. You've been very nice and I'm very thankful for your

help in this. Ah, as soon as I finish the thesis I will, I will send you a draft by e-mail so that, so that you have it, so that you know what I'm doing with it because it's only fair that you know also (smiling).

E.M.: Yes, yes; it's like... I think it can it will be a very good ah...ah...it's a good topic and I think you are doing a great work so it will be interesting, I would be very interested... reading it actually.

A.R.: Yes.

E.M.: Maybe it will help also us, in our work.

A.R.: Yes.

E.M.: So, I understand. And sometimes, I was thinking during the interview. Sometimes it's very difficult to answer these questions. It's basically the question: who are you? And why you are proud of being you? So, sometimes it's also, this also helped me to go and think about myself in a way.

A.R.: It's the same for me sometimes because you answer these questions when you have an idea of what other mean and what they want to hear and it's, it's like when somebody asks you where you come from and...even if that's not very relevant for your you have to say and when they ask you what does it mean to you, you actually start asking yourself "Does it actually mean something to me in the end?" . Yes, I can understand that.

E.M.: Yes

A.R.: So I wanted to thank you very much and I don't want to keep, take much of your time because you're at work right now and I'll let you know, as soon as I finish it, I'll let you know of this study and send it to you. And keep in touch of course.

E.M.:OK. And will you, will you...sorry, will you transcribe, like, will you use my name or transcribe. How will you use this data in the, in your thesis.

A.R.: So, for this type of interview I will have to transcribe it, of course, that's why I'm recording it and as for the name, you know when I sent you the questionnaire by e-mail, it, it had this part at the beginning with the presentation, who I am, what I'm doing and there was also this mention, that your name is important for me so that, well...

E.M.: Yes, yes.ok.

A.R.: So that I know that it's your questionnaire and not somebody else's. And also, that I know you're a real person.

E.M.: Yes, yes. It's not a problem for me; just to know, you know?

A.R.: And as long as... For instance, if you mention that if you prefer your name not to be mentioned in the study, I will of course not mention your name, I will just give you a code so that I know what interview this is.

E.M.: Yes.

A.R.: If you want, I can do this: I can not put your full name in this study.

E.M.: You can use it.

A.R.: OK. Thank you!

E.M.: Thank you!

A.R.: It's just for the thesis. So, basically, it's just my tutor and the professors in my commission who have access to this because it's not a journal.

E.M.: Yes, it's fine.

A.R.: It's not so widely spread.

E.M.: And in which university are you studying?

A.R.: I'm at Charles University at the Faculty of Arts, the History Department.

E.M.: OK.

A.R.: So, I'll let you know as soon as I finish.

E.M.: OK. Thanks you very much!

A.R.: Thank you! Thank you very much too!

E.M.: And good luck!

A.R.: Thank you! You too!

## Appendix 5

Interviewee Albert Memeti: Hello!

**Interviewer Anamaria Remete: Hello, Albert! It's nice to meet you!**

Interviewee: Nice to meet you too!

**Interviewer: Are you busy? Can you talk now?**

Interviewee: Yes, I can talk.

**Interviewer: Great! Thank you. It's good to finally meet on Skype. We've been trying several times, but our schedules were not matching at all.**

Interviewee: I know, I know. But it's good now that finally found time and that we can match and we have the interview.

**Interviewer: I just wanted to say, I think it's only fair to say that I'm recording this Skype call because I need to transcribe the interview so that I can work on it; because, of course, I cannot remember it, all the things we said. Is that OK with you?**

Interviewee: Yes, sure.

**Interviewer: OK. So, I'm going to re-ask some of the questions I already asked in the questionnaire and I'm actually going to ask some questions on the answers and I'm going to say them again so, don't worry, you don't have to remember anything.**

Interviewee: Yes. It's OK.

**Interviewer: I'm going to tell you your answers. First of all, just so that I'm not mistaken, I've contacted you through the International Roma Youth Network, right? TERNYPE. And you work for them?**

Interviewee: No, no. I don't have any connection with TERNYPE. I mean, I know them. I didn't understand, maybe you could repeat one more time?

**Interviewer: Yes. The way in which you're involved in the Roma network, do you work in an organisation right now, or, are you simply one of the CEU graduates that we contacted via the Open Society Institute?**

Interviewee: I'm not CEU graduate, still. I have one more year.

**Interviewer: So, you're studying at CEU?**

Interviewee: Yes, I'm studying at CEU. But I'm also Roma activist, but not connected now

temporarily with an NGO.

**Interviewer: But you were in the past?**

Interviewee: Yes.

**Interviewer: In what organisation have you been? I just want to have general stuff in which way you've been involved, you know?**

Interviewee: I was working in Macedonia in one Roma NGO in my city, it's called Sonce and I was working first as a volunteer for three years in the program for education and culture of youth Roma and then I was promoted like an office manager where I worked two more years there and I was writings projects, proposals, doing the office stuff.

**Interviewer: OK. I just wanted to have a more specific profile of you because when I was searching for respondents for these interviews, I tried to find people not directly, but via Open Society, the European Roma Rights Center, the European Roma Information Office and so on. Because I thought they would be good meeting points between me and potential respondents and the conatct persons from the organisations didn't actually specify. I asked this in the questionnaire, but I thought it would be good to ask this again, to have this in more detail.**

Interviewee: Yes, sure.

**Interviewer: For the first, I was asking you on the questionnaire, it was more like a spontaneous question, it was, I'll give you the title of the research which is, "Ethnicity Revisited: the Case of Younger Generation Higher-educated Roma in Central and Eastern Europe" and I asked you "What are your first thoughts on this, what do you think it's about?" and the interesting thing in your reply was that you said "It seems to be an attempt to connect the concept of the identity specified in the literature that doesn't really match with the definition of identity from inside rather than outside, that in the end it might result something like a new phenomena and maybe discover some gap in the literature." So, That's a very developed answer and many things came to your mind. You're very spontaneous, but it sounded like it wasn't the first time you thought about this. It was obvious that you had some previous thoughts on this and when you saw the title: " Ah, maybe it's about this!"**

**So, I just wanted to ask: is it because you read some articles on similar issues?**

Interviewee: I'm currently involved with Roma identity things and before you sent me the interview questions I had another interview with someone from the Central European University and it's coming now like a flourishing topic for researching and everybody is interested how, the students from Nationalism for example from CEU, everybody is interested now in the Roma identity, does fit in the concept of nationhood or of a nation, what are Roma? An ethnic minority or they're nation? And, you know, I started to research by myself.

**Interviewer: Yes, there's something going on there because everybody's going in one way, really interested in one thing.**

Interviewee: Yes and I've started to research by myself and I started to read some literature about ethnic identity, nation, nationhood. And what it comes to my mind and it's, how to say, when you do a research for me, you always try to find a gap in the literature and you always want to discover something new, some new phenomena and etc.. But I 'm skeptical about the developed theories so far on Roma identity and it's not so matching with the definitions that are in the books.

**Interviewer: That's what you found reading the articles and the books you read on your own personal research?**

Interviewee: Yes, not personal research; I just wanted for myself to know and the same questions I received a couple of times - "What does it mean for your to be Roma"- and I reply with the same question - "What does it mean for you to be Turkish?". The same thing that she answered to me, it was one previous girl from Turkey, the same thing I answered to her, it was the same answers. And just the only difference was the concept of nation, that they have the nation-state behind them.

**Interviewer: And that's part of the, what they reveal at their discourse level of what their identity is? So when they present what they are, you various times the concept of nation? That's how they present it to you?**

Interviewee: Yes.



**Interviewer:** You mentioned before, for me, what's important for my research is not to find out the identity because it's not something you could ever find. I didn't set myself to find that because it would be impossible. What I'm actually interested is to know, my target is very specific: young generation, higher educated Roma today in Europe that are involved in Roma advocacy because they're exposed to many things; as you said in your answers: assimilation, globalisation and they have contact with so many people in their work, and they're usually people who travel, they have a country of origin, but they travel a lot; so, they have contact with many different, let's say, models, so it's only natural to ask, as a legitimate research question, how do they perceive their identity as Roma when they were in the family environment and if something changed? Did something change or, did it remain the same after successive contact with other Roma coming from different countries? Because, you know, you're exposed to so many different versions of what it means to be Roma and I'm asking myself: did it make a difference having contact with so many different people? That's what I'm actually trying to find out. Not a "Yes" or "No" question, I just want to have an idea if something is being born, if something is changing, you know? And what kind of character does it have.

**Interviewee:** Personally, for me, I don't know how much you know about the Macedonian Roma.

**Interviewer:** I've met another respondent from Macedonia.

**Interviewee:** So, my opinion is like this; I lived in a family that spoke the Roma language. I live in a family who gave me the Roma tradition. I live in a family that, how to say, I was raised in such a way that I have to become a good example for the other Roma generation. That my parents were pushing me and my brother to pursue education in order to bring change. And now, when I travel also in U.S. or here in Budapest, or now I'm in Germany currently, I don't think that things changed on me. Because I'm still, I can say, the strong personal identity that I have as a young Roma, that I had also in my country. But now the only difference is that I want to transfer this to the young Roma. that I have friends, Roma, from Hungary, from Romania, from Czech Republic, from Slovakia, from Serbia and we are there like 50 Roma at Central European University. And what I am trying to do is by researching a bit about ourselves, you know? Because many Roma don't know what happened to Roma in the Holocaust. What happened to the Roma in Romania in the slavery

period. What happened to the Roma in Spain, what policies they had. What happened to the Roma in Hungary, with Queen Maria Theresa. And now I try to give this knowledge to the people about ourselves and try to, my opinion is that many youngsters today, they internalize the picture of the Others; how they perceive us: like criminals, like stealers, like travellers, like I don't know what. And this is a internalized picture that makes you feel ashamed to say and proud to say that you are Roma. And now, I am trying in some way to change that.

**Interviewer: I actually, you mentioned a very important word, a key-word: pride. And, for me the first things that rings a bell when I hear this, I think of the Open Society Institute that organized the summer school on, actually, Roma pride, that started in 2011, maybe it's from 2010, but I'm sure from 2011. And I've never been to one, but I'm very curious because the idea is very bold and it seems like it's project, it's a movement and I don't know if you collaborated with them, if you have some experiences on that.**

Interviewee: Yes, I'm collaborating. When I came in Budapest in 2010 I had a first contact with a Roma historian and Roma language teacher, from the Roma Access Programme where I was involved, but I was a student first. And then, we had some achievement seminars with the director of OSI, Roma Initiatives and in the summer they had Barvalipe School, the summer camp, about pride. And I applied there, but I applied there and I was part of that and now this year I'm organizing it.

**Interviewer: So, I'm talking with *the* person to talk about it!**

Interviewee: Yes, we are organizing it. It's not just me, but we are a couple of 4 Roma students, for ex-Barvalipe participants who are now doing the summer school in August from 15 to 26, but it's not just us. Sorry, you wanted to know?

**Interviewer: So, you're organizing it, you're deeply involved so you're the person to ask. It's a Romani Pride summer camp so I imagine that the concept of Romanipen is very central, and what kind of, I don't know, actions, activities, projects do you organize to transmit that?**

Interviewee: So, we divided the parts into three things; the first thing is knowing about yourself and it's the identity component of that part and it's about knowing Roma history,

Roma language, and Roma culture and we have plus, identity session. Then, the second component is active citizenship where we have social responsibility, we have political representation, we have community organising and advocacy and lobbying. And in the end, components of both commitment. And the commitment part involves organizing national Barvalipe camps in their countries.

**Interviewer: So, it's a future project.**

Interviewee: Yes.

**Interviewer: I wanted to ask you, being part in the Barvalipe summer camp and throughout your experience working in the Roma advocacy network, as you said, you met many Roma coming from different countries in Europe, also working in Roma advocacy, I imagine, many of them, I actually want to ask you: what kind of personal stories, personal experiences do you hear most often that are connected to the way in which they envision their ethnicity? I mean, is being Roma relevant for them? Is it important? If so, in what way? I mean, it's not the question what it means to be Roma, although, as difficult as it is, it would be even for me if you would ask me. But, I want to ask you this because I imagine there are many different experiences and when you come into contact with these people it's probably easier than to say what it actually means personally for yourself, or maybe you have a reflection of yourself when you hear these stories.**

Interviewee: So, in the beginning, when I came to Budapest in the first class I had with them, it was like, how to say, let me find an appropriate word; it was like discovering some world that you've never been. Even though we are all Roma, we were all Roma there. And I can say that maybe that I am coming from Macedonia and such a family, I developed strong identity feelings into me. But when I saw the other people I saw like, how to say, like internalized everything what it is written, like internalized into them. And first internalized with the term, they were saying "I am Tsigan"; they were saying "I am Tsigan", not "I am Roma".

**Interviewer: They were using the term "Tsigan" rather than the term "Roma" because they were more used to the first one?**

Interviewee: It's because in their country, for example Romania and Hungary, after the slavery, they internalized the term "Tsigan" and it's so internalized that everybody is calling

you "Tsigan" there. And with Hungary is also as well. Then in some kind, how to say, it's ok for them. And they go beyond what does it mean "Tsigan" or what does it mean "Roma". You know like, you are coming and you are telling me, I don't know, "You are alien" and through the years, 50 or 100 I internalize that on myself and I know that I am alien. And the things it was, with responsibility we have as a young Roma, because we were benefiting from Roma Education Scholarship and now we came in Budapest to study for Roma Access Programme and Master being like Roma students, and this, we were discussing this, it's like responsibility; someone is investing in you and is expecting that that investment you will return them some day.

**Interviewer: So, you had this feeling?**

Interviewee: Yes. And different people had different opinions on this.

**Interviewer: I want to know those opinions.**

Interviewee: And other people they feel more at individualistic level. Like someone is investing in me because I'm a very good Roma student and now I have to continue with my career and see my personal goals in my career. Being Roma now it doesn't change so much or it doesn't involve some responsibility to those, to my family back or to the Roma community that I have to return them in some way. And this what I faced. And I saw that many people had, maybe, bad experience of being Roma because they had bad examples during primary school, during secondary school that they were not feeling proud Roma, they were feeling ashamed. We had one girl in our group who for twenty years she was ashamed to say publicly that she is Roma because her friends and her environment there, they were all the time just judging who are these Roma, what they are doing and etc.

**Interviewer: She's not the only story I know; actually, it's the majority of stories I know. I'm Romanian and in Romania that's pretty much the majority, not the exception. Yes.**

Interviewee: Yes. And the cases were like that. We had people from Serbia who were feeling ashamed, who were ashamed to say that they are Roma, we had people from Hungary who were saying that they are Roma, but not doing something about Roma and we had Macedonians who were, I don't want to be bias, but who were feeling proud of being Roma and who were feeling that they want to return back. And we had Romanians also in our groups who were in some way also saying that they are Roma, but more like individualistic.

**Interviewer: In what way "individualistic"?**

Interviewee: Individualistic according to him it's just "I care about myself, you finance my study, very good, and I pursue my personal career aims".

**Interviewer: So, not getting involved in Roma advocacy?**

Interviewee: The thing is that when we came in the beginning we were very different, but throughout the year we experienced, we spent one year together and we had different activities together: watching movies, having Roma history classes, having Roma language classes, going out together, staying in the same floor, doing parties together and throughout the year I noticed a lot of changes. First, we weren't organized, not so friendly among ourselves, but then in the end we were the most united group in all years of Roma Access Programme. And even today we are acting like that and trying to transfer what we had in the previous years to the generation that is now.

**Interviewer: Do you think there was a significant change for what concerns the way in which some of the Roma viewed their ethnicity when they arrived in the CEU program and how they felt when they left the program, when they finished?**

Interviewee: Yes, I think that they experienced the identity part at CEU. Because we had discussions among us a lot and we were trying to discover ourselves; OK, who are we? Let's go back and ask questions and start looking into the national histories and start research, start asking other Roma who were activists in this and we found some things that were really interesting for us. And also, I think it can be a great influence the, I don't know if you heard about Marcel Courthiade he's a Roma professor in France and he's teaching there Roma language and history and we had Ian Hancock from the U.S.

**Interviewer: Yes, I know Ian Hancock.**

Interviewee: Yes, we had classes with him. And we had good influence in class.

**Interviewer: You also probably had Michael Stewart as one of the professors, I imagine.**

Interviewee: Yes, we didn't have classes, but I heard about him and I've been to a couple of conferences where he had it and I remember the last one; they were doing about the Roma in Hungary, I don't remember the exact title of the book, but it was connected with the Roma policies in Hungary, it was divided in five parts; one was Michael Stewart and the other some CEU doctoral researches that they did and it was about this Yobbik policies, these neo-nazi practices that they had, but I can't recall the title and I was seeing, I was noticing when they were talking about bad examples, like prostitutions or drugs or

something, they were using the term "Tsigani"; when they were talking about education, integration and etc. they were talking the term "Roma".

**Interviewer: You think it's a double discourse?**

Interviewee: Yes and I raised my hand and I asked them: why is it that when you say about good examples such as education, employment or integration or social inclusion you use the term "Roma" and why when it is for prostitution, drugs, stealing, you use the term "Tsigani". They were confused to say the answer, but then Michael Stewart stepped in, because he has experience and this, and he gave one good diplomatic answer.

**Interviewer: What answer was that? Was it that they were using it unconsciously?**

Interviewee: Yes, it was unconsciously, but exactly showing that, you know, they are "good" Roma, how to say, there are good part of Roma who are called "Roma" and there is bad part of Roma that we call them "Tsigani"; I perceive it like that.

**Interviewer: Do you think this was the case? It's not a question of, I don't know, they were presenting the discourse of people who discriminate against Roma not calling them Roma, but Tsigani?**

Interviewee: No. Tsigani, yes. It was unconscious for them.

**Interviewer: Yes, I've heard some things like this.**

Interviewee: But I also challenged him a couple of times and I spoke openly with him in some other conferences as well because he's doing anthropological research; he was living in UK with, no, in Budapest actually with Kalderashi Roma that they are strict on the Roma tradition and this is how he spread the news about Roma. And this is just one part of the puzzle; you cannot make general conclusions about all Roma because within the Roma there are different groups. And I challenged him because the purpose is not just to write a book or to make a research because you make a generalization when your book is published, and when I'm a reader and I'm reading I make an image about Roma, just like what you are selling me, let's say like marketing.

**Interviewer: Yes, it's about responsibility for the results. I wanted to ask you about**

**this; do you happen to remember now, I know one or two ideas on which you disagreed with him on this? I mean, some of the characteristics he said that belonged to the Kalderashi group that you cannot actually have the confidence to say that it's valid for all Roma groups?**

Interviewee: There are differences between some of the groups; I'm coming from Blacksmith family that had different traditional practices from the Kalderashi Roma, but we speak the language, I can easily understand with them, I can easily communicate and, how to say, even in the street, stay and have comfortable conversation, but there are some cultural practices that, for example in Roma, that stayed and when they, Kalderashi Roma, went to the U.S. or when they went to U.K. they were keeping their tradition. And, for example, also my group also kept the tradition, but it was a bit, slightly different from them.

**Interviewer: That's likely to happen, yes.**

Interviewee: And it also depends on the nation-state where you are going and how they perceive you; for example, in Macedonia, during the history, we had good status, good position. Also, during the Communism period. If you compare Yugoslavia with Hungary or with Romania, Roma enjoyed, Roma had a better status in Yugoslavia because Tito was from the Non-Alliance Group and he had good connexions with India and even Mahatma Gandhi in that period came in Macedonia and had direct contact with the Roma singer in Yugoslavia, with Esma Redzepova. And then we had recognition from the Indian Government that whatever will happen to Roma around that we have the way back, that we can return and this was also one of the declaration in the congresses.

**Interviewer: Yes, state policies left a trace on how Roma view their identity today; I was expecting that because you have different policies, you have different family histories and not only your own personal experience. So, when you hear these different stories in Budapest that you're being exposed to, let's say one way in which Roma history is taught, and then you have very different personal histories among you colleagues; so, I was thinking, after all of that, what's the result, what comes out? At some point, I was asking related to your family, how they keep the traditions and how they view their ethnicity and transmit it and you said that, ever since you can remember, in your family environment, they keep the traditions, they speak the language and they also try to transmit this concept of "Romanipe" which is Romani**

**pride and, I have some general idea of what "Romanipe" means, but I want to ask you: what does it mean personally for you? Does it mean something concrete?**

**Or, maybe it doesn't. Because I heard different things.**

Interviewee: To define what it means Romanipe is hard.

**Interviewer: For you, what it means personally.**

Interviewee: For me, if I choose one word it would be "responsibility".

**Interviewer: For the community?**

Interviewee: Yes. We very often have a trap; we understand community just the back way back, my family, my friends or this. We understand community in the Roma perception, in the perception of Romani students, we understand community just the way back we remember - "Oh, my community where I come from"- and etc. And now I don't see it as a community just that. I see a community even in Budapest when we are 50 students, I see a community when we are going at some conference when we are going with other Roma and it's, how to say, a broader picture of what I mean with "community".

**Interviewer: Talking about this idea, that you've started doing some sort of a personal quest, of the way in which Roma view their ethnicity, does it resemble the theories on nationalism, and you say that it doesn't; what do you have in mind when you say that? In what way is it different for you?**

Interviewee: You know, I was reading a bit about nations, whether Roma are a nation, whether they are ethnicity, what does it mean to be a nation, which criteria you have to satisfy for a nation and I was reading different theories. And when you have other perspective from the International Romani Union, when in the Declaration they say "We, the Roma nation".

**Interviewer: Yes, I know.**

Interviewee: And now it's conflicting for people and whenever you say a nation you immediately connect it with the nation-state; there is no other way what is the mental slop



in the mind. Nation is always connected with the nation-state. And I was reading, reading, reading and I found out that it is not always connected with the nation-state. And there are these Romantic theories about nationalism, there are now these new theories of nationalism, about globalization and nationalism, whether we will be Europeans after all or we will be again separate; I have to say, for me this concept is a bit, how to say, not so unclear, I see it like a gap, I see it like if I want to control one group, if I want a group, I make it in pieces and if the pieces try to connect themselves, I give them different things, so I keep them, how to say, far away from each other. And this is also connected with the political identity of Roma. And when I say the political identity of Roma I always say we are 12 million around Europe and that's bigger than Macedonia, that's bigger than when you compare with Slovakia, than other countries. And when I see the policies and the promises of the politicians and etc. I see that there are spent huge amounts of money, let's say from the European funds, but they're not effective and I see there is not working something and I see the responsibility of the countries that they should do something and the way they are doing it is not good in my opinion. And the political demands, when it comes to ask your political status in society, I am not different from the Macedonian, or from the Albanian, or from the Hungarian or from the Romanian; if I feel like citizens of my country, Macedonia, and I have full citizenship and full rights like they enjoy, I should have the same. It cannot be for one group to be the mother and for the other group to be the step-mothers.

**Interviewer: Yes, I know what you mean. Another questions came to my mind now that you were saying this idea that, of course, there are many different Roma groups, that kept different traditions, even the same ones that migrated to different countries and changed differently, I was thinking: do you thinking there can be a sense, or if there is, of together-ness across national borders and across the Roma groups? So, my question is: do you think there can be a sense of sharing Roma-ness across borders between Gitanos, Kale, Manouche, Kalderashi, Romungro, etc.? Do you that that's happening, that's possible?**

Interviewee: It's possible, but the main trap that we are in, I don't believe in that idea. That we connect in one place or something; it's good where we are. Just, we need to unite in our interest. The cultural tradition, the practices, the language or etc., I don't see it like, how to

say, whenever you try to unite it's always "what makes us different?". And we always say, OK I speak this dialect, they are speaking another dialect, I have this tradition, they don't have this tradition We in Macedonia we have these traditional jobs, but they don't and have etc. For me personally, it's important the struggle and the interest that we have because I see the European Union as a project that will grow up, that it will grow up and maybe it will be like a U.S. I see it in my projection, there has to be a political union among Europe. And I see it that when this maybe will happen in the future we, Roma, should also have representative there who will be able to promote the policies towards and who will ensure that Roma will enjoy full rights like the others because so far, we don't have significant political representation in European Parliament or when they did about the European budget or something. We had in the nation-state a couple of representatives, but they pursue their own interests; they don't feel the responsibility about, like all politician is doing.

**Interviewer: It's exactly what I wanted to say. There's no exception on that one.**

Interviewee: But, that's why, with the young generation what we are now, I tried also, not just with Barvalipe, with personal talking and seeing, to see the responsibility, to open our eyes and see what is actually happening and when tomorrow we will come to certain position, some of us will be some ministre or whatever, to know which interests to promote; not to promote his own interest and going there for salary, but for those people who, which is coming from.

**Interviewer: Yes. I think I got all of the material I needed from this interview, Albert. It's been really helpful for me and I think I'm going to get some good stuff out of it. I've changed the questions from the interview a bit because I saw that some things were more worth asking than others and I think it's actually better this way. I got more using this, let's say, this techniques than actually following up all the questions. So, thank you for finally meeting me and for giving me your time and as soon as I finish this, you know, transcribe it, interpret the data and so on, I will send you a copy of this study because it's only fair that you have it. So, thank you again, thank you very much!**

Interviewee: Thank you very much also! It was good to talk with you and I'm looking

forward to see the end product.

**Interviewer: Me too: I'm looking forward to see the end product.**

Interviewee: Yes.

**Interviewer: Thank you! As soon as I have I'll send you.**

Interviewee: OK. Thank you very much!

**Interviewer: Bye!**

Interviewee: Bye! Have a good time!

**Interviewer: You too! Bye!**